GIVE Trip Overview
Thailand Elephant Experience

Growth International Volunteer Excursions

The Roots of Change
# GIVE Excursion Overview Table of Contents

## Introduction ............................................................................................................. 4

## Preparation Reminders Prior to Departure ............................................................. 4
- Passport.................................................................................................................. 4
- Visa....................................................................................................................... 4
- Vaccinations......................................................................................................... 6
- Medications.......................................................................................................... 7
- Safety and General Health Concerns.................................................................... 7

## Flights and Arrival In-Country .............................................................................. 8
- Flights.................................................................................................................. 8
- Arrival.................................................................................................................. 8
- Airport Pickups..................................................................................................... 9
- Flight Delays or Cancellations.............................................................................. 9
- Next Day Flight Arrival...................................................................................... 9
- Important Note..................................................................................................... 10
- Lost/Delayed Luggage......................................................................................... 10

## Donations ............................................................................................................... 11

## Money .................................................................................................................... 11
- Notifying Your Bank............................................................................................ 11
- Currency and Exchange Rates........................................................................... 11
- Money Recommendations.................................................................................... 11

## Communication .................................................................................................... 12
- Adapters............................................................................................................... 12
- Contacting Home................................................................................................. 12
- Home Contacting You....................................................................................... 13

## Weather ................................................................................................................ 13

## Accommodations .................................................................................................. 14

## Luggage .................................................................................................................. 14
- Important Note Regarding Valuables .................................................................... 14

## Packing for Your Excursion ................................................................................. 15
- Packing Checklist................................................................................................. 16

## Volunteer Projects ............................................................................................... 18
Adventure Activities ........................................................................................................................................ 19
Itinerary (Sample) ....................................................................................................................................... 21
Culture Shock ................................................................................................................................................ 22
While On Your Excursion ............................................................................................................................ 22
GIVE Contact Information .......................................................................................................................... 23
GIVE Excursion Overview

Get ready! Your GIVE Thailand Elephant Experience is coming up soon, so prepare yourself to be immersed in a new and unique culture, to observe elephants in their natural habitat, to learn from local experts in elephant welfare and conservation, and to interact with elephants in both hands-on and observational settings!

The Thailand Elephant Experience is a responsible travel program designed to lift the veil of elephant tourism and educate you on the complex realities of human/elephant conflict in Asia. Throughout your trip, you will travel to four unique locations in Northern Thailand – an ethical elephant tourism camp, a government-funded conservation center, an elephant sanctuary, and a community-based elephant tourism project – to learn from a variety of local experts who have committed their lives to the welfare of Asian elephants. At each place you visit, your tourism dollars will provide direct financial support to local conservationists, veterinarians, animal rights activists and mahouts (elephant caretakers), in their unique and equally important efforts to combat human/elephant conflict. As a responsible traveler, it's not your physical contributions, but your tourism dollars and your advocacy that will yield the greatest positive impact.

At certain points during your trip, you will take part in more hands-on interactions with elephants, such as feeding and bathing (and hugging), while at other points you will take part in more hands-off experiences, such as volunteering at a no-contact sanctuary and observing semi-wild elephants in their natural habitat. Each of these experiences has been carefully selected to ensure that the mental, physical and emotional well-being of the elephants is the top priority.

This Excursion Overview includes important information about your upcoming trip. Some of this material may appear familiar, but please read the entire overview as some information may have changed. All of the information is important in making sure your experience is as enjoyable as it can be.

Preparation Reminders Prior to Departure

All trip preparation information can be found on our website as well! Go to www.givevolunteers.org, then click “Travel Details” in the navigation and chose your destination.

Passport:

Don’t forget to bring your passport and a color copy of your passport to Thailand! Our office should have already received a color copy of your passport, but it is important that you bring a color copy when traveling abroad as well.
Make sure that your passport is valid and does not expire within 6 months of your return travel date. For example, if you return home on January 1, 2019, your passport expiration date cannot be prior to June 2, 2019.

If you have not yet ordered or received your passport, please contact us immediately by phone at +1 (206) 973-7991 or email at info@givevolunteers.org.

**Visa:**

There are a few different options for visas, so read below. Depending on your citizenship, you may be exempt from obtaining a visa, can receive one on arrival, or order prior to departure.

