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Thailand Building Volunteers

Adventure Relaxation Culture

Trip Name: Thailand Building Volunteers **Trip Code:** THDV **Duration:** From 2 weeks

Trip Highlights

- Thailand volunteering is your chance to get stuck into some really practical building and renovation work to help some of the poorest communities in Sangklaburi
- You can learn new skills and you can sharpen up skills you already have
- You also have an unmissable opportunity to travel one of the most beautiful countries in South East Asia
- Help with our push to build a new **children's home** and **educational centre** for refuge children near the Thai-Myanmar (Burma) border

Overview

Your month volunteering in Thailand is a great opportunity to do something really helpful and really practical in Asia – instead of just thinking about it. You'll be helping to build and renovate buildings and facilities in the communtiy that are in desperate need of restoration and improvement.

While the this project often helps with numerous building renovations and improvements that are needed in the community, throughout the year there will be a focus on one project that is in desperate need of help.

We are working with our partners in Thailand to build a home for refuge children near the Thai-Myanmar (Burma) border in a village called Sangklaburi. With the financial support of Real Gap land has now been purchased where a new children`s home is being built, giving volunteers a chance to really get involved in this worthwhile project. Volunteers will be able to see the difference made on a day to day basis and know that at the end the children will be given a new safe place to live.

Destination Info

Thailand is just a beautiful country – outstanding natural gorgeousness, impressive architecture, eye-catching temples, lovely, friendly people and just the best Thai food you ever ate and a lot cheaper than over here.

You will be spending your time as a volunteer in Sangklaburi is in NW Thailand on the border with Myanmar (Burma). Sangklaburi is positioned on a 72 km long manmade lake fed by the numerous local rivers and waterfalls. The town is surrounded by mountains and creates a picturesque landscape, an idyllic location for travellers and volunteers.

There are so many local activities to enjoy from treks in the mountains through to floating down the river on tubes. The local community is a mix of Thai, Hill Tribe and Burmese people; this diversity is seen in the local dress, food and customs. Due to the local poverty and hill tribe and Burmese people are considered stateless, there is a great need for volunteers. The town itself benefits from many local restaurants, internet cafes, mini markets and one bar! It is a great setting to enjoy the best of Thailand; its people and its natural beauty.

Itinerary

While this project often helps with numerous building sites around Sangkhlaburi depending on the needs of the community, there is a real focus on one particular development; the construction of a children's home and an educational centre.

Sangkhlaburi is a cooking pot of different ethnic minorities such as Hill tribes and Burmese refugees that do not have official Thai status and therefore do not have any Thai rights. This has lead the people in these minorities to being susceptible to human traffickers and this is where the children's home helps to provide a safe haven for the young children.

The existing children`s home is a small 3 bedroom house that currently has 37 children staying in it. As you will imagine this is leads to extremely cramped living conditions! The staff at the home have provided these children with the best care they can with the conditions they have been working in, giving them the care and attention that they would otherwise not receive.

Thailand Building Volunteers

Land has been purchased where a new children`s home is being built giving volunteers a chance to really get involved. The project aims to build a children's home that will help to improve the living conditions of these children, mean that the home can help more children in the area. The project is also planning to build an educational centre so that not only are these children receiving care and attention but also an education to help given them a brighter start in life.

At the building project there will be various activities for you to get involved in and depending on the time that you arrive you will getting your hands dirty digging the foundations, clearing land, putting up walls, painting, hygiene maintenance such as running water, toilets and washing facilities to creating gardens and play areas.

Please note that individual activities may be affected each month depending on factors such as numbers of volunteers, time of year (as the site will develop over the year), weather so please be flexible - just be ready to get your hands dirty and get involved in whatever needs doing as any contribution you make to this development will be greatly appreciated by both the staff at the home and more importantly the children that live there!

Monday to Thursday you will be helping on site from 8am in the morning till mid afternoon. You will be picked up from your accommodation in the morning and taken to the project and then taken back to your accommodation after you finish. Throughout you days on the project there will be a project coordinator to answer any questions that you may have.

Day 1
Welcome to Thailand! You will be met at the airport by one of our great in-country team and taken to your accommodation where you'll be staying for your first two nights in this beautiful country. In the evening its time to

get your first taste of Bangkok and get to know the people on the project with you so what better way to do this than grab a couple of drinks on the famous Khao San Road.

Day 2
Today you will start the day with a tour of Bangkok where you will have the chance to see some of this stunning city's highlights. Once you have seen a bit more of what this bustling city has to offer you will have a chance to get to know your fellow volunteers over a welcome meal and one of the in-country team will talk you through your volunteer schedule.

