

GIVE Trip Overview

Thailand Elephant Experience



Growth International Volunteer Excursions

The Roots of Change

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 educate you on the complex realities of human/elephant conflict in Asia, while providing direct financial support to local conservationists, animal rights activists and mahouts (elephant caretakers), in their various efforts to improve the welfare of Asian elephants. This trip involves much less volunteer work than other GIVE programs, but just as much impact.

Throughout your trip, you will travel to three unique locations in Northern Thailand – an ethical elephant tourism camp, a no-contact ‘sanctuary’ for elephants retired from the tourism industry, and a community-based elephant tourism project – to learn from local experts who have committed their lives to the welfare of Asian elephants. Each place you will visit plays a unique but equally important role in implementing practical solutions to the complex problems of human/elephant conflict, and you will get to see and support each of their contributions firsthand.

At certain points during your trip, you will take part in more hands-on experiences with elephants, such as feeding and bathing, while at other points you will take part in more hands-off interactions, such as volunteering at a no-contact sanctuary and observing semi-wild elephants in their natural habitat. For each of these experiences, you can rest assured that the mental, physical, and emotional well-being of the elephants and their mahouts is our 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 the information is important in making sure your experience is as enjoyable as it can be.

Preparation Reminders Prior to Departure

Passport:

Don't forget to bring your passport and at least two color-copies of your passport to Thailand. Our office should have already received a color copy of your passport, but it is important that you bring color copies 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 June 1, 2024, your passport expiration date cannot be prior to December 2, 2024. Also make sure that your passport has at least 2 empty pages for entry/exit stamps.

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.

International Medical and Travelers Insurance (Required):

GIVE requires all travelers to provide proof of traveler's insurance coverage. This ensures that you have coverage if unforeseen events arise such as baggage loss, travel delay, sickness, injury, etc.

For USA residents and Canadian Residents: you can purchase insurance from the GIVE website under "Travel Details" in the navigation. You can find it directly at this link: go to <https://www.givevolunteers.org/prepping-trip/travel-details/#insurance>

- **Departure & Return Dates:** Be sure to include all travel days (for example, if you're taking a red-eye home, the return date is the day you land back home)
- **Trip Cost:** This is the total amount that you are insuring, which should equal your GIVE trip at a minimum.
 - We *strongly* recommend covering both the cost of your flights and GIVE trip. If you have not purchased flights yet, you can still purchase insurance and either estimate cost of flights or increase your coverage later.

Non-US Residents: Must provide proof of international travel insurance meeting our requirements and insuring your total trip cost (and flight, if preferred).

If you'd like to purchase from a different provider, then you must confirm in writing you are aware of our coverage requirements and that your policy meets those requirements. Note that your insurance coverage must include trip cancellation and interruption.

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 (traveling in Thailand for 30 days or less)

If are a US citizen or you are a citizen of one of the below listed countries, AND you are traveling in Thailand for 30 days or less, 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. Tourist E-Visa (if traveling for more than 30 days in Thailand)

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- If you are doing the Thailand + Elephants + Scuba + Laos Package, or Thailand + Elephants + Scuba Package, you must apply for a Thailand Tourist E-Visa prior to your trip. **GIVE will email you detailed instructions on how to apply for this visa if necessary.**

3. Visa on Arrival (If you do not qualify for the Tourist Visa Exemption or the Tourist E-Visa)

If you are not a citizen of the above listed countries 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
4. For a complete list of checkpoints and ON ARRIVAL countries visit: <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/services/123/15393-Visa-on-Arrival.html>

*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:

Tidarat Jitsook
151 Moo 7, Kongkeak, Maecheam, Chiang Mai, Thailand
Phone: +66 935757929

Vaccinations:

Since we are not medical professionals, GIVE is legally unable to provide you with a list of recommended vaccinations for traveling in Thailand. Vaccinations and medical precautions are your discretion with the recommendations of your doctor or travel clinic. We recommend 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 require a course of multiple vaccinations. Inform your doctor that you are traveling to Thailand and the activities you plan to participate in so they can provide proper guidance.

