



Volunteer Handbook

2017

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Overview

This handbook has been developed by volunteers to help you prepare for your arrival at the sanctuary.

Thai Animal Sanctuary was founded by Gemma Ashford in 2007. Starting with just a small building donated by the Baan Unrak School, the original space served as both accommodation and a treatment room. Over time the sanctuary has grown, and we are now proud to have a basic veterinary clinic, outdoor kennels for overnight patients, an enclosure for our disabled or very young animals, as well as 7 large enclosures for our resident dogs.

We treat a large number of dogs and cats at our clinic, as well as the occasional rabbit, chicken, goat, cow or monkey. All of our official sanctuary residents are dogs and cats, with the cats living in a separate enclosure at the Volunteer House.

The information in the handbook is designed as a guide only, and we encourage everyone to seek appropriate advice and/or conduct your own research. The aim is to give you an overview of what your experience as a volunteer at Thai Animal Sanctuary will be like.

We look forward to welcoming you to the sanctuary and our team!



Getting Here

Sangkhlaburi is located in the province of Kanchanaburi, in North West Thailand. The closest international airport is in Bangkok, which is approximately 6-8 hours drive away.

You have a choice of travelling on a direct bus from Bangkok to Sangkhlaburi, or on two separate buses from Bangkok to Kanchanaburi, and then Kanchanaburi to Sangkhlaburi. The direct route is slower by about an hour, but is usually more spacious and you do not have to change vehicles.

BANGKOK - KANCHANABURI

There are several locations from which you can catch the bus to Kanchanaburi in Bangkok. It takes approximately 2-3 hours to reach Kanchanaburi, depending on where you depart from and traffic.

Buses begin early in the morning and leave frequently throughout the day.

Kho Sahn Road - any travel shop in the area will be able to assist you in booking on a bus from your hotel to Kanchanaburi. Please make sure that you emphasise that you are going to Kanchanaburi "BUS STATION" as this is in a specific part of town. The cost for this journey is around 120THB.

Southern Bus Terminal - from Kho Sahn Road you can easily catch bus 30 or 511 to the bus terminal. From there you take the big bus (number 81) to Kanchanaburi, which should cost about 100THB. Buses start early and depart frequently throughout the day.

Northern Bus Terminal (Mo Chit) - this journey takes 1-2 hours longer than if you depart from the Southern Bus Terminal. Take the 9918 bus to Kanchanaburi, which costs about 120THB.

KANCHANABURI - SANGKHLABURI

Once you reach Kanchanaburi, you change onto another big bus or minivan. The last buses usually leave around 16:30 in order to reach Sangkhlaburi before dark, so be sure to plan your journey from Bangkok accordingly. Both the bus and the minivans take the same route, however the buses are larger and therefore slower. The road travels through the mountains, jungles and lakes with stunning views and scenery, but the road is steep and can be bumpy so those of you who get travel sickness should make sure to bring sickness tablets for the journey. Sangkhlaburi is the final destination for both buses and minivans, so you don't need to worry about missing your stop.

On the way to Sangkhlaburi there is usually a brief stop in Thong Pha Phun (about one and a half hours from Sangkhlaburi) where there are toilets and snack stands.

The big buses leave from the main bus station in Kanchanaburi (where the Bangkok buses stop) and the trip costs about 175THB. This journey takes about 4-6 hours.

The minivans leave from a small office across the road from the main bus station. Facing the toilets, turn left and walk out of the bus station and you should see the minivans lined up. There is a small office with dark glass windows and a door where you can buy tickets. You can ask anyone for "minivan Sangkhlaburi" and they will point you in the right direction! The minivan goes a lot faster (around 3-4 hours), but as a result can cause more motion sickness. The minivan journey costs about 175THB, however if you have a lot of luggage you may need to pay for two or more seats depending on space.

* the prices and times mentioned above are correct as of end of 2015 and may be subject to change

Arriving

Please either ring us on 0066 (0)988 713 154 or email us at info@thaianimalsanctuary.com when you are departing from Kanchanaburi. This will give us an idea of the approximate time you will be arriving in Sangkhlaburi.

Please contact us again once you have arrived in Sangkhlaburi so that, time permitting, we can meet you and take you (via car or motorbike) to your accommodation.

If we are unable to meet you, you can easily reach us on foot (about 15min walk) or take a motorbike taxi from the bus station. Walk along the road from the bus station towards CJs supermarket, and there should be motorbike taxis lined up with drivers in orange vests. There are no car taxis available in Sangkhlaburi. If you have lots of luggage you may need two motorbike taxis - one for you and one for your luggage!

