



7 Days

The Introductory Study of Elephant Behaviour, Biology, Healthcare, Science & Conservation While Having Fun!

# ELEPHANTOLOGY

in Laos



# ORIENTATION



elephant conservation center

# GUIDE

## CONTACTS

- **Founder & Director:** Sébastien Duffillot: [sebastien.duffillot@gmail.com](mailto:sebastien.duffillot@gmail.com)
- **Head of Education & Research:** Anabel Lopez Perez: [biologist@elephantconservationcenter.com](mailto:biologist@elephantconservationcenter.com)
- **Site Manager:** Anthony Philippe: [manager@elephantconservationcenter.com](mailto:manager@elephantconservationcenter.com)
- **Web:** <https://www.elephantconservationcenter.com/>

## PARTNERS



Smithsonian Conservation  
Biology Institute



ASIAN ELEPHANT  
SUPPORT



Univet  
NATURE





**AN THE INTRODUCTORY STUDY OF ELEPHANT BEHAVIOUR, BIOLOGY, HEALTHCARE,  
SCIENCE & CONSERVATION WHILE HAVING FUN!**

# ELEPHANTOLOGY

## **Where Science, Ethology and Authentic Laos Meet**

Step into the heart of Laos, where elephants move through the ancient canopy of Sayaboury's forests with complete autonomy – observed, never directed.

At the Elephant Conservation Center, conservation is not merely a mission – it shapes everything we do, every single day.

ECC's 7-Day / 6-Night 'Elephantology' programme invites you to think like a scientist.

You will **join our team of conservationists, veterinarians and behavioural biologists** for an intensive week of learning, fieldwork, and authentic connection – immersed in the discipline of ethology, the study of animal behaviour in its natural context.

Far from the crowds, on the serene banks of Nam Tien Lake, surrounded by the majestic Phou Xang mountain range, participants become part of a living research laboratory **where elephants set the tempo of every lesson**. The week begins with the ECC's acclaimed three-day Exploration programme – your gateway to the herd, the landscape, and the philosophy behind ethical elephant care. From the moment you arrive, you will observe, record, and begin to decode the social world of the largest group of Asian elephants living under human care in Laos, on a 540 hectare protected forest.

Each subsequent day unfolds with scientific purpose: **conducting infield behavioural data collection (ethograms)** at the Socialisation Areas, attending **veterinary health checks and medical training demonstrations**, exploring the **endocrine lab** to understand how hormonal science informs conservation decisions, and learning to **identify individual elephants** using morphological features – skills used daily by ECC's research team.

This is more than observation. It is a transformation in perspective. As the week progresses, the behaviour of individual elephants – their social bonds, dominance hierarchies, stress responses and welfare indicators – becomes legible to you. You leave not just with knowledge, but with a scientific gaze.

Evenings bring moments of reflection beside the lake, cultural exchanges led by Lao mahouts, and a growing sense of belonging to something rare and necessary. By the end of your stay, you will have acquired practical conservation science skills and a deep, embodied **understanding of what it means to protect a species at the frontier of rewilding**.

Join us in Sayaboury – the true Homeland of the Lao Elephant – and **help write the next chapter of Asian elephant conservation**.

