

ASEAN Youth Camp Viet Nam 2010 "DRAGON: Legend in ASEAN Culture"

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It has been 3 days since we leaved the Asean Youth Camp 2010 in Hanoi and I am really missing all the great times spent there as well as the new friends I made there. This was my first time joining a youth camp and I really enjoyed it thoroughly.

I enrolled as a photojournalist in the camp but I had never really taken serious photos and done serious photography before going to the camp. The camp and beautiful Hanoi both inspired me to capture and photograph moments of Hanoi and memories of the camp. I learn how to properly use a DSLR in manual mode and not to mention picked up a few extra skills and technique on how to get interesting photography effects from other photojournalist from the other countries like Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam and Phillipine.

I recall when we, team Malaysia touched down and arrived at Hanoi, I was already busy taking pictures but unfortunately not good ones. It was more like a warm up session for me on using the camera and getting used to the manual mode, often testing around to see what a certain twig of the iris and shutter speed can do to the picture. Joining the workshops arrange by the ASEAN Youth Camp was inspiring and beneficial because we got to tour around the Hanoi city taking lots of pictures especially the old quarters. This gave us a lot of subjects and moments to photograph, not to mention a lot of room to improve our understanding on photography.

After the first 2 days of the photojournalist workshop, the photojournalist all had to hand in our memory card to our instructor Mr. Thanh before leaving to Halong Bay. We were told that the photos we took will be compiled and carefully selected for a joined exhibition during the closing ceremony of the ASEAN Youth Camp 2010. I learned from the Vietnam delegates that Mr. Thanh was one of the best photographers in Vietnam and there were a few really good photographers within our group. Being an amateur just beginning to learn about photography, I was really nervous on how my pictures will turn out and what they would think about my photos especially Mr. Thanh's. None the less, I kept finding moments and interesting subjects to photograph especially at the old quarters.

The old quarter was such an inspiring place to photograph. The Vietnamese lifestyle and culture is so vividly rich throughout Hanoi and the old quarters and everywhere you look is something different and interesting to photograph. We were given only 2 hours to complete our task and it was difficult because we not only had to take photos but also learned to judge what is a good moment to capture and was is not. We also learned to observe the people and spot a good picture fast because a good moment sometimes comes and goes in a flash.

The following morning, me and two other photographers, Dzeip and Hidayah got up really early to go photograph the old ladies doing Tai Chi and fan dance by the lake and we managed to photograph some good photos. The visit to the Bo De pagoda and the Water puppet theater was also inspirational and I manage to capture some great photos. Despite the water puppet show being staged in Vietnamese, I still enjoyed the show and find it really funny. It was truly one of a kind.

When we were at Halong Bay, a new side of Vietnam was revealed. Although the weather was bad the day we arrived, Halong Bay was still one of a kind and absolutely breathe taking. The circumstances were different compared to in Hanoi due to the bad weather but this created a new realm for me to play around and try different techniques to get good pictures. The caves were also interesting to photograph. Because there were a lot of us, the organizers had to split us up into 2 different cruise. Some of us sailed and spend a night on board the mini Hanoi Opera while the others sailed a bigger cruise known as the Emotion Hanoi.

After a whole day of sights seeing and cave discovering at Halong Bay, we join boats and had a fantastic barbeque dinner. All the delegates from different countries got to know each other even better and we all had a great time. During the 5 minutes presentation of each country on the first day, everyone all got an inside look into the different art formed, culture and traditions of other countries but when were on board of the cruise ship during the barbeque dinner, we all learned a little bit more about the culture and traditions of the other delegates from other country after getting to know them better and I find that very beneficial. After spending a night at Halong Bay, we headed back to Hanoi and turned in our memory cards to Mr. Thanh for the exhibition.

Some of us photographers talk about the photos we took and talked about how to improve and make them better. I learned a lot from the comments. By day 4, my photography has improved tremendously compared to the photos I took during the first day. During the closing ceremony exhibition, 3 of our best works from every photojournalist are being selected and put up on the wall. It was exciting to see our work being displayed on the wall.

I really had a great time during the Asean Youth Camp and really happy to get to meet people from different countries. Everyone at the camp, the organizers and especially the liaison officers, Pearl(Ngau Ain) and Haa was very helpful to us. It was a wonderful experience that I will treasure for long time. From the camp, I took home new friends, new memories, new experience, knowledge in the diverse Asian culture and photography skills, lots of photos and a new hobby, photography. I will miss Hanoi and the people I met at camp and also the delicious Pha. I wish to return to Hanoi again someday and maybe a gathering of everyone from Asean Youth Camp 2010.
