



## **DUKEENGAGE IN THAILAND**

This program is organized by Global Vision International (GVI) and STA Travel in collaboration with DukeEngage.

**Program Dates:** May 13-July 8

(Dates subject to change up until the point of departure.)

### **Service Focus**

Developing and promoting environmental sustainability through broad-based coastal conservation efforts in Phang Nga.

### **Program Leader(s)**

- Molly Plexico, Thailand/Laos Country Director: Molly started with GVI as a staff member on GVI teaching and community development in Laos. She has a background in teaching and education and worked with Americorps before joining GVI. Molly now manages all of GVI's programs in Thailand and Laos.
- Christine Theron, GVI Partnerships Manager: Christine has previously worked in NPO Operations Management, working with vulnerable girl youth and has a post graduate degree in Development Studies. She has a background in teaching and education and taught English in South Korea and Mexico before joining GVI.
- Nicolette Cagle, DukeEngage Faculty Fellow; Lecturer with the Nicholas School of the Environment, Environmental Science & Policy Division. Nicolette teaches courses emphasizing natural history and environmental education & communication. She is the Director of the Environmental Science Summer Program at Duke and Co-Director of the NSOE Communications Studio.

### **Program Scope**

During their two months in Phang Nga, students will work closely with a number of local partners and will be involved in a variety of conservation, education and community development activities.

The first few days will involve orientation to Phang Nga and training on biological survey techniques, data collection protocols and local flora and fauna knowledge. Following orientation, students will participate in a variety of activities that may include conducting surveys for the Department of National Parks, coastal habitat restoration through debris removal and mangrove planting, sea turtle conservation efforts and enhancing environmental awareness, as well as teaching English to children and adults.

Cultural activities, such as visiting local temples and schools and receiving language and cultural classes, will be included in the program.

### **Service Opportunities**

GVI has formed several partnerships that are integral in achieving our aims and objectives. Our main partners currently are the Taplamu Royal Navy Base and the Phang Nga Coastal Fishery Research and Development Center. However other partners include: The Thailand Department of National Parks, Ban Nam Khem Public School and Community Development Center.

Students will be conducting bird and biodiversity surveys on the nearby island of Kho Kho Khao and national parks to help collect scientific data with the aim to increase local knowledge base and help inform their future management decisions. Students will also be partaking in debris removal and survey projects in coastal areas and local towns, and/or mangrove-planting initiatives with the aim to restore disturbed coastal habitats. To boost local sea turtle conservation efforts, students will assist with the turtle breeding capture -and-release program. Students may clean sea turtle tanks or may apply anti-fungal iodine solution as instructed by Centre staff.

Students will have the chance to get up close and personal to these incredible creatures with the long-term goal to increase wild Green, Hawksbill and Olive Ridley turtle populations in Southern Thailand. We encourage community involvement and currently provide environmental education and awareness classes to local school children in the town of Baan Nam Khem to increase local environmental knowledge and understanding. English lessons may also be offered to local partners to help improve their communications with tourists.

### **Program Requirements**

**Language & Other Prerequisites:** No previous experience or qualifications in the field of conservation is required to join this program, however an interest and understanding of issues threatening conservation initiatives is desirable. All students must have proficiency in the English language. Students must be able to understand health and safety protocols as well as project specific training from our field staff.

**Course Requirements:** None required, however Environment courses, particularly Marine Conservation, Field Methods, or other research courses, will be advantageous. As well, experience working with children or teaching English to children or adults will be a plus.

### **Personal Competencies:**

- Empathy and cultural sensitivity: effectively and respectfully communicates and interacts with people of different ages, races, religions, and cultures; demonstrates curiosity about the lives of others without judgment.
- Ability to work productively on a supervised team: responds to feedback and critique from co-workers and supervisors with maturity and openness to improvement; listens actively and communicates courteously; responds with patience and perseverance to new or unanticipated situations and obstacles; accepts responsibility for their actions; balances their personal expectations of the volunteer experience with the realities of working on short-term projects in cultural settings that are new to them.
- Self-reliance and self-confidence: understands and meets their own physical and emotional needs in new environments with an age-appropriate mixture of optimism and realism, must be flexible in response to the needs of the community.

