MSID THAILAND

Program Orientation

LEARNING ABROAD CENTER
University of Minnesota
Learning Abroad Center Philosophy

- Student-centered
- Fostering independence
- Learning begins prior to departure

Take notes!
Use the resources provided!
Ask questions when needed!
Pre-Departure Preparation

- Program Paperwork
- Power of Attorney
- Academic Planning
- Financial Planning
  - Financial Aid preview meeting
  - Review program fees
- Registration
- Cancellation Policy
Welcome!

We're excited that you've chosen to study abroad in Chiang Mai on the MSID Thailand program!

The Minnesota Studies in International Development (MSID) program model has been operating for over 30 years. Additionally, you'll be studying in a city that was founded in 1296 as the capital of the Lanna Kingdom in northern Thailand.

The MSID Thailand program team is here to help you prepare for your time abroad. We've designed this website to address the most common topics of interest to students. But, we encourage you to contact us with any individual questions you might have. We hope you'll have a rich and rewarding experience!

- Flight details
- Cultural tidbits
- Arrival information
- Plus more!
Passport & Visa Information

• Passport required
  – Passport information at: travel.state.gov
  – Allow 4-6 weeks
  – Must be valid for 6 months after your return date

• Visa required for this program
  – Visa information at: https://umabroad.umn.edu/programs/asia-oceania/msid-thailand/apply/visa
  – Begin the visa application process 60 days prior to departure
  – We will tell you when to mail your materials
Billing & Financial Aid

• Students are billed through their UMN student account
• Billing follows UMN dates & deadlines
  – Onestop onestop.umn.edu
• Students must submit a SACE (Study Abroad Cost Estimate) in order to access & modify their financial aid package
• A Financial Aid Preview meeting is strongly encouraged
Flight Information & Arrival

• Coordinated group flights
  – Village Travel
    www.villageinc.com
  – Approval required to book a different flight
  – Book a round-trip ticket
• Email itinerary to Learning Abroad Center
• Book in advance!
• MSID Thailand staff will meet you at the airport
• Arriving early/staying late
Cultural Preparation

What is culture?

“Culture is defined as the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. These shared patterns identify the members of a culture group while also distinguishing those of another group.” -- CARLA UMN
Cross-Cultural Adjustment

CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT CURVE

LEVEL OF COMFORT & SATISFACTION

Everything is new, exciting & different
Frustration/annoyance with everyday differences
Surface adjustment
Confronting deeper cultural/personal issues
Adaptation & assimilation

native culture
foreign culture
native culture

TIME & PLACE

Source: University of Cincinnati
Cultural Differences

- Importance of family and family time
- Alone time
- Individual vs collectivist culture
- Confrontation, strong negative emotions, and direct communication
- Language
- Patriotism
- Importance of hierarchies and social status
Signs of Culture Shock

- Changes in eating and sleeping habits
- Being hostile/complaining all the time about the host country
- Irritability, sadness, depression
- Withdrawing from friends, other people and/or activities
- Frequent frustration; being angered easily
- Self doubts; sense of failure
- Acute homesickness; calling home much more often than usual
Coping Strategies

• Realize that what you’re going through is normal – give yourself time & space to adjust
• Keep in touch with family & friends back home
• Get involved in the local community (sports, clubs, activities you enjoy)
• Talk to someone (others in your group, onsite staff, counselor)
• Take care of yourself (eat well, sleep, exercise)
• Have fun & relax!
Chiang Mai, Thailand

- Thailand’s second city and former capital of Lanna Kingdom
- Cultural center and tourism hub for northern Thailand
- About 1 million inhabitants
- Over 300 Buddhist temples or wats
- Urban base for hill tribes and refugees
Orientation

- Multiday orientation
  - Overview of Chiang Mai with city tour
  - Political & historical overview of Thailand
  - Academic, health, & safety orientation

- Students will stay in a hotel and later move in with their host families

- Wear your uniform for orientation
- Meeting your host family
- Flexibility is key!
MSID Thailand Office & Classrooms

- Based at the International Sustainable Development Studies Institute (ISDSI)
- Classroom space
- Computer Lab
- Crossfit facility
- Cafe
- Internet/wireless access
- Library on-site
Classroom Space
MSID Thailand Staff

- Ajaan Mark Ritchie, Program Director and Executive Director of ISDSI
- Ajaan Supawadee "A" Chimmanee, Associate Director
- Ajaan Angkarin "Tik" Pimpaeng, Associate Director
- Wanlee Kongnim, MSID Thailand Program Coordinator
- All of the ISDSI staff serve as your on-site resources
Leadership Team

