



GAP SEMESTER



**pacific
discovery**
inspiring educational adventures

Southeast Asia Gap Semester Program

THAILAND, LAOS,
VIETNAM & CAMBODIA

www.pacificdiscovery.org



Overview

Experience an inspiring travel semester abroad on this Southeast Asia gap year program through Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia.

Southeast Asia can't be beaten for the sheer diversity of cultures, histories and landscapes in a geographically small area. Your days will be as varied as the countries you visit, with a fusion of hands-on volunteer work with elephants, connecting with locals during community volunteer projects, trekking through villages, and healthy doses of jungles and beaches.

Join us on this epic journey through the remote villages of Laos, the diverse landscapes of Vietnam, the world-famous Cambodian temples of Angkor Wat, all the way to the stunning beaches of Southern Thailand. This 70-day gap year program offers you an enriching fusion of community and animal rescue volunteer projects, cultural immersion, Vietnamese cooking, Buddhist meditation, kayaking, and of course, non-stop adventure!





Safety

With our 20 years of operation and more than 100,000 student days in the field, we have an excellent safety record.

We even got voted as one of the Top Gap Year Providers for Safety by students on Go Overseas! Safety is something we pride ourselves on at Pacific Discovery, so it feels amazing to be recognized for the efforts we go through.



Accreditations

We have had our safety management systems assessed and accredited by the Gap Year Association (USA), Year Out Group (UK), and OutdoorsMark (New Zealand). Assessors have commented that our systems are among the best they have observed.



Who We Are

We are an accredited gap year provider that offers experiential gap semester and summer programs to some of the most amazing places on earth. Our programs are deliberate overland journeys, blending authentic immersion in diverse cultures, meaningful service-learning projects, rewarding adventures, wilderness exploration, and personal development.



Our Programs

Our programs are more than simply a travel, time-out or study abroad experience. Each is instead an overland journey of discovery, where students are immersed in a facilitated learning environment, designed to maximize the educational and life-skills potential.



Our Philosophy

We want to make the world a better place by providing extraordinary learning adventures that assist students in gaining the skills, confidence and insight to realize their potential in an increasingly global society; developing empathy for other cultures; furthering understanding of international issues; and heightening appreciation for the earth's wilderness and diversity.

Core Educational Components

Our programs are as much a journey of personal development as they are a physical journey, and participants are supported in reflecting together and thinking about their values, goals and what they wish to gain from the program experience.

PRE-PROGRAM

Prior to program start, participants are asked to create some goals for the program – this is personal and unique to each individual group member. Participants are given a suggested outline of skills and competencies that they can choose to focus upon.

DURING PROGRAM

At program orientation, goals participants have identified are discussed in a meeting with the program leaders. Throughout the program, ideas, tools and strategies are discussed that can be useful to help participants achieve their goals both on the program and for the rest of their lives. Participants are encouraged to journal during the program to assist them in clarifying their thoughts and define what they are learning.

TRANSFER AND FOLLOW UP

At the conclusion of the program, participants give a presentation to their group and leaders, summarizing how they've been challenged, what they've learned, how they've grown and how they intend to apply what they've learned to their lives after the program.

Towards the end of the program participants are also asked to write a letter to themselves imagining where they want to be in 6 months' time and identifying behaviors, habits and changes they wish to put in place. These letters are sent to them 6 months after program conclusion, helping reinforce the learning that has occurred.



Program Design

Each of our programs incorporate the following six core program components. These six interdependent components, provide immense opportunity for students to learn about themselves, to push their boundaries, question their assumptions, to stimulate problem solving and inquiry skills.



EDUCATIONAL FOCUS

Our programs are experiential education programs, meaning that learning is hands-on and tangible. For example, students will learn about a country's history and culture by immersing themselves in it, meeting local people and hearing life stories.



ETHICAL TRAVEL & SUSTAINABILITY

Students show respect for local customs, develop meaningful cross-cultural relationships, learn minimum-impact grassroots travel techniques and come to understand social and ecological issues on a deeper level.



