

# Thailand Summer Program



Volunteering, cultural immersion and  
adventure travel

**pacific discovery**  
insightful small group adventures

PO Box 899, Nelson 7040, New Zealand, US freecall 1800 655 3415, fax +1 206 984 3763  
[info@pacificdiscovery.org](mailto:info@pacificdiscovery.org) [www.pacificdiscovery.org](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org)

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## ***Thailand Summer Program Overview***

Experience an amazing month in Thailand with two weeks of volunteer projects and two amazing weeks of educational adventure travel: Rewarding volunteer work with elephants at the Elephant Nature Foundation; volunteering with disadvantaged Burmese youth; discovering Thailand's fascinating cities and culture; exploring incredible jungle, islands and beaches. Join us on a journey to the heart of Thailand.

This travel study abroad summer or gap year program is suitable for students, graduates and non-students, ideally 18-25 years.

### ***Program Dates***

Summer 2010: 1 – 28 July

Summer 2011: 7 Jul – 3 Aug

### ***Program Start / Finish***

Bangkok, Thailand

### ***Program Cost***

Program cost for July 2010 is USD\$3,250.00

### ***Highlights***

- Volunteering with elephants for a week at the award-winning Elephant Nature Foundation
- Volunteering with Burmese migrants and refugees for a week at a vocational training centre
- 2-day rock-climbing and caving adventure – no experience needed
- Hiking and kayaking in the amazing jungle of Khao Sok National Park
- Snorkeling and exploring spectacular Kho Phra Ngan island
- Historical Sukhothai and its superb temples and monuments
- Thailand's kaleidoscopic markets and temples
- Thai cooking course and traditional Thai massage
- Informal lectures and discussions on history, culture, society and environment
- Very personalized small group experience – maximum of 14 participants (compare with other programs of up to 40 students)
- Fantastic program leader supported by great local English-speaking guides

*"I learned so much about culture, eco-tourism and being conscious. I felt proud to be part of group that was also learning about responsible travel. This program pushed us to think critically about tourism and culture and gave me the building blocks I need to work overseas someday." Heather Bugni*

*"Traveling with Pacific Discovery has been one of the most personally rewarding things I have ever done. The program's small group sizes and focus on responsible travel allows you to interact with a country's local culture, customs, and environment on a much deeper level. I had the time of my life on the trip!" Mauri Lowrey*

## ***Pacific Discovery Program Content***

Our programs are more than simply a travel or study abroad experience. We deliberately use an overseas adventure-travel environment to maximize the educational and life-skills potential for our participants. Each of our programs is designed to combine the following six interdependent components.

### ***1. Educational component***

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, first hand.

Experience on its own does not translate into learning. But learning from your experiences is important. To encourage 'learning from experience' our program leaders facilitate opportunities for participants to regularly reflect upon their experiences, and provide historical, cultural, geographical and environmental background so that personal experience can be connected with a broader understanding of place.

The educational component of our programs is multi-disciplinary and covers:

- ◆ Host country: history, politics, culture, geography, environment, environmental and social issues.
- ◆ Broader themes: globalization, development, environmentalism, religion, ethics and sustainability.
- ◆ How to travel: how to plan and safe, the realities of life on the road, ethical and sustainable travel.
- ◆ Outdoor education: where relevant, learning the soft and hard skills of a number of outdoor activities, such as backpacking, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking (varies by program).
- ◆ Group skills: how to work with a group, communication and trust.
- ◆ Development of personal leadership skills.

### ***2. Volunteer component***

Volunteer and community service elements built into our program itineraries allow participants to really immerse themselves in a place and share an experience with local people - bridging the gap that often exists between visitor and host. The rewards are tangible and often unexpected. Volunteer work helps build self confidence and self belief through participants having to learn new skills and take on new roles. Volunteer components vary by program. Examples of volunteer work undertaken by participants are building simple homes for marginalized poor, being a big brother/sister to an orphan, habitat restoration, species monitoring.

### ***3. Cultural immersion component***

Small groups mean that our participants are not travelling in a 'bubble' separated from local people. Instead we immerse participants in the local culture, through home-stays, volunteer projects, language study etc. Participants learn empathy for other cultures and build bridges of cultural understanding.

### ***4. Travel component***

Travel and the realities of 'life on the road' teaches a lot of valuable lessons - how to communicate and relate to people from different cultures, how to be happy with few possessions and a simple life, how to overcome temporary discomfort. Travel ultimately exposes participants to the myriad possibilities in the world and their lives and allows for personal growth free from the expectations of family, peers and co-workers.

Our goal is that participants will learn the 'art of travel' - what to take, how to plan, how to keep safe, how to find what you need in an unfamiliar place, the realities of life on the road. By the end of a program, we expect most participants will have learned the skills necessary to travel safely anywhere on earth.

### ***5. Adventure education / Outdoor education component***

Our programs are one long adventure. Aside from the fact that adventure can be a whole lot of fun, our programs are adventurous because personal growth occurs through challenge. We challenge participants at their own level, so that they can gain confidence through overcoming obstacles and challenges during the program.

A variety of outdoor or adventure activities are included in our programs, such as back packing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, rock climbing, mountain biking etc. These activities require physical effort, mastery of technique, teamwork and trust between members of the group, and immersion in the outdoor environment.

Pacific Discovery takes a 'challenge by choice' approach to the adventure components of our programs. We have had people from all levels of fitness and experience on our programs. Adventure activities and instruction are aimed at the novice/beginner level, however we are able to facilitate more challenge for people who are experienced in a particular discipline. Generally participants do need to have fitness at a level that they are able to comfortably walk for 2-3 hours with a small back pack.

### ***6. Personal and leadership development component***

By taking participants out of their comfort zone and challenging them physically, culturally and mentally, we encourage students to gain confidence in their abilities and provide a supportive group environment where they can grow.