1. Tourist Visa Exemption

   **If you are a citizen of one of the below listed countries, you do not need to obtain a visa** as you fall into the Tourist Visa Exemption category. In this case, you are required to:

   1. Provide **Proof of Onward Travel**: bring proof of confirmed air, train, bus, or boat tickets showing you will leave Thailand within 30 days from your arrival date. If you cannot provide proof, you will have to obtain a tourist visa (which is outlined below).
   2. Provide **Proof of Finances**: Thailand requires travelers to have proof of adequate finances for the duration of your stay when you enter into the country, such as a traveler’s check or cash equivalent to 10,000 Baht (approx. $300 USD) per person and 20,000 Baht (approx. $600 USD) per family. A screenshot of your bank statement would be sufficient.
   3. You may need an address in Thailand and, if so, write “Eco Resort Chiang Mai, 109 Bumrungrad Rd., Watkate, Muang, Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand”

**Countries with the Tourist Visa Exemption:**

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bahrain, Brunei, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vietnam
If you are not a citizen of one of the above countries, please check with your local Consulate to find out if you need a Thailand tourist visa. You may also be able to obtain a Visa On Arrival and the process of how to go about doing this is explained below (but still check with your consulate!).

2. Visa on Arrival (If you do not qualify for the Tourist Visa Exemption)

If you are not a citizen of the above listed counties that have a Tourist Visa Exemption (see above), you may still be able to obtain a Visa on Arrival, depending on your citizenship. A Visa on Arrival allows passport holders of the countries listed below* to enter Thailand if they meet the following requirements:

1. The visit is strictly for tourism purposes.
2. You have a confirmed return ticket to show proof of a flight out of Thailand within 30 or 15 days of entry, as appropriate. Open tickets do not qualify. Traveling overland out of Thailand by train, bus, etc. to Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia (including en route to Singapore), Myanmar, etc. is not accepted as proof of exiting Thailand.
   *Important Note: You may be asked to show your flight ticket on entering Thailand. If you do not possess a flight ticket to show you will be exiting Thailand within 30 or 15 days of entry you will be most likely to be refused entry.
3. Checkpoints for ON ARRIVAL Visas are available at the Don Muang International Airport in Bangkok, and Chiang Mai International Airport in Chiang Mai

   *Bhutan, China, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, India, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Maldives, Mauritius, Oman, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Ethiopia, Taiwan, Bulgaria, Andorra, Malta, Romania, San Marino.

5. Provide Proof of Finances: you will also need proof that you have funds of at least 20,000 THB per person during your stay in Thailand. A fee of 1,000 THB is payable upon entry and is subject to change without notice.
6. You may need to provide an in-country contact and, if so, use the following:

   Tidarrat Jitsook
   151 Moo 7, Kongkeak, Mæcheam, Chiang Mai, Thailand
   Phone: +66 935757929
3. Non-Tourist Visa Exemption or Non-Visa on Arrival Travelers (If you do not qualify under the Tourist Visa Exemption)

If you are not eligible to enter Thailand under the Tourist Visa Exemption or Visa on Arrival, then you will need to obtain a visa with the Royal Thai Embassy prior to their visit.

**Please note that visa information is subject to change by national immigration and customs agencies. Check with your native Consulate for visa details well before your departure date.**

**Vaccinations:**

GIVE is unable to provide you with a list of recommended vaccinations for traveling in Thailand. You can find a list of recommended vaccinations on the Center for Disease Control website: [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.htm](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.htm). Vaccinations and medical precautions are your discretion with the recommendations of your doctor or travel clinic.

Although there are no vaccination requirements for travelers from the United States, United Kingdom, or Australia to enter into Thailand, GIVE strongly recommends that you contact your doctor or visit an immunization clinic to discuss vaccinations as soon as possible, as some vaccinations take time to take effect or you may need a course of vaccinations. Inform your doctor that you are traveling to Thailand and the activities you plan to participate in so they can provide guidance. Note that GIVE cannot provide you with vaccinations before or during your trip.

To learn about vaccination recommendations or to find a travel clinic near you, visit Centers for Disease Control at [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.htm](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list.htm).

**Medications:**

GIVE is unable to provide you with a list of recommended medications for your excursion. It is your discretion with the recommendation of a doctor or travel clinic if you choose to take medications on your excursion.

You are responsible for providing your own over-the-counter or prescription medications throughout your excursion. This includes allergy medications, anti-inflammatory medications, etc. Please discuss these concerns with your doctor before your excursion. If you have asthma (even mild), please do not forget to bring your inhaler! Also, it’s a good idea to plan ahead and bring vitamins (Vitamin C) and over-the-counter medications in case you start to get sick.

