

# Thailand Program Addendum



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## DISCLAIMER

Your host village in this program country is somewhere that can benefit from a volunteer English teacher. You should expect to be the only LE volunteer in your village (though in some programs, we do send two volunteers to one location). This means that you may not have direct access to an American.

It may not be a very well-developed community, and the ease of transportation infrastructures is not the same as you could expect in high-functioning urban areas. Transportation varies country-to-country and village-to-village (consult the remaining portions of this addendum for info more specific to your host region), and most are connected by public bus routes. The frequency of the bus/train schedule will not be the same as in urban areas, and you should not rely on schedules or purchasing tickets via the internet. You will need to consult with your host family and PD when arranging transportation. Not all host families own cars or share vehicles with neighbors/relatives.

All villages have phones and internet connections, and many but not all host families have internet in their homes. For families who have Internet connectivity, it may not be the same level/consistency as in a developed, urban area. Volunteers who are very concerned with being in touch all the time should invest in their own cellphones and you can talk to your PD about it. Villages will have access to a medical clinic or hospital in the nearest larger city.

Be prepared to live in a place with different social norms that may challenge and fascinate you. As a volunteer you need to be culturally sensitive and your host family may not have the same views as you.

You should reach out to your Program Directors or Director of Programming if you ever feel uncomfortable.

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

### (A) STAFF

#### **Mira Sen (Program Director)**

**Bio:** Mira Sen is from Batavia, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago), and is currently studying at St. Olaf College in Minnesota pursuing degrees in political science and English. She had an absolutely incredible experience spending time with and getting to know her students and host family. She was blown away by the kindness of the Thai people and the children's enthusiasm for learning. Last year, she served as the Assistant Non-Travelling Program Director to the Thailand program, and missed Thailand desperately all along the way. She is very excited to get to return to Thailand this year as Program Director. Mira believes passionately in LE's mission of promoting English abroad, and cannot wait to see the Thailand program through another successful, well-run year.

#### **Michelle Safferman (Assistant Non-Traveling Program Director)**

**Bio:** Michelle Safferman is from Baltimore, Maryland and graduated from the University of Maryland with a degree in supply chain management in the spring of 2013. She is planning to attend medical school in the fall of 2015. Michelle had an absolutely amazing experience teaching English at Wat Wang Daeng School in Phichit, Thailand. She truly enjoyed spending time with her host family and getting to know her students outside the classroom. She was lucky to form strong, loving relationships with her host family and continues to keep in touch. Michelle served as the Campus Director at UMD during her senior year of college and is SO excited to be joining the LE family again this year as the non-travelling program director. She is so excited to work with Mira this year to plan an awesome summer for volunteers in Thailand!

**PD and ANT-PD Responsibilities:** Mira will conduct orientation at the start of service and will be in Thailand to facilitate the program. Both Mira and Michelle will always be available by mobile phone and will have almost daily access to Internet, however Michelle will be remaining in the States and working to help LE from there. Mira will visit each teaching site and will be generally available for whatever suggestions, questions, concerns, or any other queries. Other PD responsibilities include coordinating sites, selecting volunteers, pre-service programming, arranging accommodations, conducting volunteer orientation, organizing mobile phones and other in-country amenities, general assistance with problem-solving while in Thailand, preparing next year's Program Directors (PDs), ensuring volunteers' successful service projects, and facilitating volunteers' needs and concerns. Mira and Michelle also want to ensure that every volunteer has just as an unforgettable summer as they did.

### **(Country Coordinator)**

The Country Coordinator will co-conduct orientation and will serve as a partner not just to the PD but to all the volunteers. The CC will always be available by phone. He/she will often help with teaching, but most importantly, she will serve as a service-, teaching-, and cultural-mentor.

Address:  
(USA):

Bio:

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## **(B) PROGRAM HISTORY**

Founded in 2009, this will be LE Thailand's sixth year in operation with, two new extremely motivated PDs. LE Thailand was founded on the premise of being more of service than any ordinary teach-English-abroad program. This year, this mission is still living strong but with a more concerted effort on increasing access to higher quality education. In addition, the volunteers selected will continue a tradition of "service-teaching" as well as "English-teaching."

In 2009, the Thailand program was established with Daniel Scott Smith (commonly referred to as DSS) as the founder. As a pilot, it began with four volunteers, two in the Phichit province and two in the Phitsanulok province.

