

Projects Abroad Thailand Official Newsletter

February 2014

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Editor's note

Hello everyone and welcome to another edition of the monthly newsletter. When we think of February, we normally think of the shortest month of the year and also Valentine's Day. Here in Thailand valentines happens to fall on Makha Bucha day, which is a very important day on the Buddhist calendar. Makha Bucha falls on the second full moon of the lunar calendar and is considered to be a day for making merit by going to temples for special observances and join in the other Buddhist activities. In the evening of Makha full-moon day, each temple in Thailand holds a candlelight procession called a *wian thian*. While holding lotus flowers, incense and a lighted candle, the monks and congregation members circle clockwise three times around the ordination hall, once for each of the Three Jewels; the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Some whom are more involved will be keeping the Five Precepts Practice of renunciation: Observe the Eight Precepts, practice of meditation and mental discipline, stay in the temple, wearing white robes, for a number of days. So, on that note I would like to wish all our readers peace and happiness on this Buddhist occasion.

The month of February has also been a fairly hectic month for the conservation team. We had the opportunity to join the Local Administrative Office with their artificial reef project and we also had the opportunity to join them for another event that was held for the world wetlands day. This event had our volunteers planting sea grass in hopes to increase the habitat and feeding grounds for many different animal species, including the endangered dugong. Apart from those, we also had the opportunity to visit Khao Thong School to conduct an environmental activity.

Until next time,

Vishal Pawa
Conservation Project Manager



Life Changing Moment in Thailand, Sabrina Lechenmayer from Denmark at her Care Project



"I have had the best host family who were so sweet and during my two months there has not been a single time that I felt uncomfortable. They cooked food for me and took such good care of me. I have stayed with them and feel like a part of the family and I don't want to leave. The school was fantastic – both the teachers and the students. It has been the time of my life".

Sabrina Lechenmayer arrived in Southern Thailand in November 2013 to volunteer in a Day Care Center after her Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Fiji. She wanted to come to Thailand and to get to know more about Thai culture since a long time ago. Working with children, she helped staff at school take care of children aged from two to three years old. In the morning, she helped them develop their skills starting from social and emotional skills. A typical day at her Care Placement starts from exercise session in the morning and then basic communication skill, which leads to lunch. Before getting food, Sabrina helped them learn about proper hygiene by washing their hands with soap. After lunch she helped cleaning the canteen and then it's time to send them to bed. Her work as a volunteer has helped increase her self-confidence and her to being more open-minded towards everything. *"You come to this new culture that you have to adapt to as well as into the family, the work and the other volunteers, who you also need to learn how to communicate with and need to learn each other's boundaries. You just learn so much and to have a new open attitude towards everything, and also learn that if you are yourself then everybody will like you for who you are – the family, the teachers, and the children. Just be yourself".*

Living in Thailand is simply just amazing for Sabrina. *“Everybody is happy, smile at you and say hello to you. The food is nice and it’s actually not hard adapting into the families because every day you have a routine like at home. You have breakfast, go to work, have dinner, and it is basically the same except the food is different, of course. It is amazing – everybody is so relaxed, no stress”*. During her stay in Thailand, she has spent time with her host family, placement and volunteer friends equally. *“In my free time, I mostly hang out with the other volunteers where we go to town for a shake or something, because it is so nice and warm down here. My host family is also very sweet to take me out to different beautiful nature-places and other places that I probably would not find myself. Many of us volunteers also go on trips in the weekends to different islands and see lots of Thailand”*. Her most memorable experience was when her parents were visiting and she took them to the school. *“It was just amazing to see how all the children, even though they had never met my parents, just ran to them and gave them all this love. All the teachers were also so open-minded and we did the handprint and the children just loved it and were so happy. It was definitely my most amazing experience”*.

It has made me wanting to travel much more and I am more independent. Down here you just have to be yourself and if you want anything to happen, YOU have to make them happen. It makes you realize that nothing stops you – everything is possible.

As a former volunteer, she has advice to people who are interested in what she has been doing the past three months. *“Just enjoy every single second. It is amazing and it is not a time you will ever get back, be yourself and don’t let anything stop you”*.