Day 3
Now it's time to leave the city behind you and travel onto Sangkhlaburi by train which will take approximately 7 hours, perfect time to chat with your fellow volunteers and marvel at Thailand's stunning landscapes. Once you arrive into Sangkhlaburi you will be get the opportunity to settle into the volunteer house where you will be staying during the project, before sitting down for your meal and an orientation meeting which will tell you all about your stay.

During this meeting you the team will cover important information such as what it's going to be like at your project, do`s and don'ts, fun things to do in Thailand, information about Thailand's history and culture, and how to stay safe on your trip. This is your prime opportunity to ask any burning questions that you haven't yet had answered and to meet your fellow volunteers!

Day 4
Today you will be able to experience traditional Thai Culture as you visit one of the nearby temples where you will have the opportunity of giving alms to monks, followed by a welcome ceremony at the temple where a blessing, bracelet and holy water will be given, a great way to see the real Thailand.

Following this you will be introduced to the staff at the project and get some idea of the activities that you will be involved in.

Day 5 to 8
Today will be the first day for to get stuck into the project work and get your hands dirty! Don't worry if you don't

have any experience in work like this, the project team will be on site to help and direct you. The main thing that is needed is your help, energy, determination and enthusiasm!

Day 9 to 10
The start of a two day weekend begins. Perfect for those who need to rest their muscles after all the great work at the project and for those who want to explore the area. The weekend is free time to do as you please.

Following weeks
Over the following weeks (depending on the duration you choose) you will continue with your project work Monday to Friday and begin to see the massive impact and improvements that you have made. You will also continue to have free time in the evenings and on weekends each week to relax or explore.

Your last day
It is time to say goodbye to all the friends you have made on the project and in Sangkhlaburi before you travel back to the airport, or off for further adventures elsewhere. The return transfer from your accommodation to Bangkok is not included in the price, however the in-country team will be able to make recommendations and help you arrange a transfer if you need them to. There is usually a train that leaves Sangkhlaburi at 8am and arrives in Bangkok at around 3pm although you may wish to leave day early if you are flying on the Friday.

Accommodation

You will be staying in a shared volunteer house in a twin share room with self catering facilities to prepare your own food. All volunteer houses have a basic kitchen including a hob, sink, toaster, kettle, fridge and utensils.

Programme Services and Facilities

Telephone

The international telephone access code for Thailand is +66. To place an outgoing, direct-dialled international call, dial +44 for the UK, followed by the telephone number. For example to call Real Gap Experience dial +44 1892 516164.

Don't forget to contact your family once you are in Thailand, to let them know you have arrived safely!

Hospital

There is a hospital located 5 minutes from the accommodation.

Laundry

Laundry facilities are available at the accommodation for only 40 baht for 1kg of dirties!

Internet

There are many internet cafes in the town around 10-15 minutes from the accommodation and cost around 40 baht an hour.

Meals

Meals are not included for this programme. However, eating out is incredibly cheap in Thailand, and you are able to walk to one of the many local restaurants where a meal can be purchased for as little as 100 baht (around £1.80).

What's Included

- Arrival pick-up and transfer
- Two nights in Bangkok on arrival including breakfast
- Transfer from Bangkok to the project location
- Twin share accommodation
- Assistance from local co-ordinator

What's Not Included

- International flights
- Travel Insurance
- Food
- Return transfer

What to Pack

Please note that this kit list is intended to help you plan what you may need to take with you and, therefore, you may not need all of the listed items on your travels nor is it exhaustive.

Personal Admin

- Photocopies of important papers such as passport, airline tickets and insurance documents

General

- Mosquito net
- Bedding is provided however some people like to take their own cotton liner and pillow case
- Day bag / rucksack (for excursions)
- A torch
- Mobile phone
- Camera & batteries
- Phone charger with a two pin adaptor plug
- Playing cards for free time
- Diary – you will have so many amazing experiences to remember
- MP3 player and speakers (if you wish)
- Tissues
- Plastic bags
- Snacks (cup of soups, biscuits etc)
- Pocket-knife
- Towel

Clothing

- Walking shoes / trainers
- Flip Flops
- A hat to protect you from the sun
- Rain coat
- Clothes; Long sleeve shirts and trousers are great.

Medical Kit

- Small medical kit containing plasters, medicine for diarrhoea, head ache tablets, anti-histamine cream and any medication you will need
- Mosquito repellent
- Contraception including condoms
- Antibacterial soap gel (does not need water to rinse off)
- Travel wash for clothes

Minimum Age

Minimum 18 years, maximum decided on potential participants' health. Please be prepared that you may be working with volunteers of all ages.

