



# Welcome to Thailand newsletter

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**Directors Notes****Antz - Country director**

"We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect." - Aldo Leopold

Since taking over as Thailand Country Director, it has become clear to me that education is the critical component in the success of our project's overall strategy to protect the diversity and beauty within the Krabi province, to encourage 'greener' living practices within the local community and to reduce carbon emissions on a global scale.

This month has seen us going to visit the stunningly unspoilt island of Koh Yao where we can still see Thailand as it has been for hundreds of years. Also a visit to our Animal Project in Koh Lanta shows us that humans are not the only things that need our help.

Only education can provide the driving force for such a renewal of awareness. I see it as our job to encourage the children to understand the ways that environmental problems intimately connect to their daily and future lives.

I feel it is important to inspire and lead by example. This is where the volunteers play the central role in the success of our education project. They show first hand that each of us has the power and the responsibility to affect positive change on a global scale.

Children are the future of change.

So until next month, keep smiling and stay happy.X

**Vishal - Conservation project manager**

Hello and welcome to another monthly newsletter. This month sees my one year anniversary as Conservation Project Manager! And what a year it has been. Since taking over I have seen the busiest summer so far, hundreds of volunteers grow into our world's next generation of conservation worriers, the opening of our new in house diving operation and recently the biggest challenge of all, the move to our new home UTOPIA. Which I believe is going to be able to offer all new volunteers a magical experience of the best Thailand has to offer. We have big plans for our new home including a brand new nature walkway, in-house tree nursery to name but a few. So if you are planning a new volunteer adventure please come and see us in the land of smiles; we promise you the time of your life!

## HELPING THE ISLANDS ANIMALS

On Friday 11th October Projects Abroad volunteers made the trip to Lanta Animal Welfare on the beautiful island of Koh Lanta to help with the painting of the volunteers' rooms, planting trees, and taking care of the animals. We also took this time to video each of the volunteers saying something to help promote the Lanta Animal Welfare Centre (LAW). This was perfect for LAW as we have volunteers from all over the world, who speak many different languages. Our volunteers were divided into three groups for the main activities. The group that planted trees had a great time as they had to remove and replant a big tree, it took a lot of effort and energy to do so. The other group who took care of the dogs, after giving them a bath, took them out for a walk along the beach. After all the activities were done, we went to a restaurant called Time for Lime for lunch. This is owned by LAW and helps with the funding for the centre. The restaurant is on one of the nicest beaches in that area. After lunch, we surprised our volunteers who were celebrating their birthdays with a huge cake. Along with amazing weather, the enthusiastic volunteers and gorgeous animals, this turned out to be another very successful day for Projects-Abroad Thailand.



## My 2 Months Benchmark by Kelsey Quan (USA) Thailand care.

When I arrived in Thailand two months ago at the start of August, I was as prepared as I could be and yet still scared out of my mind. I had debated for months with friends and family about whether or not to come out and take this grand adventure- that is, traveling by myself for the first time ever and volunteering in a country I've never been to before that speaks a language I don't know. I had always wanted to travel, and now I had the time, resources, and connections. This was the perfect opportunity. I had researched as much as I could about the Projects Abroad programme and Thailand, but I still felt utterly clueless. At that point there was nothing else I *could* do except go. So here I am.

During my first few weeks, I was uncertain about everything from how to get along with the other volunteers to how to cross the street. When I first met Pi Nong, my host mother, I was even nervous about the way I said "hello". Now I walk in and out of the house every day like it's my own, greeting and chatting with Pi Nong as if she truly were my own mother. It took initiative on my part, but now I even cook with her, and accompany her on little excursions around the neighbourhood. I really do dote on her, as she does me.

Similarly, my first few weeks at daycare felt a bit overwhelming as I struggled to learn the kids' names and communicate with them and Pi Ja, my supervisor. Language was a considerable barrier. The first thing I did was to pick up some key Thai vocabulary ("sit down", "sleep", "eat") which was enormously helpful. But then I realized that playing really doesn't need many words, as the kids were quick to teach me. At the beginning, I always finished the day exhausted, but now I never want it to end!

Furthermore, I've met many other volunteers during my stay here, hearing more about the world outside the tiny corner I've always called home than I have ever learned before. Coming to Thailand, I only expected to learn about Thailand. So when I arrived, I was quite surprised to find myself the only American volunteer! Suddenly, I was in a group of peers from other countries, socializing with people whose first language was *not* English and who, oddly enough, did not like peanut butter.

After this, I return home to begin college in January, currently with a focus on East Asian studies. But after actually coming all the way out to Asia, I know I'd like to expand my area of study towards the rest of the world, setting my sights beyond the USA.

Two months is only the halfway point for me though- I still have a long time here. However, when I look back on how much I've grown and changed over the past two months, I know that I really *can't* know what the next two will do for me. In fact, I almost laugh to think of how timid and uncertain I was two months ago; I feel so confident with myself and my environment now! Who knows who I'll be by December.

**Kelsey Quan.** USA - Thailand care



## **Phuket Vegetarian Festival : 05-13 October 2013**

The Phuket Vegetarian Festival is an annual event held during the ninth lunar month of the Chinese calendar. It is believed that the vegetarian festival and its accompanying sacred rituals bestow good fortune upon those who religiously observe this rite. During this time, local residents of Chinese ancestry strictly observe a 10-day vegetarian or vegan diet for the purposes of spiritual cleansing and merit-making. Sacred rituals are performed at various Chinese shrines and temples and aesthetic displays such as walking barefooted over hot coals and ascending ladders with bladed rungs are performed by entranced devotees known as "Ma Song".

