



Teach English to Buddhist Novice Monks and Local Communities in Laos - Enhance the education of novice Buddhist monks in Luang Prabang as well as other members of the local community while learning about the local culture

Översikt

Laos is one of the most traditional countries in Asia, and offers some of the richest culture and history of the region. Teaching novice monks and local community members in one of the country's more historic regions is an incredibly rewarding way to connect with the real Laos and its people. The project is based in Luang Prabang, a Unesco Heritage Site, which is known for its beauty, architecture and colour. There is a ban on buses and trucks in the city, and an 11.30pm night-time curfew ensures the tranquility of the area is preserved. Volunteers will have time off at weekends to explore the region and so can take a scenic boat trip up the Mekong to the Pak Ou Caves, watch the sunset from atop Mount Phu Si, swim in the Kuang Si Waterfalls, marvel at the many temples, trek, raft or take an elephant tour. This is the perfect way to explore one of the countries in Asia least tarnished by tourism.

Projektet

Luang Prabang is the ancient and spiritual capital of Laos, filled with elegant centuries-old temples draped in gilded awnings, saffron monks silently collecting alms in cobbled lanes and cosy restaurants nestling on the Mekong in French colonial mansions. Hundreds of young rural boys ordain as novices here in order to further their education and to break the cycle of poverty. A severe lack of English teachers means that these students' education will drastically suffer, so volunteers will support the English department in teaching novice monks.

Wat Siphouththabat is the largest school for monks and novices in Luang Prabang, having over 700 students. Sadly there are only two teachers to teach English, the school's most popular subject. Our goal is to help out the English department in delivering a quality education to their students. TEFL qualifications or experience are helpful (as is any previous experience of English teaching), but not necessarily essential as you will be provided with basic training and support during your stay. Classrooms at the school will likely have 30+ students in each. In addition you may have the opportunity to teach in a number of venues giving you the opportunity to fully immerse yourself in the local community. Community members with access to English lessons have better opportunities for education and work in this developing country. By assisting individuals and classes at schools, language centres, and with other local organisations you will maximize your teaching audience as well as your skills.

This opportunity is open to adult English speakers. The ability to work independently and come up with creative teaching ideas are ideal though there will be in-country teaching support available from GVI staff and other volunteer teachers.

En volontär berättar

My experience of working as a volunteer teacher of English at The Monks' School in Luang Prabang was for 1 month over the Christmas period. I wanted to travel over my Christmas vacation in an Asian country but didn't want to do the usual sightseeing type of travel. This time I wanted to have the experience of "putting into" a community and staying in one place for several weeks to get the feeling of ordinary life of the local people. My interest in working at the Buddhist School was based in my own journey of discovering that the Buddhist philosophy easily integrated into my own life.

The 4 weeks of teaching was a mixture of apprehension, nervousness, excitement, gratitude, joy, tiredness etc etc. Pretty much every emotion was experienced over the time. But what stayed with me most and made me want to do more was the gratitude and respect shown by the students to their teachers. When walking home from school each day I would pass by groups of novice monks returning to their temples from their day at school and the smiles that greeted me made me feel that I was very valued.

After 7 months of being home from this amazing experience I went again. This time to travel in the northern provinces. During this 7 month period of being back in Australia, the memory of my experiences never left me. There were times over the first few months of being back home that I felt as if I was grieving over a loss I'd experience and I was amazed at this intensity of feeling. It didn't really make much sense to miss Laos so much after only a month's stay. But that was the way it was. Not a day went by that I didn't remember the people, the novices, the monks, the food, the generosity of spirit and the smiles. So I knew that I would be going back. Now I'm returning for a third time to do more teaching.

Amidst the teaching experience of working at the Monks' School is layer upon layer of fabulously ordinary life stuff. The Lao people are very welcoming and kind and always want to know if you have eaten and/or eaten enough. Invitations of having lunch or dinner or attending a Bacci ceremony where your spirits are blessed with every piece of luck under the sun are common experiences.

If you have ever had an interest in touching the lives of gentle generous people through the giving of your skills and time, I would tell you to come over to Laos and do it! You will be giving yourself the opportunity of a lifetime. See you in Luang Prabang.

Tricia Feeney



Munkarna med sin lärare

Vilken skillnad gör detta projekt?

As the national government relies heavily on foreign aid to support itself, very little funding flows to rural education. As a result, many rural boys move to urban areas to ordain as Buddhist monks and further their education and opportunities for the future. This education is provided by the temples at very little cost and as a result resources are often stretched beyond capacity. English is the most popular subject in a school of 700 students and they are desperate for native or fluent speakers to help provide assistance. As Luang Prabang and surrounding communities gain economic benefits from tourists and adventure travellers through the region, they are realizing more and more the importance of English skills and the demand for quality teachers is growing. By providing local people with English language training you will help them take steps to improve their livelihoods and futures.