If any changes to your health occur, it is critical that you update your Traveler Information in your Volunteer Profile as soon as possible. You can access your Volunteer Profile from our website at www.givevolunteers.org. If you make any changes within 15
days of your excursion, please notify us by email at info@givevolunteers.org. If you plan to take medications on the trip, please bring the medication name and description to provide to your GIVE guides when you arrive in Thailand.

Safety and General Health Concerns:

International travel inherently involves risk and we maintain a culture of comprehensive risk mitigation while carrying out our mission to inspire growth, empower global citizens, and ignite sustainable change worldwide. GIVE strives to minimize risk through proactive measures, with the ultimate goal of providing you with an experience of a lifetime that is not only educational and inspiring, but, more importantly, safe and secure.

In large part, the international crime warnings surrounding travel in Thailand become an issue when traveling alone or with one other person in unfamiliar, large cities. The majority of time spent on our Thailand excursion takes place in rural areas, where you will always be with at least 3-5 of participants and at least 1 staff. This is a group excursion, where individual participant will be following our planned itinerary throughout the duration of their excursion. In addition, we have forged strong relationships with local leaders and community members, making the environment welcoming and friendly. In the event that an unforeseen circumstance does arise, we are prepared with a comprehensive risk management plan to respond to the incident(s), and we are therefore fully prepared with resources, such as medical supplies and routes to local hospitals and clinics.

To protect your general health in Thailand, it is important that you take good care of your body, and that you are physically prepared to be an Elephant program participant. We will be outdoors daily and hiking in a tropical environment. This means that you must be aware of your hydration, sun protection, and nutrition at all times. In the event that you do become ill or need to seek medical attention, we can arrange for you to visit a local clinic or nearby hospital to receive care.

Flights and Arrival in Thailand

Flights:

Before you depart, be sure to check your flight departure time online, or if you booked with Corporate Traveler, contact an agent to make sure that your flight information has not changed.

GIVE group flight itineraries include routes and layovers through specific airports so that you and other GIVE participants departing from the same region may travel together. To make it easy to identify each other, tie a green ribbon or string to your carry-on bag. You can even make a GIVE sign to find other participants while in transit to Thailand.
Arrival in Thailand:

Since we arrange group flight itineraries, participants will arrive at the Chiang Mai International Airport (CNX) at (or around) the same time.

You will receive an immigration form on the airplane to complete before entering Thailand. You will give this form to a customs agent upon your arrival. This form will ask you a few questions about your plans in Thailand, please answer with the following:

- **Address in Thailand**: Eco Resort Chiang Mai, 109 Bumrungrad Rd., Watkate, Muang, Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand
- **Accommodation**: check the box that says “Hotel”
- **Purpose of Visit**: check the box that says “Holiday”

After you exit the plane, you will enter the airport into the Arrivals Hall. This is where you will go through Thailand immigration with your customs form. There are multiple arrival desks, so line up with your passport in-hand and customs card completely filled out and ready to show to the immigration officer. Make sure to keep the Departure Card that will be given to you on arrival throughout your trip, as you will need it upon departure.

After you pass through customs, you will head over to baggage claim. Collect your baggage here, and exit where your GIVE staff will greet you in a green GIVE shirt just outside the arrival gate doors! Do not exit the arrival terminal until you have met your GIVE staff. You will then have the opportunity to exchange your money to Thai Baht or use an ATM. If you’d like assistance withdrawing Thai Baht (exchange rate, how much to withdraw, etc.), our staff will be happy to help.

After the group collects their baggage and uses the ATM, you will take our transportation to our accommodations in Maetang, Chiang Mai, which is about 1.30 hour from the airport.

Airport Pickups:

If you don’t immediately see your GIVE staff upon arrival, be sure to wait in the international arrivals hall until they arrive. Do not exit the arrivals terminal, stay inside the airport and keep an eye out for our staff in a green GIVE shirt!

Flight Delays or Cancellations:

In the event of flight cancellations, unexpected delays, or changes, here’s what to do:

1. Go straight to the gate agent at the airport. They will be the best resource to assist you to rebook your flight. If you’re not yet at the airport, skip to step 2.

2. While waiting to speak to the gate agent or if you’re not at the airport, call your
booking agents or the airlines directly. If you booked through Corporate Traveler (the new name for Flight Center in the USA), the numbers are below for after-hours assistance. Our agents may have access to alternative airlines not readily available to the gate agent at the airport.