Unfortunately, the 2010 program was cancelled due to security concerns regarding the political situation at the time. {Please see security concerns section below}.

Thailand was back bigger than ever in 2011 with fourteen volunteers teaching in the Phichit province. Pakapol Laosri acted as program director fully strengthening the program and expanding into new towns. The program was further expanded in 2012, so much that it required an extra PD with Melinda Lee joining the team, with 23 volunteers, 19 in Phichit and 4 in Nan province.

By the beginning of last year, the Thailand program had never been in a better position. With stable foundations and excellent in-country contacts, 2013 shaped up to be one of the best years yet. With two new program directors, Cián Mc Leod and Niall Murphy, both from Trinity College Dublin, the LE Thailand grew once more by continuing operations in the Phichit province and expanding to Chiang Mai.

While sending volunteers to Chiang Mai was by no means unsuccessful, Cián and Niall found that the distance between Chiang Mai and the well-established program in Phichit was proving rather difficult and time-inefficient. They, along with country coordinator Supa Laosri, decided that efforts would be better placed in establishing a program closer to Phichit, in the neighboring province of Phetchabun. It was also decided that, with the provinces closer together, only one traveling program director would be needed for 2014. For the summer of 2015, there will be one travelling program director. Pakapol Laosri returned as the PD for the 2014 program, with volunteers only serving in the Phichit province due to security concerns. Since the Thailand program is typically quite large, the position of ANT (Assistant Non-Traveling) Program Director was established in 2014. Together Mira and Michelle hope to uphold another successful year for LE Thailand.

(C) PROGRAM SUMMARY

Important Dates:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Dates for both Phichit and Phetchabun volunteers</b>
Pick up at Bangkok airport (Suvarnabhumi International Airport-BKK)	Monday, June 15th
Travel to Phichit for orientation	Tuesday, June 16th
Orientation	Wednesday, June 17th-Friday, June 19th
Teaching begins	Monday, June 22rd
Mid-point break	Saturday, July 4th
Teaching ends	Friday, July 31st
Post service wrap up	Saturday, August 1nd
Volunteers free to depart	Sunday, August 2rd

Approximately 10-15 volunteers will be placed in the Phichit province for the summer of 2015. All volunteers will be greeted in Bangkok on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June at the Suvarnabhumi international airport, and will be free to leave their respective provinces on Sunday August 2<sup>nd</sup> (booking flights that depart at earliest August 3<sup>th</sup>).

**Pick Up & Orientation**

As stated above, all volunteers should arrive in Bangkok by Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015 (Thai time-11 hours ahead of EST, 6 hours ahead of Dublin time) where they will be greeted by the program director and country coordinator at the airport. From the airport, we will travel to our accommodation for the night. This is your time to rest up, stretch your legs and meet the other volunteers who will share this wonderful experience with you.

We will stay overnight in the accommodation (place TBD later – we promise it's nice!). The next morning we will arrange for volunteers to change some of their money into local currency (see money and banking), and buy a sim card/ mobile phone if needed. Per Learning Enterprises policy, all volunteers are required to have some form of mobile device with them at all times (see below). From there, we will depart to the Phichit province (approximately 3.5 hours drive) where orientation will take place (location TBA). Along the way, we will enjoy the sights and experience our first taste of Thai cuisine.

Orientation will be from June 17-19. During orientation volunteers will be instructed by the PD, the CC, and members of the Thai community on matters of Thai culture, Thai language, and most importantly teaching in Thai schools. The PD will provide volunteers with examples of lesson plans and teaching strategies, and the volunteers themselves will construct mock lesson plans. On the afternoon of Friday June 19th, volunteers will depart for their host families homes. Teaching will commence the following Monday.

### **Mid-point break**

Though “mid-point” suggests that this break will take place in the middle of the program, we have found that a break two weeks into teaching is more helpful than a break after three weeks. It will be a forum for volunteers to gather and discuss ideas with teaching and any problems they may be having. It will also provide an opportunity for volunteers to provide feedback to program directors on their experience so far.

Most importantly, it will be an opportunity for all volunteers to gather together and socialize a bit and enjoy each other’s stories on that really spicy Thai dish that nearly killed them, or the time a Komodo dragon chased them across a farm!

A full timetable will be provided at a later date.

