

GET PAID TO TRAVEL!

Teach English as a Foreign
Language All over the World!



Sooner or later, many of us who have been well and truly bitten by the travel bug are faced with the harsh truth - travel costs money. And no matter how cheap those fruit shakes are in Laos the cash is going to run out sooner or later.

Most travel addicts battle with the game of to and fro. They travel to exotic destinations, soak up all the adventure has to offer, spend a load of money and then return home to work and save up for their next jaunt. But have you ever thought that you could have the best of both worlds? Could there be a way to travel and get paid at the same time?

TEFL stands for 'Teaching English as a Foreign Language' and it's the magic formula that many backpackers are using right now to fund their ongoing globe-trotting adventures. S.E.A Backpacker Magazine visited a school on the island of Koh Samui in the Gulf of Thailand where there are currently eight students taking a TEFL course to become fully certified English Teachers. The certificate will grant them the power to earn money teaching English not just in Thailand and South East Asia but all over the world!

Many backpackers are under the impression that they have to do a TEFL course in their home country before they embark on their travels. Andy, 25, one of the students agreed. "Being cooped up in a dim classroom for a month in the UK wasn't my idea of fun, so when I discovered I could do the course here in Koh Samui I was



thrilled! It meant that I could start my Thailand adventure straight away and get authentic experience teaching in local schools."

The TEFL course takes four weeks to complete, Monday to Friday 9am – 3pm, consisting of a mixture of classroom teaching and practical training. Whilst people of all ages take the course from retirees to school leavers, the eight students here at the school today range from 22-28 years old and they are mainly from the UK. (Something to do with the weather?) It's a fun and friendly atmosphere as the students tell me stories about exploring the island together during their





weekends and evenings. For first-timers to Thailand, Koh Samui with its gorgeous white sandy beaches, colourful markets and buzzing night-life is a great place to get integrated into the unique Thai way of life. And it seems that the students are doing pretty well at adjusting to the laid back island vibe as they take a 'lunch time dip' in the pool just a 2-minute walk from their classroom!

Koh Samui and in many parts of Asia, learning English is key to a successful career in whatever field they choose. One thing is immediately apparent, in contrast to visions of unruly Western classrooms with bored and disruptive kids... the pupils here are incredibly attentive, polite and eager to learn. For the new teachers, the lesson is a pleasure rather than a chore.

Today is the penultimate day of their course and the day of their final "Teacher Practice." I tag along on a visit to a local primary school where the students practice their skills with an enthusiastic group of 9-10 year olds. The kids are enthralled and giggle as Vicki, 27 jumps around demonstrating different careers and asking the children the million-baht question.

"Teaching English can be a great way to immerse yourself into a different culture." Says Roseanne, the TEFL Course Instructor. "As a traveller, at times you feel like you are just passing through a place, seeing sights, going to bars and meeting other travellers. But if you really want to get to know a country and its locals, teaching English is a fantastic means of interaction. As a teacher, there's a real sense of giving something back. Giving the children the gift of English language can make a difference to their future and seeing their English improve week on week as they grow in confidence and start to string sentences together... it's incredible. The feeling is so rewarding." Looking around at the captivated smiles of the children, I could see exactly what she meant.



'What do you want to be when you grow up?' "Do you want to be a teacher?" or "Do you want to be a doctor?" For the children here in





“Giving the children the gift of English language can make a difference to their future and seeing their English improve week on week as they grow in confidence and start to string sentences together... it’s incredible.”

At the moment, Asia is literally crying out for English teachers. It’s an essential skill for many youngsters in developing Asian economies and there are literally not enough teachers to fill the jobs! Thailand, Vietnam, China, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Philippines are amongst the countries with the highest demand at the moment and finding work is a breeze. For those looking for a job in Thailand there’s good news – the government have just passed a new law which states that all school students must be taught English by a native speaker. Job opportunities are about to rocket! We were told that most TEFL graduates find a job within one week of completing their course.