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>

Medications:

You are responsible for providing your own over the counter or prescription medications throughout your trip. Please discuss any specific medical questions or concerns with your doctor before your trip. If you have asthma (even mild), please do not forget to bring your inhaler.

If any changes to your health occur, it is critical that you update your Traveler Information in your GIVE Profile as soon as possible. You can login to your GIVE 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 guides when you arrive, if necessary.

Safety and General Health Concerns:

There is inherent risk involved with GIVE's programs, but we maintain a culture of comprehensive risk mitigation throughout our trips. We aim to minimize risk by employing proactive safety measures and established emergency protocols. Our goal is to facilitate a life-changing experience that is safe, fun, and impactful.

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. Most of your Thailand excursion takes place in rural areas, where you will always be with a group of fellow travelers and GIVE guides with training in Wilderness First Aid, Risk Management, Emergency Response, Mental Health First Aid, and Outdoor Leadership.

This is a group trip, where each traveler will be following our planned itinerary throughout the duration of their trip. Furthermore, we have forged strong relationships with local leaders, community members and emergency services over the last decade. Additionally, we take necessary precautions and are prepared with adequate resources, such as medical supplies and routes to local hospitals or clinics. We are prepared with a comprehensive risk management plan to respond to any incident(s).

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 participate in the GIVE Thailand Itinerary. We work outdoors daily engaging in strenuous physical activities in a tropical environment. This means that you must always be aware of your hydration, sun protection, and nutrition. If 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.

Luggage:

We encourage you to pack as light as possible (see packing list on pg. 18) It is required that you bring a travel backpack or duffle bag instead of a hard cover suitcase. **Hard cover or rolling suitcases are NOT suitable for the areas we'll be traveling.** Here's what we recommend:

- Your carry-on bag: ONE small backpack to use as your day pack for volunteer work, hikes and to carry your smaller items throughout the day.
 - Your checked bag: ONE travel backpack or duffle bag is recommended.
- NO HARD COVER OR ROLLING SUITCASES.**

Also, be sure to check with your airline for baggage requirements and fees. 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, expensive jewelry, 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.

Flights and Arrival in Thailand

Flights:

If you have not already, contact our flight agents at StudentUniverse to book your flight itinerary to Chiang Mai Airport (CNX). You can find their contact information on our website under the "[Travel Details](#)" section of our menu.

Before departure, check your flight departure and arrival online to **ensure that your flight information has not changed.** If it has changed, contact GIVE immediately to provide us with the updated flight information.

Your flight will land at the CNX Airport **on the start date** of your trip. Note: if you're traveling internationally, you may be traveling the day(s) before your excursion start date. You need to **be in Thailand on your trip start date.**

For your departure, you will depart **on your trip end date.** GIVE's flight agents can provide details regarding preferred itineraries.

GIVE group flight itineraries include routes and layovers through specific airports so that you and other GIVE travelers departing from the same region can potentially meet each other during your layover(s) or on the plane. You will be invited to join a group WhatsApp chat prior to your trip, where you can coordinate with other travelers about meeting up enroute to Thailand.

Arrival in Thailand:

You may receive an immigration form on the airplane to complete before entering Thailand. If you don't receive this form on the airplane, don't worry. Most immigration checkpoints are no longer requiring this form for international arrivals. If you do receive the form, input the following information, and give the form to a customs agent upon your arrival:

- 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 ready to show to the immigration officer.

After you pass through customs, you will head over to baggage claim. Collect your baggage here and exit into the arrival terminal, where your GIVE guide(s) 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 Guide.** You will then be able 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.), your guides will be happy to help.

After the group collects their baggage and uses the ATM, you will take our transportation to our accommodations in Chiang Mai about 20 minutes from the airport.

