



7 Days

CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERING

At the Elephant Conservation Center

in Laos

ORIENTATION  GUIDE

elephant
conservation
center

CONTACTS

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PARTNERS



Smithsonian Conservation
Biology Institute



ASIAN ELEPHANT
SUPPORT





AN UNFORGETTABLE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AWAITS:

CONSERVATION VOLUNTERING AT THE ELEPHANT CONSERVATION CENTER IN LAOS

Where Science, Culture and Authentic Laos Meet

Step into the heart of Laos, where elephants roam under the ancient canopy of Sayaboury's forests, and where conservation is not just a mission – it's a way of life.

The Elephant Conservation Center's 7-Day / 6-Night Conservation Volunteering Programme invites you to **join our team of conservationists, veterinarians, and biologists for an unforgettable week of learning, service, and connection.**

Far from the crowds, on **the serene banks of Nam Tien Lake, surrounded by the majestic Phou Xang mountain range, volunteers become part of a living laboratory where elephants lead the lesson.** You'll gain hands-on experience in habitat restoration, behavioural observation, and ethical animal care – all while learning from Laos' leading wildlife professionals.

Each day unfolds with purpose: **trekking** through the forest to **collect trees seeds** and **elephant dung** (fertilizer), observing and **recording social dynamics** at the Socialisation Area, maintaining our **tree nursery** or **shadowing our veterinary team at the Elephant Hospital.** In our research lab, you'll discover how behavioural data guide real conservation decisions and how to **monitor elephant health through white cells count.** Every task, every observation, every moment spent in the field directly contributes to the ECC's **rewilding and welfare programmes** – the first of their kind in Laos.

This is more than volunteering; it's a transformation. As the week progresses, you'll find yourself part of something larger – **a shared commitment to give elephants the life they deserve**, and to keep their forests alive for generations to come. Evenings bring moments of reflection beside the lake, with cultural exchanges led by **Lao mahouts**, whose deep knowledge and humility remind us that true conservation begins with respect.

By the end of your stay, you will have acquired not only new knowledge and practical conservation skills but also a deep, emotional understanding of what it means to live in harmony with nature. Join us in **Sayaboury – the true Homeland of the Lao Elephant** – and **help write the next chapter of elephant conservation in Southeast Asia.**

Sebastien DUFFILLOT

Founder, Elephant Conservation Center
Member IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group



CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERING

IN LAOS, SOUTHEAST ASIA

KEY FEATURES

- **Programme starts 1st March 2026**
- **Age: 14 years old minimum. Number of participants: 4 minimum / 16 maximum**
- **Departures EVERY MONDAY from Luang Prabang**
- **Science-led immersion:** shadow ECC conservationists, vets and biologists. Understand the conservation strategy implemented by the ECC through direct interaction with the Center's top scientists. Learn to collect and interpret welfare data.
- **Ethical engagement:** hands-off elephant policy, positive-reinforcement training, and welfare-first philosophy.
- **Habitat restoration:** participate in forest maintenance and ecosystem care.
- **Lao cultural connection:** interact with local mahouts, learn language basics, and understand the human-elephant bond.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **Understand Asian elephant biology and behaviour.**
- **Learn about welfare** indicators, hormone monitoring, and **veterinary practices**.
- Participate in **conservation fieldwork** and data analysis.
- Gain **insight into Laos' elephant conservation landscape** and **ECC's rewilding initiatives**.



PROGRAMME

7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS

FIXED DEPARTURE DATES: EVERY MONDAY. 4 PARTICIPANTS PER SESSION MINIMUM.