### **Post-service wrap-up**

Post service wrap up marks the end of your adventure with LE Thailand for the program year 2015! However, it will act as an opportunity for volunteers to reflect on their experience and provide much needed feedback to improve the program for the forthcoming year. We will also discuss how volunteers can further continue their experience with Learning Enterprises.

## **(D) TEACHING**

Teaching takes place during the Thai school year. All schools will be in full session during the duration of the program. Volunteers teach for six weeks in local schools. Schools will be accessible by walking, by bicycle or your host family will make arrangements for you to get a lift to school. Host families make contact with the school you will be teaching with prior to their application. Schools are selected as per their need for a volunteer. Your school is somewhere that can benefit from a volunteer like you.

Volunteers teach between 4-6 hours per day. Classes can be of any grade from kindergarten to twelfth grade. The size of each class will depend on the school. Some volunteers may be teaching classes with as many as 50 students, while other volunteers’ largest class may consist of as little as 8 students. The children may or may not sit at desks; some schools’ classes may just sit on the floor. All classrooms should have a blackboard, while some may have a white board. Overhead projectors and other more advanced technologies will more than likely not be available and should not be expected.

Volunteers are encouraged to teach after school classes to teachers. Remember, you will only be at the school for a short time, the teachers will be at the school for many years. Any English you can teach the teachers will be used by them throughout the years.

Learning Enterprises likes their volunteers to focus on creative lesson plans that stimulate conversational English and the conversational side of the language. Volunteers are free to play games, create theatre pieces, sing a song, do arts & crafts and whatever you can think of that involves an aspect of the English language. Volunteers have full control of the classroom and are not constrained on any aspect of their teaching.

We will be asking volunteers to think about potential subjects and lessons that they can implement prior to the program. During the months leading up to the program, we will conduct online activities around lesson planning, managing classroom behavior, as well as classroom etiquette. Additionally, we will be asking all volunteers to construct a very basic curriculum (examples of previous curriculums will be emailed out) prior to arriving in Thailand that may work as a basis for lesson plans during their time teaching.

We also encourage volunteers to spend time outside of the classroom with their students. Be this playing sports after school, learning how to cook their favorite Thai dish, playing games or even just interacting with them. Students are also to be included in the volunteer's service project (see below). You are not only the teacher, you are the student; open your mind to these students and you will also learn. The time outside of the classroom is the students' time to teach the volunteer, and will certainly be one of the most rewarding aspects of LE Thailand for volunteers.

See below for some warnings about potentially uncomfortable situations you may experience while teaching.

### **(E) SERVICE PROJECT**

Each member is required to create, organize, and implement a service project in his or her community. These are meant to be complementary to the volunteers' teaching (not to substitute it) and to include the volunteers' students, hosts, and possibly other volunteers. These are community events and should have a tangible impact. The purpose is to lead by serving others while promoting service learning within the community.

Volunteers should absolutely begin brainstorming ideas prior to application, however volunteers will not truly know what the best service project for their respective communities will be until they arrive and get to know the community. Upon admittance into the program, volunteers will begin discussions with PDs about their potential ideas for their service project. Service projects should be able to be completed within the timeframe of the program, previous ideas include:

- English book drive
- Painting a Mural
- Recycling
- Creation of classroom revision material
- Teaching a health class
- Building a playground!

## **COUNTRY INFORMATION**

### **(A) WEATHER & CLIMATE**

For the Western visitor there is no such thing as "cool". Just cooler than "hot" and "drier than humid," so light cotton clothing is the order of the day. The tropical sun can be



quite fierce so a hat is useful, and don't forget to use a good sunscreen. Nights usually cool down with rain, but don't put your money on it. Temperature and humidity averages June through August: low 90s F/30s C. Upon acceptance, the PDs will email out a more extensive list of clothing restrictions/requirements for Thailand.

### **(B) FOOD & DRINK**

Being a vegetarian or vegan in Thailand is not a problem, but keeping strict Kosher or eating accordance of halal will probably be nearly impossible. Western taste can easily be catered to upon request (just say mai-pit, which means not spicy). Open-air markets are centrally located at walking distance. However, there are vendors on every street selling food and drinks. Food bought at open-air markets or street vendors is generally quite cheap and more than delicious. The key to experiencing Thai cuisine in the fullest is to be adventurous! Never assume that you won't like something; chances are that you will like it quite a bit! See security concerns below for information regarding eating poultry. Always drink bottled water, which is easy to acquire and affordable.

