

Projects Abroad Thailand Official Newsletter

November 2013



Projects Abroad

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Directors Notes

Antz – Country Director

“When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves.” -William Arthur Ward

I have come to realize the importance of being a leader who seeks to bring out the best in people whom I work with during an amazing time working with volunteers who come from around the world into our destination and they try their best to contribute positively to local communities.

It has always been such a wonderful feeling being surrounded by people who have kind hearts and do things for others without wanting anything in return. During my time working and meeting a lot of Teaching and Care volunteers, a lot of them express their feelings after participating in the activities with children that it was beyond their expectation. They experienced some of the best times of their lives and they really did dedicate themselves to their placement and community. The children at school where we send our volunteers are really enthusiastic and that is what is most appreciated. Their feedback and kind words mean a lot to me and it is what keeps my tiredness at bay.

Vishal Pawa—Conservation Project Manager

November is here! Oh wow we are so close to stepping into 2014! Well it has been a great month; we have had a lovely, hardworking bunch of volunteers appreciating the work and all the diving in this lovely weather.

This month we have officially switched from our reforestation work to mangrove work, this included an educational trip to the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources where our volunteers got a tour around the mangroves with an expert explaining the importance of the mangroves and its ecological benefits. We have also started building our own mangrove tree nursery, which is right next to the mangrove forest where we live! We have also started planning our mangrove educational walkway which will be a great for our volunteers as well as school children we have planned for educational visits.



We have had two very successful days working with other organizations. One of them was doing a debris dive with the Krabi Provincial Administrative Organization (Krabi Local Government). Our volunteers and volunteers from different sectors managed to salvage around three tons of debris around Phi Phi Island; the local government really appreciates the work we do and looks forward to the next session. The other activity was the Ao Nang beach cleanup with “Loving Andaman Sea”; on this day we participated and sponsored a cleanup that turned out to be very big. A total of 300 kg of rubbish was cleaned up, it may not sound like much but when most of the rubbish was small plastic bits and cigarette butts you get the idea of how much was cleaned up.

In November we also had the opportunity to celebrate Loy Krathong day, we started with a presentation on Loy Krathong which gave our volunteers an idea of what the day is all about followed by sitting in and learning how to make these lanterns, and then we headed out to the beach where we taught people from all around how to make biodegradable krathongs and also the importance of not using polystyrene for making these krathongs as they end up in our water ways and in our ocean.

I would also like to mention that during November we might have had some absolutely gorgeous days but our fellow South East Asian neighbors were not so lucky, so for everyone in the Philippines who were affected by the devastating Typhoon Haiyan, our thoughts are with you.

To conclude November has been a very productive month, once again we could not have done any of this without the dedication from our lovely volunteers, so a big, big thank you to all of you!

Live long and prosper



Special Activity: English is Fun Camp #4

It is always inspiring seeing a group of people full of passion spreading their knowledge and strength to people around them.