LOCATION	ACTIVITIES
DAY 1-3 - ECC 3 Days / 2Nights "EXPLORATION" Programme - https://www.elephantconservationcenter.com/exploration/	
07:30 19:30	<p>ECC "Exploration" Programme 3 Days / 3 Nights</p> <p>Day 1: Travel from Luang Prabang by minivan – Boat trip – Walk through the Forest – Laotian Lunch – Nursery Visit – Hospital Visit – Observe Elephants Bathing – Encounter Elephants & Mahouts – Dinner.</p> <p>Day 2: Breakfast – Meet the Elephants in the Forest – Observe Elephants Bathing – Socialization Area Observation – Lunch – Afternoon Bath – Positive Reinforcement Training – Vet Check – Dinner.</p> <p>Day 3: Breakfast – Trekking to observe free-roaming male elephants - Information Center – Lunch – Free Time (Kayaking, Yoga, Sunset Chill, Games...) – Dinner at Restaurant</p> <p>14:00 - 16:00 Introduction to Elephant Conservation</p> <p>Objective: Create a Social Media Post or Reel per Volunteer (Volunteers' Workspace)</p> <p>All overnights at Dormitory</p>
DAY 4	
08:00	Restaurant
09:00	Volunteers' Workshop
12:00	Restaurant
13:30	Volunteers' Workshop
14:30	Elephant Hospital Workspace
15:30	Elephant Bath Area
16:30	
19:30	Restaurant
	Overnight at Dormitory
DAY 5	
07:30	Mahouts Meeting Area
09:00	Socialisation Area
12:00	Restaurant
13:30	Volunteers' Workshop
16:00	Elephant Hospital Workspace
17:30	
19:30	Restaurant
	Overnight at Dormitory
DAY 6	
08:00	Restaurant
09:00	Forest + Volunteers' Workshop
12:00	Restaurant
14:00	Exhibition Center
15:00	Lab + Elephant Hospital Workspace
17:00	Elephant Bath Area / Hospital
17:00	
19:30	Restaurant & Chill/Gaming Area
	Overnight at Dormitory
DAY 7	
08:00	Restaurant
09:00	Forest
11:30	Elephant Hospital Workspace
12:00	Restaurant
14:00	Boat Pier
	Depart to Luang Prabang

FEES & INCLUSIONS

Course Fee: 620 US\$

(88 US\$/day)

From the quiet awe of your first forest observation to the satisfaction of contributing real data, the week unfolds as a progression from discovery to participation to understanding.

Volunteers leave with not only practical knowledge but also a heartfelt connection to the elephants, the people protecting them, and the landscape they inhabit. This fee is **all-inclusive** for the 7-day programme and covers accommodation in shared dorms, all meals, return transport between Luang Prabang and the Elephant Conservation Center, learning materials, and expert instruction from ECC staff, including our in-house veterinarians and biologists.

INCLUDED:

- **All-Inclusive:** Transfers from Luang Prabang, all meals, accommodation at ECC, guided activities, and lectures.
- **Group size:** 4–16 participants / Session
- **Difficulty:** Moderate (involves walking and outdoor tasks)
- All **interactions with elephants are hands-off / observation-only** and under the supervision of ECC professionals.
- **Accommodation** in shared dorms
- **Lectures, fieldwork, and learning materials.** Instruction from ECC's expert staff

NOT INCLUDED:

- Flights to/from Laos
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Expenses before/after the programme
- Tips and drinks at bar

DAILY THEMES

- **Days 1–3:** Orientation, Exploration, and Introduction to ECC's Philosophy and Conservation Mission.
- **Day 4:** Introduction to Elephant Behaviour, Elephant Welfare & Diet (Produce Traditional Elephant Tonics).
- **Day 5:** Behaviour Data Collection at the Socialisation Area (Ethograms) and Tree Nursery Management. Introduction to ECC Pioneering Rewilding Programme.
- **Day 6:** Elephant Habitat Work (Tree Seeds and Elephant Dung Collection), Veterinary Insight, Introduction to Parasitology.
- **Day 7:** Cultural Immersion, Knowledge Sharing, and Farewell.

FACILITIES & SERVICES

LODGING

- Dormitory (16 single beds in 4 rooms)
- Communal Wash Facilities

FOOD & BEVERAGE

- Kitchen
- Restaurant
- Bar

STUDENT WORKPLACE

- Lecture Hall
- Projectors + Whiteboards
- Desks and chairs for group projects

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Kayaks
- Trekking
- Yoga
- Sunset Deck

HOSPITAL

- Preparation Room
- Elephant Training Area
- Pharmacy
- Diagnostic Lab

LABORATORY

- Sterilizer
- Centrifuge
- Microscopes
- Ultrasound & Probes
- Fridges & Freezers

WORKSPACE & TECH

- Meeting Room
- Admin Office
- Fiber Internet
- Cameras
- Camera Traps

VEHICLES

- 2 Hi-ACE Minivans
- 2 Hilux 4WD Trucks
- 2 Boats

INFORMATION CENTER

- Exhibition Center
- Traditional Elephant Saddlery

ELEPHANTS

- 18 Cows
- 7 Bulls
- 2 Calves

STATIONS

- Elephant Nursery
- Reproduction Area
- 2 Socialization Areas
- 1 Vet Check Area



**Conservation
Volunteering**



FOR YOU...