Experience volunteering 8,461 miles across the world by Surya Tubach from USA

"It actually works, I mean you have to really put in time and effort and it could be pretty tiring but it's really worth it. I really like it."

Having always wanted to travel to Asia, Surya Tubach decided to spend her gap semester volunteering with Projects Abroad in Thailand doing a teaching project. *"I wanted to do something more meaningful than just backpacking around; I thought Projects Abroad provides the best opportunity and the best support for what I was looking for."* Surya was also very excited to learn about another culture while volunteering.



During her six week stay in Krabi, she has had the opportunity to be involved in a number of activities. Not only was she teaching at her school placement in Koh Yao Noi, she also got to participate in a Road Show. This is a special activity where the volunteers teach the children of the community English through fun games and activities. There was a week which was one of the special weeks during school break in Thailand, where she did preparation for the road show and a tour for community volunteers who went places to teach English. Our teaching and care volunteers went together to Koh Yao Noi. On working days, she had to prepare materials for the activities that they were going to do the next day. This included materials for teaching English and games. Working at Baan Nam Jeud School on Koh Yao Noi was one of the most rewarding experiences for her, as it was the first time teaching English and there was that feeling when giving something to someone who needs it without wanting anything in return. It was time spent useful and she was very happy working at the school as she felt the warm welcome from the children. They were really happy to have volunteers at their school and they all were very enthusiastic.

During her free time, she found there were so many things to do in Thailand. She liked spending time with the other volunteers at the beach and sometime at the night market because it was always fun. *"I went with my some friends and we rode the elephants. That was really cool, really awesome."*



What is going on with Projects in Krabi?

Community Outreach February 2014

Sea grass planting with Krabi Administrative Organization on February 13th 2014

On February 13th, it is our monthly Outreach Day. Projects Abroad volunteers, together with staffs, will be joining Krabi Administrative Organization to plant "Sea grass". The main objective of this event is to be environmental friendly and keep our ecology system balance as well as to benefit sea animals. Sea grass is a type of flowery plant that plays an important role underwater. They keep the water clear, water slows down when it hits sea grass leaves, help reduce wave energy and allows sediment to fall out of the water column to the ground. They also help maintaining photosynthesis; when sediment is on the bottom and not suspended, less light is blocked, therefore, there is increased light at the sea grass canopy.



Diving in Paradise Phi Phi with Conservation Volunteers

If you want to dive in one of the most beautiful places on earth, Koh Phi Phi, Thailand is recommended. Projects Abroad Thailand Conservation Volunteers go on a dive trip three times a week. Their spots include Koh Phi Phi Don which is well known for divers. The dive takes place not far from Maya Bay (from the movie "The Beach" starring Leonardo DiCaprio). They usually do 2 or 3 dives a day depends on the weather and how long each dive takes. On the way to Koh Phi Phi you can see a lot of good stuff. Every island is amazing! You see majestic mountains and deep blue sea. One of the prettiest groups of islands is Chicken Island and Poda Island.



Festive Event in Krabi

Mawlid - the birthday celebration of Islamic prophet Muhammad

Krabi is such a fascinating place. There is such deep spiritual and cultural history. There are things that most people coming through as tourists don't get to see. I am so lucky to have local friends living here. This is amazing! It is the small town feel which is rare these days, everyone knows each other, but at the same time there is such a "live and let live attitude" people can do what they want and it's their choice. There are a lot of interesting festivals that only insiders know. One of them is Mawlid Festival.



The Mawlid festival (*mawlidu n-nabiyyi* or "Birth of the Prophet") is celebrated at Krabi Central Mosque from the 31st of January to the 4th of February. I had an opportunity to go see the celebration with my co-workers in the afternoon of February the 3rd. We headed out at sunset and arrived at the time when it started to get crowded. The first thing I saw at the entrance was a couple of Islamic girls taking picture at the gate. They dressed very beautifully, which made me even more excited to shop.

I heard from my friend that there were a lot of stuff imported from the Middle East, so I was excited to buy some carpets and clothes. Once we walked into the festive event, my eager to buy stuff was gone and replaced with my hunger.



Chicken Kebab!



Saudi Arabian Style Chicken Biryani



Goat Soup