

Title:

My Visit to the Tiger Temple

Word Count:

1106

Summary:

Deep inside the jungles of Thailand lives a Monk and his more than 20 Tigers. The tiger temple has been featured more than once on Animal Planet and has undisputable reputation as a Tiger sanctuary.

Keywords:

thailand, tiger temple, thailand temple, thailand tiger temple, Zoo, Tigers, tiger

Article Body:

I just figured that since I just got home from volunteering that some future volunteers might want to be informed as what to expect when arriving.

First of all, I would like to say that this was an experience of a lifetime. You will be handling tigers, both full grown and young (the cubs were about 9 months old when I was there, so they may be too large to be doing some of the things I might describe or there might be younger cubs by the time you arrive and so they may be doing different activities).

I would suggest bringing some basic medical supplies such as bandaids, gauze, hydrogen peroxide and isopropyl alcohol because chances are you will earn a tiger bite or scratch. These are very fun reminders of your trip as well as a very keen way to show off to your friends. Chances are that you will not be very clean when staying there so it is important to keep your wounds clean. Also, don't bring rolling luggage as I did because it is hell to lug around. Backpacks are suggested.

You can either take a taxi straight up to the temple or you can take the 81 bus out of Kanchanaburi and tell the driver to drop you off at the Tiger Temple. You will then have to hike about 3km to the temple gates. Rolling your suitcases 3km in the heat at 5 pm is not fun! When you arrive you will then be shown to your quarters. Females are on the main grounds. They have tile flooring, individual rooms with locks, mosquito nets, electricity, fans, bathrooms with toilets and showers, and sinks. Males have to continue hiking back into the jungle and we live where the monks do in huts. Females are not allowed back here. It is a cement hut with a porch and small "bathroom" attached. I will not lie, this is

pretty much roughing it. There is no electricity and the "bathroom" consists of a thai toilet (a porcelein hole in the ground) a faucet used to flush the toilet or fill up buckets for laundry or taking bucket showers. In the hut you will be provided with candles, blankets, mats, and pup tents.

Now I hope this doesn't scare you because just the chance to work with tigers like this is definately worth these living conditions. And you typically only come here to sleep. Usually you can hang out at the canteen just outside of the temple, but be careful if you are staying late because they may lock the gate on you. Water is plenty, because the Wat bottles their own so it is not necessary to bring any from town. It is true that the monks only eat one meal a day, and that is breakfast which is a huge meal. However, there is free lunch for workers as well as tourists at the canteen during the day. This is usually noodles or pad thai. There is usually a drink vendor there who sells soft drinks. And dinner is provided to you as well because they drive to a nearby market to buy it. So there is really no need to worry about food, but I would still suggest stopping in Kanchanaburi for snacks or grabbing some KFC if you are tired of Thai food. I would also suggest renting a motorbike in Kanchanaburi. This is definately worth it because there is a lot of dead time. We would check out local tourist spots such as an elephant camp and Sayok Noi waterfall. I would also definately recommend taking a day off and visiting Erawon waterfall. You will need most of a day to do this 2 km hike up the mountain and swim in the different levels of the waterfall.

The typical day at the temple is simple. At 7am you go to the cub cages and clean the cages and bathe the cubs. At 8am you bring the cubs up to breakfast at the sala. (This is where we would get most of our time playing with the cubs.) At around 9am you bring the cubs back to their cages. You have dead time until 1pm. You could follow the workers around and possibly find some work to do or if you can use this time to explore. At 12:45, you bring the cubs to an waiting area where the tourists can get a better look at them. At 1pm, you bring the tigers down to the canyon. At the canyon you have several duties: Inform the new tourists as they come down about the rules of the canyon as well as giving out souvenirs for donations; go around with a worker and take pictures of the tourists with the larger tigers; take pictures for the tourists of the cubs playing in the water; also, you may choose to stay with the cubs by the pond in order to keep them in line and off of the other older tigers (I don't suggest doing this for several days because if the cubs are not familiar with you and they are running around off a leash, they most likely will try to get you. After they are more comfortable with you, then I would recommend this.) The key is not to be afraid of them and if they do happen to wrap around your leg and bite, give them a few smacks on the top of the head and they will release. At 5pm you bring the tigers back to their cages and you are done for the day. At 7pm you

are invited to go to the sala and join the monks for meditation, some white garments can usually be found at the female living quarters or you can just wear a white shirt and some loose pants.)

Also, if you have time, try to learn a little of the Thai language because there are only a few English speaking workers who speak thai and the abbott speaks pretty good English. This will make it easier, but don't worry if you don't know any because I didn't and the workers will have fun teaching you Thai if you teach them English. In fact, some want to learn any other languages you can teach them. Well, I hope this helps to get an understanding of what a volunteer at the Tiger Temple goes through.

I would like to thank the website Walking With Tigers And, again, I completely recommend volunteering here. It is the opportunity of a lifetime. Please also donate to the Tiger Temple through the website and sign up for the newsletter. Kyle Follansbee