But how much do you actually get paid as an English Teacher? Can a career in teaching realistically fund your travels? The answer from all of the students past and present seems to be yes, although the wages can vary depending



on what location you decide to teach. In Thailand, wages can be as high as 50,000 baht per month in Bangkok and averaging around 30,000 baht in other areas. Wages in the more rural areas will be the lowest, although cost of living will also be much lower than the city and the more tourist-oriented areas. Depending on whether your primary purpose is to save money or to immerse yourself in an authentic Thai cultural experience, the choice is yours.

There are also private lessons to consider. One major part of the TEFL course is learning how to market yourself by advertising to local business whose staff need to improve their English. Helping to turn “Hello Masaaaaaaage?” into “Excuse me sir, I can see the tension knotted in your shoulders, may I advise a relaxing, stress relieving



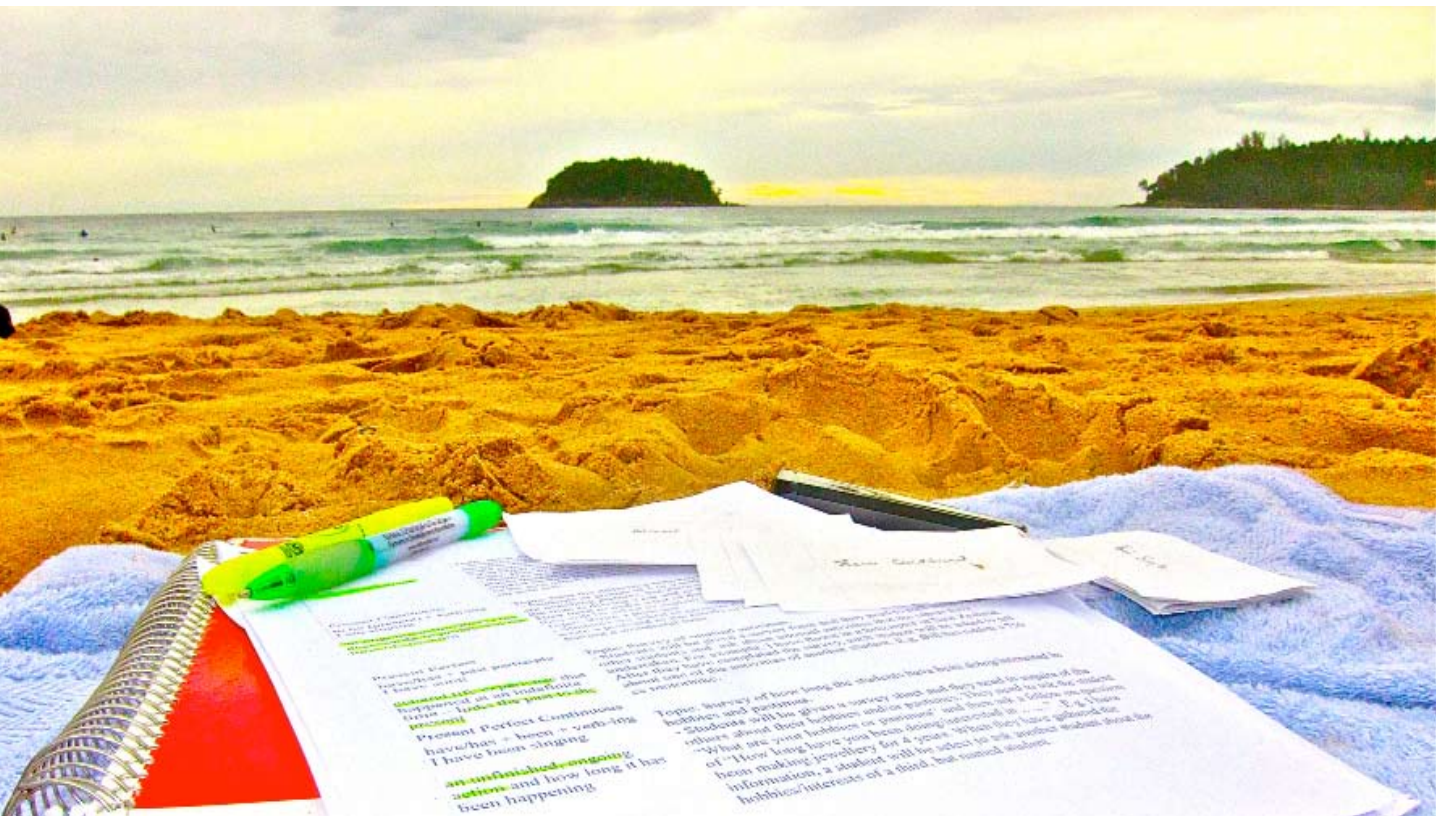
“A year working in Taiwan and not only can I travel Asia in school holidays but I can backpack non-stop the next year!”