Corporate Traveler USA: +1 877-862-7051  
Flight Center UK: +44 203 056 7993  
Flight Center AUS: 1300 557-813

*If there are other GIVE participants, join together and choose one point person to speak with the agent to rebook flights.

3. After your flight has been rebooked, e-mail your updated itinerary to GIVE AND post your updated itinerary on your GIVE group’s Facebook page! Make sure to include the airline, number, arrival time, and names of other GIVE volunteers with you.

4. GIVE staff will make alternative arrangements for your pickup – note that delayed flights may incur additional pickup fees (see below sections). Contact GIVE if you have any further questions at info@givevolunteers.org or call our Headquarters at +1 (206) 973-7991.

5. If flight changes result in a layover of more than six hours or if you have to pay additional fees for your delay, contact your Travel Insurance provider. They can assist you with alternate arrangements and explain how your insurance policy applies in your circumstances. Make sure to keep all receipts!

Talking to gate agents at the airport and calling your flight agents/the airlines are the best resource to rebook your ticket. If you have additional questions or need support, GIVE monitors the lines 24/7 while volunteers are in route to their host country.

Next Day Flight Arrival:

If your flight is cancelled or delayed and you are unable to arrive to Chiang Mai Airport on your trip start date, do not panic. Follow the same steps outlined above for delays and cancellations. Make sure you email your new flight itinerary and post in your GIVE Trip Facebook Group so GIVE staff can arrange alternative transportation. If you are not in the Facebook Group, you can contact GIVE Staff directly.

Note: In the case of a next-day arrival, you will be responsible for paying for transportation to our accommodations to meet the group. Depending on the circumstances, your Travelers Insurance may reimburse you for costs incurred as a result of your flight delay or cancellation.

Important Note:

GIVE Excursion Overview - 10
Any travel expenses outside of the GIVE itinerary are the responsibility of the participants to pay out-of-pocket, including costs associated with delayed and/or interrupted travel to and from the host location. We require all participants to have International Travel Insurance that may provide reimbursement for costs if they are within the policy coverage.

It’s always a good idea to bring an extra change of clothes (ideally, culturally appropriate clothing that covers your knees and shoulders for women), all medications, important documents and money IN YOUR CARRY-ON LUGGAGE in the case of a next day arrival, lost luggage or any other unforeseen circumstances. Our staff will do everything in their power to obtain clothing and appropriate items if your luggage is lost or delayed. In adherence with our itinerary, we will be traveling in areas that we require all female participants to cover knees and shoulders, so it would be beneficial to have spare clothing with you.

**Lost or Delayed Baggage:**

If your baggage does not arrive at the airport, do not panic. Go to the lost luggage counter to make a lost luggage claim. Please give the representative your guide’s name and phone number to contact when your luggage arrives (you will receive an email with your guide’s contact information prior to departure). Keep the copy of your lost luggage claim. Depending on the circumstances, your Traveler’s Insurance may reimburse you for each day that your bag is lost or delayed.

**Money**

**Notify Your Local Bank Before Departure (Important!):**

Prior to your departure, inform your bank that you are traveling to Thailand. This is important so that your bank does not put a hold on your account for irregular transactions. If your bank does put a hold on your account, you will not be able to access your money and it could take days to be able to use your card or access money from your bank. It only takes a quick phone call to your bank before you depart to inform them of your destination and length of travel to eliminate any potential problems! It is also encouraged to bring more than one debit/credit card (if available) just in case one does not work or is lost/stolen.

**Currency and Exchange Rates:**

The national currency in Thailand is the Thai Baht.

The current exchange rate is ~$1 US Dollar (USD) is equal to about 32 Thai Baht. We encourage you to look up current exchange rates prior to your departure as rates do fluctuate. You must use Thai Baht if you plan on spending money shopping, eating, or engaging in other activities. If you do bring USDs to exchange, you will have a better
exchange rate with large bills. It is important to bring new and crisp bills, as ripped or dirty bills will most likely not be accepted.

Although uncommon, you may be able to exchange money at your local bank before you depart for Thailand. Most banks do not carry Thai Baht and have to order the currency. Even if you bring Thai Baht, be prepared to withdraw cash from the ATM at the airport upon arrival in Thailand if needed.

It’s important to take into consideration that you will only be able to withdraw funds from an ATM while we are in Chiang Mai on the first and last day of the trip, as the villages we will travel to do not have ATMs or banks. Therefore, carefully consider your spending habits when withdrawing money. Plan ahead so you are not left without cash. Your GIVE staff will remind you to use the ATM in the airport and other locations before we depart Chiang Mai. Make sure to plan ahead so you do not run out of money!