**Reflection Sessions:** Field staff will act as mentors to the student while on project in Phang Nga. Our experienced field team will offer weekly mentoring to the students, to help improve their skills and address any issues. For the duration of the program, students may be offered additional assignments dependent on their skills and suitability. Upon completion of the program, students will have a final evaluation with their mentor, followed by certification and summary of training and experience received; GVI will also be able to provide a confidential professional reference.

### **Program Details**

**Neighborhood:** Students will be based in the small coastal fishing village of Ban Nam Khem in Phang Nga, Southern Thailand. This close-knit community welcomes GVI volunteers, and although many families live simple lives there is no shortage of kindness or happiness. Facilities are limited, but there are a couple of restaurants, some shops selling local produce, an internet cafe and launderette.

**Description of Community:** The village where students will stay, Ban Nam Khem, was the hardest hit of all Thai coastal villages in the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The village lost half of its population of around 5,000 people. Since 2004, the village has built two tsunami evacuation centres, established early warning systems, and educated the locals with signage and educational materials. GVI works at one of these evacuation centres along with other schools and centres in the village.

**Housing and Accommodations:** Students will bunk together in shared accommodation at a local resort in its low season, a 15-minute walk from the GVI volunteer base. The resort is very comfortable and provides a nice place to relax and work on assignments and reflections outside of project work. Rooms with private baths will be shared by 2-3 students of same gender. The rooms have electricity, hot water and air conditioning.

**Meals:** Three meals a day are provided while on project. Some meals are prepared by volunteers in rotation,

whereas other meals are provided at a restaurant or prepared by local families. Most meals are simple but healthy. Thai food generally consists of rice or noodles with stir-fry or curry. Thai spices will be used, but students can ask for 'non-spicy' and vegetarian options will always be available.

**Health Note:** Shellfish is a common ingredient in the local cuisine. Ready, nearby access to treatment for travelers experiencing a severe allergic reaction to this and other food(s) may be limited at this program site. Students who are considering application to DukeEngage-Thailand should review these facts with their families and medical providers before applying. Once accepted, a participant with severe food allergies is expected to inform DukeEngage, [dukeengage@duke.edu](mailto:dukeengage@duke.edu), of their specific concerns and needs no later than January 19. The DukeEngage staff will work with participants on a safety assessment and to identify reasonable accommodations and meal options.

**Communication:** Local cell phones and sim cards will be provided to each student upon arrival. Each student will be given the contact numbers of the on-site director and field staff to enable easy communication through the program. Students will also have access to the internet, both for project purposes and to contact family or friends back home. Wifi is available in the accommodation. Students can bring laptops (at their own risk).

**Transportation:** Project-related transport will be provided (including airport transfers) and students will be traveling to a number of different sites. Daily commutes will vary in length from 5 to 30 minutes. Transport in Thailand is cheap and convenient. A combination of services will be used, including: minivans, buses, ferries, and local taxis or songthaew.

**Volunteer Placement Logistics:** Participants will work together as a group or in smaller groups. The majority of the program involves working outdoors on a number of different initiatives. Students should be prepared to walk on a daily basis, including hiking in rainforest environments. Hours of service work vary depending on the activity, but students can expect to work up to 8 hours per day between the hours of 5am and 5pm.

**Opportunities for Autonomy and Private Space:** The volunteer program runs from Monday to Friday each week, with evenings usually providing free time, as well as weekends. Enrichment activities organized by the program may include a Thai cooking workshop, a visit to Kao Sok National Park, and a kayaking tour to Ko Tapu. Students are also welcome to organize their own social activities on weekends.

**Criminal Background Checks:** To ensure the safety of the children and communities we work with, all accepted participants will be required to submit a criminal background check no later than 2 weeks before their program start date. Should this document not be submitted before arrival in the field, the student/students will not be allowed to participate in community projects.

**Miscellaneous:** Days can be long and tiring especially with the heat and humidity present in Southern Thailand.

**Suggested Readings:** Staff in the field will provide training on the skills required, but volunteers will benefit from learning more about local history, culture and customs before travel.