Host families will most likely be more than accommodating to dietary needs and preferences. They will want to share every aspect of their culture with you, especially food. This means that you will probably be subjected to trying all sorts of delicious Thai meals. While it is not rude to say that you are full in Thailand, it is important to try a bit of whatever meal your host family has prepared and/or bought for you. Remember, you can learn just as much, if not more, from them as they will learn from you. Because your host family will want to make you as comfortable and happy as possible, they will pay very close attention to what you say you do or do not like. During the 2013 program year, a volunteer mentioned to her host parents that she liked peanuts; consequently, at a party thrown for her a few days later, she was presented with three platters of peanuts (of varying degrees of roast, saltiness, etc).

### **(C) LANGUAGE**

Thai people speak Thai ("pasaa tai"). Most visitors to Thailand don't speak Thai and have never heard it spoken. However, Thai people generally **love** to teach foreigners how to speak the language, and appreciate it when the visitor makes an effort. Be prepared to use your hands a lot and to be encouraged to learn a lot in a little bit of time! Upon acceptance, the PDs will begin sending out Thai language emails with YouTube videos from which volunteers can learn and practice some Thai. Additionally, we will be holding required Skype sessions with each accepted volunteer for basic Thai language lessons, as well as to check up on pre-departure preparation. In the meantime, below are some basic Thai phrases which you will almost certainly use more than once during your time in Thailand.

### Useful Phrases in Thai

Thank you  
How much?  
Where is .....?

Khorb koon  
Gee baht/Taow Rai  
..... yoo tee nai

I don't want	Mai tong gaan/Mai Aow
Sorry	Khor toat
I like it a lot	Chan chob mak
Yes/No	Chai/ Mai chai
Why?	Tum mai
What?	Arai
I want to go to...	Chun ja pai .....
Toilet	Hong naam
Which way?	Pai taang nai
Left	Sai
Right	Kwaa
Straight on	Throng pai
Is it far?	Glai mai?
How to go to .....	Pai .....
Never mind	yang ngai
It's ok/ No Problem	Plao
Do you speak English?	Mai Pen Rai
How do you do? (pleased to meet you)	Kun poot pa sa ang grit dai mai
I beg your pardon?	Yin dee tee roo jak
I don't understand	Arai na
See you later	Di chan (f) Pom (m) mai kow jai
Can you help me?	Laiw jer gan
	Chuay Di chan (f) Pom (m) noy dai mai

## **(D) CULTURE/RELIGION**

According to the census in 2000, the religions are Theravada Buddhism 94.6%, Islam 4.6%, Christianity 0.7%, other 0.1%. Thailand is a constitutional monarchy, and a proud one at that. The King and Buddhism are cornerstones to Thai identity, and to disparage or slander either is illegal; to insult the King and/or Buddha, monks, or their teachings is to insult Thais. On that note, some key points:

- Body parts: it is considered disrespectful to touch an elder's head, touch someone with your feet (really, to do anything with your feet except walking is a terrible idea), walk over food, or mix the things that go on or with the higher parts of your body with the lower parts of your body or vice versa (pillows, hats, etc don't mix with socks, shoes, etc)
- The King: disrespect is strongly prohibited; no slander, disrespectful gestures (look above for feet reference), or any sign of disloyalty is not tolerated; this includes anything with the image of the king (and Buddha, see below).
- Buddhism: essentially inextricable from Thai culture: it is important to show respect to monks, obey temple rules when visiting, and to respect the image and teachings of Buddha. Your host family will most likely be Buddhist and will want to share Buddhism with you.

## **(E) CULTURE/RELIGION**

### **(1) CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS**

- Some would say that the Thai motto is "mai bpen rai" - which means something along the lines of "it doesn't matter" or "its ok." Thai people are very laid back, easy-going and have a good sense of humor. On the other hand, sometimes you'll find that they don't really have a sense of urgency to get things done, characteristic of many developing countries around the world. Be patient and have a good time.
- Take your shoes off when you enter someone's house, sometimes you might if you enter a store - look around first to see if others have. It is a sign of respect.
- Most Thai dishes are actually eaten with a spoon and fork and typically only noodle soup is eaten with chopsticks. Don't expect knives!
- When meeting someone, one must wai. Essentially, this is a sort of half-bow that shows respect. It's the Thai form of a handshake. People don't really hug if they don't each other very well. The younger person is the first to wai, the older follows.
- It is standard to wai three times to a Buddha image in a temple and once to a monk if he stops to talk. Thailand has a hierarchical culture: always ensure that you are a level below a holy image/person/elder.
- Women cannot touch monks and even their clothing may not touch monk's clothing.
- When you go into a temple, your legs past your knees and shoulders must be covered which means longer pants or skirts and t-shirts with sleeves.

