



SUMMER



**pacific
discovery**
inspiring educational adventures

Thailand Summer Program

ELEPHANTS AND EXPLORERS

www.pacificdiscovery.org

Overview

Come on this Thai adventure combining animal conservation and cultural immersion with adventures in crystal clear beaches and National Parks!

Thailand is a diverse country, and the way to find balance is through visiting the luscious northern mountains filled with fascinating hill tribes as well as getting down to the iconic white sand beaches of the south. This program takes us off the beaten track and gets us involved in grassroots conservation service work.

On our Thailand Summer Program, we will be hiking in the hills near Chiang Mai with our group members, bonding over world-class food experiences, and sharing traditional sleeping huts looking out over rice paddies. Head to an elephant conservation project where we get hands-on, learning about and protecting these gentle giants. There's a lot to the story, and we'll walk away with so much knowledge about what you can do to help. Participants will receive a Certificate of Wildlife Conservation and Learning with 20 hours of service for their valuable time here.

It feels like another country when we take a flight to the south and immerse in the unique karst limestone Khao Sok National Park where we will tube and adventure through paradise. We will finish at the beach, climbing, kayaking, and snorkeling our way through the islands around the Railay Peninsula.

Thailand is one of those countries that you know you'll return to time and time again. Pacific Discovery has been going to Thailand for twenty years, and we work alongside responsible and local operators who deliver an amazing, safe experience. Traveling in a tight-knit group and having the program facilitated by experienced instructors gives you the best insight into a Southeast Asian travel experience.





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.

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***

WEEK 1 | CHIANG MAI HILL TRIBE TREK

Welcome to The Land of Smiles! The group will arrive together in Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand. After an exciting briefing from the program instructors about what to expect over the coming days, we head out to explore the winding streets of this bustling city together. To give you some idea, there are 121 temples within the city limits of Chiang Mai. The sounds and smells are just a whole new world, and you'll probably find your favorite spot for fresh orange juice, great coffee, or spring rolls that you can frequent. You will settle into your home base hotel in Chiang Mai which you will revisit several times in the first two weeks. In these first days, the focus is on getting to know the group. We will do a Thai cooking course (unmissable whilst here!) which always involves lots of laughter and full bellies. See how much spice you can handle, and perhaps try some deep-fried spiders at the local market!

We head out on a hike in the hills nearby Chiang Mai to meet local ethnic villagers (who all have unique languages, dress, and customs) and experience local life. We will just be carrying day packs, as each night we will sleep in our own traditional bamboo house and the community will put on a feast. It's not about hiking all day - it's about getting immersed in the culture, seeing the landscapes of the north, playing with local kids, and making the kind of travel memories that last a lifetime.





WEEK 2 | ELEPHANT CONSERVATION

You will see a LOT of elephants around these parts. Fortunately, you will be staying at an ethical elephant conservation park that aims to solve some of the problems surrounding elephant exploitation in Thailand. Despite a ban on logging, elephant habitat is still being lost and as few as 500 wild elephants are left within Thailand and they are threatened. Over 2,000 domestic elephants, trapped in the traditional elephant tourist industry, have a bleak future. You will be up close and personal with these kind and unforgettable animals, helping to care for them, wash them, feed them, and ultimately exploring the complex issues the animal conservation world is facing.

After saying goodbye to our giant friends, we head back to Chiang Mai city where you'll have a free afternoon to recover from your whirlwind adventure with the elephants, before enjoying our final group meal at the world-famous Chiang Mai Night Market.

WEEK 3 | FUN IN THE JUNGLE AND SALTY ADVENTURES

Some people think South Thailand is all beaches- they don't know about the best-kept secret! We take an internal flight down south together and transfer to our treehouse accommodation, a magnificent jungle retreat. We spend our days hiking, tubing, and exploring this lush green jungle environment and even stretch out with a relaxing yoga class. Khao Sok National Park is a remnant of the oldest and most diverse rainforests in the world and is home to a 3-foot carnivorous flower!

Say goodbye to the jungle and hello to the beach as we head over to Railay in Krabi! Situated along the Andaman Sea coastline, Railay Beach is one like no other, and you're sure to fall in love with its pure white sand and crystal clear ocean. These first glimpses of the islands around Railay are truly mind-blowing. This is a world-class area for rock climbing and snorkeling. You know those pictures of people scaling sea cliffs and falling into the water below - that's here! We will discover Railay Beach from above the ground ourselves as we head off on an epic, yet supported rock-climbing adventure! We will also head out kayaking between the calm bays and islands together to make sure we see the beauty from every angle. It's all fun in the sun for these last few days winding down together and reflecting on our amazing journey across Thailand. The instructors will facilitate conversation about all the learnings we can take forward with us in life.

Finally, we take a flight to the bustling city of Bangkok and farewell the instructors before flying home together as a group.