PROJECT STAFF

...WITH YOU

Anabel López Pérez



Photo: © Kiko Peltier

HEAD OF EDUCATION & RESEARCH

Anabel joined the ECC at its inception and never left. Her enthusiasm and energy are contagious. She began by limiting interaction with elephants, then by establishing herding protocols that now form the backbone of our rewilding programme. A biologist with limited knowledge of Asian elephants when she arrived in Laos, Anabel's expertise has grown rapidly, and today she is a renowned Asian elephant behaviour expert contributing her work to several leading research institutes, including the Smithsonian Institution and the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group.

In 2025, Anabel was awarded a PhD from Chiang Mai University, Thailand. Her groundbreaking research explored how different management approaches affect metabolism, stress, social structure, and reproduction in captive Asian elephants, offering valuable insights into welfare and conservation practices in both Laos and Thailand.

Anabel has a deep passion for elephants, and the ECC has become the sanctuary where she fully expresses this commitment-shaping elephant care and conservation in the region through science.

Moukthida Vilasith

ECC HEAD VETERINARIAN

Moukthida "Mouk" Vilasith is a dedicated wildlife veterinarian at the Elephant Conservation Center in Sayaboury. With a strong focus on elephant health, she supports ECC's breeding, rewilding, and veterinary programmes. Mouk has trained with international institutions such as the Denver Zoo and Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, expanding her skills in both laboratory analysis and fieldwork. In addition to her clinical work, she actively participates in youth education programmes across Laos, representing ECC at events organised by Econox and the Anoulak Association.

Through her expertise and passion, Mouk helps bridge the gap between conservation science and community engagement – inspiring future generations to care for wildlife.

Mouk teaches at the Wildlife Course for 5th year veterinary students from the National University of Laos organised yearly by ECC, LCTW (Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife) and Free the Bears.



Kan Thissamone



Photo: © Romain Willekens

VETERINARY TECHNICIAN

Kan was working with ElefantAsia NGO for several years as an assistant veterinary technician, boarding the organisation's Mobile Veterinary Clinics to provide first aid to elephants wounded on logging sites. He developed an intimate relationship with the country's mahouts while learning veterinary techniques with international veterinarians and staff from the Lao Department of Livestock. When the NGO's projects were eventually autonomised in 2012, Kan naturally proposed to join the Elephant Conservation Center and help with the design and operations of the country's first Elephant Hospital. Sparing no effort to improve the elephants' diet and health, Kan is supervising the supplementary food production unit, positive reinforcement and musth control protocols, mahouts' daily meetings as well as providing veterinary care to elephants in need at the ECC or outside of it. His skills, learned in the field, have earned him due respect from mahouts and the Asian elephant conservation community. His numerous contributions at various elephant care workshops throughout the region (India, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar) are always highly valued and have largely contributed to the excellent reputation of the Elephant Conservation Center abroad.