OUTDOOR EXPLORATION

Immersion in the wilderness is an opportunity for students to become grounded, teaches appreciation for wild places and provides us the opportunity to explore local environmental issues and relate these issues to global environmental themes



SERVICE LEARNING

Volunteer elements built into our programs allow students to really immerse themselves in a place and share an experience with local people, bridging the gap that often exists between visitor and host.



CULTURAL IMMERSION

We immerse students in the local culture, through homestays, volunteer projects and language study. Students learn empathy for other cultures and build bridges of shared understanding.



PERSONAL & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the program, students are given leadership opportunities from facilitating reflection to coordinating the daily schedule.



Sample Itinerary

***This is a guide to what you can expect to do on program.
The order in which the activities occur might vary***

THAILAND



WEEK 1 | BUSTLING BANGKOK & ANCIENT TEMPLES

Welcome to Thailand! We've officially landed in Bangkok—loud, colorful, crazy, and totally unforgettable. From the moment you step off the plane, you'll feel it: this city moves at 100mph, and we're jumping right into the action.

We'll kick things off by getting to know each other and building an awesome group vibe. Think icebreakers, team bonding, and setting the tone for an unforgettable journey together. Then it's time to hit the streets—literally.

Our first big adventure? A city canal tour through Bangkok's waterways. You'll cruise past local neighborhoods and hidden gems before we dive into Thailand's cultural heart with visits to the stunning **Grand Palace, Wat Pho, Wat Arun**, and the legendary **Temple of the Emerald Buddha**. It's beauty, history, and jaw-dropping architecture all in one. After that, we grab a **street vendor lunch**—because what better way to experience Bangkok than with sizzling skewers, spicy noodles, and fresh mango sticky rice, straight from the source?

From Bangkok, we hop on a **train to Ayutthaya**, the ancient capital of Siam, where jungle-covered ruins and towering temples tell the stories of Thailand's royal past. And here's the best part: we're exploring it all on a **mountain bike tour!** You'll cruise past centuries-old temples, rivers, and statues that feel like something out of an adventure movie.

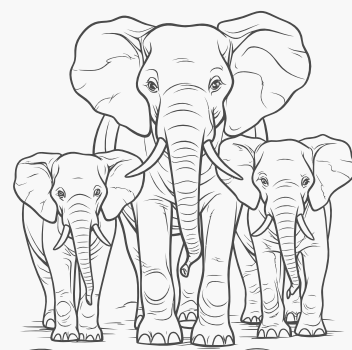
Next up: a **bus ride to Sukhothai**, another UNESCO World Heritage site and once the capital of Thailand over 700 years ago. It's quieter, more peaceful, and totally magical. That afternoon, we'll hop on bikes again for a laid-back **cycling tour through ancient temple ruins**, soaking in the calm vibes and incredible scenery.

After Sukhothai, we're off to **Chiang Mai**—Thailand's northern gem—by bus. Once we arrive, we'll hit the ground walking with a **guided city tour**, checking out the coolest local spots, temples, and hidden corners of this artsy mountain city. We'll wrap up the night with dinner at the **Chiang Mai Night Markets**, where you can shop, snack, and experience the buzzing energy of local life after dark.

WEEK 2 |

ELEPHANT CONSERVATION & COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERING

This week, we head deep into the hills of northern Thailand for something totally different—a week that slows things down and invites us to connect with nature, community, and ourselves. We'll split our time into three unique experiences, each offering something powerful and memorable.



Spend three unforgettable days at our favourite Elephant Sanctuary, where rescued elephants live freely in a protected jungle environment. This isn't a tourist show—it's the real deal. We'll spend the day getting to know these amazing animals, feeding them, walking through the forest by their side, and even cooling off in the river or mud spa together. No riding, no chains—just an unbelievable experience with gentle giants who are being treated with the love and respect they deserve.



