

SE04EP01

An Intern in Hong Kong

MyLinh Truong

H: Welcome to Noles Abroad, a podcast by Florida State University International Programs! I'm Hannah

Z: And I'm Zoe! And we are your hosts. On this podcast we'll talk about study abroad from the perspective of the students, faculty, staff, and alumni who make it an experience worth sharing. We'll also bring you travel tips and fun facts from around the globe.

H: On today's episode, we talk with MyLinh Truong, a recent FSU alum who studied abroad in Paris and did an international internship in Hong Kong. We hear about MyLinh's decision to go abroad and more about her time in Hong Kong. MyLinh talks about what it was like to be there during the Hong Kong protests, how she managed homesickness, and how she has connected to her heritage through travel. Let's go to our conversation now:

H: Hey how are you doing today?

MyLinh (M): I'm good, how are you?

H: I'm doing well! Can you start us off by introducing yourself to our listeners?

M: My name is MyLinh Truong. I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Finance Spring of 2020 and I recently just received my Master's of Science in Finance, last week. I studied abroad in Paris during Summer of 2018 for the Intensive French program and I interned in Hong Kong the Summer of 2019.

Z: Awesome. So, it's pretty unique that you participated in two different study abroad programs so can you just tell us about your decision to first study abroad and then do your international internship?

M: Yeah when I was applying to colleges I was checking to see which schools had good international programs, specifically in Paris since I've never been to Europe and I've always had a fascination with French language and culture. I studied French all four years in high school and I was the French club president so I liked how FSU had the Intensive French program which allowed me to immerse myself in the language and lifestyle of the French. So after my positive experience with FSU IP and getting the confidence to study abroad by myself, I decided that I wanted to intern abroad so I went on FSU IP's website and I saw that they had an internship program in Hong Kong which allowed me to travel while interning, so it was killing two birds with one stone so to say. And Hong Kong is like the New York of Asia and it's a financial city so having an internship there was ideal for my finance major.

H: Can you tell us where you interned and what sort of work you did while you were in Hong Kong?

M: I interned at this company called PURE Group which is a multi-national health and lifestyle brand based in Asia. The brands that it contains is PURE Yoga, PURE Fitness, PURE Apparel, Red bar and New Food which are restaurants. And PURE Yoga also has locations in New York City. I worked directly with PURE Yoga, under its regional director in Asia. My tasks would include things like analyzing the business trends and performances within the locations in the Asia division and creating and implementing new strategies to diversify their streams of revenue and drafting communications. Everyday it was very

different for me, no day was the same. So those are just some tasks, to name a few. And throughout the internship I got to utilize a lot of new skills that I learned from the previous semesters with the College of Business. My favorite thing that I got to use was I got to show off my new Excel skills that I learned in Ken Armstrong's class and my supervisor was super impressed at how efficiently and accurately I could finish her tasks using the new skills.

H: I could definitely use some of those Excel skills. That's one of those things I would love to get better at and just have not, have not improved.

Z: Yeah we love hearing about interns like actually applying what they're learning in their college work to you know your internship and it sounds like you were doing real work which is really cool, so that's awesome. So kind of shifting a little bit, we know that you were in Hong Kong at the beginning of the Hong Kong protests in 2019. Can you talk a little bit about what that experience is like for you?

M: Yeah so that was when the protests first began. I thought that it was nice seeing the people stand up for what they believed in. And I think that the media kind of portrayed the protests as more violent than it was from what I witnessed first-hand. It was mainly peaceful protest and although there were like some occasions where property was significantly damaged most of the time it was just people walking around the city and like speaking their truth.

H: Did that have any sort of impact on you working in Hong Kong? Like did anything change with your internship or anything because of the protests?

M: I still had my internship, I still went to work but there was this one occasion. So my company hosts Asia's largest yoga conference, this is actually one of my favorite experiences during the internship. So the conference was taking place during one of the weekends where the protest was taking place and things with these protests, a lot of the public transportation skip stops and the roads would be closed so this was a problem for the conference since it was located along one of the major routes of the protest. So I was tasked with planning the logistics of still holding the event while these protests were happening. So I had to find alternative routes for participants and vendors so I had every single Hong Kong transportation app and alert downloaded on my phone that weekend and using that information I had to relay it to the coordinators and then they made me draft public announcements for the participants basically saying that the event was still happening and for them to use caution and I offered them the alternative routes that I found to get to the event. So it was really crazy for someone that had only been in Hong Kong for a month, but I like crazy so it was fun.

H: That sounds like such a challenge but also just goes to show like how you really were doing real work. You were actually interning, you were part of this team, you had very real and very impactful tasks to do. And I cannot imagine having to give someone directions in a city that I had only been in for a month, I can hardly give directions in the city I've lived in for five years. So I'm so impressed that you could figure that out and get people to where they needed to go so that sounds like really awesome experience that you'll be able to speak to for the rest of your career. That's really cool. On a different note, when you weren't working how did you spend your time?