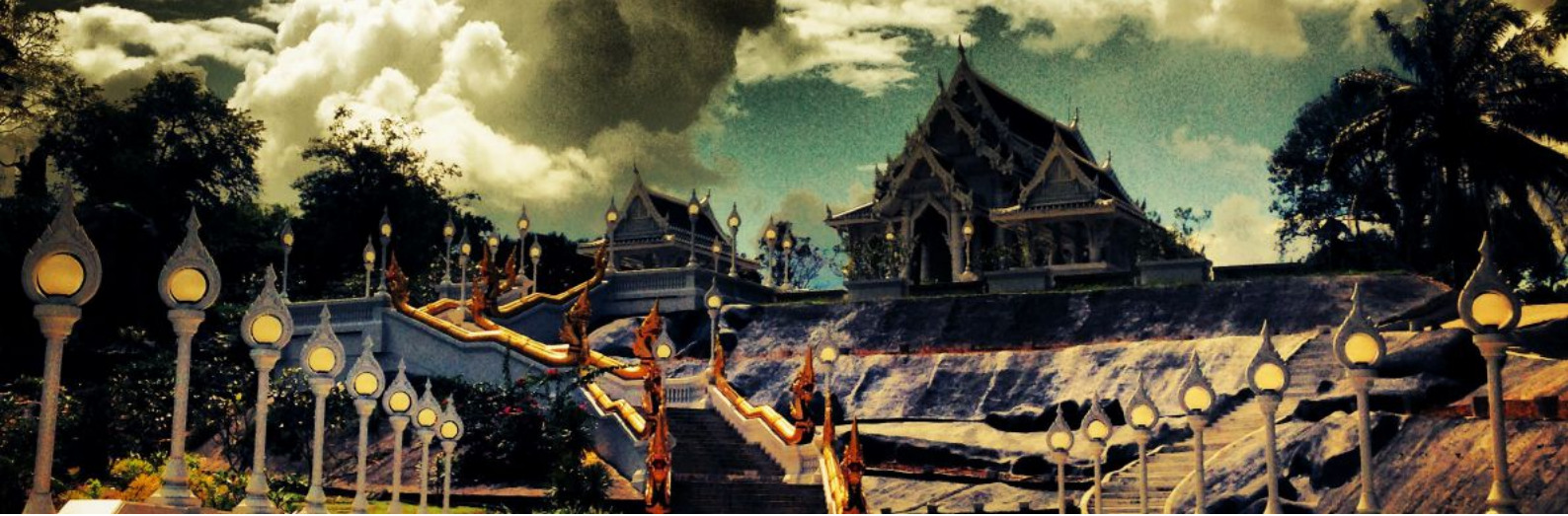


During this school break, from October 16th to 31st 2013, our community volunteers are currently working at English is Fun Camp #4, teaching about 40 students aged between eight and 14-years-old. The camp was based at Tub Prik Day Care Centre in Krabi town.

Each day activities started at around 8.45 and end at noon. Children spend approximately half an hour doing exercises and vocabulary and after that they are divided into three different groups and they go to different rooms where our volunteers are stationed. In each station, they learn English through arts and crafts, for example, they learn about colours when they paint and about direction when they go out on a field trip.

There were two interesting field trips took place in Krabi town. The first one was in Ao Nang, one of the most well-known tourist destinations. Children were taken there to play games and learn English through activities on the beach. They were divided into groups with a few volunteers in each group.

The smile on the children's faces lightened up the day and is a reminder that there are a lot of good people out there who do good things for others without wanting anything in return.



Ethan Buxton, Care Volunteer from England

"This is what I have come up with, it came from the heart!"

My time in Thailand is coming to a tragically inevitable end. The time I've spent here has simply been eye-opening. I feel that I've achieved so much and made so many people happier just by purely saying hello with a meaningful smile. To me this was the most important thing, being able to change young lives for the better, teaching them and watching them learn from what you do and say is overwhelmingly rewarding. I've learnt so many things about myself and I genuinely feel that I have changed so much since my first day here. The family that I stayed with couldn't have been nicer or more welcoming, I quickly settled in and spent a lot of my free time with them, I wanted to immerse myself in the Thai culture and for me the best way to do this was so see it through the eyes of the locals. They introduced me to a wide array of new and exciting things, one of them was to learn a Thai instrument; the Ranad, which is essentially a fancy glockenspiel to those who don't know. My host mum, Pi Lak, who works at the famous primary school in Krabi, introduced me to the schools music teacher Pi Ning. And in two days I managed to learn at least four different songs, she taught me the basic and the not so basic techniques which I thoroughly enjoyed. As the weeks flew by I became closer and closer to my wonderful host family and I truly felt like I was their son. I was lucky enough to go on fantastic days out with them, to all the local tourist spots like the beautiful Tiger Cave Temple and the natural hot springs and emerald pool. These places were beautiful, but for me one of my most memorable experiences was the trip to Koh Hong. Pi Lak had a friend who owned a long tail boat, so she invited some of her friends and they invited their friends so to me it seemed like a big event! It was wonderful to get to know more Thai people and make new friends. On the way to Koh Hong, we stopped off at various different islands, some more isolated than the others, Koh paradise was very busy as expected but having the advantage of a private long tail boat, we could sail to a more remote area so it was like being on our own island, this was amazing and so peaceful. Upon arrival at Koh Hong we saw a Komodo Dragon walk along the beach and swim into a cave, this was incredible to see and I felt very lucky.

