



SEAYLP Homestay Handbook



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Center for Southeast Asian Studies

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program 2024

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The Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Program (SEAYLP) is a youth exchange program that brings 50 high school students and 10 adult leaders from Southeast Asia to Northern Illinois University for a three-week leadership program. The program is operated out of the Center for Southeast Asian Studies in collaboration with and funding by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

The 2024 SEAYLP will be held April 20 to May 12, 2024.

This program focuses on empowering youth, strengthening people-to-people ties, and cultivating a more cohesive community identity in both the United States and Southeast Asia. Participants will learn about environmental sustainability, economic and diplomatic security, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Additionally, participants will work on networking and collaborating within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Contact information:

Judy Ledgerwood
CSEAS Director
Office phone: 815-753-1771
Email: jledgerw@niu.edu

Jordan York
Program Director
Cell phone: 779-423-8181
Email: jyork4@niu.edu



Handbook Overview

This Homestay Handbook has been prepared to help prepare American families host participants of SEAYLP from Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. This handbook contains cultural information, guidelines and helpful tips for hosting these youth and adult SEAYLP participants in your home.

Program Overview

The SEAYLP is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and is hosted by Northern Illinois University (NIU) and the Center for Southeast Asia Studies (CSEAS) each spring. SEAYLP began in 2009 and has hosted selected youth leaders 10 out of the past 12 years. The group is comprised of five students and one adult from the countries of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar (Burma), the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. This program brings together a group of people from the same region, but we are diverse in a number of ways.

The primary themes are:

- Strengthening people-to-people ties between the United States and Southeast Asia.
- Cultivating a cohesive identity in the region.
- Empowering youths to become active members of their home countries and the global arena.



Program Goals

Program goals are to:

1. Heighten appreciation for the cultural similarities and differences between the U.S. and their respective countries.
2. Heighten appreciation for the ethnic, religious, and national diversity within and among the ASEAN countries.
3. Teach appreciation for the value of citizen activism through increased levels of civic participation and community service.
4. Learn new knowledge and skills in civic action plan development and coalition building.
5. Value networking and collaboration skills in developing and implementing community service projects.
6. Focus the vision of positive cooperation among ethnic, religious and socioeconomic groups.
7. Increase the understanding and awareness of the shared global and regional challenges and opportunities that youth will face in the 21st century.



The Hosting Experience; SEAYLP Group Profile

Background check forms are on the SEAYLP Host Family website. Please download, fill out and send to jjork4@niu.edu or mail to:

Pottenger House
520 College View Court
DeKalb, IL 60115

Your family is an integral part of the SEAYLP experience. The homestay time is an opportunity for both the students from Southeast Asia and your family to learn about each others' cultures and customs. Being a host family offers the students a unique view into the daily routines of American life. For the host family, it is a chance to cultivate relationships with people from different parts of the world and have a greater sense of this "global village" in which we live. We encourage you and your family to treat your guests as members of the family, offering them a realistic view of American life. Our primary goal is that you and your new "family members" have a once-in-a-lifetime homestay experience.

Host families have the following qualities:

- A sincere interest in learning about other cultures.
- A willingness to treat the participants as members of their family.
- A willingness to spend time with the program participants; to engage them in conversation and include them in family's activities.
- An openness to accept students from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, cultures and religions.
- Flexibility, understanding, patience and the ability to effectively communicate with the participants to avoid misunderstandings.
- A willingness to cooperate and communicate with the NIU Center for Southeast Asian Studies and the host family program coordinator. Each host family will have to complete a background check and a home check by the host family coordinator.



Cultural Notes

Directness: When first offering something to your guest, do not take no for an answer. Your guest may refuse what is being offered at first, but will most likely accept it after a second or third offer. This is just a nuance of Asian cultures. Do not feel that your guest is not enjoying your hospitality if offers are refused the first time.

Customs: Participants may seem at a loss as to what to do at the table or around the house. Take the opportunity to explain American customs and traditions. Demonstrate how particular foods are eaten if they seem uncertain.

Rice: Rice is a staple in many Asian countries. If the students have a choice, they may choose rice with every meal. Keep this in mind when shopping and/or preparing meals. (They also like noodles!)



Facilities and Services to be Provided By Host Family

Bedroom: Each participant has a room with a bed. They may share a room with their fellow participants.

Transportation: SEAYLP participants are expected to fully participate in the scheduled workshops and field trips of the program. Host families provide transportation to and from campus to attend these events.

Kitchen/Meals: The participants are expected to join their host families for breakfast and most dinners during their homestay. Let participants know ahead of time if and when they will need to prepare their own meals, including breakfast. Let them know if you are willing to let them use the kitchen to cook a traditional home country meal if they choose to.

Food: Be aware that participants may be reluctant to tell you about specific foods they like or dislike. Encourage them to talk about any dietary or religious restrictions and/or food allergies they may have. The Muslim participants do not eat pork. We are encouraging SEAYLP participants to take advantage of this opportunity to try many new things.