Next, we head into the countryside near **Mae Win**, where we'll spend a few days living simply, connecting with local people, and seeing what daily life looks like in this part of the world. This is your chance to step away from the noise and into something real. We'll participate in community-based projects—what those are depends on the needs of the village at the time—but expect to be active, involved, and learning by doing. Whether we're helping out with sustainable farming, learning local skills, or just listening to stories, it's a powerful reminder of what it means to live with purpose.

To wrap up the week, we spend time at a **Buddhist meditation center**, surrounded by peaceful nature. Here, we'll learn from monks about Thai Buddhism, daily monastic life, and the basics of mindfulness and meditation. We'll get the chance to ask questions, reflect, and try out meditation ourselves in a quiet, supportive space. It's a rare opportunity to step back, unplug, and look inward—something that's often missing in day-to-day life.

WEEK 3 | HILL TRIBE ADVENTURES & CITY VIBES

After some time to rest and explore on our own, we hop on a bus to **Chiang Rai**, a chill city nestled in the northern hills of Thailand. Here, we dive into a vibrant **city and temple tour**, checking out iconic spots like the stunning all-white Wat Rong Khun temple—a seriously Instagram-worthy sight.

Once we've soaked up the city vibes, it's time to head out for the real adventure: a few days living with the **hill tribe communities** in the nearby countryside. This is where the real connection happens—we'll learn about the tribe's traditions, try on their colorful clothing, and hear stories that have been passed down for generations. We'll also get hands-on with community projects and explore the natural surroundings, including jungle walks that reveal how the locals use irrigation and care for their land.

After this immersive experience, we transfer back to **Chiang Rai** where you'll have a free afternoon to wander, shop, or relax before dinner. Speaking of dinner, get ready to hit the **night markets**, where you can feast on delicious street food and soak in the lively atmosphere with new friends.



On top of that, we'll crank up the fun with an epic **Amazing Race-style challenge** through the city, putting your teamwork and creativity to the test. Then, sharpen your cooking skills with a hands-on **Thai cooking class**, where you'll whip up tasty dishes you can brag about back home.

This mix of culture, adventure, and chill time gives you the best of all worlds—city exploration, deep cultural immersion, and plenty of chances to kick back and enjoy the vibe of northern Thailand.

TO LAOS

WEEK 4 | SOUTHEAST ASIA'S ULTIMATE RIVER ADVENTURE



We make our way north to **Chiang Khong**, a laid-back town perched on the banks of the mighty Mekong River. From anywhere in town, you can look across the water and spot the Laotian town of Huay Xai shimmering on the opposite shore. Tomorrow marks a big moment—our first official **border crossing**—and it's a rite of passage for every traveler in Southeast Asia.

We'll cross the Mekong River to Huay Xai, Laos, stepping into a new world of currency, language, food, and culture. Then, the real adventure begins: a legendary **two-day boat journey down the Mekong**. This isn't just transportation—it's an experience you'll remember forever. Stretch out, relax, and watch as jungle-covered hills roll by, fishermen cast their nets, and kids play along the riverbanks.

On our final day on the river, we'll cruise past the sacred **Pak Ou Caves**, home to hundreds of ancient Buddha statues and one of Laos's most spiritually powerful sites. Then, we arrive in **Luang Prabang**—a stunning town where colonial architecture meets golden Buddhist temples, all set against lush mountains and the peaceful confluence of two rivers. Its timeless beauty and tranquil vibe make it one of Southeast Asia's most magical destinations—a perfect place to soak in culture, history, and incredible views after our river journey.

WEEK 5 | TREKKING, TEMPLES AND WATERFALLS

Get ready to kick off your outdoor adventure with a scenic boat ride along the stunning Nam Ou River, winding through towering karst mountains and lush tropical jungle.

Trek through the hills to a welcoming village where you'll meet your host families and settle in for the night. Break the ice with a game of football or volleyball alongside village kids—nothing beats sports for making new friends.



As you trek deeper into the remote countryside, you'll explore more traditional hill tribe villages, learning about the rich cultures of the Khmu and Hmong people—the original inhabitants of Laos. Hear fascinating folktales passed down through generations, try out local phrases, and experience heartfelt community rituals like the traditional baci ceremony.