It seems that the best thing about teaching English is the amazing flexibility and mobility it offers. Once you have the TEFL certificate you can literally move around the world to teach in different exotic locations of your choice. The word jealous doesn't even come into it for those stuck at home in the office!

massage?” has got to be a good thing right? For private lessons you can earn from 300-500 baht / hour in Thailand. So depending on how many you're willing to add to your weekly routine – you can boost your income greatly.

If you're looking for the big bucks, some TEFL graduates take their certificate to Taiwan, Korea or China. With booming economies in these countries, learning English is taken very seriously and there is a very high demand for qualified English teachers. After completing her TEFL course in Koh Samui, Nicki, a former University employee from the UK, plans to teach in Taiwan. “Teachers can earn up to a whopping \$3000 dollars a month working in the bigger cities plus accommodation and 10 weeks paid holiday a year! A year working in Taiwan and not only will I be able to travel Asia in school holidays but I'll be able to backpack non-stop for the next year!”

We also discovered that many fully fledged teachers only work on average four hours a day - leaving plenty of time to invest in getting to grips with a different culture, developing creative skills, hobbies and of course travelling! Many young people do in fact use their TEFL course as a supplementary income whilst they explore other life passions, such as travel writing, art, sport and exciting entrepreneurial ventures. Emma, 25 is a freelance photographer. She plans to use her TEFL certification back home in the UK to teach foreign nationals as she continues to pursue her photography career. Many others rely on their TEFL certificate as an important skill to fall back on, particularly with the ongoing threat of redundancy and unemployment in the UK, the US and many parts of Europe. With the booming Eastern economy, those with a TEFL course in Southeast Asia are unlikely to ever be unemployed. Saying goodbye to the rat race has never been easier!



TEFL: Become a travelling teacher!

Here at S.E.A Backpacker Magazine we think that TEFL is such a fantastic idea that we've teamed up with Island TEFL in Koh Samui to offer you this life-changing opportunity!

In just four weeks you could be qualified to teach English as a Foreign Language anywhere in the world. **Start your dream today!**

Courses all year round in any one of these exotic locations:

- **THAILAND** - Koh Samui, Phuket, Krabi, Koh Phangan, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani.
- **INDONESIA** - Bali
- **MALAYSIA** - Penang
- **CHINA** - Qingdao
- **PLUS!** Cyprus; Ibiza, Spain, Malta & South African Winelands
- *More locations coming soon!*



**5%
DISCOUNT!**
for bookings
through S.E.A
Backpacker! -->

Visit our website:
southeastasiabackpacker.com/tefl
Or email for more information:
tefl@SoutheastAsiaBackpacker.com



Backpacker.
south east asia

in association with



www.southeastasiabackpacker.com

www.islandtefl.com



My Life as an English Teacher in Thailand!

By Michael Welch

Call it what you will; a just past quarter life crisis, wanting more out of life than being stuck behind a desk in an office or just wanting to travel and see all the magnificent places planet Earth has to offer. These were only a few of the thoughts running through my head as I put a stable career in corporate America to rest in exchange for teaching English abroad and traveling through as many countries as I could.