- If you go to a movie, you must stand up in the beginning to respect the King.
- Drugs must be avoided and will absolutely not be tolerated by Learning Enterprises.
- In regard to alcohol, each volunteer's experience may differ. Thai people generally drink beer, or spirits heavily watered down with soda water. Your host family may or may not offer you alcohol. If they do not offer, do not ask. Alcohol consumption outside of your host family's house (i.e. on excursions with other volunteers) will not be tolerated.
- Generally, males have preferential treatment but Western males and females are treated equally.

## (2) GENERAL

- Thais drive on the left side of the road and the driver's seat is usually on the right side of the car.
- Thais don't usually wear seatbelts, and sometimes drive people around sitting in the bed of their pick-up trucks. LE encourages volunteers to avoid potentially dangerous situations and to remember to wear their seatbelts.
- Cigarette smoke, pollution and other unpleasant odors should be expected in the urban areas.
- MOSQUITOS ARE EVERYWHERE. Bring mosquito repellent and anti-itch cream. Though north central Thailand (where Phichit and Phetchabun are located) is not an area with high prevalence of Malaria and Dengue fever, you can never be too careful. In 2013 a volunteer in the Phichit province did have to return home early due to contracting Dengue fever. We do not require that volunteers be vaccinated for Malaria (a vaccine for Dengue does not exist as of yet), however we do ask that common sense be used in regard to mosquito repellent.
- Days are HOT and HUMID. Expect yourself to be incessantly wet. There will definitely be days when you won't be able to tell whether the moisture on your head is from your recent shower or from newly formed sweat. Thai people generally shower a couple of times a day, you should too.
- In urban areas, streets can be very crowded with cars, mopeds, and bikes and drivers are reckless. Pedestrians don't necessarily have the right of way. Look both ways before you cross the street!
- Thailand is generally more liberal when it comes to gender and sexuality, so you will need to tolerate and accept all the various identities expressed (don't be surprised if you have an "out" or transgendered middle school student).
- Students will initially be very shy and then overly enthusiastic.
- Thailand is a country with vast economic disparities and, consequently, Westerners are perceived as rich, regardless. See yourself through their eyes.
- Toilets, or lack of them. Most public toilets in Phichit and Phetchabun are not Western standard. That being said, be prepared to squat and flush with a bucket. Toilet paper and soap are not usually provided at public restrooms, so be sure to carry around a pack of tissues and hand sanitizer.

- Dogs are everywhere and are not controlled by owners. A rabies vaccine should be considered.

### (3)SCHOOLS AND TEACHING

- Some Thai government schools may not even have an English teacher. Therefore, expect your students to have almost no, maybe even rudimentary English.
- Some teachers discipline their students by hitting them.
- In some government schools, students are expected to clean up the school in the morning and help teachers out by carrying stuff, getting lunch, and washing dishes.
- Most schools require students to wear uniforms and cut their hair a certain length.
- Boys and girls sit on opposite sides of the room.
- Many volunteers complained about the lack of schedule in Thai schools. Remember Thais are very laid back. You may expect to have a class but you may end up in a parade or a seminar instead. We understand this can be frustrating to you!

### GUIDELINES FOR LIVING WITH A HOST FAMILY

The host families with whom Learning Enterprises works are selected through an extensive application and interview process. They are very excited to have foreign students live with them! They see it as an opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures as well as a chance to improve their own English skills (you will probably have host brothers or sisters – if not host parents! – who are studying the language).