All of the components provide an enormous opportunity for participants to learn about themselves, to push their boundaries, question their assumptions, to stimulate problem solving and inquiry skills.

By giving participants responsibilities and freedom within the framework and safety of a well designed and carefully managed program, participants are empowered, helping them become more capable and self-reliant.

## ***Thailand Summer Program Details***

### ***Suitability***

Open to students, graduates and non-students, ideally 18-25 years. This program is suitable for anyone of average fitness with an enthusiasm for conservation, humanitarian work, new experiences and different cultures. You need to be open-minded, and committed to and prepared for some physical work whilst on the elephant volunteer component of the program i.e. tree planting or painting. It is an excellent option for students and graduates wanting to be exposed to and immersed in a culture radically different to their own. You don't need to have had previous experience with travel or any of the activities offered.

### ***Group Size***

The group is limited to 14 participants, with a Pacific Discovery program leader. English-speaking local guides join us to assist with interpretation of historical sites, cultural experiences and activities.

### ***Accommodation***

Our accommodation will vary from simple share accommodation with shared facilities to modern hotels and guesthouses with private bathrooms. Laundry, postal, telephone and email facilities will be available most days except while at the elephant conservation project. Accommodation is diverse, comfortable and carefully chosen to fit our needs.

### ***Meals***

Food is a highlight when travelling in Asia and throughout there will be the opportunity to eat authentic Asian or Western style food. Special dietary requirements and vegetarians are catered for. Two thirds of meals are included in the program cost. The remaining meals are not included to allow us a choice of when, where and what we eat. For the meals not included, you will have the option of dining out, or self-catering with others in the group. We recommend you budget the sum of \$200 for meals not included in the program cost, drinking water and snacks.

### ***Transport***

The itinerary has been designed to maximize comfort and safety whilst also giving you the opportunity to experience local transport and take part in daily life. We utilize chartered vans and buses, trains, private taxis, ferries, bicycles, and take 2 internal flights within Thailand.

### ***Free Days***

During the trip, we have free days reasonably spaced (approximately one per week), in towns or cities where there are sufficient facilities to allow you to catch up on personal needs such as resting, laundry, shopping, email etc.

### ***Attitude***

The program is a shared group experiences. We expect you to join the program with an open mind and a willingness to work together with your group mates to make the program an amazing experience for the whole group. Additionally, the program will be as much about the inner journey of personal growth and learning about yourself as it is about what you will experience in the outer physical journey. We expect you to be open to learning and challenging your ideas and assumptions.

## **Program Cost**

### **Program cost for July 2010 is USD\$3,250.00**

\$400 deposit due when you register; balance of program cost (\$2850) to be paid by May 1.

**Included in Program Cost:** Visa on arrival\*; All in-country transport including two flights within Thailand and departure taxes; All accommodation; Most meals (see 'meals' above); All activities, excursions, entry fees and adventure travel as described in the itinerary; Two weeks of volunteering and community service; Series of informal lectures; Experienced program leader/s and local guides; Online image library for your program. \*Note: A free 30-day visa for Thailand is issued on arrival.

**Not included in Program Cost:** Travel (international flights) between your home and Bangkok, Thailand (refer international flights below); Some meals (approx. \$200); Travel insurance (approx. \$150).

**Optional activities** (*not included with program fee*): Yoga and meditation classes, Southern Thailand, \$10 per class. Introductory scuba dive, Southern Thailand, approx \$100.

## **International Flights** (refer also page 18)

### **Flights from North America to Bangkok, Thailand, return**

Our travel agent can assist you to arrange international flights from the your nearest regional airport in the USA or Canada, to Bangkok, and return. You have the option of utilizing the flights recommended for this program, or arranging your own travel to/from Bangkok. If you choose to buy your international tickets through our travel agent, you will generally be travelling with other participants in the group. The ticket cost is approximately USD\$1200. Pacific Discovery does not charge any fee or commission for assisting with flights – this is a free service that we offer to simplify program arrangements for you. Refer page 18.

### **Flights from other countries to / from Bangkok, Thailand**

Our travel agent will be able to assist you with flights from your country. You are also welcome to arrange your own flights/travel to and from Bangkok, Thailand, for program start and at program finish. Please note that it is essential that you arrive in Bangkok for program start and a briefing/orientation. Please refer to page 18 for requirements of the dates/times to arrive and depart Bangkok.

### **Optional Extensions**

Our program will surely have whet your appetite for further travel, and you may like to continue your adventures independently or with others in your group. At the time you make your international flight bookings, enquire about the options for a stopover elsewhere on your way home.

*"You will come back inspired in ways you never thought possible. I came back inspired about life. The people you meet will share stories and experiences that change the way you think about the world - to really gain knowledge and understanding of something, you have to experience it firsthand. I was challenged socially, mentally, physically, spiritually and came back a much happier, stronger person because of it. I have some of the best memories of my life on that trip and I am fortunate enough to have shared them with incredible people. For once in my life, I threw away logic, emptied out my savings account and did the one thing in my life I really wanted to do. You just have to open your mind and go after your dreams. The best of luck to all of you." Kelli Barnett*

## ***Academic Credit Options***

Academic credit is an optional, but integral component of our semester, summer and gap year travel study abroad programs. Hands-on, out-of-class educational opportunities can be a more effective way of learning than following a conventional classroom routine. The value of these educational experiences is continually being recognized and credit opportunities are made available to the participants on our programs through the cooperative efforts of supporting faculty. If you are interested in earning credit while on a Pacific Discovery program, please review the credit available for this program (as shown below). If you have further questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

### ***Seattle Central Community College*** ([www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx))

Credit is available through the Seattle Central Community College Office of Cooperative Education and Service Learning, for individuals who wish to earn credit for a variety of travel experiences. Whether you are from the US, Canada, or elsewhere, you are able to undertake this optional independent-study credit while on a Pacific Discovery program. Most courses can be taken for 5 or 10 quarter credits (3 or 6 semester credits) and a maximum of 20 credits can be taken per quarter. This credit is available to any participant (worldwide) on any of our programs and is a particularly good option for gap-year students, under-grads and students wanting an economical credit option. Seattle Central is an accredited institution and credit may be transferable to your university or college – please check this with your academic advisor.