NOTE: If you have a separate ticket to BKK and then to CNX, you'll go through immigration at your first point of entry into Thailand. Then you'll fly domestically your Chiang Mai to meet your guides and group.

Airport Pickups:

If you don't immediately see your GIVE after exiting the baggage claim area, be sure to wait in the international arrivals hall until they arrive. You will receive an email a few days before your trip start outlining how to contact your guides directly if you cannot find them at the airport. **Do not leave the arrivals terminal, stay inside the airport and keep an eye out for your guides in a green GIVE shirt!**

Flight Delays or Cancellations:

When traveling, unforeseen events can occur and travel may not be exactly how you planned. Just remember, it's all part of the experience! If you experience flight delays, cancellations, or other travel-related issues on your trip, don't panic. You have several

resources to help get you rebooked and on the next flight.

We will email you a few days before you depart with a list of resources and FAQ's to help you navigate any travel-related issues. Please print this document and/or save it to your phone to easily reference in the event of a travel-related issue.

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 **StudentUniverse**, 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.

StudentUniverse: +1-844-985-4117

*If there are other GIVE travelers with you, work 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.** Make sure to include the airline, number, arrival time, and names of other GIVE travelers with you.
4. Your guides will make alternative arrangements for your pickup – note that **delayed flights may incur additional pickup fees.**
5. If flight changes result in a layover of more than six hours or if you must 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 for potential reimbursements!**

Talking to gate agents at the airport and calling your flight agents/the airlines are the best resources to rebook your ticket.

Late Flight Arrival:

If your flight is cancelled or delayed and you are unable to arrive to Chiang Mai Airport on your trip start date, don't panic. **Follow the above steps to contact your travel agent and rebook your flights.** Email your updated itinerary to GIVE at info@givevolunteers.org.

Note: In the case of a late 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 because of your flight delay or cancellation. Make sure to keep receipts for reimbursement claims.

It's always a good idea to bring an extra change of clothes (ideally, culturally appropriate clothing that covers your knees and shoulders), all medications, important documents, and money **IN YOUR CARRY-ON LUGGAGE** in the case of a late arrival, lost luggage or any other unforeseen circumstances. Our guides will help you to obtain clothing and other necessities if your luggage is lost or delayed.

Lost or Delayed Baggage:

If your baggage does not arrive at the airport, don't 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. Make sure to keep receipts for reimbursement claims.

Donations

Donations towards our projects can always be accepted through our website, here: <https://www.givevolunteers.org/fundraiser/>

We ask you to please avoid bringing physical donations from home and instead donate to the online fundraiser above. We will use your donations to purchase necessary project supplies directly from local shops and markets in Thailand to help stimulate the local economy. If there are specific supplies that we can't purchase in Thailand, your guides will notify you well in advance in your WhatsApp group.

Money

Notify Your Bank Before Departure:

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 approximately 35 Thai Baht. We encourage you to look up current exchange rates prior to your departure as rates do fluctuate.

You must use Thai Baht for any local purchases. 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 might be able to exchange money at your local bank before you depart for Thailand. However, most banks do not carry Thai Baht and must 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 necessary.

It's important to consider 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 rural areas we will travel to have very limited access to ATMs. Therefore, you should carefully consider your spending habits when withdrawing money so that you don't run out of cash. Your GIVE guides will remind you to use the ATM in the airport and other locations before we depart Chiang Mai.

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 \$100 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 drinking water and three meals a day are included throughout your trip. Only dinner will be provided on arrival day and only breakfast will be provided on departure day, so plan accordingly. We also encourage you to experience buying local food and drinks at local shops, restaurants and markets, so expect to purchase some snacks, meals and drinks 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 our accommodations in the hill tribe villages often 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. We highly recommend bringing your own rechargeable power bank.