I also felt very blessed to have been able to experience two very different sides of Thailand; Krabi, the lively town home to lovely people served as my base, a warm (sometimes rainy) place to come back to after weekends away or work trips out, a safe place that I felt proud to call home. And the less touristy side of Thailand which only seemed to show in the less popular (or perhaps not so well known) islands like Koh Yao Noi, a beautiful place filled with bright green rice fields and palm tree forests. An island which relies on the hard work of the people to keep it alive and for the people to live off the home grown food, but with the younger generation slowly being introduced, these farming traditions will eventually die out. But for me, driving through the giant rice fields as the unpredictable rain started to crash down around us and listening to the jingle of the bells that hung around the cows tied to fence posts on the road genuinely felt like I was in the real heart of Thailand, I was able to admire where I was and truly appreciate what was going on around me. I came with an open mind and an open heart and this enabled me to open up to the lively culture and the lovely people. Thailand is a place I will have to come back to, it's a place that hides many surprises and is waiting for people like me to go out and find them.



Pierre Wallerand, Conservation Volunteer from France

The pollution of the oceans is a real problem of our world.

We can find a part of this pollution in the ocean all around the world but also on the beaches and coastlines.

This kind of garbage is more commonly known as marine debris.

Marine debris is a human creation; it's all the waste that has deliberately or accidentally been released in rivers, lakes, seas, and oceans.

All these floating debris tend to accumulate on the coastlines or in the middle of the gyres.

The five big gyres of the world

Because of these gyres, the garbage stays in these areas and provokes serious injury on the environment.

This is not only a visual problem; it's also a big threat for all the marine fauna and flora. Thus, many animals that live on or in the sea consume debris by mistake, most of the time it looks similar to their natural prey (a plastic bag really looks like a jellyfish for a turtle for example).

So we can see that the effects of the debris are multiple: ingestion, entrapment, coral smothering, loss of unspoiled beaches, and loss of coral reefs. Ocean trash ranks as one of the most serious pollution problems of our time...



A turtle catching in a ghost net.

That's why we can find many organizations in the world that try to help and clean oceans and coastlines.

Today I want to present to you one of them: Project Abroad. It's a big association present everywhere in the world. Its aim to help conserve the environment and to assist the local population.



I will present you one of their many projects. I am part of a Conservation Marine Project in the south of Thailand. In this project we have different missions as divers, such as reef checks, surveying the marine species, and collecting the marine debris. But we also work on land. We have an activity called beach cleanup.

We work in groups on the beaches and we collect all the garbage that we find. But we not only collect the garbage, after the work on the beach, we also send all the garbage found into a database in order to evaluate our work over the long term and list the evolution of waste. We send this information to an organization called Ocean Conservancy, which is a kind of partner of Project Abroad. But we keep the data too, to evaluate and analyze it ourselves.

Moreover, we also work with Project Aware – Dive Against the Debris, but with this organization we only inform their database with the debris that is collected when we dive.



Project Abroad Volunteers working on the beach cleanup.

The other problem that we have noticed during the beach cleanups is the missing of big trash on the beaches where people will put their garbage. Because, although the fact that we work in Koh Phi Phi National Park, tourist's boats throw all their garbage bags on the beach when they drop off the tourists. So the sea and the current carry all the bags away.

A good idea that we can mix to our beach cleanup, could be create solid trash next to the boat on the beach where they could put all their rubbish inside. We have to make the population aware as well, because people here don't realize the importance of preserving their environment. You can note it just when you walk along the roads and that you see much garbage everywhere.

And indeed despite the statute of the area (national park), there is no monitoring or control of "polluters". So if the state can't do it, it's up to us to do it.

So if we want to preserve this beautiful place for the environment, the local population, the tourist economy, we have to act. And as you can imagine, we need all the labor available to be really efficient.



Biking in the Island

If you want to escape the crowd and spend an easy day in Krabi town, KohKlang, a small (26 square kilometers) and peaceful island is probably your best choice. KohKlang is the closest island to Krabi town, located at the mouth of KrabiRiver to the Andaman Sea. It is a homeland of four local Muslim villages with about 5,400 people. There is no car or any other vehicle bigger than motorbikes used on the island so the atmosphere is pretty harmonious.

