

Projects Abroad Thailand Official Newsletter

April 2014

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Editor's note

Happy Thai New Year!

Songkran festival is a Thai traditional holiday and considered as the Thai New Year. It is annually celebrated throughout the country from the 13th to the 15th of April.

The word Songkran is derived from the Sanskrit word meaning the sun passing one Zodiac sign to another. You might think then that 'there are 12 Songkrans but no, there is only one significant one, the biggest one that distinguishes itself from the rest. It is when the sun rises to the sign of Aries. This specific time is also relevant to the Vernal Equinox.

The celebration of Songkran is similar to the Easter celebration. Easter is the beginning of spring which signifies the beginning of life. In the same way, Songkran is the beginning of the year, New Year and newer life starting new things.

This year, Projects Abroad volunteers and staff are also going to celebrate Songkran both culturally and festively. We will first make merit by offering food at the temple and then we will join the splashing festival in Ao Nang, at the famous area of Krabi.

By the way, traditional splashing time is going on; meanwhile some parts of Krabi are in drought. Therefore we are going to be careful about using water and be more efficient on fresh water as dry season is extending a bit longer every year.

Well, I hope everyone looking forward to joining Songkran, have fun and be safe!

Cheers!

Ant, Parichart Chaipikul

Country Director



I am home for almost a week now and all I can think of is that I want to go back to Thailand as soon as possible!

Raphaela Sarah Besant, Care Volunteer from Germany



Let's start at the beginning.

After I graduated and received my Abitur in Germany, I wanted to do something meaningful abroad. After comparing many different organizations, I decided to sign up for the Care Project in Thailand for six weeks and also in Cambodia for four weeks. I believe this was the best decision I have ever made!

In Thailand I stayed with a lovely host family together with three other volunteers. From my first day with my host parents and host sister Mona, they did everything they possibly could to make my new life in Thailand as amazing as it turned out to be. With their kindness and happiness it was really easy for me to adapt to their lifestyle and culture. Even though their English wasn't really good we always found a way to communicate with each other. My host

dad is a taxi driver so he took us wherever we wanted which was really nice and an easy way to get around. Every day they provided us with food which was simple Thai food but delicious.

I am really thankful to call Pi Jeeds House my second home. ☺

Together with my host mom (Pi Jeed) and another volunteer from Switzerland, I worked at a day care center called Holland House. I was surprised how fast I fell in love with the children! I already miss them so much!



It's quite hard to describe a typical work day because each day was a little different. My favorite day was when we went to the beach with all the children from Holland House and

also with the ones from the other day care center. Together there were almost 90 children! After our host dad dropped us off at Holland House we had to make sure that all the children were dressed in their swimming suites and ready to go. By the time we got to the beach all the children were really excited and went into the sea straight away. It was great to see the children so happy! After swimming we had lunch together and on the way back to the day care center all the children were really exhausted (and so were we!) so most of them fell asleep on the bus.



My second favorite experience was Christmas day. We had a real Christmas party at Holland House with a Christmas trees, presents etc. Many guests came and gave lots and lots of gifts to the children. All of them were super excited because most of them never got any presents. In the evening we went to Patong to sing “Jingle Bells” with the children in front of a big audience. We were really proud of the children because we have been teaching the song for quite a long time and everything turned out really good. It was a great evening and definitely the most amazing Christmas Eve I have had so far!

A couple of days earlier we visited their homes and I was devastated to see under what conditions the children and their parents have to live. So it made me even happier to see the children smile. Some of the children even live at the day care center because their parents are violent, in prison or have died. So please come to Holland House and support the lovely staff there, they need your help and you can really make a difference!! The children there are really smart and are desperate to learn English and catch up on it so fast. Of course, it can be exhausting to work with so many children at once but it is definitely all worth it! Myself and Marine, a girl from Switzerland, always tried to come up with new activities to combine teaching and playing and the children seemed to like it a lot.