Mark A. Ritchie, Ph.D.  
(Ajaan Mark)  
Executive Director

Supawadee Chimmanee  
(Ajaan A)  
Associate Director  
MSID Coordinator

Angkarin Pimpang  
(Ajaan Tik)  
Associate Director

Nuchanart Khamwan  
(Ajaan Toi)  
Accountant

Administrative Team

Benjamas Chomngandee  
(Ajaan Ben)  
Accountant

Sumalee Manorat  
(Ajaan Nong)  
Business Manager

Chonlada Chawai  
(Ajaan Noi)  
Visas/Immigration

Instructor Team

Giuliana Zegara  
(Ajaan Giuliana)

Anochao Pojanathamrongpong  
(Ajaan Chao)

Sawittree Munsawang  
(Ajaan Poom)

Somboad Terngkae  
(Ajaan Poad)

Nuchjaree Chompukeeree  
(Ajaan Four)

Peter Duker  
(Ajaan Peter)

Bhudsakorn Somin  
(Ajaan Jeab)
MSID Thailand Learning Outcomes

• Foster an understanding of the global context through *classroom and experiential learning*
• Cultivate awareness and appreciation for development issues through engagement with diverse communities
• Translate insights gained into thoughtful and respectful long-term perspectives on concepts of *social justice and sustainable development*
• Strengthen communication skills through *acquisition of local languages and cultural awareness*
• Gain cross-cultural competencies through extended engagement with local grassroots organizations and host families
MSID Realities

• This is a development program. Not language and culture program.
• This can be a challenging program.
• Don’t set rigid expectations of the culture or your role within your internship/research placements.
• This program has the potential to impact you in ways you can’t imagine.
Semester Program Overview

- **Orientation**: Up to 1 Week
- **Classes**: 7 Weeks
- **Internship or Research**: 6 Weeks
- **Final Seminar**: 1 Week
Semester Coursework

- International Development: Critical Perspectives on Theory & Practice (4 credits)
  - 25-30 hours in topic-specific tracks for International Development Course
  - 10 hours of research methodology for all students
  - International Development Tracks
    - Arts & Cultural Studies; Education & Literacy; Entrepreneurship & Alternative Economies; Public Health; Social Service; Sustainability & the Environment

- Country Analysis (4 credits)
- Thai language (4 credits)
- Community Engagement in the Global South (4 credits)
- Global Identity: Connecting Your International Experience with Your Future (1 credit)
  - Optional
Academic Year Coursework

• Fall Semester Courses
• Spring Semester
  – Courses (16 credits)
    • Advanced International Development Internship
    • Directed Research
    • Topics: Case Studies in International Development
    • Applied Field Methods

• Detailed dates are online: https://umabroad.umn.edu/programs/asia-oceania/msid-thailand/dates
Optional Language Pre-session

- August
- 3½ weeks
- Homestays
- Select from the following 4-credit courses:
  - THAI 1001 – Beginning Thai I
  - THAI 1002 – Beginning Thai II
  - THAI 3001 – Intermediate Thai I
  - THAI 3002 – Intermediate Thai II
Internships & Research

• Placements related to development tracks
• Agencies are grassroots, community-based organizations
• Designed to serve both agency’s and student’s goals
• Students receive visit from MSID faculty member
• 25 hours / week minimum
• Placement process begins with Academic Planning Form
What is an MSID Internship?

- Opportunity to understand how local NGO’s reach out to under-represented populations
  - No placements at for-profits, large banks/corporations, or embassies
- Includes observing, engaging, reflecting, documenting
- Activities will range and are not fixed to any single task or tasks over the 6-week period
- Moving from intense classroom phase to more open-ended learning - important transition
- 25 hours per week expected (part-time internship and time for course paper preparation and reading)
MSID Internship Strategies

• Identify 3-4 areas of interest
• Student initiative is important, but so is flexibility, patience, and realism
• Clarify expectations, as needed
• Learning opportunity vs. professional job
• Remember you are in the linguistic minority and while a few people may speak English, it is your responsibility to try and speak Thai
Health-related Internships

• It is unethical to provide direct medical care
• Rule of thumb: "If you can't do it here, you shouldn't do it there."
• Complete the “Global Ambassadors for Patient Safety” (GAPS) module in your confirmation checklist
MSID Research Project

- Research methodology coursework
- Agency placement
- Join an on-going research project
- Supervision and guidance provided by program director
- IRB considerations
- International UROP
  - [https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/finances/scholarships/urop-scholarship](https://umabroad.umn.edu/students/finances/scholarships/urop-scholarship)
MSID Housing

• 1-2 homestays: one in Chiang Mai during classroom phase and a rural homestay as needed
• Middle class, and possibly lower in rural areas
• Families provide 2 meals per day
  – Lunches provided by ISDSI on Mondays during the classroom phase
• Gift considerations
• No overnight guests
Living with Your Host Family