Taxis cost 15THB, and if you have a lot of luggage then it's fair to give 20THB. You do not need to ask the price, instead just say where you are going and hand over the money at the end.

* the prices mentioned above are correct as of end of 2015 and may be subject to change



Sangkhlaburi Town

The sanctuary is located about a 5min drive from the centre of Sangkhlaburi, a small rural town located on the border of Thailand and Myanmar.

Surrounded by mountains, jungle and lakes, it is a very picturesque town and features the famous 400m long wooden Mon Bridge. Despite its provincial setting there is easy access to shops, restaurants, and wifi is readily available in most cafés - volunteers will be able to enjoy the beautiful natural surrounding and local culture while still having access to basic amenities.

There are several weekly markets as well as ATMs, shops, cafés, guesthouses, bars, restaurants, a post office, a 7 Eleven as well as a small supermarket. Volunteers will be able to find most items they need locally, however some specific items can be difficult to find in Sangkhlaburi (for example, tampons).

Please see our What To Bring section (page 32) for more details.

This area is fast becoming a popular destination for Thai people as well as other neighbouring countries. If you are looking for the bright lights and party scene that southern Thailand has become known for, this may not be the place for you! Some of the activities in the area include boat tours, swimming in the lakes, tubing, jungle treks, or visiting some of the many local waterfalls, caves and national parks. Those who prefer to relax can enjoy a massage for reasonable prices, have a meal out or wind down at one of the local bars.





Culture

Sangkhlaburi has a diverse cultural heritage and is home to a population of approximately 15,000 people from Thai, Burmese, Mon, Karen and Laotian backgrounds. It is a small rural town, and unlike many major Thai cities has managed to retain much of its traditional culture.

In the main area of Sangkhlaburi most people speak Thai, and a number also speak English now as the town continues to thrive. Across the lake on the Mon side most people speak Burmese, so do not be surprised if they do not understand if you speak to them in Thai.

As with all new cultures, it is important to simply be observant and respectful. In Thailand people take their shoes off when entering people's homes as well as some shops and restaurants, so for this reason flip flops and sandals are the most appropriate footwear. It can get very hot in this part of the world, and although Sangkhlaburi is not a particularly conservative town we encourage our volunteers to dress appropriately and try stay away from overly short shorts and revealing tops. Volunteers should show respect for local culture, however no dress code will be enforced.



Climate

Sangkhlaburi has roughly 3 seasons

- Feb - May: dry season - hot and dry (25°C - 40°C)
- Jun - Oct: rainy season - usually sunny during the days with intense periods of rain, although occasionally it can rain all day! (15°C - 35°C)
- Nov - Jan: cool season - usually dry and still quite hot during the days, but temperatures drop during the nights and early mornings (10°C - 30°C)



Accommodation

The Volunteer House is located just around the corner from the sanctuary, only 2 min walk away. All volunteers are welcome to stay here, depending on availability, and we recommend staying with us to really immerse yourself in the full experience. The two-story basic Thai style house features an open kitchen on the upper floor, 2 showers, 2 toilets and 5 bedrooms sleeping up to 12 people. The kitchen is fitted with a fridge, two gas hobs and all other basic amenities, and many volunteers prefer to cook here rather than going out. The bedrooms are usually shared, and are fitted with beds (single or double), fans and mosquito nets.

Sheets and bedding are provided, however **volunteers must bring their own towels!**

Both showers are cold water showers.

Free Wi-fi is available throughout the house.

Price: 100THB per night

Directions: If you are standing outside with your back to the sanctuary, walk left, take a left at the first intersection. The Volunteer House is the third gate on the right hand side of the road.

If you prefer to stay elsewhere in order to have your own room, air conditioning and a hot shower, there are several places available nearby for very reasonable prices (from 4-5€ per day). Please contact info@thaianimalsanctuary.com in advance if you need help with bookings.





Meals

During the week days, free lunch is available for all volunteers at the Baan Unrak School next door to the sanctuary. All meals are Thai/Burmese style and vegan, and we ask that when entering the school all volunteers dress conservatively with their chests, shoulders, stomach and thighs covered.

Please note that these lunches are only available during school term, and are not available during Thai summer holidays (from march - april).

For those who prefer to cook for themselves, the Volunteer House kitchen has all amenities and appliances apart from an oven. Many volunteers prefer to cook there rather than eat out, especially those staying for longer periods. There are also several restaurants, cafés and markets where food can be bought. Thai, Burmese and Western style food is readily available and usually ranges from around 10 - 150THB per meal.