During weekends we didn't have to work so we had time to go to the beach, which was close to our house, to Phuket Town or anywhere else we wanted to go. During the time I was there

we were four volunteers: Marine from Switzerland, Amalie from Denmark and India from England. We all became really close friends and hung out a lot. There is so much to do in Phuket that we were always busy going somewhere: James Bond Island, Phi Phi Island, Similan Island etc.

On some evenings we just stayed home to have dinner together with our host family and sometimes Jip, our coordinator who we love ☺, came over as well. We always had a lot of fun together and Jip did her job very well. Whenever we had a problem she would talk to us and tried everything to make us happy! Thank you Jip for your support!

Right now I just want to say thank you to Pi Jeed my lovely host mom, her husband Bang Wan and their daughter Mona. You are the most amazing host family anyone could ask for!



A special thank you to the other volunteers Amalie, India and Marine! We had so much fun together in the last couple of months and made so many memories together. I am glad I met all of you ☺

So, please sign up for the care project in Phuket and have the time of your life like I had! You will love it I am sure. Of course, during your time you will have your up and downs but when you see the smiles on the children's faces you will know it's all worth it. Be open minded and just go with it...It's up to you what you make out of your time there.

Second Time in my Second Home



Rebekka Dybvig, a 21-year-old teaching volunteer from Norway, volunteered to teach at Bannaichong School in Krabi.

Last year, at the same time, Rebekka was volunteering at Baannaichong and living with Director Chumpon's family. This year, she is back again to teach while staying at the same family. Why? Besides the rich culture of Thailand and the attractiveness of living in another country where everything is so different from home, one thing that attracts Rebekka is 'the feeling like home' that she got from her time last year. Rebekka has made a request to stay at the same family and teach at the same school as her first time in Thailand, because she was made to feel comfortable. *"I have been on many nice trips and had a lot of fun with my Thai family. My host family has taught me many things and because of them I have had the opportunity to experience many things that I would not be able to experience any other way."*

At her placement, Rebekka starts the day with taking the bus to school, and at school she has a half hour to get ready before class starts. At 08:15am all of the students gather outside the school buildings to sing the national song, and then classes start. She teaches until 11:30am, which is followed by lunch and then waits to get picked up at around 1pm. Rebekka enjoys spending time meeting volunteers from around the world who are doing Community Projects during her free time. Meanwhile she has some time to spend with the host family and this is when she learns Thai.



“The best way to learn Thai is to ask someone from your host family or school to help you pronounce the words correctly. The students think its very fun to teach Thai to us (volunteers).”

The reason she is learning Thai is not only because of the beauty of the language but also its benefit when living in Thailand. *“Learning Thai is very useful. It makes it much easier to communicate, since many Thai People don’t speak much English. Learning the Thai words such as thank you and good day and to learn how to express how you are feeling is very useful”*.



For those who are thinking about spending time volunteering in Thailand, Rebekka has some suggestions, *“My advice to future volunteers is to be open to the culture and be willing to try many different and new things. Try to spend a lot of time with your host family and get to know them. My advice as a teacher is to use body language and pictures when teaching because when you talk in sentences they don’t understand most of the things you are saying. Making them act out is also a good way of teaching them English. With older classes, it’s good to make them have conversations in English so they get to practice using English as much as possible in a realistic setting.”*

It has been an awesome English camp!



On the 25th of March, two teaching and two care volunteers, together with three Projects Abroad staff members travelled to the Phi Phi Island. This island is known to be full of life and as the paradise of half of the world's population, to hold an English Camp for students aged from six to 12-years-old. When we arrived at school, we were so amazed at the beautiful scenery right in front of us. We were on the quiet side of Phi Phi and surrounded by the bright blue sea and white sandy beach. We were shown our bedroom which was a kindergarten room with seven sleeping bags lying on the floor and three fans at the doors. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were provided by school staff and were mostly local food which gave us the real feeling of islander's life. We stayed in the school and lived the school life which most of us have already forgotten what it feels like to be school students.



