



Naucrates
Conservation Project
sea turtles, mangroves and reef
2010

Phra Thong Island - Thailand

PROJECT DETAILS

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Naucrates

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1. Introduction

Naucrates conservation project is based on Phra Thong island, South Thailand. For the last 13 years the Naucrates research team has been working on SEA TURTLES, MANGROVE FOREST and CORAL REEF.

The coming season will start on **10 January 2010** and will run until **4 April 2010**. Naucrates requires staff members and people who are willing to learn about Thai wildlife and conservation, to help monitor long beaches, to teach English and conservation to the local community, to enjoy the beauty of a tropical and remote island and to work actively towards the preservation of the local nature.

2. Project background

Naucrates, an Italian NGO, has been running a Conservation Project on sea turtles, the mangrove forest and the coral reefs of PHRA THONG island since 1996 in collaboration with the Phuket Marine Biological Center (PMBC) and the Ranong Coastal Resource Research Station (RCRRS). The project is registered at the National Research Council in Thailand.

Running parallel with the scientific work that has allowed conservation strategies to be designed and applied to the nesting population, an educational programme in the local schools and conservation awareness activities are also carried out.

Since 1996, we have found and protected nests belonging to 3 different species of marine turtles: Leatherback, Olive Ridley and Green turtles. During each season, lessons are given in the local schools about conservation.

During the past 12 years many volunteers from different countries have helped in collecting valuable information, in applying conservation strategies and conducting education and awareness activities.

On 26 December 2004 the project was completely washed away. Our little museum, the volunteer huts, the instruments, the turtle tank, etc, were lost to the Andaman Sea. However, this is a material loss and nowhere near comparable to the loss of two members of the Naucrates team who were working on the island that day.

After the tsunami, the Naucrates staff continue to provide assistance towards the conservation of the island working in the field every year.

In 2008, the project changed its base. Since January 2008 the conservation team is located within a local village, called Lion village (or Pak Choke), which was rebuilt after the tsunami. The Naucrates team is based in one house, where a room is set up as an office/fieldwork center/shop (locally called "Ban Tau" or turtle house), whilst two other rooms provide accommodation for Naucrates assistants/staff.

In addition to the change in the location, both olive ridley and green turtles visited the island laying various clutches on the beach and providing a high number of hatchlings to the Andaman Sea in 2008. This is an encouraging result and the occurrence of a reasonable number of nests could be the beginning of the result of the Naucrates team's conservation efforts from the last twelve years.

Another rewarding feeling emerged when observing the young mangrove trees (planted three years ago as part of the Mangrove Rehabilitation Project), which are growing fast and healthy thus contributing to the restoration of the forest that was completely destroyed by the tsunami.

Naucrates collaborates with Mangrove Action Project developing programmes that focus on mangrove rehabilitation, education and conservation on the island.

As the Naucrates team lives within the local community, activities and programmes were developed for both children and villagers. A teacher was employed to conduct environmental education lessons and to teach English in the school and to the villagers. A drawing competition, games, talks, lessons and various activities were all part of the school programme. At the end of the three months, the children showed an improvement in their English skills and a better knowledge about turtles and mangroves.

A pilot home-stay programme was introduced allowing volunteers to stay in local houses and share daily life with the community. Thai lessons were given to volunteers in order to help them to communicate with villagers during their stay at the project.

It is more crucial than ever before that volunteers join us for the 2010 season; they will help us manually and by bringing their skills and knowledge and a small economical contribution to cover some expenses of the project. The team brings life and innovation to the local community encouraging them to understand that the development of ecotourism programmes could be a precious alternative and source of income for their future.

3. Location

Phra Thong Island, (about 100 km²; 15 km long by 7 km wide), is located about 5 km from the western coast of Thailand in the Andaman Sea (9.03-9.17°N, 98.25-98.33°E). It is located 200 km north of Phuket, in Kura Buri District, Phang Nga province. It is part of a group of three islands near the mainland: from north to south: Koh Kho Khao, Koh Phra Tong and Koh Ra.

Phra Thong Island has a tropical climate with rain falling intermittently throughout the year. There are two main seasons: the rainy season (April to November) and the dry season (December to March) with an average temperature of 28.7 C°. Three sites (villages) are located on the island: Tapayoi, Thung Dap and Pad Chok.