- Be kind, considerate, and gracious. Your host family will accommodate you as best as they can, but also remember that you are a guest in their house.
- Make an effort to communicate with your host parents and host siblings, even if the language barrier prevents you from having long philosophical conversations. Gestures and facial expressions are universal and usually get the message across. Learn a few words in Thai and use them whenever you can. Your host family will greatly appreciate your attempts to understand their culture!
- Spend time with your host family. Although they will encourage you to get to know your students as well as your peers in the village, they will also want to get the chance to see you. Don't use your host family's house simply as the place where you eat and sleep.
- Follow the rules that your host family outlines for you (if they don't give you any, use common sense). Don't challenge your host parents if they tell you that you can't stay out past hour X or if you should avoid going to Y. Even if you think that something they tell you might be unreasonable (such as keeping your distance from certain people), understand that disregarding their advice shows utmost disrespect to them.
- Make sure that your host family knows about your plans ahead of time. If you accept a student's invitation to dinner at her/his house or plan to spend the weekend traveling, let your host family know.

- One of the concerns previous volunteers had was the lack of independence they had from their host families. They felt that at times they were always accompanied or supervised by someone or “babied.” While this can seem frustrating at times for independent college students, keep in mind that your host parents are only concerned for your safety and well-being, especially when you’re in a country where you barely speak the language.
- If you have serious conflicts with your host family, please contact your Program Director or country coordinator immediately!

### EXCURSIONS

It is important to keep in mind that the main purpose of this trip is to serve. To that end, excursions and sight-seeing will be mostly focused on cultural-exchange and learning; what free time you do have should be spent with your host family and/or students. You will have the opportunity to shop and explore during orientation and the post-service wrap-up but during your teaching, you are not permitted to leave the town for more than one night, unless it has been approved by both the PD and the CC.

## PREPARING FOR YOUR TRIP

### FINDING A FLIGHT

Buy your ticket as early as possible, as prices tend to increase rapidly. Please fly into Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK). Make sure to check that the airport code is BKK. There is another international airport in Bangkok called Don Mueang airport (DMK) which you should **NOT** fly into. We ask that you fly into Suvarnabhumi as it is quite close to our accommodation for the first night, while Don Mueang is about 25 miles (40 km) away. Again, do NOT fly into Don Mueang (DMK). Most flights from the US will stopover somewhere in Asia before heading on to Bangkok. Let your fellow volunteers know about any cheap flights you find. Though there are probably as many sites as there are flights you can take, some good places to start looking for cheap student flights include:

kayak.com  
studentuniverse.com  
statravel.com  
discountfares.com  
ba.co.uk

### PASSPORTS & VISAS

**Passports:** Everyone must have a valid passport to travel. If you do not have a passport, start the process now - they may take a while to process. Your passport should be valid up to six months after the trip is completed. If you are not a US or UK citizen, please let the Program Directors know.

**Visas:** EVERY VOLUNTEER MUST HAVE A VISA BEFORE ARRIVING IN THAILAND. Each volunteer is responsible for researching and obtaining their own visa. Volunteers will apply for visas under the “tourist” category, which are valid for approximately 60 days. Learning Enterprises can supply any helpful documents. Be advised: all US citizens send their applications into the US Embassy, while UK/Irish citizens send their applications into their respective embassies. The cost of a single-entry visa is about 40 USD, while a double-entry visa is about 80 USD.

Please go to the Royal Thai Embassy USA website to apply for a visa:

<http://bangkok.usembassy.gov/service/thai-visas-for-americans.html>

Please go to the Royal Thai Embassy UK website to apply for a visa:

<http://www.thaiembassyuk.org.uk/?q=node/4>

Please go to the Royal Thai Consulate Ireland website to apply for a visa:

<http://www.thaiconsulateireland.com/>

## HEALTH & SAFETY

Bring all of your prescription medications for the summer. It will be difficult to obtain any refills. Antibiotics and other medicines are very easy to acquire in Thailand and Thai pharmacies can be trusted.

Routine vaccines are suggested for all international travel. I assume that you were required to have these to attend university, but these include measles/mumps/rubella (MMR) vaccine, diphtheria/pertussis/tetanus (DPT) vaccine, Hepatitis A (or immune globulin, IG), influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, Hepatitis B, and the rabies vaccination. Some doctors may also recommend the vaccine for Japanese encephalitis.

According to the CDC, the risk of Malaria in Thailand is restricted to rural forest areas that border Burma, Cambodia, and Laos and areas in districts of Phang Nga and Phuket. Because volunteers will be in Phichit and Phetchabun provinces, there is little risk for malaria. That said, some of previous volunteers took malaria medication, but others decided against it. So far, no one has contracted malaria. As mentioned above, it is highly recommended to be liberal with use of mosquito repellent. Again, Phichit and Phetchabun do not have high instances of Dengue fever, but a past volunteer did contract Dengue fever and needed to return home two weeks before the end of the program.