The trails take you through bamboo forests, across streams, and past villagers going about their daily lives, carrying on timeless traditions. Along the way, you'll get hands-on chances to help with cooking, farming, or other village activities—sharing skills, stories, and smiles.

Each night, you'll stay in homestays where your hosts will welcome you with delicious home-cooked meals and stories about their way of life. Capture moments with new friends and always remember to ask permission before snapping photos—the best way to connect and show respect.

Your adventure wraps up with a final trek back to the river, where you'll enjoy a last taste of Laos' stunning landscape before heading back to Luang Prabang—a city known for its dreamy blend of French colonial charm, golden temples, and peaceful riverside vibes.

This one-week trekking adventure is your perfect snapshot of Laos—the small, beautiful country where jaw-dropping landscapes, rich cultures, and warm-hearted communities all come together.



TO VIETNAM

WEEK 6 | FLAVOR, HISTORY & EPIC VIEWS

We fly from Luang Prabang to **Hanoi**, the buzzing cultural heart of Vietnam. Say goodbye to Laotian Kip and hello to Vietnamese Dong as you jump headfirst into a wild new world of language, flavors, and street life. Your airport transfer to the hotel? Totally sorted—no stress!

First up in Hanoi: a **cooking class** where you'll learn to make real-deal Vietnamese dishes using fresh, local ingredients. Then brace yourself for **Ha Long Bay**—the ultimate bucket-list spot and a total classic. Hop on a boat and cruise past jaw-dropping limestone cliffs and emerald waters. Trust us, it's a day you won't stop talking about.

Back in Hanoi, soak up the city vibes on a morning exploration before catching an **overnight train to Hue**, where history hits different. In Hue, get ready to be wowed by the majestic **Imperial City**—it's like stepping into another time.

Then, hop on a bike for a **cycling tour to Thanh Toan Village**, where you'll roll through stunning countryside and dive into local life like a true explorer.





WEEK 7 | STUDENT-LED SECTION

The real adventure begins when we split into two teams. Each group receives a budget and a clear goal—to reach Hoi An within six days. With guidance from your instructor, you will take full control of planning your route, managing your finances, and making the most of every opportunity. Whether you choose to relax in a coastal town, explore vibrant cities, visit hidden villages, or hike scenic trails, the choice is yours.

Along the way, you'll coordinate transportation, meals, and activities, developing valuable travel skills while strengthening bonds with your teammates. By this stage of the program, you will be well-prepared and confident to take on this self-led experience with independence and teamwork.

Arriving in Hoi An, you'll be immersed in a town rich with history and culture. This UNESCO World Heritage site is renowned for its ancient architecture, peaceful streets, iconic covered bridges, and vibrant markets. It's also the perfect place to find custom-tailored clothing, exquisite silks, and delicious local cuisine.

After completing your self-led journey and soaking up the unique atmosphere of Hoi An, we fly to Ho Chi Minh City—Vietnam's dynamic southern metropolis. Here, you will engage in a meaningful community project, connecting with locals and experiencing the city beyond the typical tourist path.

TO CAMBODIA

WEEK 8 | MANGROVES, MOVEMENT & ISLAND MAGIC



Our Cambodian chapter opens in the heart of Phnom Penh, where we'll weave through the electric colors of Russian Market, and find calm at the golden Wat Phnom. We'll pause to learn from the painful chapters of history at the Killing Fields and Tuol Sleng Museum—moments that'll stir your heart and mind.

Next, we journey south to **Kampot**, where our footsteps lead us to the **Trapeang Songkae Community**. Climb aboard a small boat and get your hands a little muddy—you'll each plant **four mangrove trees**, helping to protect the coast in a super hands-on, feel-good way. Then, it's time for movement and connection at **Epic Arts**, where a playful workshop and lunch at their vibrant café will awaken your creativity—and your taste buds!

