

Leah Unwin, UK

I first visited Elephantstay in 2008 as a tourist passing through Ayutthaya. I visited the tourist camp and the working village where I met Paul who told me about the PraKochaBaan Foundation, Elephantstay and how they were trying to ensure a safe and stable future for Asian elephants. I instantly wanted to come back as an elephantstayer and I did in April 2012. During my 3 day experience I fell in love with my elephant and the village. I learnt more about the plight of the Asian elephant and wanted to help the foundation and so I applied for a volunteer position and returned in June 2014 as a Program Development Officer for 12 weeks. I thoroughly enjoyed my time as a volunteer and still felt honoured to wake up to the sounds of the elephants and be able to live among them by the end of my stay. Working in the office built my knowledge further about Asian elephants and the struggles that Elephantstay face in their fight to secure Asian elephants future. However, I still had lots of time every day to work with and enjoy the elephants and village life. I loved watching guests fall in love with their elephant and seeing them grow in confidence on their rides. I learnt so much from my Elephantstay family and thank them for that and giving me an unforgettable few months. I can't believe how quickly my 12 weeks went and think that no amount of time would be enough with my elephant family. Elephantstay now more than ever has a huge piece of my heart and I wish that everyone could have the opportunity to visit, experience and appreciate the work of Elephantstay and the PraKochaBaan Foundation.