#### **Courses of Study** (print course outlines from the website)

EDU 291: Using the World As a Classroom (5 or 10 credits)

SSC 297: Travel/Study Experience (5 or 10 credits)

ITL 197: International Cooperative Education (5 credits)

ITL 198: International Cooperative Education (5 credits)

## ***Volunteer Overview***

### ***Elephant Nature Foundation***

The Elephant Nature Foundation is a non-profit organization which advocates and acts on behalf of the rights of Asian elephants in Thailand. Their mission is to increase awareness about the plight of the endangered Asian elephant, educate locals on the humane treatment of their elephants, and provide sanctuary for rescued elephants at their nature park. During your week here, you will work on a variety of tasks such as caring for the elephants, maintenance of the facilities and tree planting. You'll get a hands-on in-depth look at the park's resident elephants and learn an enormous amount about elephants and elephant conservation. [www.elephantnaturefoundation.org/go/volunteer](http://www.elephantnaturefoundation.org/go/volunteer)

### ***Migrant Learning Centre***

The Migrant Learning Centre was established by Burmese refugee teachers in Chiang Mai to provide free educational courses in Burmese, Thai, English and computing, for young Burmese migrants and refugees who've fled the ongoing problems in Burma. The majority of the students at the centre are the same age as you. During your week working at the centre you will assist with English language and computing classes. Learning the recent history of Burma and the student's personal histories, you will gain insight and knowledge into Burmese life. You will also be contributing to critical vocational training for the students at the centre, many of whom missed out on education inside Burma.

## ***Program Itinerary***

**Day 1-2. Bangkok.** On arrival in booming, mega-city Bangkok, you'll be met by your program leader. After a comprehensive program briefing we'll immerse ourselves in the kaleidoscope of new sensory stimulus. While here we traverse the city visiting temples, markets and getting a real sense of all the contrasts Bangkok offers before finishing up with a traditional Thai massage to loosen those jetlagged muscles.

**Day 3-4. Rock-climbing and Caving.** After a short flight to Chiang Mai we head into the country side and spend two days learning climbing, rappelling and caving, overnighing in a small rural village and visiting nearby hot springs and waterfalls.

**Day 5-11. Volunteer Project 1 – Elephant Conservation.** This is an amazing week, based at the Elephant Nature Foundation, a centre that cares for elephants and educates about the problems elephants face today in Thailand. We spend the week doing varied and valuable work at the centre, from planting trees and maintenance, to bathing and caring for the elephants. By the time we return to Chiang Mai, you'll have learned an enormous amount about elephant conservation, will be very sad to farewell these gentle giants, and will feel incredibly satisfied at the rewarding work you've done to ensure their protection.

**Days 12-16, Volunteer Project 2 – Burmese migrants and refugees.** This week we are based from our comfortable guesthouse in Chiang Mai. We spend the mornings assisting inspiring young Burmese migrants and refugees with their English language and computer skills – both of which are critically important to them in gaining employment and a chance at a better life outside Burma/Myanmar. Each afternoon we do a different activity... a traditional Thai cooking, an 'Amazing Race' around Chiang Mai, visiting a spectacular mountain-top temple, and the interesting tribal museum. There's also time to trawl Chiang Mai's amazing night markets.

**Days 17-19, Sukhothai.** We travel overland from Chiang Mai to Sukhothai, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its ancient temples. One thousand years ago, Sukhothai was the capital of Thailand. Today it is a tranquil riverside town. We explore the complex of temple ruins by bicycle before continuing south by train to Bangkok.

**Days 20-22, Khao Sok National Park.** We fly from Bangkok to Southern Thailand and travel (2 hours) overland to Khao Sok National Park. Based from a jungle lodge we spend two days hiking, kayaking and exploring this amazingly diverse jungle environment. Khao Sok National Park is a remnant of the oldest and most diverse rainforest in the world, and is home to the largest flower in the world, a carnivorous species with a diameter measuring 2-3 feet!

**Days 23-26, Island Life.** From Khao Sok we travel by road and ferry to the spectacular island of Kho Phra Ngan. On the island we stay in Thai style beach houses at a small resort that specializes in yoga and meditation. Nestled on a jungle covered hill, we are a stones-throw from the ocean and a beautiful white sand beach. We have plenty of time for snorkeling, swimming, relaxing and reminiscing over the adventures of the last four weeks. On our final day we return to Bangkok.

**Day 27-28, Bangkok and Program Conclusion.** We have a day in Bangkok before we sadly farewell our trip mates and this wonderful country. We depart Bangkok for home having had an unforgettable month in the 'land of smiles'.

## Program Route Map



## ***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 and, as the country moves rapidly into the 21st century, are embracing Western culture without discarding their own rich traditions. Most Thais are Buddhist and it is expected that all men will spend some time as a Buddhist monk 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.

It is wonderful to contrast the mega-city bustle and excitement of Bangkok with relaxed and friendly provincial towns and villages. The country is geographically diverse - tropical beaches and islands in the south have some of the world's best beaches and diving. The mountainous jungle clad north is populated by numerous minority tribal groups and has stunning national parks.

Thailand is an immensely popular travel destination. Travelling with us you'll have the chance to taste a less-touristy slice of Thailand, as well as its highlights.

## ***Climate***

The climate in Thailand is very similar to Florida – think hot and humid. The program occurs during the annual southwest monsoon. This means that on roughly every second day there will be some rain. This is usually brief and you can often shelter till it passes. Daily temperatures average a maximum of 100 degrees and a minimum of 75 degrees.