All LE volunteers are advised to also consider bringing:

- Sunblock and sunglasses for protection from harmful effects of UV sun rays. [See Skin Cancer Questions and Answers](#) for more information.
- Mosquito repellent.
- Antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.

## Insurance

Learning Enterprises requires that all participants have valid insurance coverage that will cover them while in country. **Check your existing plans** (ask your parents or call your insurance company) and many of you will find that you already have international travel insurance - or at least an international coverage policy called "airlift", or "international evacuation coverage." Basically, this policy means that you are covered should something serious happen to you and you need to be flown either back to the US or to a nearby hospital facility in your volunteer region.

If you do not have international coverage, a good temporary travel insurance is STA international student travelers insurance ([www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com) or [www.statravel.co.uk](http://www.statravel.co.uk)) or CISI international student travelers insurance, though feel free to shop around.

Most importantly, we don't want to see anyone stuck in a situation where they have no way of covering medical treatment. Be smart - get an international insurance plan. Let us know if you have any problems and we'll be happy to provide whatever advice and answers we can.

However it is not uncommon to be in a medical situation where you cannot activate your insurance coverage at the time of treatment. Have an extra \$500-1000 (£250-500) available to you in a checking (current) account, or a credit card which you can put expenses on even if you don't have the money, in case of emergency. Often when you are treated for any illness or injury abroad, you cannot be reimbursed immediately with your insurance coverage. Instead you pay for these treatments yourself, keep the receipt, and then file for a reimbursement with your insurance company.

Additionally, have \$500-1000 (£250-500) personal emergency funds available during the program. If you don't have this kind of money, we encourage you to get a credit card for emergencies only. If you get caught in an emergency, it is better to have a means to buy a ticket out (and deal with the costs when you get home) than be stuck in country.

### **Communication**

Volunteers are **required** to invest in a Thai sim card and cell phone. Thai sim cards will function in any UN-LOCKED mobile phone. You can invest in an un-locked (preferably quad-band) mobile in the US (or UK) and then buy a sim-card in Thailand. You must contact your service provider with details regarding un-locking phones. If un-locking a phone or purchasing an un-locked phone in the US or UK is too expensive or difficult, Thai phones can be bought once in Thailand very cheaply. Volunteers can use the Thai sim-card to call within Thailand as well as to call home very affordably. Internet access is available at internet cafes and most schools/host houses. The PD will help you with this upon arrival in Bangkok.

Learning Enterprises phone policy states that LE strongly suggests that volunteers acquire and maintain a cellphone while in country. As a volunteer it is your prerogative to obtain and maintain such resources and your responsibility to communicate your contact information to your parents and to LE. Your Program Director can provide guidance about how and where to acquire a cell phone, and you will receive email notifications asking you to share your contact information with LE. We strongly encourage you to take these steps. Learning Enterprises is not responsible for knowing how to reach you at all times and/or communicating this information to your parents. The **ONLY** way for you to facilitate such communications is to acquire and maintain a cell/mobile phone and be diligent about sharing your contact information.

### **SECURITY CONCERNS**

The information below is graciously and perhaps over-protectively provided by the US Department of State.



The State Department is concerned that there is a continued risk of terrorism in Southeast Asia, including in Thailand. While traveling in Thailand you should exercise caution, especially in locations where Westerners congregate, such as clubs, discos, bars, restaurants, hotels, places of worship, schools, outdoor recreation venues, tourist areas, beach resorts, and other places frequented by foreigners. You should remain vigilant with regard to your personal security and avoid crowds and demonstrations. For more information on terrorist threats against U.S. citizens worldwide and steps to take as a result of these threats, please see the [Worldwide Caution](#).

The political environment in Thailand remains beset by deep political divisions.

Protesters hold political rallies frequently to voice their opinions. Between March and May 2010, political protests throughout Thailand resulted in the deaths of at least 91 people and injuries to over 260 people, including two U.S. citizens. Responding to the violent protests in Bangkok, the Royal Thai Government imposed a curfew and temporarily closed several hotels and stores. For a period of several months after the protests ended in May, there were numerous explosive attacks, including several isolated grenade and arson attacks in and around Bangkok and, on occasion, Chiang Mai. Some of the explosive devices were discovered in public places in Bangkok, including near a major shopping center, a school, a bus stop, and government buildings. These incidents appear to have been motivated by domestic politics and have no apparent link to international terrorism.

