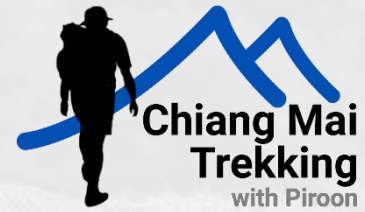


# Elephants in Thailand

Detailed information



Due to the lack of in-depth-knowledge about elephants in Thailand that some travelers might have, we would like to give some extended information about elephants in Thailand here.

We would like to start with one of our question & answer from our FAQ that can be found on our official website (<https://www.chiangmai-trekking.com/>):

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## You offer meeting elephants during your tour - are the animals treated well?

**THE MAIN THING YOU MUST KNOW FIRST: ELEPHANTS ARE NOT TRAINABLE LIKE DOGS WHEN IT COMES TO OBEYING COMMANDS OR STAY WHERE THEY ARE TOLD TO. KNOWING THIS IS IMPORTANT WHEN WANTING TO MEET THE SMALL ELEPHANT FAMILY.**

The elephant family that our guests usually meet during our 2-day and 3-day trekking tours are living in the middle of the dense jungle with the Karen villagers. The elephants are allowed to walk freely at night and most of the day. They will be brought to the small camp some time before we get there and the mahouts will have to make sure that the pachyderms don't wander off into the jungles again - hence the elephants will be tied until we are there and meet them.

Although the small elephant family is having some routine in meeting our guests, taking a bath with them and enjoy being washed by the guests there will be times that the pachyderms are a bit tenacious and the mahout will have to raise his voice in order to get the elephants to follow the mahout to the river and lay down in the shallow water. By raising his voice, the mahout does not want to scare the elephant - he simply tries to get the attention of the animal.

**WE DO HAVE A CLOSE EYE ON HOW THE ELEPHANTS ARE TREATED BY THEIR OWNERS AS WE ALSO WANT THE ANIMALS TO BE TREATED AS GOOD AS POSSIBLE.**

We would not offer meeting the small elephant family if we had the feeling that the animals are not treated well and our guests do always have the chance to completely opt out of meeting the elephants during their tour by telling us in advance - we will then buy lots of bananas for the animals and our guests will instead do some more hiking.

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Now, although this FAQ section describes the situation of the elephants to quite some extend, there is more to know - this is taken from our flyer mentioned above in the FAQ:

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Since the logging industry became illegal, elephant owners (mahouts) have to find other ways to feed their elephants and most of them have no other choice but turning towards tourism industry.

Sadly, quite often you will see camps that are heavily focused on tourism and the animals there are always tied with chains when not carrying around hundreds of tourists a day and in very bad camps these elephants sometimes will have to walk on hot tarmac roads. It is a fact, that especially (but not only) in southern regions of Thailand there are many of these truly bad elephant camps.

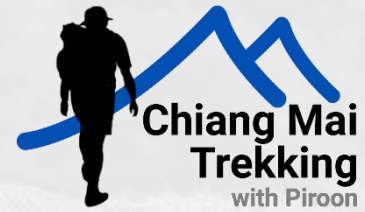
There are a few really good elephant conservation centers in Thailand to better the lives of the elephants generating revenue by letting people experience elephants as close to their natural state as possible and the Elephant Nature Park north of Chiang Mai is one of the best conservation centers in all of Thailand.

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# Elephants in Thailand

Detailed information



With this information travelers new to Asia or Thailand already have quite a good overview of the situation of elephants in Thailand but of course there is much more to know for the interested traveler, so we invite you to read on...

Thailand has an estimated 3.000 wild elephants that roam more or less freely in 69 wildlife sanctuaries and national parks (e.g.: Kui Buri in Prachuap Khiri Khan with approx. 320 elephants, Thung Yai-Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary in Uthai Thani with approx. 120 elephants, Khao Yai National Park in Nakhon Nayok with approx. 300 elephants, Kaeng Krachan National Park with approx. 300 elephants) and including sanctuaries like the world famous Elephant Nature Park.