**Sebastien DUFFILLOT**

Founder, Elephant Conservation Center

Member IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group



# CONSERVATION & WELFARE

IN LAOS, SOUTHEAST ASIA

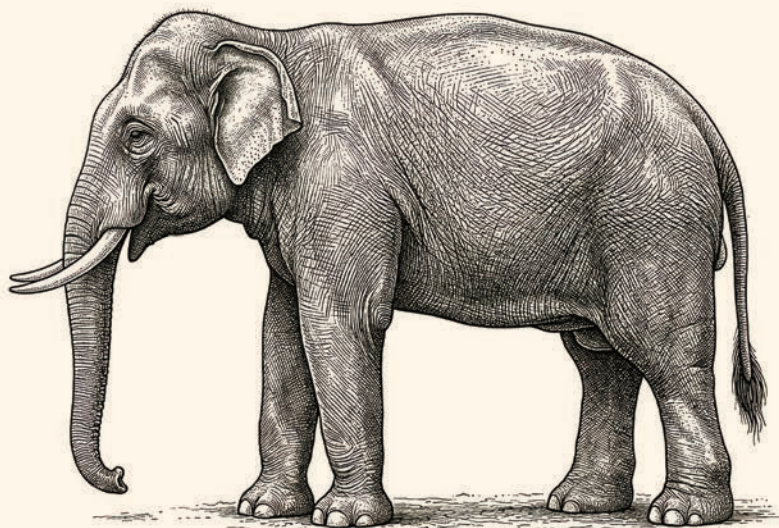
## KEY FEATURES

- **Age: 16 years old minimum. Number of participants: From 3 to 16**
- **Science-led immersion:** Shadow ECC's behavioural biologists, veterinarians and conservationists across all stages of data collection, analysis and elephant care.
- **Ethical engagement:** Hands-off elephant policy, positive reinforcement protocols and welfare first philosophy underpinning every activity.
- **Ethology in practice:** Learn to design, and use ethograms – the foundational tool of behavioural biology – in a live 18 elephant field setting.
- **Veterinary insight:** Attend vet check-ups and medical training demonstrations.
- **Endocrine science:** Understand how hormonal monitoring and endocrinology shape real conservation decisions.
- **Lao cultural connection:** Interact with local mahouts, learn basic Lao, and explore the deep human-elephant bond at the heart of Sayaboury's culture.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will:

- **Understand Asian elephant biology, social structure and individual behaviour.**
- Design and **conduct infield behavioural data collection (ethograms)** with qualified biologists.
- **Learn individual elephant identification** using morphological markers used by ECC researchers.
- Gain direct **insight into ECC's pioneering rewilding programme** – the first of its kind in Laos.
- **Learn practical field research skills** directly applicable to careers in conservation biology, ethology and wildlife management.



# PROGRAMME

7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS

DATE	LOCATION	ACTIVITIES
<b>DAY 1-3</b>	<b>ECC Day/2 NIGHT "EXPLORATION"</b>	<a href="https://www.elephantconservationcenter.com/exploration/">https://www.elephantconservationcenter.com/exploration/</a>
07:30		<b>Day 1:</b> Travel from Luang Prabang by minivan – Boat trip – Walk through the Forest – Laotian Lunch – Nursery Visit – Hospital Visit – Observe Elephants Bathing – Encounter Elephants & Mahouts – Dinner.
		<b>Day 2:</b> Breakfast – Meet the Elephants in the Forest – Observe Elephants Bathing – Female Socialisation Area Observation – Lunch – Afternoon Bath – Positive Reinforcement Training – Vet Check – Dinner.
		<b>Day 3:</b> Breakfast – Trekking to observe free-roaming male elephants - Information Center – Lunch – Free Time (Kayaking, Yoga, Sunset Chill, Games...) – Dinner at Restaurant
14:00	<b>Elephant Hospital Workspace</b>	<b>Preparatory Lecture on Behaviour Data Collection (Ethology Basics)</b>
	All overnights at Dormitory	<i>(Other accommodation options available)</i>
<b>DAY 4</b>		
08:00	Restaurant	Breakfast
09:00	<b>Socialisation area</b>	<b>Practical: In-Field Behavioural Data Collection with Biologist (female elephants)</b>
12:00	Restaurant	Lunch
14:30	<b>Elephant Hospital Workspace</b>	<b>Elephant Health Check-Up with ECC Vets</b>
15:30	<b>Elephant Bath Area</b>	<b>Learn from the ECC veterinarians about the key aspects they assess during elephant health check-ups</b>
16:30		
19:30	Restaurant	Dinner
	Overnight at Dormitory	<i>(Other accommodation options available)</i>
<b>DAY 5</b>		
08:00	Restaurant	Breakfast
09:00	<b>Socialisation Area</b>	<b>Practical: In-Field Behavioural Data Collection with Biologist (male elephants)</b>
12:00	Restaurant	Lunch
14:00	<b>Elephant Hospital Workspace</b>	<b>Elephant identification (learn how to identify elephants and create elephants' IDs)</b>
17:30		Free Time
19:30	Restaurant	Dinner
	Overnight at Dormitory	<i>(Other accommodation options available)</i>
<b>DAY 6</b>		
08:00	Restaurant	Breakfast
09:00	<b>Hospital</b>	<b>Medical target training and foot care demonstration + practice</b>
		<b>How to administrate drugs to elephants? Demonstration + practice</b>
11:30	<b>Preparation Room</b>	<b>Clean Preparation Room</b>
12:00	Restaurant	Lunch
14:00	<b>Endocrine lab</b>	<b>Implication of science in conservation. Demonstration at ECC Endocrine Lab</b>
17:00		Free Time
19:30	Restaurant & Chill/Gaming Area	Dinner & Farewell Party / Gaming Evening
	Overnight at Dormitory	<i>(Other accommodation options available)</i>
<b>DAY 7</b>		
08:00	Restaurant	Breakfast
09:00	Forest	Optional: Meet elephants in the forest. Morning Trek.
11:30	<b>Elephant Hospital Workspace</b>	<b>Objective: Share Video Reels, Images &amp; Posts with ECC Team</b>
12:00	Restaurant	Lunch
14:00	Boat Pier	Depart to Luang Prabang