While we completely understand that everyone has their own beliefs and habits, we do try to encourage volunteers to adopt a vegetarian lifestyle while staying with us in Sangkhlaburi, though this is of course not obligatory. As in many parts of Asia, dog and cat meat is still served in some areas not far from Sangkhlaburi. By adopting a vegetarian lifestyle we are trying to send a positive message to the local community in order to help overcome the prejudice and cruelty involved in the consumption of defenceless animals. The Thai Animal Sanctuary team is deeply against the general trade in dog meat, where animals are transported and kept in appalling conditions and suffer horrific cruelty at the hands of their captors. By avoiding the consumption of meat we are sending out a strong message to the community that we believe that animals deserve to be treated better.



Schedule

Generally volunteers work from 8:00 to 12:00 and then from 14:00 to 17:00, with a 2 hour break for lunch. However when we are short-staffed we work long hours and we work hard.

We are trying to make significant long term changes in the attitude towards and health of animals in Sangkhlaburi, and are therefore looking for dedicated volunteers who want to achieve the same. Although the work can be mucky and may not be considered glamorous, spending time with animals in such a unique setting as well as getting to know your fellow volunteers will be the experience of a lifetime.

Volunteers work 6 days per week with 1 day off, to be determined by the Sanctuary Manager. If you would like specific days or extra time off, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate all requests.



Duties

All volunteers (including veterinary volunteers) are expected to undertake regular daily tasks. These will be outlined at the start of each day, during morning meetings as well as on the whiteboards outside the clinic. These tasks include walking the dogs, feeding the residents and inpatients, cleaning and changing water bowls, enclosures and cages, washing bedding, assisting the resident vet, extra care for sick animals (as instructed by the resident vet) and socialising with our resident dogs. Some of these jobs may be dirty, smelly or seem mundane, but they need to be done. Remember that every task you do is truly helping to improve the lives of these animals!

There are also other tasks to be done around the sanctuary such as DIY jobs, painting, fixing the bamboo huts the residents dogs sleep in, etc. If you have any ideas for new projects, or if you would like some time to make videos or take photographs, please talk to the Sanctuary Manager.

Please let the Sanctuary Manager or resident vet know in advance if there is anything that you do not feel comfortable doing for health and safety reasons.



Our Expectations

As a small team, we expect volunteers to be observant and use their initiative while at Thai Animal Sanctuary. Although roles will be divided up between volunteers each day, we do expect everyone to use common sense and good judgement throughout. Our goal is to create a fun and exciting experience for everyone, while still doing important and life changing work - we can only do this if everyone chips in and works together!

We rely on volunteers in order for the sanctuary to run on a day-to-day basis, and we would not be able to continue to do our work if it weren't for your help. Every day is different as new animals are admitted to the clinic, so we expect volunteers to adapt, be flexible and most importantly behave responsibly.

If you have any suggestions or think that something could work better a different way then please do not hesitate to tell us! The conditions, sometimes horrific injuries, local culture and climate can make veterinary work (and other work) very challenging, but it is extremely rewarding to see the direct impact that our efforts have on the animals and the community. We are always looking for ways to improve, and as extended members of our team your suggestions and ideas are very important to us.



Safety

One of the things that makes volunteering at Thai Animal Sanctuary so special is the fact that we spend so much time with and live with so many dogs! These dogs are very different from the ones you may know back home, as most have had little to no training and may not even know how to walk on a leash. This means you get to experience dogs in their natural state and showing behaviour that you may not be familiar with. With around 35 dogs living together in groups of up to 6 or 7, it is perfectly normal for disagreements to occur from time to time.

Our resident sanctuary dogs have their own interactions and hierarchy, same as us humans - they have to find ways to communicate with and live with each other, just as any animal would. For example growling is something that all volunteers eventually get used to, and they quickly learn that it is not always a sign of something serious! It may simply be because a dog is unhappy about something, they feel their space is being invaded by another animal or even because they are just in a grumpy mood. These are normal dog behaviours and should not be interfered with.

Occasionally, however, fights do break out between the dogs and there are various ways that volunteers can help to diffuse the situation. There are also specific protocols to follow when dealing with severely injured and/or aggressive animals, which is often the case at our clinic. The health and safety of our volunteers is our top priority, and volunteers will not be allowed to start working with animals until they have been fully briefed by our Sanctuary Manager upon arrival. It is our job to make sure you not only enjoy your time with us but also that you work in a safe manner, and we will make sure all volunteers understand and are comfortable with their duties before they begin. **All volunteers will receive a detailed Health & Safety handbook upon arrival at the sanctuary, and will be required to read through it thoroughly and sign a disclaimer before volunteer work can begin.**



Health

Although there are still some well known tropical diseases in this part of the world (such as Malaria, Dengue Fever, Rabies and Tetanus), a basic course of the appropriate vaccinations or tablets should be enough to keep you healthy during your stay. The most important thing you can do once you arrive is to take preventative measures, and make sure to use insecticide at all times as well as your mosquito net at night.