M: I would spend time with my friends. So during, in the program you live in a hotel with about 100 other kids doing other internships within the city and before the program began the program like had an Excel sheet where you could reach out to people through like their phone numbers or their social medias I had

a few people reach out to me through social media and I met up with them at the hotel pool and then we became friends. We would explore the city. Hong Kong has a mix of old and new, like the old traditional aspects and just like more innovative architectural stuff so there was a lot to explore. We would eat a lot, I like eating. There are a lot of Michelin restaurants around town so we try them out. It was actually really affordable, I thought that it wouldn't be since it was a Michelin restaurant but it is pretty affordable. The food is amazing there, regardless if it's Michelin or not. And then there are a lot of malls. There are some malls that are linked to other malls which I found weird. And then there are night markets where you can find like counterfeit stuff but I wouldn't recommend.

Z: That's awesome, that sounds like a really good time. I'd love to try the food there. So many students experience a bit of homesickness being away from their friends and family and the time change doesn't make that any easier I assume, so how did you manage any of those feelings while you were abroad?

M: The time change was definitely really hard for me it was a 12 hour time difference for me so basically when I was awake everyone back home was either asleep or just getting up. So a few things that I liked to do is I would plan some calls or like text times with people, like my family or my friends and just update them on how I was doing. And I feel like the kids that I met throughout the program made the homesickness feel better because they became like my home away from home. We would explore the city together, like I said before, and yeah

H: As we were chatting before this podcast he mentioned seeking out food that reminded you of home. Can you talk a little bit about that?

M: So during my lunch break so I would like to try new food around the city, I had a list of them. But going into the second month of the internship I grew really homesick so I sought out a lot of Vietnamese food and I found this one restaurant close to where I worked and having that meal just kind of cured the homesickness in a way 'cause it felt like my mom's cooking.

H: Yeah it's great to have those meals that just remind you of home or like just take you back to a feeling or a place and food is definitely a great way to do that. Can you talk about how traveling has connected you to your Vietnamese heritage?

M: So my parents are refugees from Vietnam, they came to America when they were very young. And growing up I lived in a predominantly white neighborhood where there weren't that many minorities at all so when I graduated high school my mom took me to Vietnam and it was a big culture shock for me being in America for all those years and then finally like seeing the different way of life for the people in Vietnam there. Especially going to her village which the only way of transport to getting there is you fly into the nearest city four hours away and then you like charter a bus to go to her village and the four hour drive feels like forever. So it was definitely a culture shock but is beautiful too because that's where my heritage came from and that's where my parents grew up.

Z: Yeah I think it's beautiful that you know a lot of times some of our students are able to travel and connect with their heritage or just in general that travel can be such a way to connect with others. When we were preparing for this podcast episode you mentioned that you believe that "as Americans we have the privilege to have a beautiful mix of people from all around the world and that we can learn a lot from them right here in the United States," can you talk a little bit more about that?

M: Yeah so just being at Florida State alone I've met a lot of exchange students and learn from them so just branching out and reaching out to people not like your own, you can learn a lot from them. And ignorance is really like the worst virus to exist so, when you learn from other people about how they grew up or their way of life it just changes your mindset on things.

H: I love like you mentioned that you can do that at FSU, you can do that on campus, you don't necessarily have to travel abroad to get to experience different people in different cultures and learn from them and be able to grow in respect for them. So I love that you can do that right here even if you never choose to study abroad or after you study abroad and return back to campus you still have the opportunity to connect with other people and to continue to deepen that cultural connection and cross cultural communication and all those great things that you get from studying abroad. We have one final question for you today and this is a question that we ask everyone who comes on the podcast. So, what advice do you have for students considering studying or interning abroad?

M: I say go for it. I don't think that you will regret it. I definitely did not regret my two experiences abroad especially with Florida State International Programs. My favorite YouTubers, Yes Theory, their tagline is "Seek discomfort," and I live by that because you understand so much more when you explore the world and just experience other people's cultures when you get outside of your little bubble, like the bubble that I was in. So just go out and explore, you're going to learn so much more about the world and yourself.

H: That's awesome advice. Definitely seek that discovery and get out and explore, I love it. thank you so much MyLinh for your time today we really appreciate you being on the podcast and sharing your story and your perspective.

M: Thank you for having me.

Z: Thanks!

H: Before we disembark, we want to introduce you to IP's Internship Coordinator, Stephanie Tillman so she can tell you more about interning abroad with IP!

Stephanie: International Programs offers internships in London, England; Florence, Italy; Panama City, Panama; and Valencia, Spain. In these locations there are a variety of internship opportunities across industries. Some of those industries include international affairs, marketing, hospitality, education, and even in engineering! Based on your skills and experience, I will help you find an internship match with an employer in the industry you are interested in.

If you're looking to learn more about this program, visit international.fsu.edu and select the "Internships" tab on the main menu. You can also reach out to me directly by emailing IP-Intern@fsu.edu or by scheduling an appointment with me through Campus Connect. I look forward to speaking with you soon!

H: Thank you to MyLinh for talking with us today, and to each of you for listening.

Z: This podcast is a production of FSU International Programs. The music for this podcast was composed by John Bartmann. Our logo was designed by Vanessa Guirey, who also does our sound engineering. Editing, transcription, and research is done by us, Zoë Crook and Hannah Meister.