# FEES & INCLUSIONS

Course Fee: 990 US\$

From the quiet focus of your first ethogram to the satisfaction of identifying an elephant by name, the week unfolds as a progression from discovery to participation to understanding.

This fee is **all-inclusive** for the 7 day programme and covers accommodation in shared dormitories, all meals, return transport between Luang Prabang and the ECC, all learning materials, fieldwork equipment, and expert instruction from ECC staff including our inhouse veterinarians and behavioural biologists.

## INCLUDED:

- **All-Inclusive:** Transfers from Luang Prabang, all meals, accommodation at ECC, guided activities, and lectures.
- **Group size:** 3–16 participants / Session
- **Difficulty:** Moderate (involves walking and outdoor tasks)
- All **interactions with elephants are hands-off / observation-only** and under the supervision of ECC professionals.
- **Accommodation** in shared dorms (*other options available*)
- **Lectures, fieldwork, and learning materials.** Instruction from ECC's expert staff

## NOT INCLUDED:

- Flights to/from Laos
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Expenses before/after the programme
- Tips and drinks at bar

## DAILY THEMES

- **Days 1–3:** Orientation, Exploration, and Introduction to ECC's Conservation Mission and Philosophy.
- **Day 4:** Ethology Basics and InField Behavioural Data Collection – Female Herd. Elephant health checkup with vet team.
- **Day 5:** Behavioural Data Collection – Male Elephants. Individual Elephant Identification using morphological markers.
- **Day 6:** Veterinary Procedures – Medical Training & Drug Administration. Endocrine Lab – Hormonal Science in Conservation.
- **Day 7:** Knowledge Sharing, Media Content Creation, Personal Debrief, and Farewell.

## FACILITIES & SERVICES

### LODGING

- Dormitory (16 single beds in 4 rooms)
- Communal Wash Facilities

### FOOD & BEVERAGE

- Kitchen
- Restaurant
- Bar

### STUDENT WORKPLACE

- Lecture Hall
- Projectors + Whiteboards
- Desks and chairs for group projects

### OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

- Kayaks & paddleboards
- Trekking
- Yoga
- Sunset Deck

### INFORMATION CENTER

- Exhibition Center
- Traditional Elephant Saddlery

### ELEPHANTS

- 18 Cows
- 7 Bulls
- 2 Calves

### STATIONS

- Elephant Nursery
- 2 Socialization Areas
- 1 Vet Check Area



ELEPHANT SOCIALISATION AREA

ELEPHANT NURSERY

CHILDREN PLAYGROUND

PETANQUE

RESTAURANT

SUNSET VIEW POINT

BAR

SHOP

EXHIBITION

CHILL & GAMING AREA

EXHIBITION

YOGA & MEDITATION

EMERGENCY MEETING POINT

ELEPHANT

BOAT PIER

KAYAKS



Conservation  
Volunteering



FOR YOU...