## ***Leadership***

Our programs succeed because we put a lot of thought into choosing our program leaders. We have selected a dynamic team of supportive, resourceful, experienced and highly organized people to lead our trips. Our program leaders are people in whom you can trust and confide, who remain objective whatever the circumstances and who take a genuine interest in your welfare and safety. They implicitly understand the importance of balancing the needs of individuals with group objectives, facilitating a high level of group cohesion, inspiring a genuine appreciation for the areas visited and an awareness of minimum impact travel ethics. All our leaders are trained in wilderness or remote travel first aid, group leadership and risk assessment/management.

## ***Peace of Mind***

Since its inception, in 2001, Pacific Discovery has taken over 1000 students, graduates, faculty, family and special interest groups, on experiential travel and volunteer tours, utilizing a staff of experienced and qualified program leaders. We have an excellent safety record, comprehensive Risk Management Systems and a database of alumni who are happy to be contacted for feedback. The program carries public liability insurance, and participant payments are held in trust account until disbursement. Bank, accountant and faculty contacts are available on request.

## **Registration Information & Checklist**

- ☑ Register online for the program and pay \$400 deposit ([www.pacificdiscovery.org](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org))
- ☑ Review the pre-departure information for this program in this booklet
- ☑ Obtain a passport, or check your existing passport is valid 6 months beyond program end
- ☑ Arrange your travel insurance (page 12) and flights or travel to/from Bangkok (page 18)
- ☑ **Before 01 May 2010:**
  - Complete the online medical and passport form:  
[www.pacificdiscovery.org/bookings/medical-form.aspx](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/bookings/medical-form.aspx)
  - Submit your final payment. An invoice will be emailed to you one month before. If you register after this date, your final payment is due within 14 days of registering.
- ☑ Decide if you will take credit on the program and register for this:  
[www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx)
- ☑ Start a fitness program – you'll want to be doing at least ½ - 1 hour of exercise, 3 times a week. Anything is good...swimming, running, walking, biking, hiking, sport, dancing. The fitter you are the more you'll get out of the program.
- ☑ Review the gear list and gear tips in this booklet, and start packing
- ☑ To make the most of your time in Thailand, read/watch some of the books or movies recommended in this booklet

### **Any Questions?**

**Please don't hesitate to contact us.**

Pacific Discovery

Program Directors: Scott Burnett, Rachel Sanson

Tel. 1 800 655 3415

eFax. 1 206 984 3763

Email. [info@pacificdiscovery.org](mailto:info@pacificdiscovery.org)

Web. [www.pacificdiscovery.org](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org)

*"I pushed myself to new heights, tried new things, took new risks. I made amazing friends that I shared some incredible experiences with. I came away from the program overwhelmed by the beauty of the countries we visited, and full of a new confidence in myself and a thirst for adventure. I really mean it when I say you have changed my life. Thank you!" Katie Lane*

*"The adventures and new experiences were amazing, but the friendships I've gained outweigh everything else put together!" Ginny Coyle*

## ***Pre-departure Information for Registered Participants***

### **Travel Insurance**

Pacific Discovery requires all participants to have a comprehensive travel insurance policy for the duration of the program. Details of your policy must be supplied to Pacific Discovery when you complete your online medical form. It is recommended that you purchase this within 14 days of registering for your program, to be eligible for maximum benefits.

*What's the difference between health/medical insurance and travel insurance?*

A travel insurance policy will cover you for more than just medical treatment. Most travel insurance policies should cover you for loss/damage of baggage; trip cancellation/curtailment; personal liability.

When selecting a travel insurance policy, ensure you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation, loss or theft of your personal belongings, personal liability and default of an airline.

Please be aware that most insurance policies do not cover expenses resulting from pre-existing medical conditions of which the insurance company has not been informed. If you have a pre-existing condition, it is essential that you inform both the insurance company and Pacific Discovery before traveling, for the safety of the group and yourself, and to avoid the possibility of having to meet emergency evacuation costs which can amount to tens of thousands of dollars.

The cost should be around \$150 for 1 month and the majority of program participants purchase travel insurance online from either:

STA - Student Travel ([www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com) > insurance)

Travel Guard International ([www.travelguard.com/travelinsurance/](http://www.travelguard.com/travelinsurance/))

### **Passports and Visas**

Travel abroad requires a passport. If you don't have one, you need to apply for one as soon as possible. Passport application forms are available at either your central post office or county courthouse. Link to the US Government Passport website:

[http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport\\_1738.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html)

**If you already have a passport, make sure it is not within 6 months of expiring at program end.**

If it will expire within 6 months of program end you will need to get a new one issued at least 3 months prior to joining this program, so please do this as soon as possible.

If travelling on a US, Canadian or UK passport, you will be issued a free 30-day tourist visa on arrival at Bangkok airport – so for this program, you are not required to obtain a visa prior to program start. At the end of the program you will have 1-2 days remaining on your free visa. If you plan to stay in Thailand after program end, you will need to apply for a 60-day visa through the Thai embassy before program start. Refer to this Thai Embassy webpage for details: [www.thaiembdc.org/consular/VISA/Tourist.aspx](http://www.thaiembdc.org/consular/VISA/Tourist.aspx).

If travelling on another nationality passport, you may need to arrange your visa before arrival. Please contact us to discuss this.

Prior to program start we send out comprehensive pre-departure information that clearly explains the arrival and rendezvous procedure.

## Health

There are no specific health requirements to participate in the Thailand Summer Program. We urge you to consult your physician regarding recommended vaccinations and any foreseeable illnesses while traveling. This consultation needs to take place at least two months prior to departure. Ask your physician about vaccinations for Hepatitis A and Typhoid (a single vaccine for both is available) and check that your Tetanus and Polio boosters are up to date.