Contacting Home:

An important aspect of any GIVE trip is to unplug from your devices and plug in to the experience. We encourage our travelers to minimize use of phones, social media, and contact with friends and family during the trip to get the most of your time in Thailand.

Much of your time will be spent in remote areas where there is limited to no mobile service or WIFI. Make sure to inform your family and friends to expect **limited communication** from you during your trip. In the event of emergencies or case-by-case circumstances, your guide will arrange for you to contact home if service is unavailable. GIVE will also contact your emergency contact upon arrival to Thailand.

Home Contacting You:

For status updates, general questions, and emergencies your family can contact the GIVE offices at +1 (206) 973-7991 or email info@givevolunteers.org while you are on your trip. Our GIVE HQ team will relay any important messages to you and your guides.

GIVE will occasionally post photos of the group on our social media channels during your trip. Let your family and friends know to follow GIVE's Facebook, Instagram, and other social media channels (@givevolunteers) for intermittent updates.

Weather

Come prepared for hot weather throughout the day, sprinkled with short and heavy rain showers. The sun is very powerful in this region, so it is important to pack adequate sun protection, such as sunscreen, SPF shirts and/or hats. Please see our suggested packing list for specific recommendations.

In the hill-tribe villages north of Chiang Mai, November through January are the cooler, dryer months, with temperatures dipping as low as 40°F in the late night and 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, April, and 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, often heavy rain showers. Expect plenty of rain showers this time of year (July and August especially), as the seasonal monsoons transform the Thai highlands into a lush, green, tropical, and MUDDY, oasis.

Accommodations

There are 3 main types of accommodation throughout your Thailand Excursion:

- Eco Resort Chiang Mai (Days 1 & 7): Air-conditioned rooms with shared bathrooms in the city of Chiang Mai. You will share same-sex rooms with 1-3 other travelers. Eco Resort has an on-site restaurant, swimming pool and meeting area.
- Homestay at Elephant Freedom Village (Day 2): offers ethical hands-on encounters with elephants, resembling the typical interaction most tourists have with these majestic creatures in Thailand. Operated by a small family-run team of 5 individuals, the camp is nestled at the edge of the jungle, nearby a Karen tribe village, offering a homestay experience, the accommodation includes same-sex dormitories with shared bathrooms and common area to hangout.
- Homestay at Root Coffee Homestay (Days 3 & 4): Root Coffee's Homestay is situated in Huay Pakoot Village. Root Coffee's Homestay is an on-site coffee shop and home-grown organic coffee. You will share same-sex rooms with up to 1-2 other travelers (or private tents) with access to shared bathrooms. Everyone will sleep on floor mattresses with pillows, blankets, and mosquito nets. Nestled in the heart of our host community and surrounded by spectacular views, this is the perfect opportunity to get out of your comfort zone and immerse yourself in the local culture and environment.
- Chadapon Hotel, Mae Chaem (Day 5&6): Air-conditioned rooms with private bathrooms in the town of Mae Chaem, nearby local shops and a cafe. You will share same-sex rooms with 1 other traveler. Chadapon has a meeting area overlooking rice fields.

Our accommodations are comfortable and equipped with necessary amenities, such as running water, toilets, showers, beds with sheets and blankets, etc. You will have access to electricity for most of your trip, but brief power outages are common throughout your trip, and you will be spending 3 days and 2 nights in more remote villages without access to electricity at the end of your trip. Therefore, **we highly recommend bringing your own rechargeable power bank 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 the duration of your trip, you will share sleeping quarters and bathrooms with your fellow travelers, so practice the golden rule! If you'd like to room with a friend, please let us know before your trip and we will do our best to arrange that for you. Otherwise, your guides will provide room assignments when you arrive 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 review the packing list thoroughly to ensure that you're prepared. **Most importantly, arrive with an open mind, positive attitude, and commitment to expand your comfort zone!**

Meals

You will be provided with drinking water and 3 balanced nutritional meals per day throughout your trip. Please note that, due to airport arrival and departure times, only dinner will be provided on arrival day and only breakfast and lunch will be provided on departure day. We can accommodate most dietary requirements, including vegans, vegetarians, gluten free, etc.

