



May 23 through May 28, 2017
Newsletter 1

THEY REACHED THEIR SUMMER “HOMES” ABROAD



After completing a rigorous semester-long course on how to conduct research and attending a pre-travel workshop on living abroad, 12 MHIRT students boarded planes for their international destinations. This weekly Newsletter will chronicle some their research activities, cultural experiences, and interesting observations, so we can all *Stay Connected*.

This week, seven students traveled to Thailand where they will be spending the summer at four different universities in three different cities. Two MHIRT students traveled to the Republic of Palau, where the University of Hawai'i has a Step-Up Research Program for local students. In addition, one student traveled to New Delhi, India and two students to Yaoundé, Cameroon. So, our MHIRT students are spread around the world this summer.



Team Thailand left on May 24 and 19 hours later arrived in Bangkok, Thailand, where they were met by Dr. Argon Steel who is their in-county advisor. Brithney-Nicole Dela Cruz reports that “Upon arrival, my fellow MHIRT students and I were immediately greeted by the heat. We thought we felt the full dose of it once we got off the plane, however we were very wrong. Once we stepped out of the airport, it felt as if we stepped into an oven.” After checking in at Viva Gardens and a short night’s sleep, Dr. Steel gave the students an orientation and took the students staying in Bangkok around the city. Cindy Vuong reports, “He introduced us to the BTS system and guided us to our respective workplaces (pictures attached).” Dwayne Manaznillo knows “the Bangkok Transit System (BTS) is one of the coolest mode of transportation that can lead us anywhere in



Thailand. “Cindy also wrote, “Every time I walked outside of the BTS, Dwayne's and my glasses would also fog up, which I find amusing and is something I haven't gotten used to yet.” “Unlike the light breeze in Hawaii, the air is heavy here too due to the pollution. Cars and motorbikes can be found literally everywhere. One of the things that struck me was just how many motorbikes there are in Thailand. I was shocked to even see parents picking up their children from school with a motorbike, where their child would be riding in the front seat.” Brithney confirms, “It was also crazy to see how busy the street was; it was as if there was no real system going on amongst the drivers. I also was surprised to see that they drive on the right side here.” This group spent the weekend sightseeing and shopping as they adjusted to life in Bangkok. Sasha Canovali confirmed, “We start work tomorrow and are all looking forward to starting our research.”





Ashley Fukuchi is spending the summer at Rangsit University. She was met by her mentor, Dr. Suchada at Viva Gardens and moved to on-campus housing. “We had lunch together at a cafe on campus. I also had a chance to take a quick tour of her offices as I dropped off my supplies that needed refrigeration.” The next day, “I met up with Dr. Suchada and Nalinee to review cell culture, discuss project, then after go to Fortune Mall for living supplies. I had a lot of fun and was thankful to them both as they treated me to a

wonderful dinner.”

For Team Chiang Mai: Mark Razalan reports that “Lean (Teodoro) and I had to travel to Chiang Mai, which started off a little rocky with us having no idea how to get from the airport to our house to exceeding the luggage weight on our flight.” “We managed to get through without paying any extra fees and arrived at Suanpaak. Of course Lean and I were shocked when we arrived to our new home and saw our living arrangements, it was decorated in Thai accessories and was surrounded by lush vegetation.” Lean agrees, “We are in love with our place because it's a 5-minute drive to the airport, 3 min walk to a huge mall with a supermarket, and they also have a cute meditation tree-house!! We're going to be seeing our mentors today.” They also spent the weekend sightseeing and eating Thai food.



Team Palau: For the first time, MHIRT is sending students to the Republic of Palau. Jessica Ramirez and Brianna Taylor were seen off at the Honolulu airport by Laarni Sumibcay, MHIRT's administrative girl-wonder. Nine hours later, after a short stop-over in Guam, they reached Koror, Palau, where they were met by their mentor, Dr. Christopher Kitalong. Since they arrived only yesterday, they didn't have a lot to report. But, they said that day #1 was great and sent this photo.



Team India: On May 23, Michael Faundo left for New Delhi, India. After 20 hours, he arrived and was met by Dr. Ravi Tandon, who is his summer mentor. Michael is staying in a guest house on the campus of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which is one of the most prestigious academic institutions in India. They will be studying CD8 T cell immune responses to the virus that causes Chikungunya infections. Never heard of Chikungunya? Stay-tuned, we'll explain in up-coming newsletters. The photo on the right is Michael's walk to work.



Team Cameroon: MHIRT students Jovikka Antallan and Bradley Thomas, along with graduate student Yukie Lloyd (who is conducting research in Cameroon this summer) left Honolulu at 8:45 pm Friday May 26. After an 11 hour stop-over in LA (photo on left), they flew to Paris and then to Yaoundé, Cameroon (total 36 hours in transit). They were welcomed by the Cameroonian Malaria Research Group and soon discovered two pieces were missing, including the one with the cold box with all the important reagents for the summer (i.e., PCR primers). They were transported to the home of Drs. Robert and Rose Leke where they will be staying for the summer. Jovikka reported “We were served with good dinner upon arrival, and the fruits were really delicious.” The next day, the missing luggage reached Yaoundé. Jovikka's first impression, “I expected Cameroon to be much hotter, but the weather is nice. It rained a little last night, so it was cool.” Brad says, “There is an up-side to the jet-lag; I was up yesterday at 4 or 5am so I was able to watch dawn from the lanai while having a coffee. I like Cameroon so far. It seems oddly familiar.”



So everyone has safely made it to their international destinations and they are beginning to settle in. In the next Newsletter, we'll share their initial impressions about life abroad and starting their research projects.