

DUKEENGAGE IN THAILAND

Developing and promoting coastal conservation efforts. *This program is organized by GVI in collaboration with DukeEngage.*

Dates: May 13-July 8, 2020

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

Service themes

- Environment and Conservation
- Education and Literacy
- Community Development and Outreach

Program Focus

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

Program Leaders

- Molly Plexico, Southeast Asia Regional Director: Molly started with GVI as a staff member in 2012 on GVI teaching and community development projects in Laos. She has a background in teaching and education and served with AmeriCorps before joining GVI. Molly now manages GVI's programs in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia.
- Vanessa Rees, Program Manager: Vanessa has extensive experience with GVI Service Learning Groups, having led groups in GVI India in 2017, then leading all groups in GVI Thailand in 2018 and 2019. She has a background in education, marketing, and volunteering.

Program Overview

During their eight weeks 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, data collection protocols, and introduction to TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) training. Following orientation, students will participate in a variety of activities that may include conducting surveys in 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.

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 6am and 6pm.

Goals for Students

- To learn about local and global conservation issues and contribute to the restoration of disturbed coastal habitats by participating in mangrove regeneration projects, beach cleans, and litter removal.

- To understand the human impact on the local environment and conservation in marine and terrestrial environments and share that knowledge with local residents by providing environmental education workshops.
- To understand the local tourism economy and the skills necessary to participate. Students will help local children and adults develop their English skills through language instruction and practice.
- To learn about and contribute to local sea turtle conservation efforts by aiding the monitoring, rearing, and capture and release programs.
- To be familiar with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, to understand the host community's chosen approach to advancing a subset of the SDGs, and to formulate a plan for how to impact the SDGs in the students' own communities.
- To become comfortable working with cultures other than their own, to appreciate the skills, resources, and contributions of people different from themselves, and to understand that there are different perspectives on international issues.

Partnership Opportunities

GVI has formed several partnerships that are integral in achieving our aims and objectives. Our main partners currently are the Royal Thai Navy, based in Taplamu, several local schools such as the Ban Nam Khem Public school and the Community Development Centre, and the Department of Marine and Coastal Restoration (DMCR). We have other schools in the area where we have previously conducted workshops and construction activities, including FED and Ban Yan Yao School in Takuapa and Koh Phra Thong School.

Students will be conducting bird surveys in the village to help collect scientific data and add it to citizen science databases. 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 of restoring disturbed coastal habitats. To boost local sea turtle conservation efforts, students will assist with the turtle head start program. Students will clean sea turtle tanks and apply anti-fungal iodine solution as instructed by GVI staff. Students will have the chance to get up close and personal with these incredible creatures and contribute to the long-term goal of increasing wild green turtle populations in Southern Thailand. Students will also have the chance to construct behavior enrichment devices and to observe their effect on the turtles in the tanks.

GVI also encourages community involvement and currently provides environmental education and awareness classes to local schoolchildren in the town of Ban Nam Khem. Duke students will help increase local environmental knowledge and understanding. English lessons will also be offered to local partners to help improve their communications with tourists. Participants will also teach English to the hotel staff where they stay. The TEFL training that community participants receive will also help them prepare and conduct workshops themselves for local schools on the topics of conservation, healthcare, and the environment.

The schedule changes week to week and is dependent upon the changing needs of our community partners. Students can expect to work on a variety of projects each week with service work roughly evenly divided between conservation and community development.

Program Requirements

Language Requirements: All students must have proficiency in the English language. Students must be able to understand and adhere to health and safety protocols as well as project specific training from our field staff.

Course Requirements: No specific previous experience or qualifications in the field of conservation is required to join this program, however an interest in and understanding of issues threatening conservation initiatives is desirable. An interest in leading workshops and teaching is also preferable. Environmental courses, particularly Marine Conservation, Field Methods, or other research courses, will be advantageous. Training or experience working with children and/or teaching English to children or adults will be a plus.

Personal Qualities

- **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.

Criminal Background Checks: To ensure the safety of the children and communities with whom we work, 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.

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 café, and laundrette. Daily commutes will vary in length from 5 minutes to 1 hour. A combination of services will be used, including minivans, buses, ferries, and local taxis or *songthaew*.

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 centers, established early warning systems, and educated the locals with signage and educational materials. GVI works at one of these evacuation centers along with other schools and centers in the village. It is important for students to note that in Thailand the monsoon season starts in May and lasts until November, so students should be prepared to experience occasional short, sharp downpours.

Housing and Meals: Students will bunk together in shared accommodation at a local resort in its low season, a 20-minute walk from the GVI volunteer base and a 10-minute walk from the beach. 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 the same gender. The rooms have electricity, hot water, air conditioning, and Wi-Fi.

Three meals a day are provided while on project. Most meals are simple but healthy. Thai food generally consists of rice or noodles with stir-fry or curry, so expect to eat a lot of rice! 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 applying to DukeEngage-Thailand should review these facts with their families and medical providers before applying.