Flights

Your flight to Thailand should arrive at Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK) on your programme start date. Your return flight or onward travel should be arranged on your programme end date.

To receive the included transfer from Bangkok airport to your accommodation your flight will need to arrive between 6am and 10pm on the programme start date.

To book your flights, please contact your travel advisor who will do their best to get you the best deal on the day. Please provide them with your full name as it is stated in your passport. Before you make the call please make sure you have your required departure dates, return dates and other details you may require.

It is important that once you have booked your flights you add these details to your online account or alternatively you can contact us with your departure date, the flight number and arrival time at your destination.

FAQs

1. **What will I be building/renovating?**
   Projects can differ dramatically depending on the size of the group but the objective remains the same: To improve the health and safety of the children. Previous projects have renovated classrooms, built small farms to improve the kids nutrition, installed water systems, built safe play areas, renovated toilets and showers, or even built whole new facilities such as toilets and kitchens.

2. **How much spending money would you recommend I take?**
   We generally recommend that you take around £70-£80 per week.

3. **I am a first time traveler, and a bit apprehensive about travelling on my own. Do many people do this by themselves?**
   The majority of our participants are solo travelers, so you will be one of many in the same position. We e-mail out a buddy list 2-3 weeks before you start, so you can begin to get to know one another beforehand.

4. **Will I support whilst I am on the programme?**
   Absolutely, and you have co-ordinators with you at all times to ensure your safety.

DBS

This trip requires a Police Check to be carried out - please contact us for further information on how to do this.

Support & Advice

Your safety is paramount which is why all our programs have been visited and assessments have been conducted to ensure any major risks have been minimized.

You will be assigned a personal travel advisor who will co-ordinate your program with you. Feel free to contact them at any time before you go, or when you are on your travels. They will provide you with competent assistance and help with any questions or advice you may need during your stay.

In addition, you will have access to a 24 hour emergency contact number so you can contact one of our staff at any time should you need to. In addition our overseas partners and coordinators are on hand in-country to assist you.

Financial Security

We know that the last thing you want to worry about when you're planning your trip of a lifetime is whether your money is in safe hands. As a leading global gap year provider it's our job to make sure your finances are secure, so when you book with us you can be confident that we do just that.

Real Gap Experience is part of TUI Travel Plc, one of the largest travel organisations in the world, and these days in the travel industry, large means secure.

Insurance

Whether you're traveling for two weeks or two years, trekking the Amazon in Ecuador or on safari in Africa,

insurance is an essential part of your adventure and will help you enjoy your travels, secure in the knowledge that you have the protection you need. In fact, everyone traveling with us must have adequate cover before their trip begins.

Of course you are free to buy insurance from any provider, however at Real Gap Experience, we have partnered with World Nomads to offer policies that have been specifically designed to meet the needs of global travel. If you think you're already covered by an existing policy, such as those offered by credit card providers, check the policy wording very carefully to ensure it covers you for your Real Gap Experience.

For more information on travel insurance please contact us to speak to one of our travel advisors.

Money Matters

The unit of currency in Thailand is the Baht (THB; symbol ?). There are 100 Satang to the Baht and coins come in denominations of 1, 5, 10, 25 and 50 Satang or 1, 2, 5 and 10B. Paper bills come in 20B (green), 50B (blue), 100B (red), 500B (purple) and 1000B (beige), the 10B bill is rarely used as coins have largely replaced it.

US Dollars are the other most widely accepted currency and credit cards can be used for a fee in most large cities or at resort hotels but are not often accepted by small locally run businesses. ATMs are found in all major cities and almost all provincial banks.

Meal, Inexpensive Restaurant 2.43 $

Domestic Beer (0.5 litre draught) 1.86 $
Coke/Pepsi (0.33 litre bottle) 0.53 $
Water (0.33 litre bottle) 0.25 $

(Prices quoted in US Dollar)

Passports and Visas

You should ensure that you have a full passport that is valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, if one is necessary, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information provided below is to help you with that process. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Citizens of the UK, the USA, Ireland, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and most European countries do not require a visa for stays of less than 30 days. For stays of up to 90 days a Tourist Visa can be obtained for a fee before you go and must be used within 90 days of receiving it.

For more information about Thailand visas see http://www.mfa.go.th/web/12.php

UK passport holders

For UK passport holders, we have teamed up with a great partner, Travcour, to offer you specialist assistance and advice when arranging your visa/s for your time away; making your preparations for your trip easier and more straight forward.