Your doctor may recommend anti-malarial medication. Whilst there is only a very low risk of contracting malaria on this itinerary, it is impossible to say there is no risk at all and you should follow the advice of your doctor. The following link is to a webpage showing the incidence of malaria by province in 2004: [www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Malaria\\_in\\_the\\_SEAR\\_thamal\\_sit04.pdf](http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Malaria_in_the_SEAR_thamal_sit04.pdf). We don't go to any provinces with high malaria incidence and our program leader does not take malarial medication.

We recommend that you carry a personal first-aid kit as well as any personal medication. Please be aware that for legal reasons, our program leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug. Please ensure that you are adequately prepared.

If you have any queries regarding health recommendations for travel, please contact your doctor to discuss this.

## Spending Money

Spending money usually goes towards meals not included with the program, personal shopping, email and entertainment. We recommend you budget approximately \$200 for meals not provided, drinking water and snacks. You need to bring this money yourself, for meals. As shopping in Thailand is relatively inexpensive we think you could easily get by on \$200 – so in addition to your meal money of \$200, this is approximately \$400 total. The amount of spending money you bring really depends on your budget and shopping habits.

We recommend bringing most of your spending money on two Debit/Credit cards (essential to have a back-up in case your first card gets lost or damaged). Visa or MasterCard with the star or cirrus symbol on the back can be used most places to withdraw currency from an ATM. If you are not sure about your bank card, then contact your bank to find out if their cards are accepted in other countries.

You don't need to buy any foreign currency before you leave home.

## Keeping In Touch

The easiest way to keep in touch with family and friends while in Thailand is by email and travel blog.

**Pacific Discovery travel blog** - [www.pacificdiscovery.org/blog.aspx](http://www.pacificdiscovery.org/blog.aspx)

This is available for everyone in the group to post to, and for friends and family to read. Details of how to post to the blog will be outlined at the program orientation in Bangkok. You are welcome to give this blog address to anyone who might be interested in reading about your adventures!

**Make sure you can access you email account** from any computer in the world - if you can't, a free Yahoo or Gmail account works well. Phone calls can be made easily and cheaply from internet cafes. Call charges are about USD\$0.20 per minute. Don't bother bringing a phone card from the US – they often don't work. By all means bring your cell phone (contact your provider to set it up for use in Thailand) but be aware that call costs can be very expensive.

## Gear List

Traveling light is the 'ideal' in Asia. Everything you bring should fit into a medium sized backpack. Bring only what is on the list below and remember, the more space you have, the more you can take home. When selecting clothing to bring, keep in mind that Southeast Asia has high humidity.

### Clothing

- Comfortable hiking/running shoes but NOT smooth-soled street shoes
- Comfortable walking sandals
- 2 x comfortable light weight trousers
- 1 x light weight quick-dry hiking shorts (knee length preferred)
- Swimsuit
- 2 x cotton shorts or skirt (knee length or below preferred)
- 1 x warm light weight top (light fleece best)
- 1 x light weight raincoat
- 3 x light weight socks
- 1 x light weight long sleeve shirt
- 4 x cotton T-shirt/shirt/tank tops (make sure one is a short sleeve cotton shirt)
- 5 x underwear
- 1 x light weight pack towel
- 1 x sarong to use as a towel - you can buy these cheaply during first day in Bangkok

### Equipment

- Backpack or duffel to bring everything in
- Daypack/shoulder bag for daytrips
- Sleeping sheet

### Accessories

- Sunhat and sunglasses
- Pocket knife
- Flashlight/headlamp (compact)
- Watch with an alarm/ travel alarm clock
- Camera
- Ear plugs (optional)
- Eye shade for overnight travel
- Light cord clothesline (approx 20ft)(optional)
- One good book to share
- Personal first aid kit (refer below)
- Discman/iPod (optional)

### Paperwork, Money etc

- Passport & photocopy of same
- Air tickets & photocopy of same
- Travel Insurance policy details
- Money belt
- Debit/credit card, cash
- Travel journal (optional)
- Texts, syllabi, etc if taking credit
- Small flip photo album of friends, family, your home life, to show your trip mates and local people you meet

### Toiletries

- General toiletries (toothbrush, tooth paste, soap, shampoo, sanitary needs etc.)
- Tampons (often unavailable)
- Disposable contact lenses and solution
- Sunscreen and lip balm (difficult to obtain)
- Effective insect repellent
- Hand sanitizer/sanitizing wipes

### Personal first aid kit (should contain)

- Any prescribed medications
- Blister tape/moleskin for feet
- Pain relief (Tylenol, Ibuprofen etc)
- Antihistamine (for hay fever, bites, allergies)
- Eye drops
- Sting/bite relief spray or cream (for insect bites)
- Tweezers
- Band-aids
- Antiseptic solution or powder
- Scissors
- Non-adhesive dressing
- Motion sickness pills (non-drowsy)

**Do not bring:** Hairdryers; electric razors; laptops; expensive, irreplaceable jewellery

## Gear Tips

Please refer to the gear list and gear tips when you are packing for the trip. There's quite a lot of information here, so take your time and read through this carefully.

First of all, you don't need to go out and spend lots of money on the latest gear. In fact it's best to bring clothing and footwear that is comfortable and well worn in. Over the course of the trip, your pack and everything inside will take a beating.

**Travel light:** When you begin packing, you'll be tempted to bring more clothing than is on the clothing list because you still have room in your backpack – this is a fatal mistake! If we get one piece of advice from past participants it's consistently, “tell them to bring the absolute minimum”.

**Quick dry:** Look at all the clothing you are planning to bring and think to yourself, “How long is that going to take to dry”. This goes hand in hand with traveling light. As a general rule of thumb, clothing made from synthetic fibers like nylon, fleece, capilene, cool-max etc dries much quicker than woolen or cotton clothing.

**Cultural sensitivity:** Throughout Asia, people dress conservatively. In larger towns and cities people are used to international travelers, but whenever we are in rural areas and villages we expect you to wear pants, or knee length shorts/skirt, and have your shoulders covered.