Program Highlights

- Washing elephants with your bare hands!
- City tour of Chiang Mai
- Two-night hill tribe trek through the jungle staying in ethnic minority villages
- Rock-climbing and canyoning adventures in Railay
- Tubing, yoga, and hiking Khao Sok National Park
- Thailand's kaleidoscope of markets and temples
- Exploring the best islands and beaches in Southern Thailand
- Rewarding conservation service-learning project working with elephants
- Certificate in Wildlife Conservation and Learning with 20 hours service





COUNTRY INFORMATION

Known as the 'land of smiles', we have found Thailand's 54 million people (the ones we've met) live up to their reputation. People are well educated with a literacy rate comparable to the USA. The country is moving rapidly into the 21st century and embracing modernization without discarding its rich traditions. Thais are deeply religious and it is expected that all men will spend some time as Buddhist monks during their lives. Thailand was the only country in Southeast 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. He recently became the longest-reigning Thai Monarch. 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.



CLIMATE

The climate of Thailand 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 Summer Program is during 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 average daily maximum is 32°C (89°F) and the average daily minimum is 27°C (80°F).



TRANSPORT

The itinerary has been designed to maximize comfort and safety whilst also allowing you to experience local transport and take part in daily life. We utilize chartered vans, trains, various boats, moto-taxis, bicycles and rickshaws, and an internal flight.



MEALS

Thai cuisine is delicious and you'll get to understand it up close and personal in your Thai Cooking classes. In general, Thai cuisine includes a lot of rice, noodle dishes, and tropical fruits. While this may sound delicious, it's common at some stage of the program to crave some western food, and your instructors will let you know when there are chances available for this option. In general, dairy products are less common, especially when we're in remote regions, so don't expect cheese and yogurt every day.

Thai food plays around the four tastes of sweet, salty, sour, and spicy, and on most restaurant tables you'll find condiments to add these flavors to your meal: palm sugar (sweet), soy sauce (salty), tamarind sauce or lime juice (sour) and hot sauce (spicy), so you can adjust your meal to your liking.

Special foods to try: noodle soup, Tom Kha Gai (hot and sour soup), Pad Thai, mango sticky rice, curries (green, red, yellow, massaman), fried rice, pineapple, papaya

Regular food to expect:

- 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), western food available in some areas we visit.





Testimonials

Traveling to Thailand with Pacific Discovery was everything and more that I could've imagined! It was the most courageous summer of my life! I was so out of my comfort zone I'm never going back. Everything from the volunteer projects, global citizenship, and the impact you have in the world, expeditions, amazing cities, the cultural immersion, inspiring leaders, the food, the group, the adventures made this experience unforgettable. I've learned how to challenge myself physically and mentally, conquer my fears and not letting them stop me. It was the best 30 days where I lived in the moment, challenged myself and made lifetime friends!

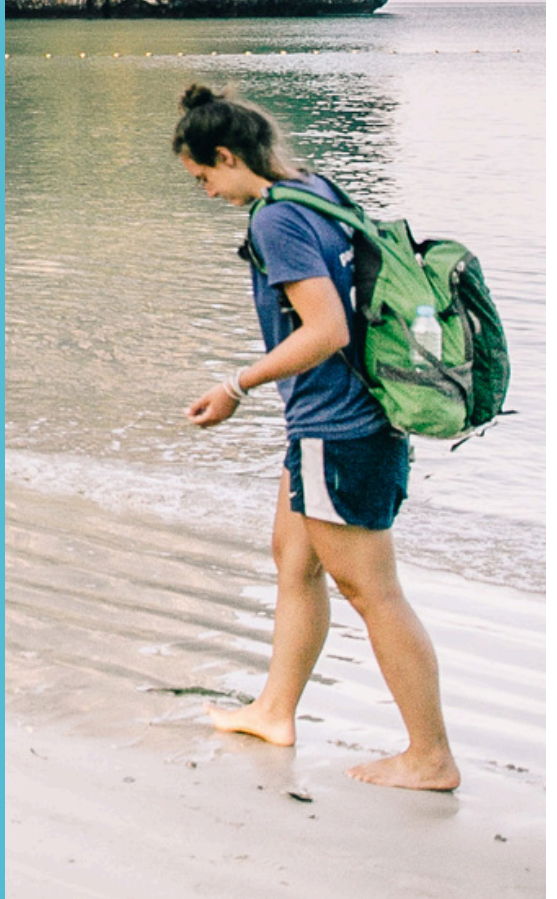
Cassandra

Traveling with Pacific Discovery to Thailand was hands down one of the best experiences of my life. So much was packed into just thirty days of travel that by the time the program finished, we all felt like we had been gone for months - our itinerary was well-planned and varied, and no two days were alike. The group leaders were extremely knowledgeable about Thailand's history, customs, and the like, which allowed us to interact more meaningfully with the locals. Additionally, instead of following the typical tourist routes around Thailand, we went off the beaten path, allowing us to experience so much more of what the country has to offer. The sheer range of activities you would get to take part in on a Pacific Discovery trip is, in my opinion, reason enough to sign up.

Jack

I have been on a lots of trips to different places around the world. It is always the case of some things turning out better than expected and then a lot of things really letting you down. However with Pacific discovery they have already found out all the amazing things to do, so the trip is just constant highs. I wish I could do the whole thing again and plan to save up to go on another trip if with brilliant company.

Edward



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