

## Anne Wilkinson, UK

I first came to Elephantstay for two weeks holiday in March 2011. At that time I was working at Australia Zoo with the farm animals in the Kids Zoo section.....however the elephants were my love and passion and so I began volunteering one day a week with the elephants at the zoo.....I really wanted to ride an elephant but couldn't do that at the zoo and therefore I found Elephantstay on the internet and duly arrived for my holiday. It was a wonderful two weeks and I totally fell in love with Pisamy who was my allocated elephant for the time I was here.

Upon returning to Australia, I wanted to work more with elephants and also to give the elephants back something in return for the way the human race has and unfortunately still is treating them.....So I applied and was accepted as a volunteer for 6 months.....I was due to start in October 2011, but due to the dreadful floods, it was actually Mid December when I finally was able to start.

Volunteering is totally different from being a guest and you have to work long hard days, this can be very draining due to the extreme heat and humidity at times.....You are responsible for the guests enjoyment and most of all safety.....obviously elephants are very large and at times can be very dangerous and you have to be totally aware of your surroundings and what is happening at all times and make sure the guests are enjoying their stay, getting what they want out of the experience and not venturing into any trouble.....

As with everything, the more you put in to something the more you get out of it.....I love helping people and therefore volunteering gives me great satisfaction as I can help the visitors enjoy their time at Elephantstay and hopefully impart interesting information about the elephants that they are here to spend time with.....

As for myself.....the satisfaction I get from waking up or being woken up during the night by the elephant noises is incredible.... to be able to open my door and see Soi the elephant just outside in her night area and the working elephants walking past on their way to the river and back is just unreal.....and of course the time I get to spend with the babies is so rewarding.....I was incredibly fortunate and extremely honoured to witness the actual birth of baby TG who was born on 23 April 2012 and that event remains one of the most memorable days of my life.....The main thing for me however is that I feel by being a volunteer, I am fulfilling my greatest desire to help the plight of all the elephants left in the world.....

It is not always easy being a volunteer, but the rewards are unmeasurable and that is why after my first 6 months of volunteering, I went back to the UK for 3 weeks and then came back for another 2 months.....and I have just returned to Elephantstay on 30 October 2014 for a further 3 months of volunteering!!!