Please make sure to inform us of any dietary requirements at least 14 days prior to your trip. If you have not done so already, please inform us ASAP (info@givevolunteers.org). Adjustments to dietary requirements CANNOT be made upon arrival, as meal plans have already been organized by local vendors.

Finally, remember that you are in a different country with different types of food than you're used to at home. Prepare to get out of your comfort zone a bit and sample lots of delicious new cuisine. Most importantly, as a responsible traveler, be respectful of our local chefs and the local food culture. Rice is the dietary staple of Thailand and will be served with nearly every meal.

Packing for Your Trip

People tend to over pack while traveling and we suggest that you challenge yourself to only pack the bare necessities. Our best suggestion is to lay out what you think you need, and only bring three-fourths of that. You will realize that you need a lot less than you think once you're on the ground and there are opportunities to do laundry throughout your trip.

In accordance with the cultural considerations of the communities we will be visiting, you will be required to wear culturally appropriate clothing throughout most of the trip. While teaching at local schools, exploring temples, or walking through our host communities, you will need to wear culturally appropriate clothing. By following these local standards, you are displaying cultural awareness and respect to our host communities:

- Females will be asked to cover their knees, shoulders, and cleavage, and to not wear any low cut, tight-fitting, or see-through clothing at these times. We recommend packing at least 3 culturally appropriate outfits, which you can wear multiple times.
- Males should bring at least 2 outfits that cover their shoulders and knees as well.

Expect to wear the same clothes multiple times for our reforestation and Farm to Cafeteria projects, as they will inevitably get dirty. Also keep in mind that many of the clothes you wear while working and exploring will become very muddy, so don't expect them to remain spotless when you return home.

**If you are also doing the Elephant Experience, Thailand Scuba, and/or Laos Excursion, keep in mind that those packing lists have many of the same items listed here. Plan to re-*

wear a lot of the same clothing, as there will be several opportunities for you to do laundry.

**We highly recommend bringing a smaller backpack or duffle that can fit approximately 6 days of clothing and gear for days 2-7 of the itinerary. This way you can leave your big bag at our hotel in Chiang Mai and travel light into more remote communities.*

Packing Checklist of Recommended Items:

Please keep in mind that this checklist is based on the best possible recommendations from our guides and past travelers, but at the end of the day it is up to you to bring what you think you will need throughout your trip. We have not suggested a specific number of t-shirts, shorts, pants/leggings, underwear, and socks, because individual preferences often vary. Please review the itinerary to get an understanding of how often you will use each article of clothing, and note that **laundry services are available at the Eco Resort in Chiang Mai on days 1, 7 & 8 of your trip.**

Item	Notes	Required	Optional
General Clothing			
1 Lightweight raincoat/poncho	May – August is the rainy season in Thailand, but showers should be expected year-round.	x	
1 Sweatshirt, lightweight jacket, or sweater	December and January can get quite cold in the mornings/nights so make sure to bring a jacket that will keep you warm enough if you are on a winter trip	x	
T-shirts	<p>For females:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>When out in public:</u> shirts must be loose-fitting and tight around the neck. Cropped tops, spaghetti strap shirts, mid-riff showing shirts, and tank tops are NOT acceptable to wear in public throughout the trip. • <u>At accommodations:</u> Tank tops are OK to wear at accommodations but should not reveal cleavage. Sports bras are not acceptable to wear in lieu of a shirt. <p>Shirts worn during projects and adventure activities will get dirty, so pack enough to last the entire trip or plan to do laundry during the trip.</p>	x	
SPF shirt(s)	We highly recommend 1-2 long-sleeve SPF shirts for sun, insect, and plant protection. We will be hiking through the jungle for 2 days, it is very important to wear a long-sleeve shirt to protect your skin from insects, irritating plants, and thorns.		x
Shorts	Loose-fitting athletic shorts and hiking shorts are ideal. ‘Short-shorts’ or spandex shorts are NOT acceptable to wear at any point throughout the trip	x	

