

Time for Thailand

10 days | Starts/Ends: Bangkok



Explore the treasures of Thailand from the bustling metropolitan capital of Bangkok and the temples of Chiang Mai to the beautiful scenery at Erawan National Park. Visit hill tribes in Chiang Rai and sample culinary delights at exotic night markets throughout the country.

HIGHLIGHTS AND INCLUSIONS

Trip Highlights

- Bangkok – enjoy a guided tour as we ride through the streets on tuk-tuks and cruise the labyrinth of canals on a longtail boat
- Chiang Rai – admire the unusual white temple of Wat Rong Khun which depicts scenes from famous movies including Star Wars
- Erawan National Park – stroll through lush forests and swim in the pools beneath the famous waterfall
- Kanchanaburi – pay your respects at the Allied War Cemetery and enjoy a train journey over the iconic 'Bridge over the River Kwai'
- Chiang Mai – explore the golden Doi Suthep Temple and browse the bustling night market for souvenirs and street food

- Mae Rim – meet ethnic minority villagers and learn about traditional life for the hill tribes
- Ayutthaya – discover the ancient ruins and see the iconic Wat Mahatat where the head of a Buddha statue is entwined in the trees
- Kok River – cruise the river in a traditional longtail boat to enjoy scenic country views and villagers going about their lives

What's Included

- 9 breakfasts, 1 lunch and 3 dinners
- 8 nights 3 - 4 star & Special Class hotels, 1 night floating hotel in the jungle
- Economy class flight Bangkok to Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai - Bangkok
- Airport arrival transfer day 1 & departure transfer day 10
- Escorted by an English-speaking Thai tour guide
- Guided sightseeing - Bangkok, Kanchanaburi, Erawan National Park, Ayutthaya, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai
- Train ride over the River Kwai and visit to Hellfire Pass
- Cooking class in Chiang Mai
- Longtail boat cruise on the canals of Bangkok and on the Kok River
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles

What's Not Included

- Tipping Kitty: USD\$45-55pp, paid in USD
- Entrance Fees: USD\$55-65pp, paid in USD
- International flights and visa
- Tip for your tour guide. We recommend you allow USD\$3 - 6 per day, per traveller. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Bangkok

Saturday. Welcome to Bangkok, the ever-alluring capital of Thailand. Once you have checked into your hotel the rest of the day is free until 6pm when you meet your guide for a welcome meeting. We'll make our way to the lively Khao San Road area, here we'll enjoy a welcome dinner down the bustling street of Soi Rambuthri. After dinner your guide will assist you back to the hotel, alternatively you can continue the night at one of the many exuberant bars in the area. **Overnight - Bangkok (D)**

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Day 2 : Bangkok



This morning we set off to explore this sprawling metropolis. The first stop is at the 24 hour flower market where you get to view stunning orchids and roses on sale to the local restaurants and florists. We then jump on Tuk Tuks and take an exhilarating ride through the streets of Bangkok reaching our next stop Wat Pho, home to the famous reclining Buddha. Then we visit the spiritual and religious heart of the city - the striking Grand Palace. Topped by golden stupas, the complex has been the site of royal coronations and is home to the legendary Emerald Buddha.

After a break for lunch we board a longtail boat and set off on an exploration of the labyrinth of klongs (canals) that criss cross the city. On our journey we'll glide by stilted houses and gleaming temples whilst old men fish and children play about on the waters edge. Disembarking our boats the rest of the day is at leisure to further explore Bangkok independently. **Overnight - Bangkok (B)**

Day 3 : Chiang Rai



Bangkok - Chiang Rai. This morning we head for the airport before flying north to the stunning city of Chiang Rai. This afternoon we'll visit fabulous White Temple of Wat Rong Khun which depicts scenes from movies including the Matrix, Star Wars and Superman! This temple is far from ordinary and it's white buildings glisten in the bright Thai sunshine.