**Money Recommendations During Your Excursion:**

Since spending habits vary from person to person, please plan according to your own personal habits! GIVE suggests planning to spend Thai currency equivalent to $200 to $300 USD for purchasing souvenirs, gifts, snacks, drinks, etc. You can always ask your GIVE staff for help translating and calculating exchange rates while shopping or purchasing souvenirs.

All of your fresh, drinking water, as well as three meals a day are provided for you during your GIVE excursion. Since we encourage you to experience purchasing and tasting the delicious local cuisine (as well as helping to boost the local economy), expect to purchase a couple of meals or snacks for yourself when the opportunities arise.

**Communication**

**Adapters:**

You will be able to charge your cameras and other electronic devices throughout most of your time in Thailand. Thailand often takes either a flat blade plug, (like the US) or a two round pin plug.

Note that some of our accommodations in the hill tribe villages run on generators, so electricity will shut off occasionally. However, you will have sufficient time to charge your electronics, and you will be notified of the times and places where electricity will not be available. Generally, there will be 1-2 nights throughout the trip with no electricity as we explore more remote villages.

**Contacting Home:**

We understand that your family would like to know you arrived safety in Thailand. To satisfy this, an email will be sent to your emergency contact after your entire group has
arrived and settled in our accommodations. Please double check and verify that your emergency contact's information is correct on your volunteer profile and that they are aware that we will be sending them an email upon your arrival. We will also post photos on our Facebook page and other social media outlets throughout your excursion, so let your family and friends know to follow our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/givevolunteers!

An important aspect of traveling internationally is to “unplug” from your life back home and “plug in” to the surrounding environment. We ask our volunteers to unplug from phones, social media, and contact with friends and family at home during their GIVE excursion to truly engage in the experience. Please keep in mind that access to electronics and Wi-Fi will be very limited during your trip, but disconnecting from your daily life will allow you to plug into different parts of yourself and truly experience Thailand, ultimately allowing you to have a more enjoyable, relaxed, and authentic experience.

Make sure to inform your family that communication is limited and is not to be expected. There will be extremely limited access to phone or Internet throughout your excursion, so do not plan to contact home daily. Tell your family that communication is extremely limited and that they should not expect to hear from you. In the event of emergencies or case-by-case circumstances, our staff will arrange for you to call or email home. Wi-Fi is generally available on the last day of your excursion while we’re in the city of Chiang Mai.

Home Contacting You:

It is important to let your family know not to expect to have communication with you while you are on your Thai excursion. For status updates or general questions, your family can contact the GIVE Headquarters at +1 (206) 973-7991 or email info@givevolunteers.org while you are in Thailand. Our GIVE team will be able to relay any messages to you and GIVE staff.

For emergencies or non-emergencies, your family can contact the GIVE offices. For time-sensitive emergencies only, your parents can contact our staff directly. You will be emailed these numbers in the near future to have and use in emergency situations only.

GIVE will occasionally post photos of your excursion to our social media, so be sure to let your family and friends know they can follow your excursion on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, as well as GIVE’s other social media sites. GIVE’s social media webpages can be accessed through the social media icons on our website at www.givevolunteers.org. Please inform your family that we will do our best to post photos of your group throughout the trip!

Weather
Come prepared for hot weather throughout the day, sprinkled with short, sometimes-heavy, rain showers, as well as physical activity in the heat. Please see our suggested packing list below for recommendations on what to pack.

In Northern Thailand, November through January are the cooler, dryer months, with temperatures dipping as low as 40°F in the late night/early morning and then heating up again to the 80’s and 90’s throughout the day. Definitely pack some warmer clothes to sleep in if you’re joining us in December or January!

March - May are the hottest months, when temperatures can soar well over 100°F. There is a rainy season from May – September, characterized by sunny, humid days intermixed with short, powerful rain showers. Expect plenty of rain showers and lots of mud this time of year (July and August especially), as the seasonal monsoons transform the Thai highlands into a lush, green, tropical, albeit muddy, oasis.

The sun is very powerful in this region, so it is important to bring more than enough sunscreen and even a sunhat to protect you from the sun.