And then... paradise awaits. We board a **speedboat to Koh Rong**, a dreamy island escape with white-sand beaches, turquoise waves, and total chill vibes. Two full days to reflect, laugh, and lounge—whether you're on a hammock, in the surf, or hanging with your crew under the palm trees.

When the sun sets on island time, we board an overnight bus to **Siem Reap**, ready for the next magical chapter in the Kingdom of Wonder.

WEEK 9 | IMMERSION IN THE LAND OF TEMPLES



After two blissful beach days, you'll have a free morning to relax by the pool or explore Sihanoukville before boarding a speedboat back to the mainland and catching an overnight bus to Siem Reap, where the real adventure begins.

Upon arrival in Siem Reap, you'll have another free morning to unwind or shop for souvenirs. In the afternoon, you'll embark on a boat ride through a floating fishing village on Tonlé Sap Lake, offering a unique glimpse into life on the water. Later, experience the magic of the Phare Circus, a captivating performance by local artists that blends acrobatics, theater, and Cambodian storytelling.

The following day is dedicated to exploring Angkor Wat, the largest religious monument in the world. Originally built in the early 12th century by King Suryavarman II as a Hindu temple dedicated to the god Vishnu, it later transformed into a Buddhist temple. Angkor Wat is renowned for its grandeur, intricate bas-reliefs, and symbolic architecture, representing Mount Meru, the center of the universe in Hindu and Buddhist cosmology. The temple's alignment with the cardinal points and its extensive moat further emphasize its spiritual significance. As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Angkor Wat stands as a testament to the artistic and cultural achievements of the Khmer.

After a leisurely morning, you'll embark on a half-day bike ride through the Siem Reap countryside, passing rice paddies, local villages, and traditional workshops. This immersive experience offers insight into rural Cambodian life. Finally, you'll conclude your journey with a flight from Siem Reap to Bangkok (DMK), transitioning to the next exciting chapter of your adventure.

FULL CIRCLE BACK TO THAILAND

WEEK 10 | FROM JUNGLE TO BEACH CLIFFS



After an energizing Muay Thai session, you'll board a night train to Surat Thani, setting the stage for an unforgettable journey. Your days in Khao Sok National Park are a blend of tranquility and excitement: start with a morning yoga session to center your mind, followed by river tubing, offering a refreshing way to explore the lush surroundings. In the evenings, embark on a night safari to witness the park's nocturnal wildlife. A full-day tour of Cheow Lan Lake awaits, featuring a scenic boat ride, a night trek through the jungle, and a chance to swim in the serene waters, immersing you in the heart of the rainforest.

Next, transition from the jungle to the coast as you head to Ao Nang Beach in Krabi. Here, indulge in a half-day rock climbing session on the iconic limestone cliffs of Railay Beach, suitable for both beginners and experienced climbers. Following this, embark on a half-day kayaking adventure, exploring the emerald waters and hidden caves of the Andaman Sea. These activities not only challenge your physical limits but also offer breathtaking views and a deeper connection with Thailand's natural beauty.

As your Thai adventure concludes, gather with your group for a final dinner, sharing stories, laughter, and memories. Reflect on the diverse landscapes—from the tranquil jungles to the vibrant beaches—and the experiences that have enriched your journey. With new friendships forged and a heart full of adventures, you're ready to embark on the next chapter of life.

*Each week there will be some designated free time so that you can catch up on email, do laundry, rest, and explore independently with others in the group.

**Pacific Discovery reserves the right to alter and/or change the order of the itinerary, the focus of the projects, or the activities themselves due to dates, availability, and safety precautions.