The East coast of the Island is covered by mangroves, with fine sand beaches (total length 15 km) on the opposite side of the island. Tourist development was limited to three small resorts which had bungalows made with local materials that did not disturb the natural beauty of the island. All the resorts were washed away by the tsunami. In 2008 one resort (Golden Buddha Beach) reopened, offering the possibility to stay on the island once again.

Flora and fauna are still rich in terms of species numbers. The island does not have electricity or roads. The tsunami completely destroyed one of the three fishing villages of the island and damaged a second one. International organizations and the Thai Government have been working since then towards the rebuilding of the local community livelihood.

4. Species and habitat

The project focuses on the four species of marine turtles that are found: Olive ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) green (*Chelonia mydas*) and hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) turtles; the latter has been observed swimming but nests have never been found.

The mangrove forest and reef will also be surveyed during the project which involves a number of different species.

Together with marine turtles, on the island there are hornbills, sea eagles, many other beautiful and colourful birds, monitor lizards, pangolins, deer, long tailed macaques, otters, crabs, reef fish, bats, lizards, snakes, dolphins, mangroves, coconut trees, etc.

Even though the area was badly hit by the tsunami in 2004, no evident signs are visible. Nature is slowly reacting and recovering. The vegetation is recovering and getting greener every day.

The island is covered by different habitats, which offer small spots of forest, savannah, mangrove canals and small coral reefs. Inside the island, ponds are found in old tin mining caves. Primary rain forest is found on Ko Ra, the island adjacent to Phra Thong.

5. Project activities

The Naucrates team will focus on turtle monitoring in order to evaluate nesting activity; on a mangrove rehabilitation project and on reef surveying; on an assessment of the impact of artisanal fisheries on turtle survival; and on an education programme in the school.

- Sea turtle monitoring: sea turtles usually nest on the island in January and February, with their eggs hatching in March (more information on turtles is available at www.naucrates.org). All beaches will be monitored on a daily basis in order to find and protect all the nests. Nests will be protected until hatching.
- Fresh water terrapin and tortoises survey: a first survey to identify species, habitat use and distribution will be conducted (if funding and staff available).
- Mangrove Rehabilitation Project (if funding is available) will include planting seedlings, making signs, an educational project, transect surveys, etc.

- Reef survey and restoration project will be conducted (if funding is available). The main purpose is to continue evaluating the recovery of the reef after the tsunami and to start restoration activities on the small reef at Koh Pring. The survey consists of snorkelling along defined transects.
- Environmental education: English lessons and environmental education in the local school. Aims of the programme will include: utilizing environmental friendly practices in the village, i.e. planting trees, producing compost, saving water, litter collection etc.; focus on a Reduction, Recycling & Reuse waste management strategy; use of environmental games that educate the young generation.
- Tourist awareness: guests and visitors to the island often visit the project and it is important to inform them on our work and the conservation of Phra Thong.
- Home stay in the village: volunteers will stay in villagers' houses encouraging them to develop a home-stay programme in the future and during the year.
- Community project: Naucrates staff in collaboration with Mangrove Action Project is conducting a project to assist the community in developing a community based tourism programme which includes home stay and activities managed by local people.

6. Projects base

The team will be based at the Lion village (ex Bak Joke village), in the north of the island. The village was destroyed by the tsunami and rebuilt in a safer location by the International Lions club as Lions village. The village consists of 150 houses, one school, one common area and a small pier. Each house is made of cement and has a kitchen, a toilet and 3 rooms. A local person will cook for the Naucrates team. Volunteers will live within the local community and will involve the local people in the programme. Electricity will only be available in the evenings. The nearest beach is about 20 minutes walk from the village.

7. Naucrates team

Naucrates team is composed by a fieldwork leader, research assistants, one teacher/translator and volunteers. The size of the team varies according to the number of volunteers per turn, but it is of maximum 10 people (exception might be encountered for special occasions). Volunteers activities are scheduled on a daily basis, according to the program of the season. The teacher/translator is in charge of conducting the environmental education program in the schools and to facilitate communication with villagers. She will teach basic Thai to allow volunteer to have basic communication among villagers. Fieldwork leader and assistants are in charge of organizing conservation work, including turtle monitoring, mangrove rehabilitation work, setting up the museum, awareness, etc.

In addition local people will be part of the team, like the lady that cook for us, the boat driver, volunteers, students, etc.

8. Volunteer involvement

You will follow a conservation research program coordinated by the Naucrates staff. You will be required to monitor beaches (15 km) on Phra Thong and Ra Islands, to conduct behavioural observation on turtles feeding and to assist nest hatching.