**Accommodations**

All of our accommodations are comfortable and equipped with necessary amenities, such as running water, bathrooms, showers, beds with sheets, tents/sleeping bags for camping, etc. You will have access to electricity for the large majority of your trip; however, brief power outages are common throughout your trip and you will be spending 2 days and 1-night camping in the forest without access to electricity. This is why we highly recommend bringing your own rechargeable portable battery for charging phones and other small electronics. You do not need to bring your own blankets or pillows, as they are provided for you, but we highly recommend bringing a microfiber towel for more remote villages. For the duration of your trip, you will share sleeping quarters and bathrooms with your fellow participant so remember to practice the golden rule! If you’d like to room with a friend, please let us know before your excursion and we will be more than happy to arrange that for you. Otherwise, staff on the ground will provide room assignments when your group arrives in Thailand.

Please remember that you will be staying in rural communities in a tropical climate, which means you will encounter different weather conditions and insects than you are accustomed to at home. We will provide mosquito nets when necessary and will always fully prepare/advise you on any necessary precautions to take. Please thoroughly review the packing list (page 15) to ensure that you’re adequately prepared. Most importantly, arrive with an open mind and commitment to push yourself beyond your comfort zone!

**Luggage**
We encourage you to pack as light as possible in bags convenient for in-country travel, such as travel backpacks or duffle bags. **It is required that you bring an additional day pack/overnight bag** for a night that is spent in the jungle camping. **Please do not bring boxy, rolling suitcases!**

**We will be sleeping in a different accommodation every single night (see itinerary for details) and we will travel by minivan for an average of 2 hours every day. For these reasons, it is best to pack light.**

Before transporting your luggage from your home to Thailand, check the baggage rules and regulations for your specific airlines. Generally, for international flights, the airlines allow you to bring one personal item (45 in/ 111cm), one carry-on bag (62 in/ 158cm), and one checked bag (50lbs/ 23kgs) at no additional cost. It is important to remember that you cannot have any liquids that exceed 3.4 ounces or 100ml in your carry-on bags, so be sure to make note of that while packing at home. Please refer to the TSA website for more detailed information about baggage regulations at [http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm](http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm).

Please be aware that if you plan on purchasing souvenirs, airline weight restrictions may incur extra charges when you return home.

**Important Note Regarding Valuables:**

**When packing your luggage do not put anything valuable in your checked bag.** This includes electronics, copies of your passport, medications, etc. It is best to pack all valuables in your carry-on bag. Pack at least one change of clothes and a small pack of toiletries in your carry-on bag in case your luggage is delayed. Put luggage locks on your checked bag as a safety precaution. With many connecting flights and traveling such a long distance it is important to take all precautions to be sure your belongs arrive safely.

**Packing for Your Excursion**

People tend to over pack while traveling and we suggest that you challenge yourself to only pack the bare necessities. Be realistic and ask yourself, “What do I really need to have?” Please adopt the motto “Travel Light!” Our best suggestion is to lay out what you think you need, and only bring 75% of that. You will realize when you arrive in country that you need a lot less than you think!

Please keep in mind that many of the clothes you wear while trekking will become very muddy, so don’t expect them to remain clean when you return home!

While exploring local temples, or walking through villages, you will need to wear conservative clothing that **covers your knees and shoulders**. Bring at least 2-3 conservative outfits.
In accordance with the cultural customs of the communities that we will be visiting, you will be required to wear “culturally appropriate” clothing for the majority of the trip. We require our female participants to cover their knees and shoulders and to not wear any low cut, spandex or see through clothing at these times. Rules for males are less strict, but they should certainly bring 2-3 outfits that cover their shoulders and knees. There will be specific times that this will not be necessary, such as when we are in Chiang Mai or at our private accommodations, but it is encouraged that you plan on wearing clothes that abide by these guidelines for the majority of the trip. Please note that by adhering to these rules you are practicing sensitivity and respect both to our host communities.

Packing Checklist of Recommended Items:

**General Clothing**

- 1 lightweight raincoat/poncho
- 1 sweatshirt, lightweight jacket or sweater (bring a heavier coat and hat for cold nights in December and January)
- 3-4 T-shirts and 1-2 tank tops to wear during down time (females cannot wear tank-tops in the villages. They can wear only for bed or in Chiang mai ONLY)
- 2 pairs of shorts to wear during down time (not too short)
- 1-2 pairs of light weight pants that can cover your knees for visiting temples and exploring villages. (Elephant pants are great!)
- 1-2 pairs of long hiking pants. Light weight, breathable and durable fabrics. (we will be hiking through the jungle for 2 days, it is very important to wear LONG hiking pants to protect your skin from insects, irritating plants and thorns)
- 1-2 long-sleeved dry-fit hiking shirts. Light weight, breathable and durable fabrics. (we will be hiking through the jungle for 2 days, it is very important to wear long sleeves to protect your skin from insects, irritating plants and thorns)
- Underwear and socks.
- 1-2 swimsuits (bikini style swimsuits are allowed but no thongs or cheeky bottoms)
- Sunglasses
- Hat for sun protection
- 1-2 sport or athletic bras (females)
- Pajamas or comfortable sleeping clothes (it gets down to 40°F at night in December & January)
- 1-2 “nice” outfits for special occasions and nights out