Program Highlights

- **Climb Railay Beach's** famous limestone cliffs and kayak its clear waters in Southern Thailand.
- Get hands-on **cares for elephants at a sanctuary** in Northern Thailand.
- **Trek through Laos' jungles**, waterfalls, and remote villages
- **Train in Thailand's legendary Muay Thai** martial art
- **Cruise the Mekong River** from Northern Thailand into Laos, experiencing local river life and markets.
- Explore **Angkor Wat by bike** and enjoy a thrilling Phare Circus show in Cambodia.
- Bike through **ancient temple ruins in Ayutthaya and Sukhothai**, Thailand.
- Hunt down the **best street food** and treasures at vibrant night markets in Chiang Mai and Bangkok.
- **Plant mangrove trees** to help restore coastal ecosystems near Sihanoukville, Cambodia.
- **Immerse yourself in authentic hill tribe** culture in Northern Thailand and Laos.
- Travel like a local on **overnight trains and traditional boats** across Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos.
- Learn to **cook delicious Southeast Asian dishes** during workshops in Hanoi, Vietnam, and Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- **Relax with yoga, river tubing, and night safaris** around Khao Sok National Park and Cheow Lan Lake in Thailand.





COUNTRY INFORMATION

Thailand: Known as the 'land of smiles', we have found Thailand's 54 million people (the ones we've met) live up to their reputation. The country is embracing modernization without discarding their own rich traditions. Thai people are deeply religious and it is expected that all men will spend some time as a Buddhist monk during their lives. Thailand was the only country in South East Asia not to be colonized by Europeans during the 16th - 18th centuries. The monarchy is strong and the King is revered for his social reforms. The country is geographically diverse: Tropical islands and beaches in the south, with some of the world's best diving; and a mountainous jungle clad north, populated by numerous minority tribal groups.

Laos: Laos was, along with Cambodia and Vietnam, a French colony which formed French Indochina. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Laos fought for and gained independence from the French. Twenty years of political unrest and civil war followed until 1975 when the communist Pathet Lao gained power and closed the country to visitors. Only in the last 10 years have foreigners been allowed to travel freely in Laos. Most of the country is rugged and mountainous with few natural resources. It has several beautiful national parks, home to a fantastic array of flora and fauna. The Lao people have retained their hospitality, centuries old traditions and way of life.

Vietnam: An exciting, vibrant country of some 90 million people from 54 different ethnicities. Like Laos, the country was closed to tourists until the last decade. Vietnam is, for some, the most interesting of the four countries we visit, with stunning natural landscapes, bustling cities and a fascinating society and culture. Remnants of French colonialism are still observed through architecture, food, tree lined boulevards and a thriving cafe culture.

Cambodia: Its spirit is embodied in the stunning temple ruins of the Angkor Empire, a civilization which once presided over most of present day Vietnam, Thailand and parts of Burma, Laos and China. Cambodia gained full independence from France one year before Vietnam, in 1953. King Sihanouk ruled for a peaceful 10 years until the country became embroiled in the Vietnam conflict and a coup overthrew the monarchy. Massive corruption and the B52 carpet bombing of eastern Cambodia enabled the renegade Khmer Rouge to gain support. They took control of the country in 1975 and began one of the worst episodes of genocide in recent world history, until they were, in turn, overthrown by the Vietnamese in 1979. After UN assisted elections in 1993 and 1998, Cambodia is now a stable democracy and a safe country to travel in. The Cambodian people, for all that they've endured, are among the friendliest you'll find anywhere, with a remarkable ability to put the past behind them and enjoy life.



CLIMATE

The climate of Southeast Asia is governed by two seasons. Put simply - 'the wet' season from approximately May - October is characterized by rain and high humidity, whilst 'the dry' season from November - March brings cooler, dryer weather. Between the two is 'the hot' season from April - June when temperatures rise. The Fall Program begins at the tail end of the wet season, when all vegetation is lush and green, and rivers and lakes are full - it is a warm and spectacular time to travel. The Winter/Spring program runs during the cooler, dryer season and offers very settled weather. Both are ideal times to visit the region, and the only reason for choosing one over the other would be your personal schedule and when it best suits you to join the program.