Höjdpunkter

Have the rare opportunity to work closely with novice monks in a temple school; live in Luang Prabang, a UNESCO heritage town; assist local community members in obtaining and practicing valuable English skills; learn about Lao culture, history, food, religion and language; visit local sights; enjoy a weekend break on the banks of the Mekong River.

Plats

Luang Prabang is the former royal capital of Laos and is a very relaxing town located on the Mekong River. It is about 900 km northeast of Bangkok, Thailand. Lovely French Colonial buildings and fresh baguettes fused with exotic Southeast Asian culture and charm make for a wonderful setting to gain some teaching practice and experience a unique culture. 200 year old Wat Siphoutthabat stands at the base of Mt. Phousii in the heart of historic Luang Prabang. It is the largest school for monks in the city, having over 700 novices who live in the other temples and come here each day to study. Other schools, colleges, and language centres are all within walking distance of this lovely town. The surrounding hills contain traditional villages, waterfalls and other scenic pleasures.

Ute i fält

Volunteers will have their own room in a centrally located guesthouse. It has electricity and a variety of facilities are plentiful and nearby. Both Lao and Western food are available very cheaply in Luang Prabang (food will be at the expense of the volunteer). Laundry will be at your own expense.

Laos generally enjoys a mild, tropical climate, but it can get quite chilly in the cool season. Temperatures range from 10 – 40°C in the Mekong Valley, and may dip below zero in the mountains and on the Xieng Khouang and Bolaven Plateaus. There are three distinct seasons: cool from November-February; hot from March-May and the rainy season which lasts from June -October. Most people find the best time to visit from October-February; however the low season offers lush green landscapes in the rainy season and the colourful Lao New Year's festival in April.

Viktigt att tänka på

As the school is in a Buddhist temple, there are several guidelines which must be stressed: Females are expressly forbidden from making physical contact with monks and novices (including handing items directly to monks) and should never be one-on-one with a monk. This is due to ancient laws restricting the behaviour of the monks, and breaking them can have severe consequences for a monk, including being defrocked and expelled from the monkhood (a genuine disgrace for any Lao man). While Laos allows freedom of religion, proselytizing in all forms is expressly forbidden. If you are not Buddhist, be prepared to answer questions from the novices as they are curious about the lives of foreigners, but volunteers must steer clear of being perceived as trying to 'convert' the monks. Laos is also one of the few surviving communist countries, albeit more thawed than in the past. Economically it is opening up, yet is politically still repressed. Any attempts to 'spread democratic thinking' or 'undermine the socialist government' will be dealt with harshly by the government and will mean serious consequences (including imprisonment and deportation).

Blueberry Volontär

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Livet på projektet

Volunteers' main tasks will be classroom instruction to the school's novices. English grammar and conversation are the main subjects and will be taught to students with varying levels of ability.

An average day may run as follows:

- * 08:00-11:15 Morning teaching sessions
- * 11:15-13:30 Volunteer lunch
- * 13:30-17:00 Afternoon teaching sessions
- * 17:00-18:00 Volunteer dinner
- * 18:00-20:00 Evening enrichment sessions

Sample one week itinerary:

Volunteers will work from Monday to Friday. Saturdays and Sundays will be free for them to explore the area and relax. Some weekends, various optional restoration and improvement projects may take place in and around the temple.

Annat att göra

There are some popular local trips which are easy to organize and can be paid for in country:

- * Kuang Si Waterfall - Swim in the crystal clear water, Enjoy the cascades and walk to the top of the falls to enjoy the beautiful view of the course of the water below. Visit the protected bear camp at the falls. Picnic in the grounds.
- * Pak Ou Caves - Ride on the Mekong River to visit the historical Pak Ou Caves which hold thousands of Buddha images. Visit the "Jar Maker Village" and "Weaving Village" on your way back. Watch the weavers at work.
- * Kayaking on the Nam Khan - After a short ride out of town, paddle on the beautiful Nam Khan River and discover village life, wonderful countryside and the lush green mountains along the way.
- * Elephant Camp - Experience the life of a Lao Mahout. Learn about the elephants, feel them, feed and wash them. Enjoy the sounds and life on the river as your elephant takes you silently for a ride.
- * City Tour - Be guided through the lovely UNESCO heritage town of Luang Prabang with an experienced English speaking guide. Visit the Royal Palace Museum and be shown the beautiful temples of Wat Xieng Thong and Wat Mai.
- * Tad Sae Waterfall - Delight in the multi-level limestone formations that create the numerous cascading pools. Swim in cool, crystal green water. Lunch at the café.
- * Cycle through the Luang Prabang Valley - Experience the daily life of the local people. Visit a temple ruin, cremation ground and handicraft villages. Learn about the weaving and dying of silk and cotton fabrics. See blacksmiths at work and the making of paper so well known in Luang Prabang.

We can help plan and arrange other trips as requested by volunteers.

Foton från projektet



För startdatum, priser och bokning, se www.blueberry.nu

