



A land of smiles, bustling Bangkok and beautiful beaches...but there is another Thailand. A simpler, gentler land, full of warm people in tune with the rhythms of rural life. Our gap year projects and volunteering opportunities will see you located in Ban Thaton, about one and a half hours' drive west from Chiang Rai, or three hours' north of Chiang Mai. It nestles in the Fang Valley, very close to the border with Myanmar (Burma). The valley forms a bowl full of orange groves and paddy fields, whilst the river, once the 'road' when boats were the main transport, still frequently provides the quickest way between villages. The villages and schools are in the foothills at the edge of the bowl. The hill tribes (peoples whose origins may lie in China, Burma or Laos) and the rural Thais rub happily along together. Volunteering in Thailand with AV gives you the opportunity to go straight to the heart of this wonderful country, full of astonishing beauty – both natural, human and architectural.

Project Summary

Departs: February, May

How long? 15 weeks

Accommodation: Self catered AV houses

Project Work: Teaching, Art, Music, Drama, Sport,
Community Work

Explore Further: Trekking, Temples, Beaches, Wildlife



Project Overview

Orientation + Briefing (5 days)	Orientation course at the Maekok River Village Resort in Tha Ton. A chance to get to know your AV group whilst learning basic Thai and attending briefings on teaching, keeping safe, staying healthy and Thai history and culture.
Project Work (Approx 10-12 weeks)	Living and working in villages around Ban Thaton, west of Chiang Rai. AV volunteers teach, get involved in extra curricular clubs or work in the wider community. Together with fellow AVs you will live in houses in or near the school grounds, with a high level of independence. Spending significant time in one place lets you become fully involved and gain a sense of achievement.
Independent Travel (4 weeks)	Explore Thailand and South East Asia further, using the confidence and local knowledge gained on your project to make the most of your travels. Visit temples, the famous islands and relax on the beautiful white sandy beaches or take a PADI diving course. You choose what you do, but we are still on hand to help.

Detailed Itinerary

ARRIVING IN THAILAND

The group flight departs from London Heathrow and will be seen off by one of the AV team. You will fly into Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport. You will take an internal flight to Chiang Rai, where you will meet Bryan and Rosie Massingham, the AV representatives for the Thailand Venture. Together you will travel to Tha Ton, about one and a half hours through some of northern Thailand's stunning scenery – your base for the orientation course.

BRIEFING AND ORIENTATION

This is a chance to settle in, unwind after the hectic few days leading up to your departure, long journey and an opportunity to get to know your AV group. The orientation course is important to make sure you are fully prepared when you arrive in your school. It will be led by Bryan and Rosie, giving you a chance to get to know them too. You will be based at Maekok River Village Resort in Tha Ton where they will:

- Teach you about Thai history, culture, customs and polite behaviour
- Teach you some Thai
- Teach you some basic Thai cooking
- Discuss safety issues
- Give you some training in teaching English

During the course you will have a chance to practice teaching on each other and on local Thai children. There will be plenty of free time to relax and get to know each other better over some Pad Thai.

After the orientation course you will head out to the villages. All villages are within 90 minutes of Tha Ton and of the hospital at Mae Ai. Your new home will be close to the school, or actually inside the grounds, at the heart of the village. Here the AV representative will leave you to settle into your new home, but remember they're never more than a phone call away if needed!

THE PROJECT

Our gap year projects and volunteering opportunities in Thailand join forces with the Maekok River Village Project which works to improve facilities in schools in the Fang Valley. AV volunteers work at primary or middle schools with local children or those from nearby hill tribe villages. Your volunteer placement will involve you teaching spoken English to the children, and perhaps to teachers and villagers.

You will be formally welcomed to the school. It will take a bit of time to know all the staff, but you will be looked after by one of the English teachers (who may not be a confident English speaker!). The school will normally give you lunch, shared with the other teachers. Schools are always at the centre of the village communities, so you will be very well known and your presence much appreciated. Socialising in the staffroom and outside of the school gives you a chance to get to know the staff who will explain the Thai way of life and traditions, perhaps teach you some Thai dancing or Takraw (a sort of cross between volleyball and football).

The Thai schools' English syllabus is entirely an exercise in writing, so neither teachers nor children get a chance to speak it. That's where you come in! You will teach each of the different classes in your school two or three times per week, helping the Thai English teacher with pronunciation and giving the children a massive boost in confidence. Most pupils will be aged between 4-11 years old and class sizes can vary. The children respect older people (you!) but can be quite cheeky and are very competitive!

Outside lessons you may be asked to run separate English classes - teaching reading in smaller groups. Most schools have a quiet period after lunch.