# PROJECT STAFF

...WITH YOU

## Anabel López Pérez



Photo: © Kiko Peltier

## HEAD OF EDUCATION & RESEARCH

Anabel joined the ECC at its inception and never left. Her enthusiasm and energy are contagious. She began by limiting interaction with elephants, then by establishing herding protocols that now form the backbone of our rewilding programme. A biologist with limited knowledge of Asian elephants when she arrived in Laos, Anabel's expertise has grown rapidly, and today she is a renowned Asian elephant behaviour expert contributing her work to several leading research institutes, including the Smithsonian Institution and the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group.

In 2025, Anabel was awarded a PhD from Chiang Mai University, Thailand. Her groundbreaking research explored how different management approaches affect metabolism, stress, social structure, and reproduction in captive Asian elephants, offering valuable insights into welfare and conservation practices in both Laos and Thailand.

Anabel has a deep passion for elephants, and the ECC has become the sanctuary where she fully expresses this commitment—shaping elephant care and conservation in the region through science.

## Moukthida Vilasith



## ECC HEAD VETERINARIAN

Moukthida “Mouk” Vilasith is a dedicated wildlife veterinarian at the Elephant Conservation Center in Sayaboury. With a strong focus on elephant health, she supports ECC's breeding, rewilding, and veterinary programmes. Mouk has trained with international institutions such as the Denver Zoo and Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, expanding her skills in both laboratory analysis and fieldwork. In addition to her clinical work, she actively participates in youth education programmes across Laos, representing ECC at events organised by Econox and the Anoulak Association.

Through her expertise and passion, Mouk helps bridge the gap between conservation science and community engagement – inspiring future generations to care for wildlife.

Mouk teaches at the Wildlife Course for 5<sup>th</sup> year veterinary students from the National University of Laos organised yearly by ECC, LCTW (Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife) and Free the Bears.

## Kan Thissamone



Photo: © Romain Willekens

## VETERINARY TECHNICIAN

Kan was working with ElefantAsia NGO for several years as an assistant veterinary technician, boarding the organisation's Mobile Veterinary Clinics to provide first aid to elephants wounded on logging sites. He developed an intimate relationship with the country's mahouts while learning veterinary techniques with international veterinarians and staff from the Lao Department of Livestock. When the NGO's projects were eventually autonomised in 2012, Kan naturally proposed to join the Elephant Conservation Center and help with the design and operations of the country's first Elephant Hospital. Sparing no effort to improve the elephants' diet and health, Kan is supervising the supplementary food production unit, positive reinforcement and musth control protocols, mahouts' daily meetings as well as providing veterinary care to elephants in need at the ECC or outside of it. His skills, learned in the field, have earned him due respect from mahouts and the Asian elephant conservation community. His numerous contributions at various elephant care workshops throughout the region (India, Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar) are always highly valued and have largely contributed to the excellent reputation of the Elephant Conservation Center abroad.