This evening we will visit Chiang Rai night market, which boasts many interesting stalls selling local & national handicrafts and souvenirs. You'll also find a number of street food stalls offering a variety of delicious Thai dishes. **Overnight - Chiang Rai (B)**

Day 4 : Mae Rim

Chiang Rai - Mae Rim. After a leisurely breakfast we set off towards the hill tribe region, located north of Chiang Mai and reach our accommodation in the afternoon. From here we board our longtail boat for a cruise down Kok River, and onto the surrounding countryside and visit the some of the nearby hill tribe villages. Gain a wonderful insight into the lives of some of the smaller minority groups in the country. In the evening we enjoy a sumptuous meal before being entertained by dancers from the local community. **Overnight - Mae Rim (B, D)**

Day 5 : Chiang Mai



Mae Rim - Chiang Mai. This morning we visit the Araksa Tea Gardens, home to 110 acres of verdant tea plantations. You'll learn about the history of the tea plantation and their commitment to supporting the local people. You'll also discover the process of tea growing in this area and try your hand at picking before enjoying a cup of the freshest brew.

Later we continue to Chiang Mai and make our way to the imposing Doi Suthep Temple that stands like a sentinel over the city. The temple is said to have been founded in 1383 and the beautiful golden stupa sitting in the centre of the temple complex is now the main attraction.

This evening your guide will give you an orientation of the sprawling night market of

Chiang Mai. A perfect place to shop away the hours and try some exciting local food.

Overnight - Chiang Mai (B)

Day 6 : Chiang Mai Cooking class



This morning we head to a local cooking school to try our hand at preparing tasty local cuisine in a traditional Thai setting. This informative cooking class teaches us how to prepare three of Thailand's most popular dishes that we'll later get to enjoy for lunch.

The rest of the day is free for you to relax and explore at leisure. In the evening we visit the Chiang Mai night market, a haven of souvenirs and works by local artisans. **Overnight - Chiang Mai (B, L)**

Day 7 : Ancient Ruins of Ayutthaya



Chiang Mai - Ayutthaya. This morning we make our way to the airport for our flight south, arriving at the airport we then drive to the former Thai capital of Ayutthaya.

This afternoon we explore Ayutthaya's famous ruins, visiting the magnificent stupas at Wat Phri Sanphet and iconic Wat Mahatit where the head of a damaged Buddha statue has slowly been embraced and lifted by a nearby tree. This is one of Thailand's most religiously significant places. This evening we

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continue to Suphanburi for our overnight stay.

Overnight - Suphanburi (B)

Day 8 : River Kwai & Hellfire Pass



Ayutthaya - Kanchanaburi. This morning we drive to the small town of Kanchanaburi. Here we pay our respects to the thousands of Allied POWs who perished in the area under the hand of the Imperial Japanese Army. After pausing at the Allied War Cemetery we continue to the infamous 'Bridge over the River Kwai', immortalised by the film of the same name. You have a chance to take pictures before you board a train for a 2 hour journey that crosses the bridge before following the tracks dug by the POWs and locals some 75 years earlier.

Disembarking at Nam Tok we have a short drive to 'Hellfire Pass' where the POWs dug through a mountain often using only their bare hands. A fascinating museum at the entrance details the region's history.

After our day's sightseeing a leisurely longtail boat ride leads us to our fabulous floating jungle raft hotel. To the beauty of a hundred softly glowing lanterns and the sounds of the tropical forest and cool water flowing by we enjoy dinner and a relaxing evening on the deck. **Overnight - Kanchanaburi (B, D)**

Day 9 : Erawan National Park



Kanchanaburi - Bangkok. This morning you might be lucky enough to interact with the local resident elephant who occasionally pops down to the river bank next to the jungle rafts. We then travel on to the beautiful Erawan National Park to explore the rivers, waterfalls and trails on foot. You'll have time to explore the 7 tiers of waterfall, perhaps taking a swim in each of the pools formed by the falls. Departing Erawan we make our way back to Bangkok for our final evening in the capital.