**Buying clothing in Asia:** If you find you need another pair of pants, skirt, shorts, top or flip flops and are of average build, then you will be able to get them in easily in Asia. Good shoes, comfortable sports sandals, bras, women's swimsuits and clothing for larger builds can be almost impossible to buy.

**Your documents and how to keep them safe:** You will want to bring a money belt or neck pouch. It's a matter of individual preference which you use. Into it (inside little zip lock bags to keep everything dry) will go your passport, air tickets, travel insurance card and the bulk of your cash. For day to day purchases bring a small pocket size purse or wallet. *Additionally* have photocopies of your passport, air tickets and travel insurance policy in a zip lock bag down the back of your pack. Make sure you also leave a copy these items in the loving care of folks back home – if you lose anything, having a copy will speed up replacement.

**Footwear:** We recommend trail runners (pictured) or hiking shoes for the trip. These are a happy medium between hiking boots, which are heavy and bulky to carry around and (at the other end of the spectrum) smooth soled running or street shoes, which will not give you enough traction on muddy, slippery trails. Break them in before leaving for Asia, blisters can get infected easily in the tropics.

Sandals like Chaco (pictured) or Teva are perfect for the trip. These are what you'll wear all the time except when trekking. Birkenstock and other walking type sandals are OK but not as good for water sports. The most important thing is that your sandals are comfortable for walking long distances. Try walking in them for an hour...any blisters?



**Trousers:** Comfortable light weight trousers = light cotton or synthetic, not jeans or cords

**Shorts:** You need to bring a pair of shorts for walking and working in. Considerations here are again 'light weight' and not too short because of cultural sensitivities. Knee length hiking shorts are ideal. No heavy cargo shorts or 'shorty short daisy dukes'.



**Shirts:** Anything goes but it's good to have at least one or two collared cotton shirts like below. We've found these to be the most comfortable things to wear in the heat. You stay cooler than in when in a t-shirt. Females can wear one unbuttoned over a tank-top as an easy option for covering shoulders. A long sleeve shirt is essential for sun protection. Men's cotton business shirts from Goodwill are an inexpensive way to go.



**Raincoat:** Think compact and lightweight.

**Sarong:** The hitch hiker's guide to the galaxy will tell you that the only essential piece of equipment for travel is a towel. Douglas Adams can't have traveled in Asia because in fact it's a sarong that you want for drying yourself, skirt, picnic rug, pillow case, sun shade, tow rope....the uses are endless and they dry fast. Best to buy one on your first day in Thailand for a couple of bucks, rather than bringing anything from home. Don't bring a heavy towel that takes ages to dry!

**Sleeping sheet:** Like a roomy sleeping bag made out of light weight cotton or silk. If you don't already own one, you can just get an old single summer sheet, fold it in half and sew it into a sleeping bag.

**Backpack:** Note that we recommend a backpack, rather than a suitcase or duffel because there are numerous times during the program where you have to carry your pack on your back, over terrain that a rolling suitcase will not traverse. For the Thailand program you don't need a backpacking pack, just some sort of pack that you can store your stuff in. If you don't have a pack, a lightweight duffel or case will suffice, just make sure you can carry it.



Also...with a pack you look like a seasoned traveler but with a suitcase you look like a tourist ☺

**Daypack/shoulder bag:** Must have enough room for rain jacket, camera, sunscreen, sunglasses, water bottle, diary etc.

**Other things to think about...**

**iPod/mp3 player:** Good escapism.

**Electrical outlets and power adaptors:** Electrical outlets in Southeast Asia are the same shape as at home, so you do not need an adapter plug. Asia uses 220v electricity. This means that iPod and digital camera rechargers can plug straight in but other electrical appliances like hairdryers etc that only take 110v will blow up. To check if your electrical item can be used in Asia, check the voltage –if it says 110v, it will blow up, if it says 100-240v, it will work fine. But don't bring a hairdryer!

**Camera:** You will want to bring a camera to Southeast Asia. If photography is not your consuming passion a compact digital camera is much easier to travel with, fits in a pocket and is easier to look after than a big SLR with interchangeable lenses. Make sure you bring more than one memory card. We've had problems with people's cards getting damaged by heat and moisture. Some people make their digital file sizes smaller so they can fit lots of images onto a card but we don't think there's any point taking photos unless you have big enough files that they're of good enough quality to make prints once you return home.

**Video camera:** People who've taken a video camera on our trips have said on the positive side that they've taken awesome footage but on the negative that it's another thing to worry about and to try and get a waterproof case if you can.

**Toiletries:** You may not be able to get the same brand of contact lens solution, toothpaste or shampoo. If you are particular about which brands you use, bring enough to last till you return home.

**Washing/Laundry:** You will be able to get clothes laundered frequently when we are in cities. You will get sick of wearing the same clothes all the time but don't worry because everyone else will be doing the same and it is much better if all your gear fits easily into one backpack!

Once you've made a pile of everything you might bring, double check to see if you can leave anything behind...but make sure you DO bring the required gear. Honestly...everyone on our trips thinks they bring too much clothing.

## ***Your International Flights to and from Bangkok***

Once you have registered for this program, please go ahead and arrange your international flights to Bangkok and return. You can contact our travel agent, Sue Lai at Avia Travel, who arranges group flights for our programs. Our agent will work with you to find the best routing and fare for you. You may choose to fly from your nearest regional airport, or to depart from a major hub such as Los Angeles or New York. You will confirm your flight arrangements with the agent and pay the travel agent directly for your flights. Once you have confirmed and paid for your flights, please email your flight itinerary to us, so we can meet you on arrival in Bangkok.

