

## **Working at Lanta Animal Welfare's animal centre at Time for Lime - a volunteer's experience**

Arriving at Time for Lime after a long journey, our first thought is, "wow, are we really going to be working here for the next two months? How lucky are we?!" The grounds are stunning, very leafy and well maintained, it almost feels like we are in a little piece of the jungle! We are greeted by many cats lazing on the footpath, basking in the sun, all waiting for a cuddle or a scratch. We happily oblige and soon find out that Fatty and Ginger go into ecstasy with a scratch at the base of the tail, their little tongues poking in and out.. very funny!

After meeting Junie, the founder of Lanta Animal Welfare and owner of Time for Lime, along with Mai, Time for Lime's Manager, we settle into our simple but clean accommodation. We make friends with Rung and Kit, Time for Lime staff who share the living space. Then we meet our new charges (10 dogs and 13 cats!). 3-legged Sam immediately jumps up for a cuddle (not an easy feat considering his size) whilst the other 7 dogs from the pack come over for a sniff and a pat.

The dogs can't wait to hit the beach for their morning walks - expect lots of whining, barking and sometimes howling, they are so excited! Deng, beautiful and gentle, is the leader of the pack. The other dogs come to him when they are feeling itchy and he nibbles their fur, it's very cute! He doesn't need a lead to walk.

Sam, Noodle and Sorry can be let off their leads at the start of the sea gypsy area, as long as there are no other dogs around! As soon as we get to the small beach over the rocks and around the corner, all of the other dogs can be set free, this is a *real* treat!

Sugar and Red always get first walks, they are getting on a bit in years and cannot handle the craziness of the pack! Their joy on the beach is a wonder to behold, especially when Red gets his "puppy face" on - you will see what I mean!

When we started, Noodle was a little bit shy but by the time we left she was becoming more confident, even trying to play with YoYo and Chok (who are best buddies and love tangling with each other!) She is still learning how to "play" but she will get there; she also loves to "hunt" for fish in the rock pools. We teased her a little by throwing little stones in the water, she was none the wiser! Buddy and Sorry sometimes go on adventures together, it's just a matter of waiting until they are ready to come home (shaking the biscuit container helps!)

Before "walkies" time we take Saam (3 in Thai) for his swim if it's a nice day - he doesn't like it very much but it's good for strengthening his front leg. We also have to keep an eye on all the animals' health and wellbeing.

After our daily tasks, we head down to the restaurant for self-service breakfast right on the beach! We have free time from 11am to 4pm, when we can do whatever we fancy.

Wednesday is wash and de-tick day and these dogs are smart! Once you start walking them up the path, they somehow know what's going to happen so get ready to carry them! The cats love to sit just out of reach and watch - I think they do this on purpose!

In the evenings we take the dogs for a walk again, they really look forward to this time of sniffing, marking and running free!

Then, dinner time! Volunteers get 60 baht meals in the Time for Lime restaurant! Choose from the daily changing menu - the food is so fresh it's amazing! All the curry pastes are made from scratch and you can really taste the difference. During our 60 days there, we ate at Time for Lime on about 45 of them. Volunteers get staff prices on beer and cocktails too, which is a little too tempting at times! Especially when the restaurant has such a wonderful atmosphere and vibe; Mai and Tho were always laughing and happy to help with any request.

On our last weekend, we did the cookery class and my god - it was so informative, everything was so fresh and once we knew how, so easy! Being a chef, I was very impressed. The only down side for me was that Asian ingredients are so darn expensive at home!

Unfortunately leaving day came and I had to say goodbye to "everybody". It broke my heart that they didn't know we were leaving and there was no way to tell them I loved them or say goodbye - to them we would just "disappear".

After two months at Time for Lime, I learnt all of the amazing personalities and little quirks of the animals. We had fun, we had drama, we had running on the beach and many, many laughs together. To all my Time for Lime animal and human friends, it's not goodbye, it's see you soon. And I can't wait.

**Michelle Jones** (Volunteer from June - August 2012)