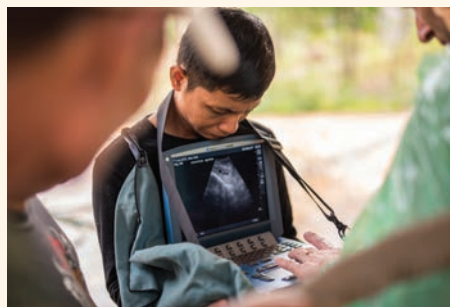
## Jamie Russell



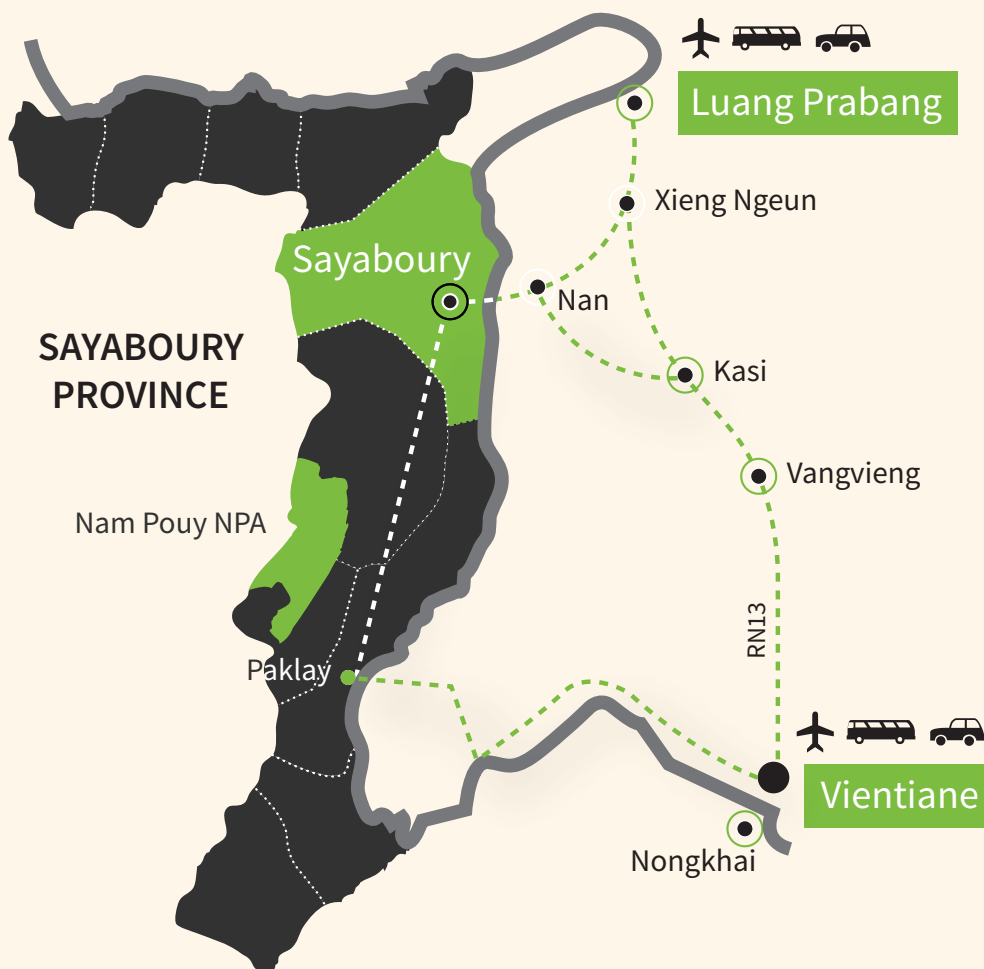
## ECC BIOLOGIST

Jamie Russell is a wildlife biologist at the Elephant Conservation Center. He supports the ECC's elephant management, rehabilitation, research, and breeding programs, and contributes to education efforts through talks and outreach. Jamie holds a BSc in Animal Behavior from Indiana University Bloomington. He has a background in avian fieldwork, having worked on migration monitoring, breeding behavior surveys, and raptor research across the United States. His experience in behavioral data collection and fieldwork, combined with experience in guiding and education, support the ECC's efforts in improving elephant welfare and fostering public understanding of elephant conservation.





# ACCESS MAP



LAO PDR



## How to get there?

### FROM/TO LUANG PRABANG

From Luang Prabang ECC minivan departs from the post office on the main street daily at 7:30am and arrives at the ECC at 10:30am. It returns daily to Luang Prabang at 2:00pm, arriving approximately at 4:30pm. The journey takes approximately 3 to 3.5 hours.

### FROM/TO VIENTIANE

**In Vientiane:** Sakura Minivans (Sikhay station, pass the airport).

Departures at 7:00am, 8:00am and 10:00am.

**In Sayaboury:** Sakura Bus Station.

Departures at 7:00am, 8:00am and 10:00am.

The journey takes approximately 7 hours.