Aside from this, there are other ceremonies throughout the fest, notably: invocation of the gods Lam Tao, who keeps track of the living, and Pak Tao, who keeps track of the dead; processions of the gods' images; and feats of the Ma Song-like bathing in hot oil, bladed ladder climbing and fire-walking. The festival ends with merit making ceremonies at each temple (sadoh kroh) and the send-off of the gods on the last night (when fireworks are at their most impressive).

Ma Song, or entranced horses, are devotees whom the gods enter during the fest. They manifest supernatural powers and perform self-tortures in order to shift evil from individuals onto themselves, and to bring the community good luck. Ma Song fall into two categories: those who, having had an intimation of impending doom, want to extend their lives; and people specially chosen by the gods for their moral qualities.

Throughout the festival fireworks and drums are sounded, especially during ceremonies. It is held that the louder they are the better, because the noise drives away evil spirits. Participants in the fest keep to a strict vegetarian diet for a varying number of days, usually no less than three. This they do to make themselves strong in mind and body; they refrain from all vice, eating animal flesh, and killing animals. The festival thus promotes good hygiene, brightness and inner peace.



### **10 RULES FOR THE VEGETARIAN FESTIVAL**

1. Cleanliness of bodies during the festival
2. Clean kitchen utensils and to use them separately from other who do not join the festival
3. Wear white during the festival
4. Behave physically and mentally
5. No meat eating
6. No sex
7. No alcoholic drinks
8. People at mourning period should not attend the festival
9. Pregnant ladies should not watch any ritual
10. Ladies with period should not attend the ritual



## **Krabi**, a province on southern Thailand's Andaman

**coast**, is an almost otherworldly region of labyrinthine archipelagos, where islands seem to erupt vertically out of the sea and secluded beaches are only accessible by colorfully adorned long tail boats. Krabi's myriad of bays and coves have sheltered pirates, merchants, and sea gypsies for thousands of years and archaeological evidence indicates that Krabi was originally inhabited as early as 25,000 - 35,000 years ago! With attractions including hot springs, a wildlife sanctuary, sea caves, flourishing coral reefs and exotic marine life, limestone cliffs that draw rock climbing enthusiasts from around the world, and national parks that include the island paradises of Koh Phi Phi and Koh Lanta, one could easily spend weeks in Krabi and leave yearning for more.

If that wasn't enough, Krabi features some of the most photogenic sunsets in Thailand, often accompanied by spectacular displays of cloud to cloud lightning. Meanwhile, Krabi Town is the somewhat sleepy provincial capital. Surprisingly, few tourists spend time in the charming riverside town, whose hilly streets feature a number of cozy cafes and inexpensive and authentic Thai cuisine is served at an outdoor, riverside evening market. "Town" to most visitors is Ao Nang, a seaside strip of guesthouses, hotels, bars, restaurants, and souvenir shops that continues to grow as tourist arrivals increase, now spreading north into Noppharat Thara, whose quiet, shady beach is part of the national park that includes the Phi Phi Islands. Ao Nang is the major launching point for boat trips to nearby islands and the isolated beaches of Phra Nang Cape, where the famous former hippie enclave of Railey Beach is located.

Krabi Province, which lies along the coast of the Andaman Sea in Southern Thailand, is plentiful in natural attractions including white sandy beaches, crystal clear water, extensive coral reefs, numerous caves and waterfalls, and over 130 islands, including Koh Lanta and the jewels of the Andaman coast, the six islands of Mu Koh Phi Phi National Park. While not the top destination in and of itself, Krabi Town is a charming provincial capital located along the banks of a river that leads to the nearby Andaman Sea. Consequently, Krabi is an important port city for both local fisherman as well as boats ferrying visitors to the nearby attractions, including Koh Phi Phi, Koh Lanta, and Railey Beach.



## UTOPIA- Home sweet home

A utopia is a community or society possessing highly desirable or perfect qualities. The word was coined in Greek by Sir Thomas More for his 1516 book Utopia, describing a fictional island society in the Atlantic Ocean.

We have finally made it! After a lot of hard work, sweat and a few tears we are finally moved in to our new home, Utopia. Unlike our previous home, Utopia will be exclusively for the use of Projects Abroad, which will enable us to truly stamp our mark on Thailand and mold Utopia into a mecca for all future Conservation volunteers.

The Utopia resort is located in the southern state of Krabi set amongst the magnificent limestone karsts and unspoiled mangroves. At the resort we regularly see monkeys, otters, eagles and various other types of indigenous animals.

Already in the planning process is a nature walkway which will run directly from the heart of the resort across approx. 100m metres of virgin mangrove forest exiting at one of the many waterways that crisscross the area. This is where we are hoping to build a viewing platform so the volunteers can relax and take advantage of truly unspoiled nature at its best.

One of the first jobs the volunteers under took was to transport our tree nursery which took all our volunteers a whole day to disassemble and then reassemble. This all had to be done without hurting any of our precious seedlings.

Also fully set up is our new custom built home of all our top of range dive equipment, which is available to all our marine volunteers. This equipment is vital to our mission to protect the local marine environment.

This is just a peek into our new home and we will be giving you regular updates and photos through future newsletters and of course [Facebook](#).