MEALS

Food is undoubtedly a highlight when traveling in Asia and throughout there will be the opportunity to eat authentic Asian food. Special dietary requirements and vegetarians are catered for. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included in the program cost. Any snacks are at an additional cost, which we recommend budgeting around \$10 per day for. All meals are eaten out at restaurants due to the local culture and accommodation. An average day on program would consist of the following:

- Breakfast: rice, toast, fruit, omelet, Jok (rice porridge), dim sum
- Lunch: Noodles, soups, Tom Kha, dim sum
- Dinner: curry (Green, red, yellow, massaman), rice, noodles, Pad Thai, grilled meats, fried rice, Som Tam (spicy green papaya salad), Laab (spicy salad), some western food available in western areas, but not in the mountain communities

Camping meals will be adjusted to the cooking equipment at hand.

TRANSPORT

The itinerary has been designed to maximize comfort and safety whilst also giving you the opportunity to experience local transport and take part in daily life. We utilize chartered vans, trains, various boats, moto-taxis, bicycles, rickshaws, and take four flights within the region.



SUITABILITY

Gap programs are intended for students aged 17 - 22. This program is suitable for anyone of average fitness with an enthusiasm for conservation and new experiences. There is always a volunteering component in our programs, so we can give back to the places that give so much to us. You need to be prepared for some physical work during this volunteering portion of the program; i.e. trail building, tree planting or painting. You don't need to have had previous experience with travel or any of the activities offered.

ATTITUDE

The program is a shared group experience. We would like you to join the program with an open mind and a willingness to work together with your group mates to make the program an amazing experience. The programs focus on group cohesion. We appreciate you for being open to learning and challenging your ideas and assumptions in order to get the most from this summer abroad experience.

GROUP SIZE

Group sizes vary per program and are generally 12-14 students, accompanied by two experienced and qualified Pacific Discovery program instructors. Local guides assist with interpretation of some historical sites, cultural experiences, and activities.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

We have selected a dynamic team of inspiring, supportive, resourceful, and highly experienced instructors to lead our programs. Our program instructors are committed to putting your welfare and safety first. They are people in whom you can trust and confide, who remain objective whatever the circumstances, and who take a genuine interest in your well-being. They implicitly understand the importance of balancing the needs of individuals with group objectives, facilitating a high level of group cohesion, inspiring a genuine appreciation for the areas visited and an awareness of minimum impact travel ethics. All of our instructors have Wilderness First Responder (WFR) first aid certification, and extensive group leadership and risk assessment/management training.

ACCOMMODATION

Our accommodation will be a mixture of comfortable and clean hostels, lodges and campsites. Accommodation is diverse, comfortable and carefully chosen to fit our needs and varies per program.



FREE TIME

Programs are heavily scheduled so that we are always on the move and having lots of structured fun; but we highly value rest and reflection. There will be some designated free time in a town or city each week so that you can catch up on email and laundry and rest.



HEALTH

One component of all of our programs is outdoor adventures like hiking, biking and kayaking, so while you don't need to have done any of these before, you will need to be prepared and have the fitness level to give them a go. If you have any queries regarding health recommendations for travel, please contact your doctor, or a travel doctor, to discuss this. For further information refer to: [http:// wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/) We also recommend you be up to date on specific vaccinations that are required to travel in this region.

We recommend that you carry a personal first-aid kit as well as any personal medication. Please be aware that for legal reasons, our program instructors are prohibited from administering any type of drug. Please ensure that you are adequately prepared.



SPENDING MONEY

Spending money usually goes towards drinks and snacks, personal shopping, laundry, email, entertainment, and optional activities. We recommend you budget approximately \$100 a week for this, but this varies per student and per program. The amount of spending money you bring depends on your budget and shopping habits. You need to bring this money yourself.

Optional activities are available on many programs that can add to this cost, such as skydiving, bungee jumping, extra surfing lessons, etc.



KEEPING IN TOUCH

Our students value the opportunity to wind down, immerse in their surroundings and talk to each other. We encourage students to self manage their phone use, and we strongly encourage flight mode. This allows students to still take photos and send updates to family when in wifi, but allows them to be fully connected to the locals, service work and community when they're out and about. You are able to purchase a SIM or use international roaming plans if you wish. The easiest option is to use the WIFI available at places we stay in main cities and towns. Family and friends will also be able to keep in touch and follow your adventures through Pacific Discovery's social media pages, and through an online Facebook album for your group (which your instructors will upload photos to each week).



PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Travel abroad requires a passport. If you don't have one, you need to apply for one as soon as you apply for this program.

US Government Passport website: <http://travel.state.gov/passport/>

If you already have a passport, it must be valid for more than 6 months after program end, otherwise you need to get a new one issued before joining the program. Pacific Discovery will contact you regarding visa requirements and arrangements after you apply for the program.



TRAVEL INSURANCE

Pacific Discovery requires all students to purchase a comprehensive travel insurance policy for the duration of the program. Travel insurance provides cover in the event of medical expenses due to illness, injury, and emergency medical evacuation. Travel insurance may also include cover for loss of baggage or personal effects, and trip cancellation or trip curtailment.



PEACE OF MIND

Pacific Discovery is an educational travel organization accredited with American Gap Association (USA). Since its inception in 2001, Pacific Discovery has taken several thousand students, graduates, faculty, family and special interest groups, on experiential travel and volunteer programs, utilizing a staff of experienced and qualified program instructors. We have an exemplary safety record, comprehensive Risk Management Systems and a database of alumni, parents, advisors and faculty, who are happy to be contacted for feedback. The program carries public liability insurance, and student funds are held securely until disbursement.



Program Tuition & Costs

A \$500 application fee is due when you apply. Upon acceptance onto program, a deposit is due within 14 days. Balance of program cost to be paid 60 days prior to departure.

Please find the up to date program tuition cost on [our website](#).

Included in Program Tuition

- All in-country travel and transport
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All activities, excursions, entry fees and adventure travel as described in the itinerary
- Informal lectures from resident experts on conservation and sustainability, history, and culture.
- Experienced program Instructors and local guides.

Not Included in Program Tuition

- Travel (international flights) between your home and the program
- Internal flights
- Visas
- Spending money (we suggest allowing \$15 per day for drinks, snacks and personal expenses)
- Travel insurance
- Optional academic credit
- Optional activity costs ie skydiving, bungee jumping, and additional surf lessons.

INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS

Students should not book their travel until after they have received the flight confirmation email from Pacific Discovery with the program flight requirements and travel agent details. This is sent out 2-3 months ahead of program departure. This information is also made available in the student portal login section of our website.

Our preferred groups travel agent, [The Travellist Co.](#), can assist you to arrange international flights from your nearest regional airport, and return home. We prefer you to arrange your flights through our group travel agent to simplify arrival logistics, and so that you are traveling to and from the program with others in your group.





College Credit

Our programs are a structured syllabus with clear learning outcomes that offer true personal growth and global awareness. As a reputable gap year provider since 2001, we have developed strong industry connections, including two educational institutions which we offer college credits through for our programs.

Pacific Discovery partners with Seattle Central College to offer college credit, a recognized educational provider who offers exceptional study options for students. We have been running college credit options for students for several years now with this provider, and as long as requirements are completed, the system has been an excellent option for students in regard to continuation of study, deferment and easy transfer to other institutions.

If you're keen to explore this option further, please reach out to us using the contact details provided at the end of this catalogue. We'd love to help you identify what options are available to you and support you throughout the process.

Scholarships & Financial Aid

We want to make our programs as accessible as possible. Although we charge the minimum we can for our programs, we recognize that they can still be difficult to fund for many families. Please note that these scholarships go directly towards the tuition costs for the program and do not include assistance towards the cost of international flights. We expect scholarship recipients to demonstrate their commitment to this opportunity by fundraising for their international flights, personal spending, and the balance of tuition.

Our students supplement the program costs in a variety of ways. We encourage you to get creative! Create a Kickstarter, find a part-time job, fundraise. Think big and small. Each dollar adds up to one amazing adventure abroad.

- Exploration Scholarship
- Diverse Voices Scholarship
- Financial Need Scholarship
- Gap Year Ambassador Fellowship

To apply, please go to pacificdiscovery.org/need-to-know/scholarships-financial-aid



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