

THE OFFICIAL

NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Thailand



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Editor's Note

Welcome to the February edition of the Projects Abroad Thailand newsletter!

This month, conservation volunteers teamed up with a local charity organisation, Trash Heros, to help clean up a local beach. They all collected 300kg of trash which is a great accomplishment. We also have an article about the plight of coral reefs and why they need to be saved.

This month conservation volunteers did an Education and Awareness activity at a local school teaching children about the importance of reducing, reusing and recycling. They also did an arts and crafts activity with the children where they reused plastic bottles by making piggy banks.

The end of January brought with it the end of the Mobile Teaching Programme. Cheyanne, Jessica and Caroline, the mobile teaching volunteers, got to write about their time in Thailand and travelling around teaching English lessons at different schools in the Krabi region.

The community volunteers also got an introduction to Thai cooking at their monthly cultural workshop, where they made sticky rice and egg custard.

Thank you for a great month, volunteers!

If there is anything you would like to contribute to next month's newsletter, let me know by emailing me at paularabeling@project-abroad.org

Paula Rabeling
Communications Officer

Spending the day with Trash Hero

As a volunteer for Projects Abroad, I was given an amazing opportunity to help the local community of Krabi clean up one of the most littered beaches in the area. As Projects Abroad volunteers we were able to work hand in hand with the local people of Krabi who ranged from all ages to clean up all of the waste coming from the land, and preventing as much as possible from entering the open ocean. When the trash enters the open ocean all aquatic animals suffer as some mistake it for food, while others get entangled in the hazardous material. Along with Trash Hero (another organization) we scoured the whole beach for recyclable material, finding abandoned hazardous material like oil tanks that have been partially used and abandoned, and lastly we collected everything else from endless rows of trash bags to cigarettes that covered the sand for miles. By working alongside the local community we were able to educate them on the importance of cleaning up the beaches and the devastating impact it has on the aquatic life. I am very thankful for this opportunity because I learned very important lessons that I could implement back home and to other communities all around the world!

- Sam Röell (USA)



Meet the Coral Reef

Projects Abroad's Conservation Project in Thailand is located in the Krabi province, right by the Andaman Sea. Conservation volunteers have the opportunity to often dive at this location where Thailand's most pristine and wide-ranging coral reefs are. Although the Andaman Sea takes up only one third of Thailand's coastline, over half of the country's coral reefs are in these waters. These reefs support around 4 000 species of fish and 700 species of coral, and a quarter of the world's coral reefs are found in Southeast Asia's ocean.

These ancient animals that reside in shallow water and are related to the jelly fish, are one of the most diverse ecosystems in the world, being home to thousands of marine species. A third of all marine fish species spend part of their lives living on coral reefs; many use them as nurseries until they are older and big enough to swim in the deeper ocean. Coral reefs do not only provide benefits to those that live in the ocean, but also to humans.

Coral reefs provide many valuable services to humans such as food, shoreline protection and medicines. The NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) said, "Coral reef plants and animals are important sources of new medicines being developed to treat cancer, arthritis, human bacterial infections, Alzheimer's, heart disease, viruses, and other diseases." According to the World Resource Institute, destroying 1km of coral reefs means the loss of between 137 000USD to 1 200 000USD over a 25 year period. Even with these facts, 60% of the world's coral reefs are threatened because of human activity.

What are the major threats to coral reefs?

- Destructive fishing practices such as cyanide fishing, dynamite fishing, bottom trawling, and banging on reefs with sticks
- Overfishing, as it affects the ecological balance of coral reef populations
- Careless diving, boating, and snorkelling happens all over the world, with people touching reefs, stirring up sediment, and dropping anchor on reefs
- Pollution such as urban and industrial waste, sewage, and agrochemicals are all poisoning the reefs
- Corals cannot survive if the water temperature is too high. Global warming has already led to an increased levels of coral bleaching and this is predicted to escalate

Without crucial action to tackle these issues, coral reefs could disappear. The good news is that there are still many ways that everybody can help in saving coral reefs for the future.