**Or fly to Luang Prabang.** Lao Airlines and Lao Skyway have several departures daily, and board the ECC minivan the next morning.

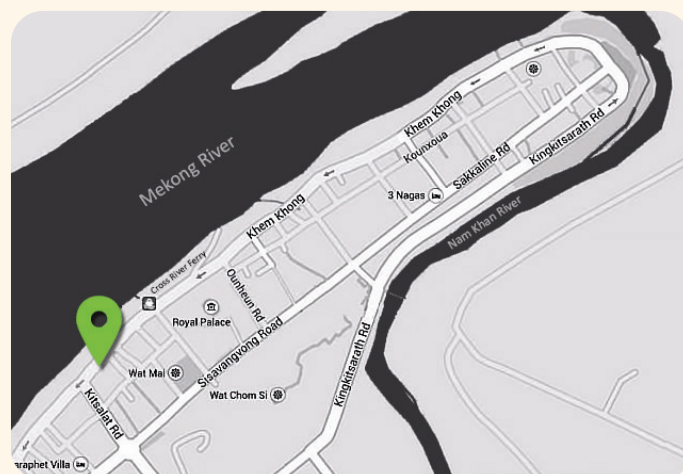
### FROM/TO VANGVIENG

**In Sayaboury:** Public Buses from the Bus Station.

Departures at 3:00pm.

**In Vangvieng:** Minivan from Vangvieng bus station.

Departures at 10:30am (reservation required).



## Luang Prabang Office

Manthatoulat Road (Mekong)  
Ban Pakham, Luang Prabang  
TEL: +856(0)20 96 59 06 65

## ECORE / ECC

Nam Tien Lake,  
Sayaboury Province, Lao PDR  
WHATSAPP: +61 412 183 018

[marketing@elephantconservationcenter.com](mailto:marketing@elephantconservationcenter.com)

# TERMS & CONDITIONS

## CURRENCY

All amounts mentioned in this rate card are stated in US Dollars, but are occasionally calculated in other currencies - especially when using a credit card.

## BOOKING

All clients are deemed to have read these terms and conditions and have signed a reservation form which must be made directly between the customer and the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC). The booking includes the number of participants, a list of participants' names incl. title (Ms., Mr.), nationality and passport numbers prior to the departure. To secure a booking, ECC requires a completed booking containing all relevant information detailed above by e-mail. Clients booking are deemed to accept these terms and conditions and sign a waiver when boarding our minivan to the Center. A booking is accepted and a contract is entered into as soon as ECC issues a written confirmation of the booking. The booking will be secured upon reception of the payment (see below). If clients are not paying the booking in a timely manner, ECC reserves itself the right to cancel the booking.

## PAYMENT

An invoice will be issued with the confirmation of the booking and the submission of the participants' details as stated above. Payments can be made by bank transfer or Credit Card which will incur a bank fee, or cash (at the ECC). Account details are given on the booking confirmation. Note that all bank transfer fees have to be covered in full by the client.

In case of a payment being made later than 90 days after the invoice is sent, a penalty of 10% of the total invoice will be applied.

## CANCELLATION (ALL SEASONS)

ECC Cancellation policy is as follows:

Cancellation less than 30 days prior to arrival date: 25% charge of the full price will be applied, bank fee not included. (ECC will pay back 75% of the amount invoiced, bank fees not included).

Cancellation less than 15 days prior to arrival date: 50% charge of the full will be applied, bank fees not included (ECC will pay back 50% of the amount invoiced, bank fee not included).

Cancellation less than 72 hours (3 days) prior to the arrival date or 'no show' - Full charge from all services requested for will be applied (ECC will retain the full amount invoiced).

## TOUR LEADER AND FOC POLICY

Lao National guide will be charged 30\$ / night (per person),

International Tour Leader ( and/or teachers/supervisors) will be charged 50% of the public price (per person). We do not offer FOC.

## CANCELLATION BY ECC

ECC reserves the right to cancel any trip due to reasons beyond its control (i.e.: natural disasters or political instability). In such a case ECC will refund monies received in full (minus bank transfer fees).