Every day your duties will include monitoring nesting beaches either during the night or early in the morning. In the afternoon, other activities such as collecting data on the beach, preparing materials for schools, etc. will be carried out. Activities to improve the garden, the display, etc of the Environmental Education and Visitor Center will be scheduled.

Environmental education will be conducted in the local school of the village and meetings will be set up with villagers to discuss conservation. English classes will be carried out by volunteers in the local village.

You will also be involved in activities working towards the restoration of the mangrove forest following the guidelines of Naucrates' researchers. The site was badly damaged by the tsunami and

a replanting project was initiated in 2005 along with cleaning of the area.

You will be involved in the reef survey which consists of snorkelling along transects. Training will be given to volunteers on their arrival. An information package will be sent after the booking is confirmed.

Other activities such as beach cleaning, fund raising and planting littoral vegetation will be set up on site during the project.

The following description should be considered as a general example; there will be differences in each volunteer's experience due to the nature of the project. You should bear in mind that we are working on wild endangered species and in a foreign country in South East Asia.

You will work in shifts (depending on the number of volunteers at the camp with you) and therefore one day you might do activities that you will not do the following day.

The Naucrates timetable "generally" consists of:

- early morning (about 05.30), transfer by boat to the beaches (about 15-30 minute boat trip), to monitor by walking one of the two beaches (about 5 km long, about 2 hours walk). At least two people on each beach.
- Breakfast (Picnic) on the beach, after the monitoring.
- Around 09.15 weather condition measurements.
- Late morning (around 09.30): "observations from the rock" take place. A group of two volunteers will go up on the rock near Golden Buddha Beach resort with binoculars to observe the sea, looking for sea turtles swimming there, dolphins or other animals. You might reach the place by bicycle from the village.
- If you are not on the rota for "observations from the rock" you might have free time for swimming or walking on the beach.
- Every two days at 10.00, after daily monitoring, the boat will take the team to Ra island (about 30 minutes boat trip) to monitor other nesting beaches.
- At 13.00 – 13.30 Lunch in the village or Picnic on the beach.
- Afternoon: around 15.00. Second shift of "observations from the rock" takes place. You might reach the place by bicycle from the village
- Afternoon: around 14.00. English or environmental education lessons in the local schools.
- Afternoon: at 17.00 – 17.30 English lessons for the villagers.
- About 18.00: conservation talks by Naucrates assistants.
- At 19.00 Dinner in the village.
- Night shift: Dependent on the position within the egg laying season, weather conditions and nest locations, the team will monitor nests when hatching is due. A tent will be set up on the beach and two volunteers in turn will sleep there until the nest has hatched.

Other activities that can be planned on site are: work in the Naucrates office preparing materials for the school, monitoring and display, path making, conducting guided tours for visitors, bird watching, etc.

Activities are organized in daily schedules in turn. The work is not structure from 9 to 17; volunteers should be flexible to adapt working few hours then having time free and then another two hours working, there will be plenty of free time to enjoy the beauty of the island.

9. Life in the village

After the season 2008, the local community appreciated the idea of working together with a conservation team. For this reason, Naucrates is planning to improve aspect of the projects that will provide support to the community by building capacity and awareness.

The local people of Lion Village come from different villages which were affected by the tsunami. They are now getting to know each other and slowly becoming a community. Naucrates

project provides a contribution toward the establishment of several groups in this new community stimulating the community spirit and unity.

The village is very new and it still need time to adjust itself.

Living in the village means that you will share cultures and daily habit with Thai people. Living conditions and tradition are very different from the western world. You will experience a simple and basic life, where the nature and the beauty of the place will be part of each day.

10. Accommodation

You will live with a Thai families (home-stay)in different homes but houses are very close to each other. You may have to share a room with another volunteer depending on availability. Thai houses are different from western standard houses: bed consists of a mattress on the floor covered with a bed sheet; bed sheet are not provided but a pillow is provided; toilettes have 'Thai showers', a big tank of water, please bring your own towel. Two houses are used by Naucrates as office and research assistant's accommodation as well as a volunteer common area. Electricity will be available but only in the evening (after 18.00 every day until about 22.00 at night).