How can you help coral reefs?

- Conserve water - the less water you use, the less run off and waste water will pollute the ocean
- Reduce pollution - Fossil fuels lead to the warming of the ocean and the destruction of corals, so try walking, biking, and taking the bus instead of using your car
- Use organic fertilizers - Even if you live far from a coral reef, fertilizer products flow into the water system and pollute the ocean
- Dispose of your trash properly - Recycle! This helps keep rubbish out of the ocean
- Plant a tree - Trees reduce run off into the ocean, and you will also contribute to reversing global warming
- Practise responsible diving and snorkelling - Do not touch the reef or anchor your boat on the reef
- Volunteer for a coral reef clean up - The Projects Abroad Conservation Project does regular dives against debris where volunteers assist in removing trash from corals

Coral reefs are an important element in the health of the ocean and to the species that live there, and, by extension, they are important to people. A healthy ocean equals a healthy world.

Two Canadian teachers travel to Thailand to broaden their personal and professional horizons

We are two friends and teachers from Quebec who decided to volunteer at Projects Abroad for many reasons. First, we wanted to become better teachers by deepening our knowledge about this profession. We also wanted to make a trip away from our country and travel with a backpack. So we did research on the internet to find a project that would suit us. Thus, we found the Teaching Project. The only remaining thing to do was to choose a destination, which turned out to be Thailand. Initially, we did not really have a destination in mind. In fact, we even looked at going to Australia or New Zealand. By cons, our choice was returned to Thailand because students in this country need us more than the others. So with Projects Abroad, we could achieve our mission in this country and that is to appear in the body's action countries. More so, the scenery of Thailand pursued us to want to visit this beautiful country. Also, we were curious to experience something out of the ordinary as the Thai culture is very different from our own.

We were volunteers in Thailand; Krabi for two weeks. We taught in primary schools with Thai students. We were on a mobile teaching mission, so we taught in two schools: Baan Klong Sai and Baan Rai Sai. This experience enabled us to discover a new phase of education. Indeed, the relationship we had with the students here was totally different from the ones with the Quebec students. We were surprised to see how much the students wanted to learn and appreciated our presence as teachers. Also, the view from the school was amazing. There is a ceremony every morning, which is not the case at the Quebec schools.

Here, we teach barefoot and we play a lot with the children. We felt that the students enjoyed learning with us. We played through colour games, duck and run, basket, fruit races, etc. Furthermore, we were surprised on how much effort the children put in to learning and performing well. Moreover, we found that the children here were really polite and helpful. They were always helping us to transport our equipment and to get ready for school. Another thing that surprised us greatly at school is the fact that we are served breakfast and lunch! The children brought us coffee every morning and something to eat. How could we hope for better start for our day? We enjoyed teaching in Thailand so much. This was the most wonderful experience we ever had. We will miss the cute little faces of our Thai students. One thing is clear: we will keep those memories forever etched in our minds.

- By: Caroline Roy Brazeau and Jessica Lauzière

Being a mobile teacher in Thailand

Overall, I really enjoyed being a volunteer with Projects Abroad in Thailand! I found the project coordinators to be very helpful from the beginning when they picked me up at the airport. Even though my flight got delayed multiple times and I ended up arriving in Krabi at 1am instead of my scheduled time of 9:30pm one of the coordinators, Nou, was still at the airport to pick me up and bring me to my hotel before starting the project the following morning. She told me some of the basics that I would need to know including which are good restaurants to go for breakfast at in the morning, a phone in case of emergency, and a contact number in case I needed anything.