	Shorts can be worn on reforestation & school garden projects, while trekking, and while hanging out at the accommodations for both males and females.		
Pants/Leggings	<p>For females, leggings are okay to be worn at all times, EXCEPT when out in public in our host communities. Lightweight pants, knee length shorts, or knee length skirts are ideal in these situations (elephant pants work great and are very affordable in Chiang Mai!).</p> <p>1-2 pairs of long, lightweight pants or workout capris made with breathable and durable fabrics are ideal, such as soft-shell hiking pants. 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.</p>	X	
Underwear and socks	Keep in mind that socks can get wet and dirty, so pack a couple extra pairs.	X	
1 swimsuit	Females can only wear swimsuits at our hotel swimming pool in Chiang Mai. When we are outside of Chiang Mai, females will be asked to wear a t-shirt and shorts over their swimsuits.	X	
Sunglasses			X
Hat for sun protection			X
Sport or athletic bras		X	
1 pair of work gloves	We can provide basic work gloves when necessary, but bring your own if you have a pair that you prefer.		X
Warm pajamas or sleeping clothes	It gets down to 40°F at night in December & January	X	
1-2 “nice” outfits for special occasions and nights out	At least one of these outfits must be culturally appropriate	X	
Footwear			
1 pair of flip flops or sandals	It’s impolite to wear shoes inside people’s homes, temples, and some businesses, so a <i>durable</i> pair of sandals will make it easy to slip on and off, and will be worn for the majority of the trip	X	
1 pair of closed-toed boots or shoes for volunteer projects and hiking.	<p>Closed-toed shoes are required for projects and hiking. Keep in mind that these will get wet & dirty. It’s fine to use the same pair for both activities, or feel free to bring an extra pair if you prefer.</p> <p>Strapped sandals such as Tevas and Chacos are not sufficient for certain hikes. Bring your closed-toed shoes with the best traction for muddy trails and project sites.</p>	X	
Other Gear			
Small day pack or overnight backpack	<p>Waterproof/water resistant if possible. If not, a rain cover is highly recommended!</p> <p>This is what you will bring to the school, worksites, overnight trips to neighboring villages and during</p>	X	

	bamboo rafting (each raft has a bamboo tripod for hanging bags to keep them dry).		
Rain cover for your daypack or big pack in case of rain during travel	Highly recommended		x
Towel	You must bring your own towel. We recommend a microfiber towel for easy packing and quick drying.	x	
Toiletries	Shampoo/conditioner, face wash/wipes, toothbrush and toothpaste, soap, etc	x	
Sunscreen	30 spf or higher. <i>“Reef friendly” mineral sunscreens are highly recommended!</i>	x	
Insect Repellent	Expect to use this every day – especially in July & August. <i>Natural and non-toxic insect repellent highly recommended!</i>	x	
Anti-itch cream/wipes			x
Hand sanitizer/hand wipes			x
Refillable water bottle	REQUIRED	x	
Reusable coffee cup and straw	To minimize plastic waste Great if you plan on buying coffee or drinks		x
Large Ziploc Baggies/Waterproof bag	These are good to protect cameras and valuables from getting wet, especially during bamboo rafting		x
Headlamp and batteries	Recommended for late night bathroom trips. Handheld flashlights are not sufficient	x	
Rechargeable portable battery	For charging phones and small electronics in villages without electricity. Highly recommended.		x
Phone or a watch with an alarm clock			x
Headphones/Earplugs	Roosters roam around and can be quite loud while we sleep in the villages!		x
Small first aid kit			x
1 good book			x
Camera			x
Vitamins	Multi-vitamins, vitamin C, Airborne, Emergen-C, etc.		x
Prescribed medications	You are responsible for bringing and taking any medication prescribed by a medical professional.	x	
Face Masks	At least two face masks for travel and when community vendors request it.		
COVID-19 Rapid Self-Test	We recommend bringing your own at-home test. Travel/airplanes can cause people to feel stuffy or exhibit cold-like symptoms. This test is recommended so you can confirm if your illness is COVID-related		
Over-the-counter medications	Over-the-counter fever reducers, gastrointestinal medications, anti-inflammatories, electrolyte packets, motion sickness medication, etc.		x
English/Thai dictionary			x
Deck of cards or other games	For hanging out during free time		x
Notebook with pens and pencils to write about your excursions			x