Host Family Rules

It is important to discuss house rules and expectations with your guests on the first night of their stay. Instruct them on how to operate appliances and electronic media that are available for their use. Encourage participation in your family's activities as well as household chores such as preparing meals, setting/clearing the table, kitchen and general cleaning. Their participation in everyday family activities is a vital component of their homestay experience. The free weekend should represent a typical weekend for your family. It is not necessary to do anything out of the ordinary.

As part of your family, your guests will be expected to respect family house rules and follow them. Be clear about your expectations. The next few pages include a checklist of items that you and your family should discuss with your guests based on feedback from past host family participants. This should only serve as a guideline; please discuss with them any rules that apply to your home.



Host Family Rules (Continued)

Use of Kitchen Appliances and Kitchenware:

- Refrigerator access.
- Microwave usage and limits.
- Dishwasher use or dishwashing procedure.
- Pantry access.
- What dishes they are allowed to use.
- Which dishes are microwavable.

Use of the Shower/Tub and Sinks:

- How to turn the water off and on.
- How to work the shower.
- How to turn on the hot and cold water.
- Bathing schedule (shower in the morning or evening, once a day).

Use of Home Electronics:

- Television/cable/TV apps such as Netflix, Hulu, etc.
- DVD player.
- Stereo.
- Video game systems.

Meal Preparation and Cleanup

Expectations:

- Eating with the family.
- Discuss food allergies/dietary restrictions based on cultural or religious beliefs.
- Setting and clearing the table.
- Washing dishes/dishwasher instructions.



Host Family Rules (Continued)

Use of the Phone/Computer/Internet:

- Appropriate times to make and receive calls and/or texts.
- Appropriate times to use the computer.
- Availability for homework (i.e. action plans).

The participants do not have phone cards. They will contact their family using their phones/laptops. Be sure they have access to the Wi-Fi in your home. Do request them to contact home during Illinois morning/evening hours.

Rules on Use of the Internet:

- Downloading online.
- Chatting.
- Social media including Tinder.
- Printing documents.
- Contact numbers. Please prepare a list they can carry with them at all times or enter in their phones include your address. Establish a way to communicate. (Facebook Messenger for example.)



Islam Explained

Islam, the religion of over 1.2 billion people, provides humankind with a unified view about the purpose of our creation and existence, our ultimate destiny and our place among other creatures. It is a way of life that is in complete conformance with nature, and with reason, logic and science.

The Arabic word Islam means voluntary surrender to the will of Allah and obedience to His commands. Allah is an Arabic word, the proper name of God. Muslims prefer to use the word Allah rather than God. A person who freely and consciously accepts the Islamic way of life and sincerely practices it is called a Muslim.

Five Pillars of Islam

Islam has five pillars or basic foundations of action. Acting correctly and sincerely on these foundations transforms a Muslim's life into one that is in harmony with nature and thus in conformity with the will of the Creator. Faithful practice of these duties inspires them to work toward the establishment of justice, equality and righteousness in society, and the eradication of injustice, falsehood and evil.

SHAHADAH (testimony), the first of the five basic foundations, is the declaration knowingly and voluntarily, of: La ilaha illal lahu Muhammadur rasulul lah. "There is no god except Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." This declaration is the basis of all actions in Islam, and the other basic duties follow this affirmation.



Islam Explained (Continued)

SALAH (compulsory prayer) is offered five times a day. It is a practical demonstration of faith and keeps a believer in touch with their Creator. The benefits of Salah are far reaching, long-lasting and immeasurable. It develops in a believer the qualities of self-discipline, steadfastness and obedience to the Truth, leading them to be patient, honest and truthful in the affairs of their life.

ZAKAH (welfare contribution) is a compulsory payment from a Muslim's annual savings. It can only be spent on helping the poor, the needy and the oppressed, and for the general uplift of society. Zakah is one of the fundamental principles of Islamic economy, which ensures an equitable society where everyone has a right to contribute and share.

SAWM is the annual obligatory fasting during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. A Muslim, every day of this month, refrains from eating, drinking, smoking and sex from dawn to sunset. Sawm develops a believer's moral and spiritual standard and keeps them away from selfishness, greed, extravagance and other vices. Sawm is an annual training program that increases a Muslim's determination to fulfill their obligation to the Almighty Lord. This year, the program runs during Ramadan. Participants will need to eat before dawn (food will be supplied so they can prepare food early themselves). And they will need to eat after sunset.

HAJJ (pilgrimage to the House of Allah) is an annual event, obligatory on those Muslims who can afford to undertake it, at least once in their lifetime. It is a journey to the "House of Allah" (Al-Ka'bah) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar. Hajj symbolizes the unity of humankind; Muslims from every race and nationality assemble together in equality and fraternity to worship their Lord.





Thank you!

We are excited to have you join the SEAYLP Family.



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