The following morning I was picked up and taken to the office where they explained to me in great detail about everything that I would be doing for my time here, they gave me a map of the town, explained basic places that I may need to know in both Thai and English to help me get around, the fundamental Thai words, emergency phone numbers as well as the numbers and names of everyone volunteering with Projects Abroad during my duration, and the names and phone numbers of clinics in Krabi Town. If I needed anything, I was given the cell phone numbers of both of my project

coordinators and they were very helpful along the way for anything that I needed. This was a great introduction and the way to start off my time with Projects Abroad Thailand.

I had a great host mom and living in at a host family was a great contribution to my experience in Krabi. My Thai mom did everything she could to make me feel comfortable and safe. She always made sure that I had enough food to eat and lots of fruit in the house to snack on. Living in Thailand is very different from many other countries and you have to enter every situation with an open mind, remembering that their culture is very different from many others. All that was in my room was a mattress on the floor, two fans to try and keep the room cool, and a TV and DVD player (but everything was in Thai so I could not understand it). The food is also something that you have to be ready for. Almost every meal contained rice just with a different sauce, meat, and vegetables so you have to be ready for a change in your diet. Last but not least, my host family was located about a 30 minute walk away from the office so if I wanted to do anything or go to the office, I either had to ride the motor bike taxi or be prepared to walk. This was a challenge for me in the way that I wanted to hang out with people in the evenings, however I always had to keep in mind how to get back home before the 10pm curfew. This walk was okay with me though as I was able to see more of the town and experience a different neighbourhood than the one I live in.

Working as a mobile teacher was a fantastic volunteering experience for me! I really enjoyed being able to teach English in three totally different schools, therefore being able to help a greater variety of children. Teaching in different schools meant saying hello to students on Monday and goodbye to them on Friday. This form of mobile teaching forced me to really make sure that I was teaching the children as best as I could for I was only with them for a week, while not getting too attached to the children. Each school had their own ways and all of the children were at different levels. As mobile teachers, we would have to transport everything that we needed to teach with us for day on the taxi bus, drive approximately 45 minutes to the school, and then set up each day before we could start our lesson. Whatever we did not have or we happened to forget it at the office we had to make do without it. We would teach a lesson from 9 am to 11:30 am and then clean up the classroom before enjoying the meal that the school would so graciously prepare for us. After lunch we were able to either get ice cream or play some games with the children like Thai basketball, badminton, or soccer depending on what they were already playing. I also learnt during this time that the students love to play clapping games. Whether it is just a high five, a fist bump, or clapping hands with one another. After some time with the children, we would head back to the office around noon to make sure that we had everything prepared for or finish preparing for the lesson the next day. If everything was prepared for the previous day, you had the afternoon free to do whatever you wanted. I really enjoyed teaching in the morning as it gave us the chance to do something in the afternoons and evening whether it be preparing another lesson, going to the beach, getting drinks with friends, or just sitting back and relaxing around town. It was also nice that we only had to work during the week so this allowed gave us time to travel on the weekends being able to explore more of Thailand.

My time volunteering with Projects Abroad as a mobile teacher in Krabi, Thailand was an absolutely amazing experience that I am so happy I had the chance to participate in. It helped me as an individual become more confident in my teaching and leadership skills, while also allowing me to enjoy the little things in life more. These children are very disciplined and very respectful with everything that they do. Before they enter any room, all of the students take off their shoes. As us volunteers arrived in the mornings and were preparing our lesson, the students would bring us coffee and breakfast. If we needed anything, the students were there to jump in and lend a hand whether it be setting up tables and chairs or carrying out equipment to the bus; they were always there to give a helping hand. I also love the way that the children make the best of everything that they are given! Most of the children only come to class with one pencil, one eraser, and one ruler; that is all they have. To play after lunch they only have a ball and a basket therefore they always play basketball. The children are so happy and make the best out of every situation that they are in and I absolutely love that about them! They are always trying so hard and I can tell! Volunteering with Projects Abroad has impacted my life in more than one way and I will no longer take anything for granted, but instead always look for the positive in every situation and make the best of what I have.

"Better choice, for better life"

- Cheyanne Hinkley (Canada)

Volunteers in Action