### ***July 2010 Program Participants:***

***Arrive Bangkok*** on Thursday 1 July, before 12:00pm (usual departure from US, 2 days prior)

***Depart Bangkok*** on Wednesday 28 July, anytime (usual arrival to the US, same day)

**Arrival before program start:** You may arrive in Bangkok earlier than program start if you wish, or depart later than program finish. You will need to cover your own accommodation costs and transfers until program start/after finish. We can assist with accommodation and transfer bookings. Please contact us about this once you have confirmed your flights.

**Important Thailand arrival note to all participants:** A free Thailand 'visa on arrival' issued on arrival at the airport in Bangkok, is only valid for 30-days, so you can arrive in Thailand the day before program start, but not earlier otherwise your visa will expire before program finish. If you want to stay in Thailand longer than 30 days, you will need to arrange your own visa (see page 12).

### ***Pacific Discovery travel agent for flight bookings***

Sue Lai

Avia Travel

760-A Gilman St

Berkeley, CA 94710

Tel: (800) 950 2842, Tel: (510) 558 2150

Fax: (510) 558 2158

Email: sue@aviatravel.com

**Alternatively,** you are welcome to make your own travel arrangements to and from Bangkok through your own travel agent or online, and we will meet you on arrival at the airport in Bangkok. If you do make your own arrangements, please ensure you book flights to arrive and depart as shown above. If you have any questions about your itinerary, please contact us to discuss this before you book your flights.

## ***Recommended Books***

**The Dream of a Thousand Lives: A Sojourn in Thailand** by Karen Connelly  
(2001, Seal Press)(also released as 'Touch the Dragon')

Really good insight into rural life in Thailand, and Thai culture, from a Canadian's year as an exchange student. The swampy jungles, the lure of hedonistic Bangkok, the austere, ambient Buddhism, and the torrential rains serve as backdrops for Connelly's carefully crafted prose.

**The Beach** by Alec Garland (1998, Riverhead)

Lord of the flies in Southern Thailand. Fictional account of a young backpacker who stumbles across a map to a paradisiacal beach in Southern Thailand. He travels there and lives with other western tourists living there till it all goes horribly wrong. Page turning thriller.

**From the Land of Green Ghosts** by Pascal Khoo Thwe (2003, Harper Perennial)

Autobiographical story from a young Burmese minority student who fled persecution in Burma and ended up graduating from Cambridge University. Beautifully written. Gets really engrossing from about halfway through. Not only is it incredibly descriptive and evocative of the region, but will give you some valuable insight into the history of the Burmese students you'll work with.

**A Fortune-Teller Told Me: Earthbound Travels in the Far East** by Tiziano Terzani  
(2002, Three Rivers Press)

An Italian born journalists overland travels through 11 Asian countries in 1993. A year he'd been told not to fly by a fortune teller. A series of fascinating vignettes on Asia and his experiences.

**A Land on Fire: The environmental consequences of the Southeast Asia boom**  
by James David Fahn (2003, Westview Press)

Excellent series of chapters highlighting different environmental problems facing developing countries. For 10 years James David Fahn was the environmental reporter for Thailand's 'The Nation' newspaper. While the case studies are about Thailand, the problems and solutions are universal. Gives a clear understanding of how environmental issues and social issues are much more entwined in developing countries than developed countries.

**Two Years in the Kingdom: The Adventures of an American Peace Corps Volunteer in Northeast Thailand** by Blaine L. Comeaux (2002, Writers Club Press)

Two Years in the Kingdom is a lighthearted yet informative look at life in Thailand, from the perspective of an American Peace Corps Volunteer. Part personal narrative and part essay, the book is a chronicle of the author's two years in Pakham, a rural village in a little-known part of the Thai Kingdom. Written with the visiting foreigner in mind, Two Years provides a candidly honest and instructive look into rural Thai lifeways, foods, languages, and customs.

**Rice Without Rain** by Minfong Ho (1990, Harper Collins)

A serious novel about opposing views on how to deal with the problems of exploited peasants in Thailand. A sad, sometimes poetic, look at a difficult dilemma.

**Travelers' Tales Thailand: True Stories**, James O'Reilly (Editor), Larry Habegger (Editor)  
(2002, Travelers Tales)

**A Broad Abroad In Thailand; An Expat's Misadventures in the Land of Smiles** by Dodie Cross  
(Four Ways West/Crossroads Publishing; 2007)

The title says it all. A lighthearted account of life in Thailand.

## ***Recommended Movies***

**Legend of Suriyothai** (2003) - Chatri Chalerm Yukol – A story of intrigue, romance and war set in a dramatic period of Thailand's history, "The Legend of Suriyothai" is based on actual events in 16th century Thailand. Filmed at spectacular locations throughout Thailand, with a true cast of thousands, this epic chronicles the life of Suriyothai, a beautiful young princess.

## ***Websites***

**[www.thingsasian.com/thailand](http://www.thingsasian.com/thailand)**

Lots of good short essays on various aspects of Thai culture, travel writing pieces on different destinations in Thailand and various photo essays.

# Booking Conditions and Liability Release for Pacific Discovery Programs

## Payment Schedule & Booking Conditions

Prices in brochures and on website are correct at the time of publishing.

Pacific Discovery reserves the right to alter these prices at any time. The price of your program is guaranteed when you have paid in full.

All program participants must acknowledge reading and agreement with Booking Conditions and Liability Release, at the time of registration. A Medical Form must be completed once final payment is made. By advancing deposit to Pacific Discovery, the depositor thereby agrees to be bound by the booking conditions and payment schedule.

Upon receiving your forms and confirming space on the program of your choice, we will contact you with pre-travel information covering gear to bring, health & vaccinations, travel insurance, climate, spending money, cultural tips, and a list of recommended books and films.

If the program date you request is already full we will not process your deposit, but will contact you and add you to the waiting list.

The final payment covering balance of program cost and optional group flights is due 90 days before program departure, unless late booking. Master Card or Visa accepted.

Bookings accepted less than 90 days prior to departure can be secured with the deposit; full payment must then reach us within a further 14 days.

