

Ashleigh Dian – Teaching in Thailand January 2015

My Thailand adventure officially began a little over five months ago when a friend, who at the time was living and working in Thailand, recommended I get in touch with Philip from English Camps Thailand.



I had visited Phuket and Krabi on holiday the previous year and it was there that I first heard of teaching English as a foreign language. It wasn't something I had ever considered doing before as I had pursued my passion for photography after high school, and I had little experience in teaching other than Sunday school and a handful of Holiday Clubs. There isn't any other way to phrase it - when I went back home to Johannesburg after that vacation I felt homesick for Thailand. The people, the place and the food! I was desperate to return and I was dying to teach!

I think I asked Philip more questions than any aspirant teacher had ever asked anyone over the following four months, but he was incredibly patient and forthcoming in answering all of them and I appreciated his reassurance and encouragement more than I can say. I was extremely anxious about living and working in a foreign country as I'd never travelled alone before, and I wanted to know I'd be taken care of. I tried to prepare myself as best I could, but looking back I really knew nothing at all – Thailand was far better than I ever expected!



I completed the online TEFL course through English Camps Thailand and arrived in Thailand for the Thai Cultural Immersion and Teacher Training program at the beginning of January – it was an amazing week spent with a group of fantastic EFL teachers from all over the world! Philip and his staff introduced and advised us on Thai culture and customs in and out of the classroom – everything from dress code to how to correctly and respectfully greet a Thai person (“wai”). He gave us helpful advice on classroom management, teaching techniques and hands-on teaching practice



and lesson planning. His knowledge of Thai culture and customs comes from having been immersed in it for several years, and it shows. It was invaluable! There were excursions and outings planned for us after class, and so on top of everything we learnt in the classroom, we got to really enjoy and experience Thailand outside of it too. And what a bonus to have the other teachers “in the same boat” experiencing all of these exciting new things with me!

Midway through the week the other teachers and I met our placement agent and she took me for an interview at a private school in Bangkok the very next day. I got the job! It was such a relief because I worried that my inexperience and the fact that I didn't have a degree would make finding something very difficult, but I was offered a position teaching the age group I wanted before I'd even completed the course. By the end of the week all of the teachers had been offered jobs – our placement agent took care of everything! Some of us remained in Bangkok and we're still in touch, others pursued quieter towns throughout Thailand. I think the thing that stood out for me was the lengths that Philip and our placement agent went to to ensure we were placed in schools we liked and would enjoy teaching in.



I am extremely happy with the school I've been placed in and the kids I'm teaching (from 3 to 9 years old)! The experience has already been life-changing! I'm still living in Bangkok, although the area I stay in is quieter than the city centre (which suits me perfectly) but I'm 10 minutes from the BTS



station which makes travelling easy and inexpensive. I spend my evenings and weekends experiencing as much of Bangkok as possible – temples, parks, food and markets! Although the difference in culture is huge between here and home, I've found adapting exciting and much easier than I ever would have imagined. I couldn't ask for anything better!

If you're looking for something life-changing and exciting, and to make a difference (even though it may only seem small) by teaching English as a foreign language to children and teens - then I would really encourage you to do the program through English Camps Thailand. It's so much easier and more enjoyable to be here in Thailand knowing you're looked after by people who genuinely care for you and for the school you work for. Especially if you're travelling alone like me. What you'll learn from Philip and his colleagues is indispensable, and I wouldn't trade this experience for anything!

Happy teaching!

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