All volunteers are required to have updated Rabies and Tetanus vaccinations in order to work safely with our animals and around certain equipment. This is simply a precaution, and it is very rare that any of our volunteers fall seriously ill. Another more common issue is “traveller’s diahorrea” - this is usually caused by drinking unsafe water rather than food, and while it is unpleasant it is certainly not life threatening if taken care of promptly. We always recommend our volunteers to carry their own drinking water and only buy sealed, bottled water when out. Safe drinking water is readily available at the sanctuary, restaurants, shops and cafés.

Essential items: Insect repellent (we recommend DEET); Rehydration Salts (great to avoid dehydration whilst getting used to the hot and humid climate!); Basic 1st Aid Kit (antiseptic cream, plasters, disinfectant)

Please note that Thailand has a high standard of health care. The recommendations above are just general guidelines, however the level of mosquito activity varies depending on the season and there may be hardly any at all! The local Sangkhlaburi hospital is 5min drive from the sanctuary, so it is easy to get checked and treated should you have any symptoms or concerns. We strongly recommend you consider taking out travel/ medical insurance before your trip! Please let us know in advance if you have any pre-existing conditions we should be aware of, such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, etc. If you have any pre-existing conditions that require medication, please make sure to bring enough supplies for the duration of your stay, as we cannot guarantee that the same medicine brands will be available locally.



Visas

Volunteers will need a current passport which is valid for at least six months from the time of entry into Thailand. Most nationalities will receive a 30 day visa upon arrival in Thailand, however some may need an extra visa if planning on staying longer. Visa requirements are different depending on the country, so please make sure to check with your local Thai Consulate or Embassy before travelling.

We are currently unable to sponsor visas, however we can provide a letter to assist with your visa application, if required. You can find the addresses of consulates in most countries here:

www.thaiembassy.org

Depending on the length of your stay, you may need to go on a "visa run". Visas are generally issued from a maximum of 30, 60 or 90 days. You must leave Thailand within the time permitted on your visa. This applies regardless of the number of entries you are permitted. A visa extension can be obtained for a fee from an immigration office in Kanchanaburi, for a period of up to 90 days (depending on your original visa). Otherwise, a "visa run" is necessary, whereby you need to travel to the nearest border, be stamped out of Thailand and then come back in again. This process usually takes a couple of days, and we recommend you travel by air in order to ensure getting another visa upon your return.

A work permit is not required to volunteer at Thai Animal Sanctuary, and we generally recommend getting a Tourist Visa if staying longer than 30 days.



What to Bring

Please make sure to bring clothes that you don't mind getting dirty or ruined, and that are suitable for the weather. We understand that Thailand conjures up images of tropical beaches and white sand, however at the sanctuary we spend a lot of our time doing mucky jobs and surrounded with animals, so please try to avoid bringing anything too fancy or valuable. Outfits for everyday work generally consist of shorts or loose/thin trousers, a t-shirt or tank top and comfortable sandals.

Essential Items:

- *hat* • *sunglasses* • *toiletries* • *towels*
- *sturdy, comfortable footwear for extended walking* • *flip-flops / crocs / sandals*
- *insect repellent* • *sunscreen* • *flashlight / headlamp*
- *waterproof clothing / umbrella (during the rainy season)* • *quick dry clothing*
- *warm clothing for layering (during cool season)* • *international adaptor*
- *first aid kit* • *camera (waterproof recommended)*
- *memory cards* • *small backpack for day trips*

Items that can be difficult to find:

- *sanitary products can be tricky to find in Sangkhlaburi - pads are readily available in town (although often thicker/thinner than western versions) but we recommend you bring your own tampons if needed. These can also be found in larger supermarkets and shops in Kanchanaburi or Bangkok.*



Internet

We recommend you bring your own laptop or tablet with you if you would like to have access to the internet during your stay. Free Wi-Fi is readily available at the Volunteer House as well as at the clinic, though we do not currently have a public computer.

Please note that while our internet access is high speed, it can be intermittent due to the service being down or local power cuts.

Free internet access is also available in many cafés and restaurants in town (you may have to ask for the password), and there is an internet café in town for those who prefer not to bring their own computer.



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