If the balance is not received by the specified date, we reserve the right to cancel your booking and your deposit may be forfeited.

## **Cancellations**

If you decide to cancel your program, the following fees apply at the time (prior to departure) we receive written notice of your cancellation: More than 91 days before departure - loss of deposit; 31 to 90 days before departure - 50% of program cost; 0 to 30 days before departure - 100% of program cost.

If you fail to join the program, join after its departure or leave prior to its completion, Pacific Discovery reserves the right to set the amount of refund (if any). Such terms are adopted in a similar form throughout the travel industry. They are usually covered by your trip cancellation/travel insurance, provided the reason for cancellation falls within the terms of the policy.

## **If we cancel a program**

Pacific Discovery reserves the right to cancel any program if sign-up is inadequate to make the program economically feasible for us to operate. If this happens, we give a full refund of program cost paid. However, Pacific Discovery is not responsible for additional expenses incurred by you in preparing for the trip (e.g. non-refundable air tickets, gear or medical expenses). If a program is under-booked we will inform you before final payment is due.

## Liability Release

Pacific Discovery Limited is a private New Zealand NGO formed to promote experiential education and sustainable tourism. Our incorporation number is WN/1148326.

## **Medical Considerations**

Pacific Discovery is not a medical facility and therefore is unable to accept any responsibility regarding medical advice, medications or inoculations that you or your doctor deem necessary for your safe participation. Pacific Discovery assumes no liability regarding provision of medical care.

## **Insurance**

Travel insurance is compulsory for all program participants. Your travel insurance must provide cover against personal accident, medical expenses, emergency repatriation and personal liability. We also recommend it covers cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

## **Responsibility**

By participating in a Pacific Discovery program, you assume certain obligations to Pacific Discovery and the other program members. It is your responsibility to:

- Understand the conditions implied in the Pacific Discovery itinerary and trip suitability description.
- Select a program (with the help of the Pacific Discovery staff) that is appropriate to your interests and abilities.
- Prepare for the program by familiarizing yourself with the itinerary and program dossier sent by Pacific Discovery.
- Bring appropriate gear and clothing as advised by Pacific Discovery.
- Follow considerate standards of personal hygiene in order to reduce risk of contracting diseases.
- Follow considerate social behavior with other program participants and respect their habits.
- Act in an appropriate and courteous manner befitting the customs of countries you visit.
- Complete the program itinerary as scheduled (or as adjusted by your program leader as necessary).
- Respect the countries we visit by using environmentally safe products, staying on established routes of travel and not littering.

You are aware that travel within a group may involve compromise to accommodate the diverse desires and physical abilities of group members. Your program leader will do their utmost to ensure that any problems are solved for the benefit of the group as a whole. Signing this Liability Release Form signifies your acceptance of the leader's authority to make decisions affecting the group or individuals. For instance, he/she may require an individual to leave the group if he/she believes that a person's health is at risk, if an illegal act is committed, or their behavior becomes detrimental to the safety, enjoyment and well-being of the group. Should the leader take such action, that person would not be entitled to any refund. Similarly, a participant leaving a program en-route will not be entitled to any refund. Under these circumstances Pacific Discovery reserves the right to set the amount of refund (if any).

Pacific Discovery will not accept responsibility or liability for any program participant who contravenes any law or regulation of any country visited.

You acknowledge that travel on a Pacific Discovery program requires a degree of flexibility, and understand that the route, accommodation and modes of transport are subject to change without prior notice due to local circumstances. We reserve the right to make reasonable changes in the itinerary where deemed advisable for the comfort and well-being of program members. These changes are

binding and additional expenses will be charged to you if the reason for any alteration is outside the control of Pacific Discovery.

You acknowledge that Pacific Discovery contracts with a network of companies, government agencies and individuals to assist in the running of its programs. To the best of Pacific Discovery's knowledge, these third parties are qualified to perform the duties they are contracted to perform. However Pacific Discovery will not be held liable for any injury, damage, loss, delay or irregularity that may occur due to the behavior of these third parties.

Any air travel that is part of any program is subject to the conditions as stipulated by the airline concerned and liability is limited in accordance with International Convention.

No employee, servant or agent of Pacific Discovery has authority to vary these conditions.

The terms and conditions of all agreements made with Pacific Discovery shall be subject to, and governed by, New Zealand law. You agree New Zealand will be the forum for resolution of any dispute related to your participation in this program.

If a dispute arises, you will try to resolve it directly with Pacific Discovery. If you cannot resolve the dispute you agree to go to mediation first. You will agree the mediator with Pacific Discovery within 10 days of notification of the dispute. If a mediator is not agreed or appointed, you and Pacific Discovery agree to participate in arbitration under the Arbitration Act 1996 (NZ).

The terms of this agreement shall serve as a release and assumption of risk binding on your heirs, executor, administrator and all members of your family.

You understand that traveling with Pacific Discovery may involve risks (and rewards) above and beyond those encountered on a more conventional holiday, and that you are undertaking an adventure program with inherent dangers. You understand that you are traveling to geographical areas where, amongst other things, the standard of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, cleanliness, medical facilities, telecommunications and infrastructure development may not be of the standard you are used to at home or would find on a conventional holiday. You have read and understood the itinerary and suitability for this program you are undertaking and have provided details of any pre-existing medical conditions. You accept these risks and obligations and you fully assume the risks of travel. You release Pacific Discovery from any liabilities connected to these risks to the maximum extent permitted by law.

*I understand that this is a release of liability and a contract between me and Pacific Discovery Limited and/or its contracted tour operators or affiliated organizations, and I sign this agreement of my own free will. If any part of this agreement is deemed unenforceable, all other parts shall remain in full force and effect.*

Please contact us with any questions.  
Pacific Discovery Ltd  
PO Box 899  
Nelson 7040  
New Zealand  
Freecall from the US 1 800 655 3415  
info@pacificdiscovery.org