Snacks	Local snacks are tasty, affordable and help to support the local economy, but feel free to bring some of your favorites from home.		x
Outlet converter/adapter			x
Camping Hammock	Great way to relax during downtime		x

Please give us a call at HQ with any specific packing related questions that you have.

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

- \$150-\$300 (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: Meet your guides and fellow travelers at Eco resort for an opening orientation. (*~20-minute drive from the airport*).

DAY 2: Head into the Doi Inthanon mountains to our first stop - an ethical elephant tourism camp (*~2 hour drive by minivan*)! We'll follow our local mahouts into the forest for a meet and greet and feeding session with the elephants. *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 will spend more time with the elephants - swimming with them in the river and learning about elephant behavior and anatomy from their mahouts. That evening we'll head to a Karen hill-tribe village to learn about the tribe's culture, history and language and, most importantly, enjoy some slingshot target practice! We will end our night with an authentic Karen dinner in the village.

DAY 3: After spending more time with the elephants in the morning, we'll say our goodbyes and then drive north through the rolling green landscape of Doi Inthanon National Park towards the Karen hill-tribe village of Huay Pakoot (~3.5 hours by minivan). Learn more about the community's storied history of keeping elephants and how they've adopted a unique and innovative form of community-based ethical elephant tourism. That afternoon, we'll tour the village, and then take part in a sports day with local kids! For dinner, we'll enjoy a Thai barbecue dinner with our homestay hosts and local mahouts.

DAY 4: Life of a Mahout: Trek into the jungle with your mahouts in search of familial elephants 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. *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 5: After breakfast we'll do a short hike and spend time with different bull elephants before heading to the town of Mae Chaem for the night (~1.5 hours by minivan). Before dinner, we will visit a temple and receive blessings from a monk and explore the local market.

DAY 6: Spend the day at Burm and Emily's Elephant Sanctuary (BEES) which provides a home for old, injured and retired elephants needing rest and/or permanent care. This is a special place where elephants are free to just be elephants. At BEES, we will learn about the sanctuary's mission from its founders, observe elephants in their natural habitat, and volunteer to prepare food for the elephants or maintain facilities around the sanctuary. *Note: BEES is a no-contact sanctuary, so prepare to observe these gentle giants from a safe distance.*

That night, we'll take part in a Thai cooking class and then enjoy our home-cooked meal while a local student group performs traditional dances from Northern Thailand! This will be a night of discussion, reflection, and celebration with your GIVE family.

DAY 7: After breakfast, we'll drive to the top of the tallest mountain in Thailand, Doi Inthanon (~1 hour by minivan), to explore the summit and check-out some mountain top temples before heading back to Chiang Mai (~2 hours by minivan). That afternoon, all your hard work will be rewarded with a spa treatment at a local spa styled in the traditional Lanna Thai style. After our final dinner together, you'll have some free time to explore local shops and markets in Chiang Mai.

DAY 8: All good things must come to an end. Soak up your last few hours in Thailand before heading home or onwards to the next phase of your journey in Southeast Asia!

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
- 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 your GIVE guides 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 your guides know so they can help you through it.

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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!