



# Thailand

by Christina Le

## VOLUNTEER

**I have been traveling to Thailand to provide medical care to the remote villages in Kae Noi, Thailand since 2019.**

This trip started with an orphanage that my church partners with - The Kae Noi Orphanage. This orphanage exists in the foothills of northern Thailand, approximately ten

miles from the Myanmar border. This orphanage helps children who have lost their parents, or whose families have been impacted by extreme poverty and despair. The majority

of families in rural villages throughout northern Thailand experience extreme poverty, resulting in inadequate nutrition and an inability to access medical care.

In 2019, it was the first time that we provided a medical team that not only provided care for the kids within the orphanage but also the villages surrounding the orphanage. It was life changing. For years, this area of the country never had medical care and their closest clinic was several hours away. My first year in Thailand, I was a part of a medical team of 7 that varied from EMTs, CNA, and nurses. We traveled along the area and set up a clinic wherever we had space - abandoned huts or a newly built community center. Almost immediately, there would be a line after we set up.

**Everything by word of mouth - it was incredible. Many traveled by foot very far just to seek care. We were able to provide steroid injections, vitamins, medication for high blood pressure or diabetes, and wound care. We saw many different people from very different walks of life.**







The impact we made that day spread through the surrounding villages and we knew that we had to continue providing this type of medical care for every trip. We had to take a pause due to the pandemic and have returned back in 2022. This year I was able to lead a "Medical Micro Team". We wanted to develop a small team that was able to travel to many different areas to continue the work we started in 2019. We traveled to two parts of Thailand - Kae Noi and Pai. We provided assessment on the kids in the orphanage as well as provide care to the local villages. Other projects we were involved in were planting mango trees to provide a revenue source for the orphanage and building new bunk beds for the kids. We recently had an increase of kids with not enough beds for them to sleep in. We also assist the schools in teaching the kids english and throwing a carnival for the kids to have some fun!

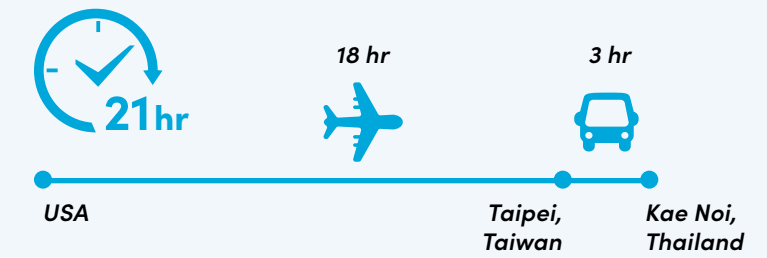
Due to Covid, we weren't able to travel around so we opened a clinic within the orphanage and allowed those who wanted to be seen to come in. The other half of our trip, we went to Pai. This assisted an existing clinic to provide care and see patients but also we were there to assist in building a water system to this village. It has been over 50 years since this area has had running fresh water.



## TRAVEL

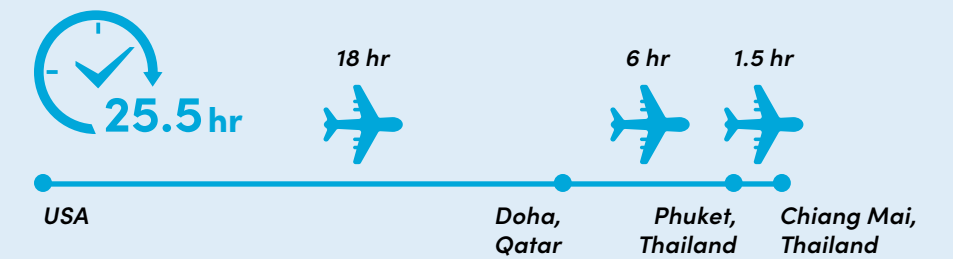
### 2019

In 2019, travel to Thailand was easy. We had a 18 hour flight to our layover in Taipei, and then another flight to Chiang Mai. From there we took a van and drove 3 hours to Kae Noi.



### 2022

In 2022, travel was much harder due to the aftermath of Covid. We were unable to fly into Taiwan without having to be held for quarantine so we had to take a 18 hour flight to Doha, then a 6 hour flight to Phuket, and another 1.5 hour flight to Chiang Mai.







## FOOD

We were able to enjoy authentic Thai food in-country but during our stay in the orphanage, we had local groundskeepers provide our food that was freshly cooked. A lot of the food comes from the grounds so it was mainly meat from the animals, vegetables from the ground, and mushrooms. Fresh fruit and eggs were always on the menu as well.

## DOWN TOWN

After our week in the orphanage, we always have a few days of down town before we head back to the states. The experience we have in the orphanage can be emotionally draining so we want our team to decompress before heading back home. One of the best things we do is visit an elephant sanctuary. Elephant riding is a big tourist attraction but is detrimental to the elephants. These sanctuaries rescue elephants and provide them with a ride-free life for the rest of their lives. We are able to clean, feed and swim with the elephants. They are just like big puppies! Very loving and love interacting with humans. We also get the opportunity to stay in the city, either in Phuket or Bangkok, and eat local cuisine and go shopping for souvenirs at the night market.





## TIME OF YEAR



We normally go to Thailand in the summer. My first year we went in July and it was very humid and hot. The next year we went in June and the weather was significantly better. It was still humid but cooler up in the mountains with rain. The rain definitely helped keep us cool and the kids are big fans of playing soccer in the rain!

## TRAVEL ESSENTIALS



Due to the number of volunteers and the travel length, we recommend using a rolling duffel bag for travel. This helps us save room when we are packing all our bags in vans once we are in- country versus using a hard luggage case.



Rural Thailand does not have septic tanks so it's very uncommon to come across toilet paper. It's always advised to bring your own just in case. Toilets are a very big change when you're in undeveloped parts of Thailand. Some areas have "western toilets" which are toilets that we are used to but the majority of the country have "squatty" type of toilets. These are toilets that you have to squat onto and use a bucket with water to "flush" the toilet. Toilet paper is not allowed in the "squatty" toilets and must be thrown in a trashcan nearby. This may sound off putting to some but it's definitely something you get used to.



Soap is something that is hard to come by also, so it's recommended that you bring your own or have hand sanitizer nearby!



My travel must have is high-quality insect spray. **The mosquitos are NO JOKE.** They are very resilient so you want to make sure you're constantly covered in spray.



Hand sanitizer since its not very often you'll have a sink to wash your hands.



Breathable pants due to the humid weather but you want to be covered because of the insects when possible.