Local Safety, Security, and Cultural Norms: If you have special needs related to health, cultural, or religious practices, please contact the DukeEngage office, dukeengage@duke.edu, to discuss whether or not your needs can be reasonably accommodated in this program.

For information related to how your religion, race, sexual/gender identity, ability or other aspects of your identity might impact your travels, we recommend starting with the [Diversity, Identity and Global Travel](#) section of the DukeEngage website.

We encourage students who have questions or concerns about health or safety in international programs to check Duke's [International SOS \(ISOS\) portal](#) for relevant information.

Reflection and Enrichment: Field staff will act as mentors to the students while on project in Phang Nga. Our experienced field team will offer regular reflection sessions to the students. One example would be a workshop on sustainable tourism to help improve students' skills, understanding local issues, and the opportunity to discuss any personal challenges students are experiencing. For the duration of the program, students may be offered additional assignments dependent upon their skills and suitability as a part of their leadership development workshop. Upon completion of the program, students will have a final evaluation with their mentor, followed by a leadership certification and summary of training and experience received; GVI will also be able to provide a confidential professional reference if requested.

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. Enrichment activities will be planned on some weekends.

Curricular Connections

Coursework on marine turtles, biodiversity survey techniques, the importance of mangrove ecosystems, environmental protection, wildlife protection, preservation education, environmental consequence of marine and coastal waste, teaching English as a foreign language, and community development would all be useful coursework for students to complete in preparation for their experience in this program.

More Information

Days can be long and tiring, especially with the heat and humidity present in Southern Thailand. It is also common to experience rain at least once per day.

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.

- *The Thai Kingdom*
- *Thai Cultural Values*
- *Volunteer Tourism Debate in Thailand*
- *The capacity to adapt? Communities in a changing climate, environment, and economy on the northern Andaman coast of Thailand*
- *WWF Living Blue Planet Report*
- Marine Turtle conservation WWF
- An Introduction to Tsunami & Preliminary post-tsunami water quality in Phang Nga
- Evolution of drinking water treatment and quality in Takua Pa
- Water monitoring & treatment for drinking purposes in 2004 tsunami affected area, Ban Nam Khem, Phang Nga
- Mangrove rehabilitation and intertidal biodiversity - Mangrove ecosystems, Thailand
- Mangrove crabs as ecosystem engineers & True Mangrove species
- Mangrove flora and fauna in Thailand; Fauna mangroves
- Mangrove ecosystem services illustration & Mangrove species map
- Wave of Destruction by Erich Krauss

A link to articles, videos and other resources will be provided prior to departure.

Students will participate in leadership training; a large focus of the 2018 and 2019 programs was developing student leadership skills to make a difference in the community. Four projects were developed and carried out, including:

Project 1: Educating island schoolchildren about marine conservation. The objective of this project was to teach remote island schoolchildren about marine conservation and plastic pollution through interactive games and activities. The leaders of this project designed an entire day of activities and learning, involving the whole DukeEngage Thailand team. Resources were prepared, and we visited the island school on our overnight trip to Koh Prathong Island during our community project. The leadership day was incredibly successful with all students

enjoying spending time with the children and encouraging them to learn about these important issues.

Project 2: Creating a seaweed farm for sea turtles at the Naval Base. The objective of this project was to design and implement a seaweed/algae farm for the Thai Naval Base in order to provide sustainable food for the sea turtles as well as for the enrichment devices for behavior studies. This project is highly useful to GVI and the Naval Base as it provides easy access to seaweed, which saves us time and the frustration of tide times when we go to collect seaweed. The students on this project were predominately engineering students, and they used their skills and knowledge to research and design the structure. They had several meetings with important officers in the Naval Base who were very keen on this project and worked closely with the Naval Base to ensure it was completed before they left. They also provided training to make sure the farm could continue after they left.

Project 3: Village Clean. The objective of this project was to promote recycling of trash in the local community as well as clean up the local village. The leaders of this project mapped a route for the group as well as a competition on who could collect the most trash. The group created recycling bins out of chicken wire to place around the village as well as posters to encourage locals to recycle. A marketing poster about the event was distributed to the community through social media with the help of our Community Liaison, and some local residents joined the event to work alongside the DukeEngage students.

Project 4: Eco Brick Community Project. The objective of this project was to educate the community about the importance of conservation and how ecobricking can be an easy way to repurpose trash. In preparation for teaching the community about this, the leaders of this project led several ecobricking sessions with Duke students at ThaiLife Homestay Resort. Flyers and announcements were made in the community about how to ecobrick and to advertise for the main event. The main event brought together community members and Duke students/GVI staff to have a huge ecobricking session in which enough bricks were created to build a bench. The bench was presented to the community as an example of the good that ecobricking can bring.