• Keep an open mind and have realistic expectations
• Remember that you are a guest in their home and be respectful
• Greet your family when you come home and say goodbye when you leave
• Clean up after yourself
• Always let your family know when you will be out late, out of town or not home for dinner
• Respect their space but really make an effort to spend time with them
• Be mindful of electricity and water use
Staying Healthy in Thailand

- Health Information Form
- Visit the Center for Disease Control website for vaccination recommendations
- Pack enough prescription medications for the entirety of the program
  - Insurance letter available from the Learning Abroad Center if applicable
- Food and drink precautions
- CISI Insurance
- Health care facilities can be limited in rural areas
- What to do if you get sick
Tropical Diseases

- Visit a travel clinic
- Japanese encephalitis
  - Risk factors include trips over one month, travel to Chiang Mai and Northern Thailand, travel in rural areas
  - Vaccinations available in country
- Malaria isn’t a concern in the Chiang Mai province
- Dengue is a concern during the rainy season so bring bug spray with DEET
- Refer to the Program Handbook for more details
Staying Safe in Thailand

- Adopt a more cautious attitude
- Be vigilant and aware of your surroundings
- Leave valuables at home and carry belongings with caution
- Maintain a low profile
- Go out in groups and meet in public places
- Take a cab; don’t walk home alone at night
- Trust your instincts
- Gender & relationships
- Lèse majesté laws
Communication

• Mailing address in Thailand
• Cell phones with local Thai phone numbers are required for all students on the program
• Wi-Fi is available at ISDSI and internet cafes can be found throughout the city
• Remember internet can be slower than in the US
Staying in Touch

- Communication methods
- Appropriate amount of communication
- Create a communication plan
- Expect limited contact during first few days
- Use in-country resources first when issues arise
Understanding FERPA

• About FERPA
• Information we can & cannot share
• When we would contact parents
• If parents contact the LAC
Money

- National currency is the **baht**
  - [www.oanda.com](http://www.oanda.com) (for exchange rates)
- Cost of Participation
- Cash vs. Credit/Debit Cards
- ATMs
  - Notify your bank that you’ll be abroad and find out the foreign transactions fees
- **Have a credit card for medical emergencies**
- Keep money in a safe place
Packing

- Pack light!
- Check the Program Handbook for clothing recommendations
- Be considerate of local norms
- Pack enough prescription medications for entirety of the program
- Adapters and converters
- Photocopy important documents
- Carry-on items
  - Medications, passport, & other important documents
Thai Student Uniform

• From the first day of orientation forward, students are required to dress in the same style that is worn by Thai university students.

• Black skirt for women, black pants for men, and a white button-up shirt for both.
  – Larger sizes harder to find.

• Suggested to bring 5 tops and 2-3 bottoms.

• Uniforms can be purchased in Thailand but beware sizing.
Appearance

- Thai people are much more conservative and value conformity
- Collectivist culture vs. Western individualism
- Western backpacker culture is highly frowned upon
- Things you may want to avoid
  - Facial piercings and visible tattoos
  - Facial hair, man buns, dreads/braids (excluding Black students)
  - Tank tops, short skirts and shorts
- When in doubt, wear your uniform
Transportation

- Songthaew
- Budget 150 baht/week
- No driving or motor bikes
- Commuting times and city living
Food & Drink

• Drink only filtered and bottled water
  – Filtered water available at ISDSI and with host families
• Be careful eating street market food, especially meat, seafood, and unpeeled fruit
• We can’t accommodate severe peanut, shellfish, or gluten allergies, strict vegetarian diets, or vegan diets
• Food as culture and a social justice issue
Travel

- Field studies
- Student travel guidelines
- Hosting family and friends
- Consult with on-site staff for travel recommendations
- Independent Travel Form
- No travel to level 3 or 4 countries and regions
- Balancing travel with other program responsibilities
Travel Resources

• LAC travel resources
  – http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/travel/
• Culture Shock! Thailand
• Lonely Planet Guidebook
Coming Home

- Reverse culture shock
- Perceived lack of interest by friends and family
- Disconnect with family and friends
- Depression
- Missing host culture
- Judging the U.S.
- Reevaluating values
Upon Your Return

- Share your photos and stories, do a student profile, serve as a past participant on study abroad website
- Learn how to market your experience abroad to employers and graduate schools
- Stay in contact with the people you met while abroad
- Take an internationally focused course on campus or join an international club
- Study abroad again or consider working, interning, volunteering, or teaching English
- Visit the Learning Abroad Center website for more ideas
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