There is also plenty of opportunity to play sports with the children, all schools are built around a football pitch-sized space so there is scope to play football, basketball or volleyball. Alternatively you can help with clubs for art, music or drama. You will need to apply energy to start extra classes for local villagers, for example, to arrange activities or sports with other schools, but it will be worth it! Scouting is important in Thai schools and scout or guide uniforms are worn once a week. On other days different dress is worn.

Thailand is intensely patriotic and, at the pinnacle of this feeling, is the hugely respected King. You may have 'King Day' holidays. Occasionally, schools have picnics or other celebrations at weekends but otherwise your time is free have fun and explore. This is also a good chance to pop into the local town to do some shopping, check emails, catch up on news from home, or meet up with other AVs, visit their schools and travel in the local area.

To find out what a typical day on project might be like take a look at our ['Day in the life of an AV'](#) feature, written by AVs who have been there and done it themselves!

Food + Accommodation

You will live in a designated AV self catered house with other volunteers. Types of houses vary – some are traditional wooden Thai houses and some more modern, brick built. You will have a living room, a bedroom, kitchen area and bathroom. These are very hygiene-conscious, so bathrooms are usually very clean. The school will give you lunch, but you will have to buy and cook your own breakfast and supper – or eat from the small food stalls and restaurants in the village; they are incredibly cheap and great value for money. You will grow to love it and soon feel very much at home!

We encourage independence and so you will not have someone cooking and looking after you – it's a chance to step up and take responsibility for yourself. You will be given a daily food allowance and will be expected to shop at the local markets and cook for yourself – picking up lots of great Thai cooking tips from as you go! This is the best way of getting to know people, being involved in the community and gaining the an understanding of living there – you are not a bystander watching from afar.

Whilst not living with you full time the AV representative is never far away and there whenever you need them. They can be contacted by phone 24/7 and will visit you during your project.

Independent Travel

As your project comes to an end it is not quite time to say goodbye... AV includes approximately four weeks of independent travel at the end of the venture, to ensure a good balance of volunteering and adventure. Thailand and the surrounding countries of South East Asia have lots of exciting and beautiful places to explore which you won't get to see on your weekends alone. Many AVs want to stay on and travel but don't know if others on the project will too. Therefore we include this extra travel time to ensure that you experience as much as possible and know that you will have people to travel with. From our experience travelling is often when problems occur, from lost passports to getting ill – that's why we have the motto 'Once an AV, always an AV' - we'll still be there to help you, even though your project has finished.

Different travel options Thai AVs have done in the past include: visiting the iconic beaches and secluded islands for sunbathing or scuba diving, especially in the archipelago on the western side of the Thai Peninsula; crossing into Laos to visit Luang Prabang and head down the Maekong River to Vientiane, that very French city; travelling (flying by one of the region's low cost carriers) to Siem Reap and visit the astonishing Angkor Wat, one of the wonders of the world; Visit Vietnam, its lovely gentle people and the Maekong Delta, Ho Chi Min City and the relics of the Vietnam War; or travelling down into Malaysia, taking the train to Singapore or crossing to east Malaysia to visit the Orang Utangs (originally Orang Hutan or "Forest People"!) before they become extinct. There is no shortage of things to do and see. The only rule is you do not travel alone.

Dates + Costs

For current AV departure dates + costs please visit the website – www.aventure.co.uk

AV PROJECT COSTS INCLUDE:

Before departure:

- Pre-departure information, support and advice
- A nominated member of the UK volunteer support team
- One-to-one face to face briefing for UK applicants
- Telephone briefing for non-UK applicants
- References taken up
- Comprehensive online health check
- Advice on group flight booking or individual flight arrangements
- Briefing for group departure from London airport

In-country:

- In-country representative
- 24/7 in-country backup
- Meet and greet at airport (if arriving with the group)
- Airport transfer (if arriving with group)

- In-country induction course
- Transfer from induction course to school/project
- Accommodation (except during independent travel)
- Food allowance (except during independent travel)
- Management of emergencies, including lost passport, illness, etc. whilst in-country

Upon returning home:

- Returning home advice
- Full telephone debriefing

AV PROJECT COSTS DO NOT INCLUDE

- Flights
- Travel Insurance
- Country visas
- Meeting of non-group arrivals
- Accommodation for early/late arrivals
- Medical expenses, e.g. inoculations, malaria prophylactics
- In-country medical expenses
- Drinks
- Tips/gratuities - No tips/gratuities for AV staff are necessary or expected
- Spending money
- Extra activities that you choose to do
- Food, transport and accommodation on independent travel

Still got questions? We're here to answer them and remember if you want to talk to an AV volunteer who has been there and done it just let us know and we'd be happy to put you in touch! Contact the AV office on +44(0)1380 729009 or info@aventure.co.uk