Kaen Xanapanh



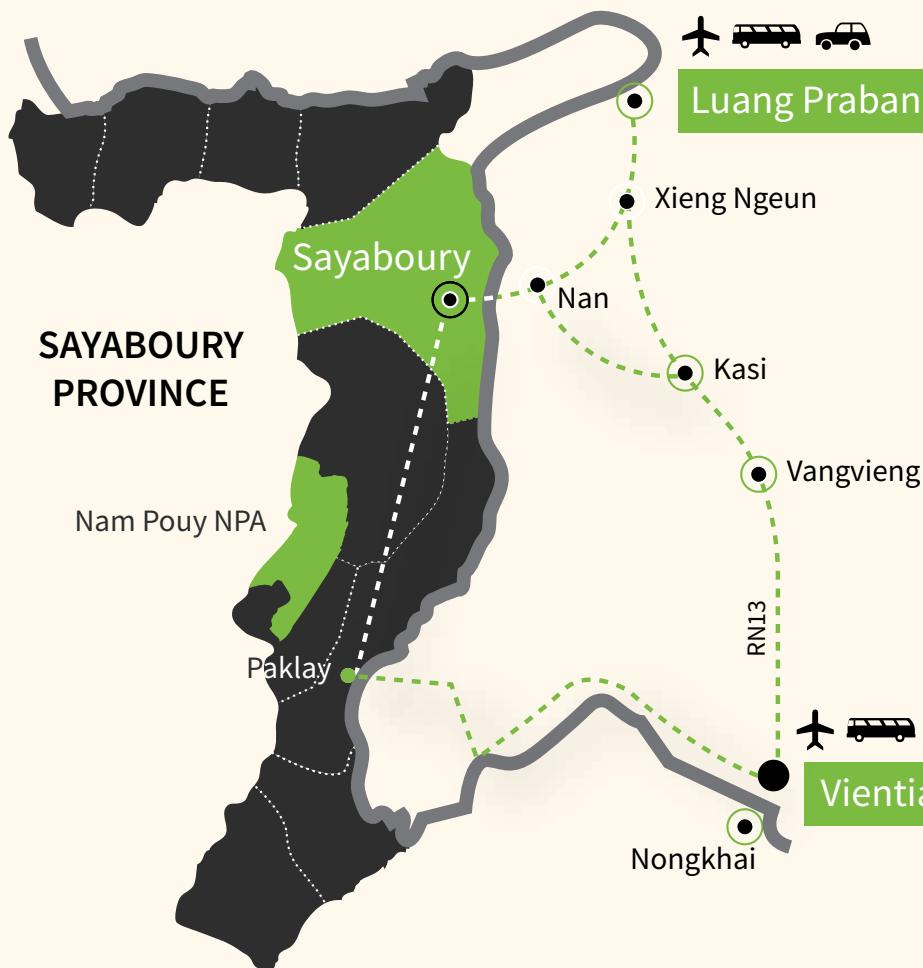
GUIDE

Mr. Kaen Xanaphan has guided ECC guests for over ten years, bringing gentle warmth and an artist's eye to every conservation journey. Deeply committed to volunteer wellbeing, Kaen draws on extensive field experience and specialized training to safely lead hands-on activities such as bamboo handicraft, gardening, and eco-building. His calm presence, cultural insight, and deep knowledge of local ecosystems help guests connect meaningfully with nature and community. As your dedicated guide throughout the conservation volunteering stay, Kaen ensures an enriching, responsible, perfect logistics and authentic ecotourism experience that fosters learning, respect, and lasting memories for all participants.





ACCESS MAP



How to get there?

FROM/TO LUANG PRABANG

From Luang Prabang ECC minivan departs from the post office on the main street daily at 7:30am and arrives at the ECC at 10:30am. It returns daily to Luang Prabang at 2:00pm, arriving approximately at 4:30pm. The journey takes approximately 2 hours.

FROM/TO VIENTIANE

In Vientiane: Sakura Minivans (Sikhay station, pass the airport).

Departures at 7:00am, 8:00am and 10:00am.

In Sayaboury: Sakura Bus Station.

Departures at 7:00am, 8:00am and 10:00am.

The journey takes approximately 7 hours.

Or fly to Luang Prabang. Lao Airlines and Lao Skyway have several departures daily, and board the ECC minivan the next morning.



Luang Prabang Office

ECORE / ECC

FROM/TO VANGVIENG

In Sayaboury: Public Buses from the Bus Station.

Departures at 3:00pm.

In Vangvieng: Minivan from Vangvieng bus station.

Departures at 10:30am (reservation required).

Manthatoulat Road (Mekong)

Ban Pakham, Luang Prabang

TEL: +856(0)20 96 59 06 65

Nam Tien Lake,

Sayaboury Province, Lao PDR

WHATSAPP: +61 412 183 018

marketing@elephantconservationcenter.com

TERMS & CONDITIONS

CURRENCY

All amounts mentioned in this rate card are stated in US Dollars, but are occasionally calculated in other currencies - especially when using a credit card.

BOOKING

All clients are deemed to have read these terms and conditions and have signed a reservation form which must be made directly between the customer and the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC). The booking includes the number of participants, a list of participants' names incl. title (Ms., Mr.), nationality and passport numbers prior to the departure. To secure a booking, ECC requires a completed booking containing all relevant information detailed above by e-mail. Clients booking are deemed to accept these terms and conditions and sign a waiver when boarding our minivan to the Center. A booking is accepted and a contract is entered into as soon as ECC issues a written confirmation of the booking. The booking will be secured upon reception of the payment (see below). If clients are not paying the booking in a timely manner, ECC reserves itself the right to cancel the booking.

PAYMENT

An invoice will be issued with the confirmation of the booking and the submission of the participants' details as stated above. Payments can be made by bank transfer or Credit Card which will incur a bank fee, or cash (at the ECC). Account details are given on the booking confirmation. Note that all bank transfer fees have to be covered in full by the client.

In case of a payment being made later than 90 days after the invoice is sent, a penalty of 10% of the total invoice will be applied.

CANCELLATION (ALL SEASONS)

ECC Cancellation policy is as follows:

Cancellation less than 30 days prior to arrival date: 25% charge of the full price will be applied, bank fee not included. (ECC will pay back 75% of the amount invoiced, bank fees not included).