**Footwear**

- Good hiking shoes. IMPORTANT! (You will be hiking through muddy trails in the jungle, so you will need durable, closed-toed hiking shoes/boots with lots of traction ONLY! Chacos, Tevas, and regular sport shoes are not sufficient!)
- 1 pair of Flip flops or Sandals. These are crucial for walking around the villages. It’s impolite to wear shoes inside people’s homes, temples and some businesses, so a good pair of sandals will make it easy to slip on and off.

**Other Gear**

- Small day pack or overnight backpack (waterproof/water resistant if possible)
- Rain cover for your daypack or big pack in case of rain during travel.
- 1 towel (a microfiber towel is recommended for quick dry purposes)
- Toiletries: shampoo/conditioner, face wipes, toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, etc.
- 1-2 large bottles of sunscreen (30 spf or higher)
- 1-2 large bottles of insect repellent (Expect to use this every day – especially in July & August)
- Anti-itch cream/wipes
- Hand sanitizer/hand wipes
- **Refillable water bottle**
- Reusable coffee cup and straw to minimize plastic waste.
- Large Ziploc Baggies/Waterproof bag (these are good to protect cameras and valuables from getting wet)
- **Headlamp and batteries** (Recommended for late night bathroom trips)
- **Rechargeable portable battery** for charging phones and small electronics in villages without electricity.
- Phone or a watch with an alarm clock
- Small first aid kit
- 1 good book
- Camera
- Vitamins (multi-vitamins, vitamin C, Airborne, Emergen-C, etc.)
- Over-the-counter fever reducers, gastrointestinal medications, anti-inflammatories, electrolyte packets, motion sickness medication, etc. (optional)
- English/Thai dictionary (optional)
- Deck of cards or other games (optional, for hanging out at night)
- Notebook with pens and pencils to write about your excursions (optional)
- Money belt (optional)
- Snacks (optional, but **HIGHLY** recommended!)
- Outlet converter/adapter

**Spending Money:** Thai Baht is necessary to purchase snacks, souvenirs, etc. in Thailand.

- $150-$200 (equivalent in USD) spending money for souvenirs, snacks, and other opportunities. We will have limited access to ATMs throughout the trip, and 1 day to exchange and/or withdraw funds in Chiang Mai at the beginning of the trip.

**IMPORTANT!** Don’t forget to pack your passport!!!

- Passport
- Color copy of your passport

**Itinerary (Sample)**

This is a sample itinerary of GIVE’s Thailand Elephant Experience, and, as such, will be modified during your excursion. Traveling abroad requires flexibility based on weather, wellness of the group, and other important factors. We appreciate your understanding and adaptability with the itinerary.
DAY 1

Your Thailand Elephant Experience begins: Group arrives in Chiang Mai. Meet your guides and fellow travelers at the airport, and then head straight to our first elephant camp for the night (~1-hour drive by minivan).

DAY 2

Put on a traditional mahout outfit and get to know a familial herd of elephants! Spend the rest of the morning hiking with the herd and then bathing and feeding them in the river. Note: This is the most hands-on of any of the places we’ll visit, so get those elephant hugs in while you can!

After lunch, we’ll head to the Thailand Elephant Conservation Center (TECC) (~2-hour drive by minivan), to learn about their initiatives to provide free veterinary care to all elephants in Thailand, reintroduce captive elephants to the wild, and train mahouts on positive reinforcement training techniques. We’ll spend the afternoon touring the elephant hospital, making nutritious herbal supplements, observing baby elephants at the nursery, and learning from the local experts who make it all possible! Note: This will be less hands-on than the morning’s activities, but you will be in close proximity to baby elephants at the nursery!

DAY 3

Start your day at TECC watching elephants complete their morning exercises, which are designed to promote mental and physical enrichment. Note: Mostly observational, potentially some brief hands-on interaction.