Drinking Water will be essential during the day, but must be carried with you so bring a large water bottle. Three meals a day will be prepared by a local Thai woman in her house (Vegetarian option available on request). Transport to the beach, which is located about 30 minutes walk from the village, will be organized every day by boat; a local driver will be employed for the project.

In the village a local Thai lady provides a laundry service at a reasonable price there are also two small shops, selling drinks, small snacks and essentials like shampoo, etc. No souvenirs are sold in the village and there are no restaurants. Thai massage is available from 3 local ladies.

You will live closely with the local community and they will be involved in the programme. Women are kindly asked to respect the local community culture and religion by wearing suitable clothes and covering up when in the village (T-shirts and long trousers or skirts would be ideal). There are no resident foreigners in the village.

11. Volunteer contribution

The contribution required to take part in the project is 650 Euro for two weeks; any additional week is 325 Euro. This will include food and accommodation. You must have your own insurance and support your travel expenses to reach the island (flight, boat, car, etc).

Special rate are available for **Thai Volunteers**. Please contact Monica Aureggi for more details about it, naucrates12@tiscali.it

12. Requirements

No experience is needed, however you must be willing to work hard as the research requires long walks (up to 15 km) in warm and humid conditions. You also need to be friendly and communicative, be able to work in a group and live in a small Thai community.

You will be on a remote tropical island, and need to be prepared to live without night life, shops, television, etc. You will have a lot of free time during the day to walk and explore the beauty of the island or to read a book. Any health issues must be communicated before booking.

You will be based in a Thai village and you should be open and prepared to live respecting Thai culture and habits. You might find Thai daily habits different from yours, but please consider that we are all different and should respect the culture of the country where we are. The exchange of culture and different way of seeing things enriches ourselves and brings positive effects.

Women are kindly asked to respect the local community culture and religion by wearing suitable clothes and covering up when in the village (T-shirts and long trousers or skirts would be ideal). While monitoring beaches or when out of the village you can wear swimwear and shorts. The villagers are not used to having foreigners in the village living with them. It is only in the last few years that a few have visited the community to bring post tsunami support.

The activities of the project are mainly conducted on sandy tropical beaches, which are very isolated and unspoiled by tourism. Beaches are affected by a strong erosion process and tide excursion is evident. Littoral vegetation mainly consists of coconut palm and Casuarina trees, and a variety of tropical bushes and trees. The island is covered by different habitats, which offer small spots of forest, savannah, mangrove canals and small coral reefs. Inside the island, ponds are found in old tin mining caves.

13. Tips for future volunteers directly from a volunteer

‘Some people might come to the project and have different expectations and hopes, which do not necessarily come true. This may cause disappointment and raise criticisms. I have seen this in a few projects. One good piece of advice I received in a previous project is: do not think that you know it all, in most cases there are reasons why things are done as they are. It is better to accept the fact that not all things are necessarily done to your liking. Do ask why something is done the way it is, do propose improvements, better yet, help to test them if agreed with the project, but accept that improvement ideas may not be taken into use immediately or maybe not at all. Shoes will have a big impact on your experience on the project. Your shoes will get wet and there is a lot of sand. Normal sneakers/tennis shoes are not the best. Shoes meant for running/walking/biking in wet conditions that have soft neoprene innards especially around the ankle work very well’.

14. How to Book

Before booking, contact Naucrates (naucrates12@hotmail.com; naucrates12@tiscali.it) to find out if there is availability during the two weeks that you would prefer to come to the project. Then, download the booking form from www.naucrates.org or write to Naucrates directly.

15. Personal equipment

Comfortable summer clothing (shorts, T-shirts, bathing suit), for women shorts and skirts that comes below the knees and shirts that cover the shoulders when you are in the village, cotton sweater (long sleeve), long pants (trousers), sand shoes (for walking distances with wet sandy feet, something like walking sandals, water shoes, diving shoes), flip flops, sunglasses, sun cream (one bottle per person per 2 weeks), towels, waterproof jacket, insect repellents (containing DEET, diethyltoluamide, best are about 30 %). Taking vitamin B12 has been advocated as making you less attractive to insects, it might be worth to try), sun hat or cap, camera, binoculars, flash light/torch with spare battery, alarm clock, flask/ water bottle of high quality plastic or metal, personal toiletry items, sewing kit, big cotton sheet or sarong to cover yourself at night and to lie on the beach (plenty available to buy in Thailand), cotton pillow case, basic medicine and personal belongings (band aids, antibacterial cream, antistaminic, aloe vera (or something for sun burn), anti diarrhoea could be useful). Pocket money (Thai Baht, that can be changed on your arrival in the airport) to buy drinks (like coke (20 baht), beer (40 baht), etc). Snorkelling equipment.

