

Matthew Ward UK

I first came to Elephantstay as a guest and looked after Honey the elephant for a week. During that week I was completely captivated by these animals, the village, the work that goes on here and specifically fell head over heels in love my Honey! It was love before first sight. Back in the UK Elephantstay never left my mind and I wanted to get back there as soon as possible and learn more. I applied for the volunteer position working in the office and was given a 6 month placement. Office duties included replying to emails, updating social media and general office admin but there was plenty of time to see the elephants and be involved in the program too. Although it may seem obvious, being a volunteer is very different to being a guest and so you get to learn more of the reality of the place as well as the magic. Volunteers are here to help, work and look after the guests that visit Elephantstay. It can be long hours but with that comes the extreme pleasure and honour of living on site with over 80 elephants. You get out of it what you put in. I was here for 6 months volunteering and the time flew by so even if things aren't always easy, appreciate everything because it goes so quick and is an opportunity like no other. There is a routine that is followed and the quicker volunteers learn it the better. Before Elephantstay, elephants were never really my favourite animal but being here you become part of the family and part of the village. You learn about elephants and you bond with these amazing animals also learning about each individual personality trait that they have. It sounds dramatic but it is life changing! Elephants are a part of me now and always will be.