We’ll then drive north through the rolling green landscape of Doi Inthanon National Park (~1.5-hour drive by minivan), stopping along the way to enjoy an easy 2-hour hike through a spectacular series of waterfalls, jungle and terraced farmland!
After the hike we’ll continue on to Berm and Emily’s Elephant Sanctuary (BEES) (~1-hour drive by minivan), which provides a home for old, injured and retired elephants needing rest and/or permanent care. This a special place where elephants are free to just be elephants! Spend the evening touring the facilities and learning about the sanctuary’s history and mission from its founders. Note: BEES is a no-contact sanctuary where you will observe the elephants from a safe distance.

DAY 4

Spend the morning volunteering at BEES to prepare food for the elephants and/or maintain facilities around the sanctuary. Note: BEES is a no-contact sanctuary where you will observe the elephants from a safe distance.

After lunch, we’ll head deeper into the mountains towards the Karen hill-tribe village of Huay Pakoot (~1.5 hours by minivan). Learn more about the community’s incredible history of keeping elephants and how they’ve adopted a unique and ethical form of community-based elephant tourism. That afternoon, we’ll tour the village, receive a blessing from a Buddhist Monk, and then take part in a sports day with local children! For dinner, we’ll enjoy a barbecue dinner with our homestay hosts and local mahouts.

DAY 5

24 Hours in the Life of a Mahout: Trek into the jungle with your mahouts in search of a familial herd of semi-wild elephants. Spend the entire morning and afternoon observing the herd in their natural habitat, while learning about the unique spiritual bond these elephants share with their mahouts. That night, we’ll camp in the jungle with our mahouts, sharing stories and laughs around the bonfire! Note: There will be some brief moments of hands-on interaction, but these elephants are semi-wild, so prepare to observe them from a safe distance most of the time.

DAY 6

GIVE Excursion Overview - 19
After breakfast we’ll hike back to Huay Pakoot and take some time to shower and pack up before heading to our epic mountaintop accommodations for the night (~1.5 hours by minivan). That night, we’ll take part in a Thai cooking class and then enjoy our home-cooked meal while a local women’s group performs traditional Northern Thai dances! Note: On this night we’ll be glamping (glamorous camping) with 360 views of the surrounding mountains. You will sleep in tents, but will have nearby access to electricity, restrooms, showers, running water, etc.

DAY 7

After breakfast, we’ll drive up the tallest mountain in Thailand, Doi Inthanon, to explore some mountaintop pagodas (~1 hour by minivan). After lunch, we’ll begin the journey back to Chiang Mai (~2 hours by minivan) for one final night of reflection and celebration with your GIVE family. After dinner, you’ll have some free time to explore the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, a one-stop shop for every Thai souvenir imaginable.

DAY 8

Trip End: All good things must come to an end. Say your goodbyes and begin the journey home.

Culture Shock

Culture shock is a strange feeling many of us will face when we are traveling in a country that is culturally different from our own. Knowledge about symptoms of culture shock can help us identify and work through the shock as we continue to be involved with the community and culture. Below is a list of symptoms of culture shock that you may experience while traveling in a different country. Do not be worried about culture shock as it is a normal part of the travel process, and completely expected to happen to just about everyone. If you experience culture shock, your guides will assist you to work through your feelings and experience, so don’t be embarrassed or afraid to say anything to them. We have all been through it, so don’t think you’re the only one to feel this way! You’re not alone!

Symptoms:

- Preoccupation with health
- Trying too hard to absorb everything in the new culture or country

GIVE Excursion Overview - 20
• Insomnia, desire to sleep too much or too little
• Changes in temperament, depression
• Developing stereotypes about the new culture
• Feeling vulnerable, feeling powerless
• Irritability, resentment, unwillingness to interact with others
• Identifying with the old culture or idealizing the old country
• Loss of identity
• Melancholy, loneliness, sadness
• Lack of confidence and feelings of insecurity
• Developing obsessions with over-cleanliness
• Longing for family
• Feelings of being lost and overlooked

If you experience any of the above, please reach out to GIVE staff as they will provide you with support. GIVE team will help you decipher your feelings and cope with these symptoms, making the adjustment to this new land and new culture easier on your mind, and a lot less stressful on your body.

While on Your Excursion

Do not hesitate to let staff know what you need while on your excursion. We are here for you! We want you to work hard and enjoy this experience to the fullest, so make sure if there is something preventing you from enjoying yourself entirely to let GIVE staff know so he/she can help you through it! GIVE is dedicated to inspire growth, empower the marginalized, and encourage sustainable change worldwide. With your help, we can make this goal a reality!

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Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you and we are excited to see you in Thailand!