We started our trip late in the afternoon. We rented our bicycles from one of the hostels in town and took it to KohKlang by a long tail boat as it is the only way to get there. Along the river we saw a lot of fish farms and local seafood restaurants. The sign said they serve fresh seafood directly delivered from the sea. It took us about 10 minutes to travel on a boat. With a bit of information and directions given on a map of KohKlang, we decided to make a loop around the island. The road we took was nice and flat and surrounded a mangrove. On the sides of the road we also saw Tsunami Evacuation signs every 100 meters.



When we biked through the village, we noticed most houses raised goats and chickens. There were a lot of water buffalos chilling in the rice paddies. After half hour nice ride, we were found a unique blue coastal bird flying in the rubber plantations. It was amazing! Apart from coastal birds, along the way you get to see some of the breathtaking scenery and local people doing their business. There was a group of children aged around 5-6 going fishing at the pier when we finally arrived at the pier that connected to Andaman Sea.

It was about 4pm when we realized we should get going before it got dark. Unfortunately the weather immediately changed, it rained very hard. We were concerned whether to wait or to go. Finally we decided to bike in the pouring rain. It was my first time experiencing the strong monsoon in southern Thailand. I was so happy drenched by the soaking joy from the sky above. We kept biking and ignored the mud that scattered against our clothes. No longer than 30 minutes we made it back to the pier and took a boat back to town. It was so much fun that I would definitely do it again and those who visit Krabi town should not miss it!



Get a glimpse of Andaman



Krabi is one of the most interesting provinces in Thailand with its beautiful natural surroundings such as white sand beaches, waterfalls, hot springs and green forests. It attracts a massive amount of tourists every year. Apart from enjoying outdoor activities like kayaking, diving, and rock climbing, people who visit Krabi are also exposed to rich local cultures.

On November 1st – 3rd, Krabi Provincial Administrative Organization and local businesses in Krabi cooperated to celebrate the festival called Berg Fah Andaman. During the festival, people from every sub-district in the regions gather together to present their culture and local products. There is also cultural parade showing several kinds of performances. This year, the free entry event Krabi Berg Fah Andaman was held at the Black Crab Statue along Krabi River in the heart of the town. The opening ceremony started by worshiping the Goddess of river or [Phra Mae Khong Kha](#) who brings fertility to the crops and sea animals. After that there were live music by local musicians and shows from local people on stage.

On the two sides of the road along Krabi River, there were a lot of food stands serving local food from almost every part of Thailand but mainly southern food. The theme of the event was very interesting as the area looked like China town at the beginning of the street and after that there were several little huts which represented the life of fishermen and islanders from some of the famous islands on the shore of Andaman Sea such as Lanta Island. At almost the end of the street, there were a few art galleries showing some great pictures taken by local photographers which captured some fantastic moments of the locals. Thus, people who visited the festival had the chance to preview some of the amazing culture on the street of Krabi town during the night festi-

Climbing up a standout Tiger Cave Temple

Tiger Cave Temple, or locally known as Wat Tham Sua, is located five miles northeast of Krabi town. In a jungle setting, walking up 1,237 steps leads you to the top of mountain where gilded Buddha statues are situated 600 meters above the Andaman Sea. This is like an adventure or some sort of exercise Ktown provides you.

At 10 in the morning we took a red taxi in front of City Market in town to the temple. This costed us 50 baht each. About 15 minutes passed, we were dropped off in the temple's main area which was surrounded by limestone mountains and caves. The temple itself was built inside the cave and decorated with pieces of skeletons and skulls.

The walk to the top of mountain was a steep climb of 1,237 uneven steps past the trail of monkeys. As we took the first step up the hill in the jungle, we heard the sounds of life: birds singing beautifully, leaves rustling in the wind, and of course monkeys calling each other. We stopped to take pictures with them before we continued our hike.

We came across several stop points which offered us beautiful Andaman Sea views. And as if the founder knew people would be dehydrated and kept drinking water, many toilets were built at every stop points.



Trudging along, the steps were very steep before we reached the end of our walk. With our hearts beating at such a fast pace, we had to stop many times but we kept encouraging each other to keep walking because we knew we would feel extremely triumphant once we made it up there.

After climbing for three hours, we finally made it to the top. We were so proud of our achievement. We saw an infinite view of the Andaman Sea and countless amounts of mountains around us. We lay down under the shade of the biggest Buddha statue and enjoyed the breeze. By the time we came down, our legs were shaking; we had no energy left so we sat down a bit and played with little kittens that lived there before we called a taxi back home.