The Department of State advises all U.S. citizens residing in or traveling to Thailand to monitor events closely, to avoid any large public gatherings, and to exercise discretion when traveling within the country. Political demonstrations are frequent in Thailand. Many are scheduled on the anniversary of political events, and others happen with little warning. Demonstrations can attract tens of thousands of participants and often cause severe traffic disruptions, especially if they include processions from one site to another. If a demonstration is expected to pass near the U.S. Embassy or Consulate facilities, Embassy and Consulate entrances and functions may be restricted. Demonstrations are unpredictable and can turn violent without warning. For this reason, we encourage you to monitor local media for information about possible demonstrations and to avoid the vicinity of demonstrations. The U.S. Embassy in Bangkok and the Consulate General in Chiang Mai post information about particular demonstrations on their websites as well as through [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). We usually will not send out emergency messages to U.S. citizens about particular demonstrations.

The far south of Thailand has been experiencing almost daily incidents of criminally and politically motivated violence for several years, including incidents attributed to armed local separatist groups. Although the separatist groups have focused primarily on Thai government interests in the southern provinces, some of the recent violence has targeted public and commercial areas, including areas where foreigners may congregate. On September 16, 2011, three coordinated bombs exploded in Narathiwat's business and entertainment district, killing five people, including four Malaysian tourists, and injuring over 110 others. On April 18, 2011, a car bomb exploded in Yala's business district, killing one person and injuring 23 others. On February 19, 2011, gunmen fired on a karaoke restaurant in Narathiwat municipality, injuring two; half an hour later, a car bomb went off nearby, injuring more than a dozen people. On February 13, 2011, a car bomb exploded in Yala municipality's business district injuring at least a dozen people. The U.S. Embassy prohibits its personnel from

traveling to the far south of Thailand-- Narathiwat, Pattani, and Yala provinces--without prior mission approval, and Embassy personnel may go there only on mission-essential travel. The Department of State urges you to defer non-emergency travel to these areas. If you must travel to these areas, you should exercise special caution and remain vigilant with regard to your personal security. You should be aware that Thai authorities have on occasion instituted special security measures in affected areas, such as curfews, military patrols, or random searches of train passengers

## **MEDICAL CONCERNS**

Medical treatment is generally adequate throughout Thailand. In Bangkok, good facilities exist for routine, long-term and emergency health care.

HIV and AIDS - Thailand has been experiencing an epidemic of HIV infection and AIDS. Heterosexual transmission accounts for most HIV infections, and HIV is common among prostitutes of both sexes, as well as among injection drug users. HIV infections among men who have sex with other men appear to be on the rise. Additionally, alcoholic beverages, medications and drugs may be more potent or of a different composition than similar ones in the United States. Several U.S. citizen tourists die in Thailand each year of apparent premature heart attacks after drinking alcohol or using drugs.

Avian Influenza - The CDC, WHO, and Thai authorities have confirmed human cases of the H5N1 strain of avian influenza, commonly known as the "bird flu." Travelers to Thailand and other countries affected by the virus are cautioned to avoid poultry farms, contact with animals in live food markets, and any surfaces that appear to be contaminated with feces from poultry or other animals. In addition, the CDC and WHO recommend eating only fully cooked poultry and eggs. For the most current information and links on avian influenza in Thailand, see the Center for Disease Control website regarding Avian Influenza and Travel at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>. You can also refer to the Department of State's Avian Influenza Fact Sheet, available at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health\\_1181.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/health/health_1181.html).

## **TAKE-HOME MESSAGE**

Dress for sweat and be professional about it. Don't eat uncooked meat. Drink bottled water. Don't participate in protests. Make eye-contact with drivers when crossing the street. Don't have sex. Make friends with Thai people and check-in with other volunteers regularly. Be outgoing, freethinking, and accommodating. **Most of all, be of service.**

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## ADDITIONAL READINGS/LINKS

State Department:

[http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/cis/cis\\_1040.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1040.html)

CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html#Intro>

Thai News in English: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/>

Human Rights Watch: <http://www.hrw.org/en/asia/thailand>

Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand>

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