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The elephant is the national symbol of Thailand. Yet, despite its close association with the people of the country over the centuries and the many services it has rendered to the kings and ordinary men, its very future survival hangs in the balance. This first volume, Elephants in Thailand - Mahouts

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Like many people, meeting some elephants was one of the things we were really looking forward to on our Southeast Asia trip. Finding a truly ethical elephant experience is surprisingly difficult, given the number of elephant sanctuaries and tourist opportunities, in Thailand especially.

In the 20th century, many domestically kept elephants were owned by villages that leased their services and those of their mahouts to logging companies. In 1989 and without much warning, the Thai Government banned logging in Thailand. This put these elephants and their mahouts out of work and the ability to pay for the elephant and village's upkeep.

Today many elephant activists such as Lek Chailert are making "ecotourism" more popular, working to free these gentle giants from work and promote their conservation while maintaining their cultural significance within Thailand.

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