I departed to Thailand with a one-way ticket from San Francisco Airport in late July 2010. Aside from unexplainable excitement, the thick tropical weather was the first feeling I experienced upon arrival in Bangkok. This was the moment when the reality finally hit me; my adventure had begun.

An overnight train journey, followed by a bus to Phuket, where I would begin a one month's TEFL program, further confirmed everything I had seen in pictures and heard of Thailand to be true. Lush green vegetation, a colorful sunset and sunrise on the train, the overall breathtaking landscapes and a spicy dinner of Thai fried chicken and a cold Chang on the train to wash it down....and this was just day one!

Once settled in Phuket I rented myself a motorbike for the month to venture out and explore the island. There was definitely no regret in that decision; from Promthep Cape and Rawai in the south, to the beaches of Kata, Karon, Patong and Surin along the western coast....nothing was off limits. Seeing the Big Buddha on the hill, the many unique day and night markets, Muay Thai schools run out of local people's homes and the Phuket Aquarium were just some of the amazing sights, sounds and smells from around the island.

Meeting my fellow TEFL teachers; Dan from Virginia, the South Africans, Kyle the swim coach, Mike from dirty Jersey, Cleo from Devon England and Julio (who was dubbed the Don of Patong); as well as other Phuket party-goers made for an amazing month of learning/teaching and sight seeing.

The beauty of the beaches with their bright blue waters was one of the first things to jump out at me when I began to explore my new "home." Realizing that I was living in a real tropical paradise



that people from all corners of the earth come to visit; I knew I had to get out and see as much of Thailand as I could. A short weekend venture to Koh Phi Phi from Phuket had my mouth watering for more travel. Arriving by ferry into the main harbor was comparable to looking through an issue of a NatGeo magazine's best locations. If this is what it

means to be an English teacher in Thailand, I'm glad I signed up and can't wait to enjoy the perks!

And so a month and a half later after a cheeky jaunt to "Incredible India", I arrived in Bangkok where my position as an English Teacher would begin. On the journey from the airport to my new apartment I was able to gaze out the window and see the expanse of Bangkok; the mix of an ever growing and industrializing city spawning amidst the traditional ways of farming country life. Quite diverse lifestyles, priorities and frames of mind seeming to co-exist.

I spent the next day unpacking, getting settled and sorting out my bearings in my new surroundings before an orientation / get-to-know-you info assembly. I was looking forward to getting a glimpse into exactly what it was I had gotten myself into!

I shared very similar feelings prior to learning what to expect of and from the students, what was expected of us as teachers and a brief discussion on signs and symptoms of the varying degrees of culture shock one can go through when living in a foreign country. These were just some of the topics meant to help prepare us for the impending Day 1 of classes! I also met my group of fellow new teachers. Spanning the U.S. from coast to coast, we had so many things in common and hit it off immediately.

After orientation our group was shuttled to the Piyavate Hospital in Bangkok to have our mandatory physical check-ups prior to beginning the semester. Aside from finding out that according to the Thai Body Mass Index I was four kilos overweight and deemed "fat" by the Doc; I was feeling like 30 million Baht, the equivalent of \$1 million bucks! It sure didn't take long to find out that the Thai people are straight shooters with when it comes to not sugar coating their opinions on physical appearance. Let the good times roll!

Leaving my apartment and riding the coach to campus in Bang Na on day one, the pre-game butterflies were definitely alive and well. When the coach pulled up at the sprawling University in the middle of the country I felt as if I was brought back in time to the height of the Roman Empire. The architecture of the colossal buildings, the fountains, bridges, staircases, statues and floors all had an extremely Romanesque feel to them. I almost forgot for a minute that I was in Thailand.

Absorbing this along with receiving first day rosters and classroom assignments was the equivalent of taking a drink from a fire hose. Looking over my class rosters I quickly realized that while teaching ten classes averaging twenty or so students each; I was about to be responsible for bringing roughly 200 students from the dark into the light. I felt up to the challenge knowing that I had my TEFL program prep in my back pocket which gave me an idea of how to handle a classroom as well as put together lesson plans.