*Hint: there are not many sanctuaries in Thailand that are recommendable - the ENP is by far the best sanctuary that you can find in Thailand and if you consider to visit an elephant sanctuary in Thailand, then you should go for the ENP.*

This said, these elephants are able to roam the national park area more or less to their own will but still limited to the boundaries of the national parks as such - these animals will be guarded and handled by the park rangers of the national parks.

In the national parks with elephant herds you can usually book safaris (like in Africa) with a chance to possibly see elephants and other mammals during the safari.

In the Elephant Nature Park, the elephants are also living "free" most of the day and are allowed to live as close to a "free" life as possible.

The same applies to the small elephant family that we visit during our 3-days/2-nights trekking tour:

These animals do live as close to a "free" life as possible in a smaller scale.

Please bear in mind that Thailand has a long history of elephants being an important figure in Thai society and elephants have played a major role in manual labor, war combats, as royal symbols and in many more areas for many, many centuries before western tourists found Thailand on their travel maps.

Respecting these centuries of Thai culture every tourist should remember that many of the elephants in Thailand (and most of Asia) - just like horses or dogs all over the world - do have an owner...

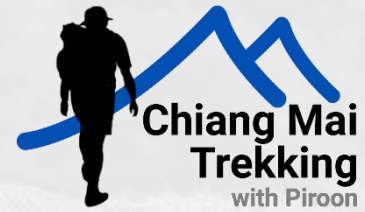
In the case of the small elephant family we are visiting, the owners of the pachyderms are from the Karen tribe, living in the jungle and they let the elephants roam through the jungles around the village most of the day and the animals are helping their owners in making a living and earning some money by tourists who would like to actually get in touch with such a majestic animal...

The area that the elephants can roam is quite big but like in any other park this area also has its boundaries and the mahouts will of course make sure, that the elephants stay in a reachable distance to the village (approx. 20-30 minutes walking distance). Just like you would not let your horse or dog simply go roaming anywhere.



# Elephants in Thailand

Detailed information



If you are only taking the word "free" from a sentence like "The elephants are allowed to walk freely at night and most of the day" then the answer to the question whether the elephants are being free (by the meaning of the word free) is: They are not "free" by the meaning of the word: they cannot wander off to e.g. the South of Thailand. They are living in a somewhat large area where they can wander around and munch their favorite leaves and grasses most of the day but the mahouts (just like the park rangers in ANY national park in the whole world) will make sure, that the elephants stay within the premises they are meant to stay within.

The elephants do live as close to a "free" life as possible - yes, in a smaller scale than in a large sanctuary or a huge national park. But still they are allowed to do what they want most of the day. Just like your horse or dog is allowed to do at your home or stable... the elephants of the Karen only do have a lot more freedom compared to your dog or horse as the elephants are not limited to just the very tiny area of a house or stable.

Once more we would like to recite from the FAQ on our official website:

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**WE DO HAVE A CLOSE EYE ON HOW THE ELEPHANTS ARE TREATED BY THEIR OWNERS AS WE ALSO WANT THE ANIMALS TO BE TREATED AS GOOD AS POSSIBLE.**

We would not offer meeting the small elephant family if we had the feeling that the animals are not treated well and our guests do always have the chance to completely opt out of meeting the elephants during their tour by telling us in advance - we will then buy lots of bananas for the animals and our guests will instead do some more hiking.

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We do understand that without a deeper knowledge of how elephants are entwined with the Asian history - and especially for western tourists - it is quite difficult to know about all this up front and we also know that even with this knowledge, there will be times where one still will not agree and rate the freedom of an animal only by the question whether or not it can walk anywhere on this planet.

[This indeed would be a perfect world - but it would require mankind to leave this planet first.](#)

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We hope this PDF is helping guests in deciding  
whether or not they want to meet the pachyderms during our tours.