Cancellation less than 15 days prior to arrival date: 50% charge of the full will be applied, bank fees not included (ECC will pay back 50% of the amount invoiced, bank fee not included).

Cancellation less than 72 hours (3 days) prior to the arrival date or 'no show' - Full charge from all services requested for will be applied (ECC will retain the full amount invoiced).

TOUR LEADER AND FOC POLICY

Lao National guide will be charged 30\$ / night (per person),

International Tour Leader (and/or teachers/supervisors) will be charged 50% of the public price (per person). We do not offer FOC.

CANCELLATION BY ECC

ECC reserves the right to cancel any trip due to reasons beyond its control (i.e.: natural disasters or political instability). In such a case ECC will refund monies received in full (minus bank transfer fees).

INSURANCE

ECC guarantees that all vehicles it owns are insured as commercial passenger vehicles. Insurance coverage does not apply after the passengers have exited the vehicle. A private travel insurance is compulsory for all people traveling with ECC. Your travel insurance must provide cover against personal accident, medical expenses, emergency repatriation and personal liability. We also advise to contract insurance coverage against cancellation, curtailment, and loss of luggage and personal effects. The participants must be aware that during the course of the trip certain risks and dangers may occur, including but not limited to hazards of kayaking, hiking, or driving in a motor vehicle or boat, snakes, insects and other wildlife and proximity of elephants. It may also involve an accident or illness in remote places without appropriate facilities, or

be caused by the forces of nature. The client agrees to assume all risks associated with the trip and agrees that no liability will be attached to our company or its outfitter, employees or agent, or to any member of the tour group. ECC accepts no liability in respect of death, personal injury, illness or delay of the passenger, or for any loss or damage to the property of the participant during the course of the trip, however caused.

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Clients must carry a valid passport and obtain the relevant visas when traveling with ECC. We cannot accept responsibility if entry is denied to Laos or any other country due to incorrect visa or passport documentation.

COMPLAINTS

If a client has a complaint about the tour, he or she must make it known to the tour guide (leader) as soon as possible so that he/she is able to take appropriate action at the earliest opportunity. If the client is not satisfied with our response and he/she feels his or her enjoyment of the tour will be significantly affected the client should contact our manager at ECC to discuss how we might best resolve the problem. If the client remains unsatisfied after return from the tour, we must be notified in writing within 30 days.

RESPONSIBILITY

When booking a stay at ECC, the client understands that ECC is established in a forested area of Laos where the standards of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, level of infrastructure development and medical facilities, and telecommunication services are not necessarily the same as one may be used to at home, or one would find on a conventional holiday. This type of stay inherently involves a higher level of personal risk than a 'conventional holiday'.

ECC, the Government of Laos and the Lao National Tourism Administration cannot accept any responsibility for accidents, injuries, death, or loss of personal effects. The client understands that during the course of the stay certain events may occur, including, but not limited to, accident or illness in remote places without medical facilities, political instability and the forces of nature.

The client agrees to assume all risks associated with the journey to the maximum extent permitted by law. Each client acknowledges that staying at ECC requires a degree of flexibility, and understands that the itinerary, accommodation and modes of transport are subject to change without prior notice due to local circumstances. Should ECC deem it advisable to amend an itinerary for any reason, it may do so by shortening, varying or re-routing any trip. These changes can incur additional expenses that may be charged to the client, if the reason for any alteration is outside control from ECC.

While traveling with ECC, the client agrees to accept the authority of the leader or local operator at all time. He/she is aware that travel within a group may involve compromise to accommodate the diverse desires and physical abilities of group members. The client understands that ECC reserves the right to decline the participation of any person as a member of the group at any time. The client acknowledges that ECC contracts a network of companies, government agencies and individuals throughout the country to assist in the running of its stays. To the best of ECC knowledge, these third parties are qualified to perform the duties they are contracted to perform. However, ECC will not be held liable for any injury, damage, loss, delay or irregularity that may occur due to the behaviour of these third parties. ECC will not accept responsibility or liability for any traveller who contravenes any law or regulation of Lao PDR. No employee, servant or agent of ECC has authority to alter these conditions.

The ECC community includes people from many different cultural backgrounds and ages, so we are asking that our visitors be tolerant of others while on site.



World's 10 Best Places

Wanderlust
TRAVEL MAGAZINE
Nº4
to See Elephants

Tripadvisor
Travelers'
Choice Awards



10 of the Best Places

lonely planet

2024
to Visit in Laos



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