Our English Camp started great with fun basic English and games from the entertainment team which travelled from Surat Thani to join us. It had really been an excellent camp, with excellent teaching and entertaining processes and excellent students who were enthusiastic and eager to learn. Our English lesson was also very successful. The highlight of the lesson was probably the phonics clinic. At first it was such a struggle but after a while the children

followed up and could read words by themselves. They discussed in groups and finally came out with the correct sounds. They were so proud of themselves. It was such an awesome experience due to these reasons:

- Shining sun over the bright blue sea and warm weather
- Lovely teachers and students and our funny entertainment team that woke us up in the morning
- Enthusiastic children who are confident and willing to learn English



Spaghetti Tom Yum Goong

“What is your favorite Thai food?” might be one of the most frequent questions you may get asked when you meet Thai people. Your answers might be various depending on what your favorite flavor is. Today, I have a signature Thai dish with a long history to introduce to you all. Tom Yum Goong is a hot and sour soup with shrimps. Actually “Tom Yum” can be made with any kind of meat, doesn’t have to always be shrimps. The word “Tom Yum” is formed by two Thai words, Tom and Yum. Tom is the process of boiling and Yum is like mixing salad. So Tom Yum is like the taste of mixing Thai salad which gives the taste of spicy and sour in a process of boiling. In order to make Tom Yum, you need Thai herbs such as chili peppers, lime, lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves and galangal to make the broth and then add the meat of your choice. Tom Yum is often served with plain rice on the side to kill the spice. Anyway, today I am going to recommend alternative side for Tom Yum.



Spaghetti Tom Yum Goong

Spaghetti is a perfectly perfect choice for hot and sour Thai style broth. This thin and long cylindrical pasta originally from Italy and made of semolina is a perfect choice to be served with Thai style Hot and Spicy Broth. You will get the hot taste of the broth and also the amazing taste of spaghetti.

Tha Pom Khlong Song Nam or Tha Pom the two water ecology, the only and the best in Thailand



Tha Pom is in Pa Phru or a peat swamp forest category. It is a canal that fresh water and seawater meet and form between mangrove forests. The Tha Pom River is only five kilometers long and it's the source of water for the Chong Phra Kaeo pool. The water stream runs through the jungle pool before merging with the Andaman Sea. When the tide comes up, the fresh water in the pool becomes salty but when the tide goes down, the fresh water pushes away the salt in the water. Tha Pom Khlong Song Nam covers the area of 1,600 square metres. It is an amazing ecosystem, not only welding two kinds of water but also combining three different kinds of forests including the mangrove, black mangrove, and swamp forest.

Tha Pom canal looks emerald green because of its biodiversity. It's a habitat for both fresh water fish and brackish water fish. The plants and the fish that inhabit this area have the strongest ability to adapt to the change of the water daily, especially when the tide changes.



Another gorgeous view of this canal is a bunch of roots of the plants that are beautifully branching down to the water surface and make the place so moist. This canal will maintain its beauty and diversity if everyone helps conserve it.



Love is all around; this is how I feel at this wedding

A couple of weeks ago I had the chance to go to an island for my friends' wedding on a peaceful beach not too far from town. It was the first wedding I have attended without my parents as I was invited! (Me! And not my parents!)

It was the most beautiful wedding I have ever seen for these reasons:

- It was right on the beach
- I was invited
- It was my friends' wedding
- It showed both cultures of western and Muslim
- Food was amazing
- People were even more amazing
- It was a gathering outside of town of Krabi town people

The wedding ceremony started at sunset, the most beautiful time of the day. The ceremony didn't take long but long enough to feel the love of the bride and the groom. I saw tears of love of both of them while they were holding hands and looking into each other's eyes in front of everyone. It was the sweetest moment definitely. After the sweet time of love, it was a fun time for both them and also the guests. The groom is one of the most well-known local singers and he has a lot of musician friends who gathered together at his wedding. It was by far the best beach Thai reggae concert. Music was played until 11pm before we left them alone to enjoy their moment under the moonlight.