To access the application forms please click here and select the correct trip name from the drop down list and press submit. You will then need to agree to Travcour's Terms and Conditions by ticking the box that will appear; once you have done this you will be able to download your visa information pack by clicking on the ***[pdf]*** button next to your trip name.

If the form requires details of addresses/ inviters/referees before it can be processed then you will receive these on your Online Account once you have booked.

If you have any questions relating to your application using this service, please contact Travcour directly on the following details:

Telephone: 020 7223 6295
Email: info@travcour.com

Non-UK passport holders

If you are not a UK passport holder, you will need to contact your nearest Embassy, High Commission, Consulate for the country that you are travelling to in order to obtain the relevant visa for your time away.

Cultural Considerations

Thailand is a developing country and you will see places and people far less fortunate than yourself. The accommodation you will be staying in is very basic and you will not have the luxuries that you may have in this country. Please respect that this is the way locals live and take the opportunity to experience this new way of life. The friendly people, the great atmosphere and beautiful location will more than make up for this. Most travellers enjoy this change in lifestyle. It is very healthy, refreshing and opens your mind to a new world.

Religion

Religion is an important part of Thai day-to-day life. The main religion is Buddhism, with about 95% of the population. However, there is also a 4% Muslim population.

Clothing

Note to girls, regarding clothes: You will be staying or visiting areas where there are strict Buddhists and Muslims. They consider it impolite to wear the incorrect clothing so please make sure you think about what clothing you take with you. When travelling around to villages and places of interest you should wear long trousers or skirts. T-shirts should cover your shoulders and not be too fitted, vest tops are inappropriate but are fine for the beach.

When visiting temples you will need to wear long trousers and long sleeve tops. Remember clothes also need to cover your midriff and back, so please make sure your tops are quite long.

There are plenty of opportunities to sunbathe and swim whilst in Thailand, so do remember to take your bikini, swimsuit, swimming shorts etc.
Flip-flops are the easiest and coolest footwear to take with you. Whenever you enter houses, temples, or home stays you will need to remove your shoes and leave them at the door. This will soon become habit and you won't even realise you are doing it. Remember to take some trainers with you as well for the outdoor activities.

There are many opportunities to buy cheap clothes from markets. These are cool, cheap and ideal for the climate and social norms.

Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs

Smoking and drinking is acceptable in Thailand and readily available. However, please respect other people. Smoking is not permissible in volunteer apartments or the host families' homes. Drinking is only permissible in moderation and must not impact upon any volunteer work you undertake. While we want you to have fun in your free time, antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated.

It is absolutely forbidden to carry drugs into Thailand. Being caught in possession of drugs can lead to at least a prison sentence and a hefty fine if you are lucky but remember there is still a very real threat of the death penalty for carrying drugs in Thailand. Always keep an eye on your luggage while travelling. Never bring anyone else's luggage through customs.

Bathroom Facilities

You will experience a range of different shower and toilet facilities. Unless you are staying in a hotel you will rarely have hot water. The cool water takes a little getting used to but I'm sure you'll find it refreshing after a hot and humid day. Toilets will be a combination of western and Asian. Remember to put all toilet tissue in the bin provided and not in the toilet.

Whist on excursions you will notice that many places do not have a western toilet and will have a typical Asian toilet; again this is all part of the Thai culture. Also, many places do not have soap in the bathrooms. It is a good idea to take a small bottle of soap gel and keep it in your day bag. This is an antibacterial gel that you don't need to rinse off. These are available in chemists in the travel section.

Vaccinations & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad. The risks to your health whilst travelling will vary depending on your general health and the type of activities you are going to be partaking in and the length of your stay.

Since we are not medically qualified, it is recommended that you consult with your Doctor or a recognised Travel Medical Advisory Service who will assess your particular health risks before recommending vaccines and/or anti-malarial tablets and advising you on what precautions you should take.

Safety

As in most countries there are people who try to take advantage of tourists. The following advice is intended to help you keep safe:

- Always keep your personal items such as passport, money and camera with you and in a safe place. You can buy mini padlocks to prevent people from going into your day sack without your permission.
- Always walk around in groups, never go off with strangers and people that you have only just met
- Never go out alone after dark
- Stick with the escorted trips. If you do go out in the evening unescorted, you do so at your own risk. Please tell the co-ordinator or your home-stay family where you are going, what time you will be back and ensure you sign the release from.
- Please do not get into fights, or arguments with local Thais. We cannot guarantee your safety and it could provoke future attacks on other travellers
- As in this country there have been reports of drinks being spiked on the islands. Please do not leave your drinks unattended and do not accept drinks from strangers.
- Most importantly of all, if you wouldn't do whilst your at home, then don't do it whilst you are away!

