

Volunteering in Thailand after the pandemic When, Where and How?



It has been a year since we were able to welcome international volunteers to the WFFT Wildlife Rescue Centre, Elephant Refuge and the Wildlife Hospital as Thailand closed its borders at the end of March in 2020. The Covid-19 Pandemic has hit our foundation and the animals we care for hard, the last year has been a struggle both with the lack of human resources and a shortage of funding. But finally, there might be some light at the end of the tunnel as Thailand is preparing to open up to international visitors in the months to come. In this letter we are going to try to answer the many questions prospective volunteers might have.

What is the current situation?

Visitors to Thailand can travel into the country after obtaining a visa from a Royal Thai Embassy in their country of origin; they will require a negative covid test before flying into Thailand. On arrival to Thailand every visitor will need to be placed into Alternative State Quarantine (ASQ) for 15 nights. Thai Nationals will receive this free of charge in mostly cheaper low-cost hotels, while non-Thai Nationals are to cover the costs of these facilities themselves, prices vary from 1000 USD upwards, depending on the quality of the chosen ASQ hotel. There is a huge choice, but being “locked up” for 15 days is not an option for most, when you are to travelling to Thailand to volunteer for a few weeks.

Is there change coming?

Yes! Thailand will gradually open for international visitors in the months to come and we hope that by the end of the year all will be back to “normal” again. The Thai Authorities have come out with a step-by-step plan for the coming months that we will try to sum up hereunder. We will then answer other questions that might be of concern.

Step 1: April-May 2021

In the months of April-May 2021 we will see the easing of the quarantine period from 15 days to 7-10 days only. Compulsory quarantine is still an issue for some, but for people that are planning to stay within Thailand for a longer period than just a few weeks, it might be worth considering. One demand set by authorities for a shorter period of quarantine is however that the foreign visitor needs to be vaccinated within 3 months before traveling in to Thailand, and a negative covid test must be presented within three days prior to traveling. Quarantine is still required, but with fewer nights it will be less uncomfortable and surely less expensive. Countries from the African continent are excluded from this change and their nationals will still need to quarantine for 15 nights as before.

Step 2: September-October 2021

By this time Thailand is aiming to open up without quarantine for all visitors that have both proof of vaccination and a negative covid test within 3 days before entering Thailand. Basically, everything is back to a kind of “normal” with the only difference is that the vaccination will be a must. For some people that are skeptical about the virus and that have objections to taking a vaccination we can only say that you will probably will have to wait until 2023 before free travel into Thailand will resume. At this same time, we at WFFT feel it is important to get your vaccinations, you surely do not want to spread such a disease to one of the many rescued wild animals or elephants at our projects now, do you? Nor do we want our staff to be infected.

I want to come and volunteer, so what's next?

1. Get in touch with our volunteer team and look at the options to volunteer and get updated about any latest news on changes regarding entry to Thailand.
2. Choose your dates for volunteering, so we can make you an invitation letter to present to the Thai embassy in your country so you can apply for visa.
3. Arrange for medical insurance that covers Covid-19. Medical insurance that covers Covid-19 is compulsory.
4. Apply for visa in the Thai embassy or Thai consulate in the country where reside. Most will ask you to make an appointment online first.
5. Arrange your flights (and if traveling within ‘Step 1’ period) your ASQ. There are many options sold on booking.com for example under “Bangkok ASQ”.

I arrived in Thailand, what do I do now?

For all volunteers that book to stay with us for one month or more we will arrange free transportation directly from the airport (‘Step 2’ period), or from your ASQ (‘Step 1’ period) to our projects. On arrival you will be housed in a special area of 6 volunteer rooms with others that arrived in the same week. All rooms are single occupation, unless you travel with a friend or partner. If required by government regulations you may have to be tested while at WFFT.

The cost of transport from Bangkok for those who do not volunteer for 4 weeks or more is 65 US dollars, or 60 Euro, or 2,200 Baht.

What has changed about volunteering with WFFT since the pandemic?

For those who have volunteered at WFFT before the structure of the first working week may be a little different, we will create working bubbles and daily work routines may seem different than before. The safety of our animals, volunteers and staff is our priority.

Going in to the village after work...

The local community in our small local village might not be ready to interact with foreigners yet due to the fact that they have little knowledge about the dynamics of the virus and the success-rate of the vaccines. We have also seen a very small quantity of Covid-19 cases within the province of Phetchaburi, the place where WFFT is located. For this reason, we will ask you to refrain from walking around the local village.

We have a mobile telephone application installed for volunteers to shop online with both 7-11 and the local CJ supermarket, who deliver goods to us within 15 minutes from 7AM till 9PM. We will continue to provide free drinking water and 3 meals a day on-site.

We arrange transportation to both nearby beach-resorts Cha-am and Hua Hin, where people are used to welcoming foreigners, and we are sure that you will be more than welcome there! Having a day off, spending a day shopping or at the beach, we can arrange it after the first week of your stay with us!

Interacting with our staff and volunteers

Where possible we will be practicing social and physical distancing with volunteers, staff and especially the animals. You will be required to keep a very high standard of personal hygiene and required to wear a mask at all times when working. Staff and volunteers often come from varying backgrounds, different countries with different values. We are all coming out of lockdown, and to many of us social isolation so please respect each other and the rules put in place to keep you and animals safe.

Where do we need volunteers?

The Elephant Refuge

Currently there are 27 elephants under our care on 4 different locations within our project grounds. We will need your help in caring for, preparing food, feeding, preparing enrichments, harvesting food, and cleaning the enclosures.

The Wildlife Rescue Centre

With close to 700 rescued animals in total we will need volunteers to help with the upkeep of enclosures, preparing food and feeding, making enrichments and reforestation of green areas on our projects.

The Wildlife Hospital

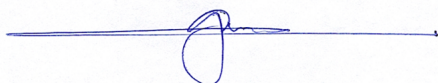
Only a limited number of volunteers are accepted in this project and most of them are veterinarians, veterinary medicine students or veterinary technicians. Post-pandemic this project runs with very strict rules on hygiene and safety protocols.

Last but not least

As mentioned above we have had a very tough time in the last 12 months and we will need you help more than ever! The closure of Thailand's borders resulted in a total number of volunteers over 2020 of only 126, where we welcomed over 1,450 in 2019. The lack of volunteers meant that we lost not just 70% of our normal income to run all our projects, but that we also lost a huge amount of helping hands, putting so much extra pressure on our staff over the last 12 months.

We will need your help more than ever in the months to come to get back to the high standards we were used to. The pandemic has resulted in many tourist attractions such as zoos and animal shows to close down and we would like to help so many more animals that are now victims of the pandemic.

According to current news the compulsory quarantine will no longer be in place from 1st of October 2021. We hope to welcome you in the near future!



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- ***DISCLAIMER: This document was written on March 15th 2021 and some details might be subjected to change. If unsure about any issue please contact us.***