Other suggestions:

- The mobile phone network coverage might be limited on the island and Thai networks might be different from the one of your country. An idea would be to purchase a THAI SIM card (“onetocall” has a good network) before you get on the island (cost: about 300 baht). You can charge the card buying credit every where.
- You will often have to wade out to the boat, so a dry bag maybe useful for any valuables (camera, mobile etc...) and quick drying clothes.
- If you are able to find (and have space in your luggage for) please bring very basic English story/colouring books for children with a conservation theme or teaching assistant/methods/games for teachers (even second hand books are appreciated). There are about 15-20 children in the local school where the project is conducting environmental education activities.
- On the island there are no Banks or change facilities. Bring your own money.

16. Safety and rules at the camp

Naucrates has formulated some simple rules for volunteers in order to guarantee a successful season.

Volunteers staying at the camp are required to follow some basic rules in order to avoid unpleasant situations which could create negative feelings within the team. Volunteers that are on duty in the early morning or in the night (beach monitoring) are requested not to be drunk the night before. No drink is allowed during the walks. No use of drugs is allowed at the camp.

Volunteers are requested not to drink excessively. Specifically, no one is allowed to be drunk to the point at which they fall unconscious. In case of a tsunami warning, there will be very little time to evacuate and each volunteer has to be ready without interference from other members of the team. Volunteers that do not respect these simple rules, will be given a warning. At the second warning, the Naucrates member who is responsible for the camp has the authority to send him/her away from the project.

17. Travel info

There are several different options; the easiest is to fly to Bangkok and then on to Phuket or Ranong airport. From there a car can be arranged to collect you at the airport or you can taken a local bus to Takua Pa and after that to Kura Buri village. At the Kura Buri pier there is a boat (this has to be arranged by Naucrates at least one day prior to arrival) Another option is to fly to Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) and then to Phuket. From there Kura Buri village can be reached either by bus or by car. If you plan to come earlier and spend a night or two in Kura Buri village, you should make reservations for a room in advance. Naucrates can do this, if you send a message at least three days before.

The village is located about 1 hour from the mainland. Transport from/to the mainland is quite expensive and can be organized by Naucrates. Costs will be shared among Naucrates team members.

19. Your free time or day off

While visiting the village, you can conduct the following activities provided by the local community:

Visit sea grass: In low tide, a walk to the beach offers education about the rich biodiversity of sea grass and marine animals. You will enjoy stunning scenery, abundance of life, and learn from the village guides.

Time: Low tide Duration: 2 hours Price: 260 Baht (local guide)

Visit old village – Pak Jok: The 2004 tsunami devastated Pak Jok Village, leaving only small sections of concrete road and the bases of a few buildings. Then villagers from Pak Jok were scattered into many new villages which were built for tsunami-affected people. You'll have time to view and learn about the old village.

From there you can walk to the beach and relax in a serene atmosphere while viewing a beautiful sunset. Time: Anytime Duration: 2 hours

Price: 260 Baht (local guide)

Visit golden grass field: Get transported via a local tractor to golden grass fields while enjoying a picturesque setting along the way of the rising morning sun that showcases deer footprints and foliage. At the grass field you can see a magnificent landscape surrounded by a swamp area. Melaleuca trees are scattered around.

Time: early morning or evening Duration: 2 hours Price: 890 Baht (max 6 persons, price included local guide)

Making squid trap: Fishing is the main occupation for Ban Lion villagers.

Squid is one of the main catches of the day. Making a squid trap is a method to learn the villagers' way of life. Join the local fisherman to assist in constructing traps.

Time: Anytime Duration: 1 hour Price: 160 Baht (max 10 people)

Thai Massage: one hour relaxing 110 baht.

Thai dessert cooking class: a local lady cooks delicious Thai dessert and she sell them around the village about every day. If you want to learn how she makes them...we can book a cooking class for 100 baht.

Diving: you can find more information about Blu Guru diving activities and trip to Ko Surin at <http://www.kohphrathong.com/diving.html>

Please specify you are a Naucrates volunteer, there might be special rate for you.

Hoping to meet you at the project in Thailand,

Naucrates thank you for your attention,

Best regards,

Naucrates Team

Naucrates

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