## INSURANCE

ECC guarantees that all vehicles it owns are insured as commercial passenger vehicles. Insurance coverage does not apply after the passengers have exited the vehicle. A private travel insurance is compulsory for all people traveling with ECC. Your travel insurance must provide cover against personal accident, medical expenses, emergency repatriation and personal liability. We also advise to contract insurance coverage against cancellation, curtailment, and loss of luggage and personal effects. The participants must be aware that during the course of the trip certain risks and dangers may occur, including but not limited to hazards of kayaking, hiking, or driving in a motor vehicle or boat, snakes, insects and other wildlife and proximity of elephants. It may also involve an accident or illness in remote places without appropriate facilities, or

be caused by the forces of nature. The client agrees to assume all risks associated with the trip and agrees that no liability will be attached to our company or its outfitter, employees or agent, or to any member of the tour group. ECC accepts no liability in respect of death, personal injury, illness or delay of the passenger, or for any loss or damage to the property of the participant during the course of the trip, however caused.

## PASSPORTS AND VISAS

Clients must carry a valid passport and obtain the relevant visas when traveling with ECC. We cannot accept responsibility if entry is denied to Laos or any other country due to incorrect visa or passport documentation.

## COMPLAINTS

If a client has a complaint about the tour, he or she must make it known to the tour guide (leader) as soon as possible so that he/she is able to take appropriate action at the earliest opportunity. If the client is not satisfied with our response and he/she feels his or her enjoyment of the tour will be significantly affected the client should contact our manager at ECC to discuss how we might best resolve the problem. If the client remains unsatisfied after return from the tour, we must be notified in writing within 30 days.

## RESPONSIBILITY

When booking a stay at ECC, the client understands that ECC is established in a forested area of Laos where the standards of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, level of infrastructure development and medical facilities, and telecommunication services are not necessarily the same as one may be used to at home, or one would find on a conventional holiday. This type of stay inherently involves a higher level of personal risk than a 'conventional holiday'.

ECC, the Government of Laos and the Lao National Tourism Administration cannot accept any responsibility for accidents, injuries, death, or loss of personal effects. The client understands that during the course of the stay certain events may occur, including, but not limited to, accident or illness in remote places without medical facilities, political instability and the forces of nature.

The client agrees to assume all risks associated with the journey to the maximum extent permitted by law. Each client acknowledges that staying at ECC requires a degree of flexibility, and understands that the itinerary, accommodation and modes of transport are subject to change without prior notice due to local circumstances. Should ECC deem it advisable to amend an itinerary for any reason, it may do so by shortening, varying or re-routing any trip. These changes can incur additional expenses that may be charged to the client, if the reason for any alteration is outside control from ECC.

While traveling with ECC, the client agrees to accept the authority of the leader or local operator at all time. He/she is aware that travel within a group may involve compromise to accommodate the diverse desires and physical abilities of group members. The client understands that ECC reserves the right to decline the participation of any person as a member of the group at any time. The client acknowledges that ECC contracts a network of companies, government agencies and individuals throughout the country to assist in the running of its stays. To the best of ECC knowledge, these third parties are qualified to perform the duties they are contracted to perform. However, ECC will not be held liable for any injury, damage, loss, delay or irregularity that may occur due to the behaviour of these third parties. ECC will not accept responsibility or liability for any traveller who contravenes any law or regulation of Lao PDR. No employee, servant or agent of ECC has authority to alter these conditions.

The ECC community includes people from many different cultural backgrounds and ages, so we are asking that our visitors be tolerant of others while on site.



BACK TO THE WILD



Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Awards



elephant conservation center

Luang Prabang Visitor Center  
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(Mekong Riverside)  
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lp@elephantconservationcenter.com  
TEL: +856(0)20 96 59 06 65

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Sayaboury Province, Lao PDR  
elephantconservationcenter@gmail.com  
www.elephantconservationcenter.com  
Facebook: elephant conservation center  
Instagram: #ecc\_elephants