This information is not intended to scare you. Unfortunately, bad things can happen, as they can do in any country and we want you to be prepared. We want you to stay safe and have a good time.

We would like to add that the majority of the locals are friendly, warm and hospitable people who love meeting our travellers. Please be friendly, respectful and stay aware and you will have a great time.

We advise that you check your government’s advice before travelling abroad. For UK, American and Australian customers please see the relevant links below;

UK: www.fco.gov.uk

USA: www.travel.state.gov
Australia: www.smartraveller.gov.au

ATM Theft

It is very likely that you will need to withdraw cash at some point during your travels. Please be cautious when

withdrawing money from an ATM and ensure that you are vigilant of other people near the ATM, especially those that offer unsolicited assistance if your card is detained. It has been recognised that individuals are operating unlawful withdrawals by placing 'traps' in ATMs whereby personal bank cards are being detained, causing the victim to believe their card transaction has not been completed, and leaving their bank card in the ATM which is then later retrieved by the thief.

If your card is confiscated or you are concerned that your card has been tampered with, please report immediately to the bank or cancel your card.

Thailand Terrorist Threat

Thailand is one of the most popular destinations for visitors to Southeast Asia. Most visitors enjoy a trouble-free stay. However, Thailand does have a history of political instability and has experienced a number of military coups since 1932. The political future of the country remains uncertain, though the situation remains stable.

The country experienced a series of bombings in the capital, Bangkok, on 31st December 2006 and 30th January 2007. However, the Thai government has increased security throughout the city. While there is an increased risk of further attacks, foreign travellers to the country are unlikely to be directly affected.
(Source: red24)

We advise that you should avoid large public gatherings and demonstrations. As in this country, there is an increased risk of terrorism in and around busy tourist spots in the capital, popular nightclubs/bars and transport stations.

Language Guide

Here are some useful phrases to remember when you get to Thailand. We also suggest you obtain a Lonely Planet or language guide for the destination(s) you are travelling to.

Hello (Male speaker) - *sawatdee krup*

Hello (Female speaker) - *sawatdee kaa*
How are you? - *sabai dee reu*
Thank you - *kop koon*
I can't speak Thai - *phoot Thai mai dai*
I don't understand - *mai kao chai*
Do you understand? - *kao chai mai*
Where is the rest room? - *hong nam yoo tee nai*
How much does this cost? - *nee tao-rai*
What is this? - *nee aria*
Good-bye - *la gon*
Sorry/Excuse me - *kor thoad*
The bill please - *Gep taang*

Food & Drink

It's normal in Thailand to eat rice dishes for breakfast and it is all part of the cultural experience. In fact, rice and noodles are served with all meals. The food is gorgeous, with fresh vegetables tasting far better than they do back home. Vegetarians will be happy, as Tofu is widely available as is plenty of fresh fruit. And meat lovers will also be tantalising their taste buds visiting the many local markets where you can buy chicken satay (marinated kebabs), beef kebabs and other types of meat. It is very cheap too. Remember to let us know before you depart if you have any special dietary requirements.

Public Holidays

When planning your trip, you should be aware of the major national holidays celebrated throughout the country. However, although businesses and government offices are closed on public holidays, tourist attractions and shops are almost never closed. The main impact on the tourist of these holidays is the increased competition for travel and accommodation from Thais who use long weekends to get away from the big city.

To view a list of the public holidays for Thailand please see the link below:

www.timeanddate.com/holidays/thailand/

Weather

Thailand's equatorial climate remains tropical and warm for most of the year, with the south getting the best of the weather. The monsoon season falls between May and October, bringing warm and humid air and dipping to a minimum of 18ºC. This means that Thailand is a great destination at most times of the year, though the best months are between November and February when temperatures are comfortable and rains have slackened off.

Time

Thailand is 7 hours ahead of GMT.

Electricity

The electricity in Thailand is 220 volts and frequency 50 Hertz. Devices that do not accept this voltage will need to be used with an adapter. Outlets in Thailand generally accept 2 types of plug:

Flat blade plug

or

Two round pins

Trip Note Disclaimer

The information contained in this trip note has been compiled with great care and is provided in good faith. Any itinerary featured is correct at time of release. However, our itineraries may change as make improvements that result from travellers' comments, our own research or from time to time as a result of reommended travel advice.

You can rest assured that it is always our goal to provide you with the most rewarding trip and experience ever!

Our Details

If you have any questions about this trip please do not hesitate to contact us and we'll be happy to answer them.

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