The camaraderie between us new teachers grew strong in week one. We shared similar stories of classroom situations as well as our coping techniques in the teachers lounge. It did not take long to realize that while the students are



a clever group and willing to test you in the classroom to see how you handle yourself; they are also a great group and extremely fun to work with. They want the ability to read, write and speak English and are willing to put themselves in front of the class, or scenarios which may be out of their comfort zones, to help them practice speaking the language and gain the understanding of how it is used.

Our entire group also picked up quickly one commonality all these students seem to share; that while very willing and able to learn, they are extremely resourceful when it comes to missing class and creating excuses to have the absence excused. Learning to sift through the “unfathomable,” the “well, maybe this happened” to the “there is no way you have five grand mothers and all of them have passed away this week” type of excuses became a curve on the learning curve we handled with Formula 1 racing technique!

An additional challenge is the age of the students, 18-23. Being not far their seniors, commanding respect in the university classroom can present a challenge. You learn quickly to be firm but fair, to carry a sense of humor with you and not be proud to laugh at yourself, because you will make mistakes and a quick laugh can make all the difference. Employing the ability to shift with the likes and personalities of the different classes is a challenging, exciting and educational way to perfect how to think quickly on your feet and adapt lessons in different ways for each class.

Life outside the classroom is great. With housing covered in the teaching contract and overtime hours calculated and paid out on a monthly basis, the salary of a teacher can make for an honest living in Thailand. Frequently eating out at western food restaurants in a sure fire way to chew into your monthly salary; however most of us came to Thailand to experience food other than McDonalds and KFC, right? With Pad Thai, Pad Ga Prow and varieties of Tom Yum soup ranging from 30 to 80 Baht per meal, you can eat extremely flavorful and filling meals here for roughly under \$10 a day. This will definitely leave the average teacher with a decent Buddha Bank full of Baht each month to travel the country or, if you like, indulge in the glitz Sukhumvit Road has to offer!

The academic calendar runs from October to March, then again from May to October. With a substantial summer vacation period, the time available to explore the many surrounding kingdoms of South East Asia is an appealing point to many who wish to teach, including myself. One particular trip currently in its incubation stage is a motorcycle ride from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam during March and April. I plan to make this ride with a group of fellow teachers to explore the beauty of the coastal roads as well as the mountain villages of Vietnam.

Throughout the semester weekend trips are plentiful and thrown together by different groups of teachers looking to explore the many regions of this expansive country. I recently decided to take to the bright blue water and white sandy beaches of a magical little island in the Gulf of Thailand called Koh Samet with a group of teachers. Trading the city life for a weekend of sun, surf and scooter rides was a very welcome change! Eating hamburgers, baguette sandwiches and soaking up the warm rays was a treat, even if only for a weekend. Scootering the length of the island on roads that defy the actual definition of “road” was quite the challenge. However, arriving to view the sunset at the southern tip of the island was well worth the anxiety of the navigation to get there. By the time Sunday came around and it was time to leave many of us were wondering what we needed to do stay here permanently....then

“reality” kicked in and we realized this is vacation and we had to be back in the classroom Monday. A trip back is in the works for sure!

There was a lot of angst and questions running through my veins in the weeks and days prior to my plane departing San Francisco International Airport. Was this the right move or not? Would I regret leaving my job, would I miss out on things back home or is this the right time in my life to be doing something like this? After being here, meeting people I would never have met and having the amazing experiences I would never have had I can firmly say that I have absolutely no regrets!

I realized that office jobs could come and go; they will always be there. As each day goes by I am having the time of my life. Helping to brighten the future of students and the future of another country is quite an amazing feeling. Watching the progression and the lights turn on while having the ability to see the beauty and history of this fabulous land is quite a monumental experience. Given the opportunity to repeat, I would happily do it all over again!