Overnight - Bangkok (B)

Day 10 : Bangkok

Monday. Today marks the end of your Thai adventure. After breakfast and hotel check out we will transfer you to the airport in time for your onward departure flight. Your most welcome to extend your stay in Bangkok. If choosing to book post tour accommodation with us a departure transfer to the airport will be offered at the completion of your post tour accommodation arrangements.(B)

HOTELS

Highlighted below are some of the hotels which we frequently use on this tour, though we reserve the right to substitute these hotels to ones of a similar standard.

Please refer to your Tour Voucher for your confirmed arrival hotel and further arrival information.

Royal Princess Larn Luang

Located in the heart of Bangkok Old City, The Royal Princess Larn Luang hotel offers stylish accommodation along with a range of facilities and, most importantly, comfort. The spacious guest rooms are decorated with neutral colours and equipped with modern amenities such as cable TV and internet access, with wonderful views of either the city or the pool area with its shady palms. The property has four restaurants, offering a range of delicious international cuisine, while tasty cocktails and light snacks are served in the lobby lounge and Princess Club. After a day of sightseeing guests can enjoy a refreshing swim in the hotel's large outdoor pool, or head to the spa and fitness

centre, before listening to live music at the Princess Club.



Laluna Hotel Resort & Spa

Set in a stunning lily garden in Chiang Rai, the Laluna Hotel & Resort is the perfect place to soak up the relaxing atmosphere. Each air-conditioned bungalow features cable TV, refrigerator, mini bar and complimentary WiFi. The resort also features an open-air lobby and bar and restaurant to where guests can enjoy a range of local and international dishes. Guests can also enjoy the lagoon style swimming pool and jacuzzi or sit back and unwind with a massage.

Hmong Hilltribe Lodge

Set within the spectacular mountains and rice fields of Mae Rim, the Hmong Lodge offers guests a unique opportunity to experience traditional Hmong culture amidst striking natural beauty. Conveniently located just an hours drive from Chiang Mai, The Hmong Lodge offers travellers the perfect balance of style and comfort and offers them the chance to meet and learn about nearby tribal communities. The comfortable guest rooms are beautifully crafted from wood and have a splash of colour added with the Hmong quilts. The lodge features an outdoor pool, spa and open-air restaurant. Days can be spent with local tribes and exploring the stunning surrounding landscapes while evenings at the lodge can be filled with a barbecue and al fresco dining followed by traditional Hmong performances including dancing.



Amora Hotel Chiang Mai

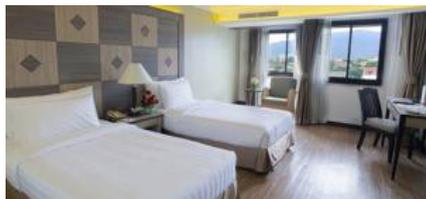
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Close to the Tapae Gate, Amora Hotel Chiang Mai is a modern property with great amenities. Guest rooms are designed in the modern Northern Thai (Lanna) style and come with air conditioning, TV, mini bar and room service. The hotel also boasts a refreshing outdoor pool and fitness centre as well as Chili's restaurant - serving up a delicious array of transitional Thai and international cuisine. The Lobby Lounge Bar and Pool Bar are great places to enjoy a cocktail at the end of the day.



Songphanburi Hotel

Well-located in the centre of Suphanburi, the Songphanburi Hotel offers easy access to many local tourist attractions including the Dragon Descendants Museum and Wat Pa Lelai Woraviharn. Its spacious guestrooms are equipped with all the essential amenities, with WiFi access available. Guests can also take advantage of the refreshing outdoor pool, coffee shop and restaurant, which serves both international and Thai cuisine for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Expect a warm welcome from the friendly team of staff.



River Kwai Jungle Rafts

River Kwai Jungle Rafts Resort offers a unique accommodation experience right on the flowing Kwai Noi River. All floating rooms are tucked into a floating bamboo lodge moored along the historical River Kwai Noi surrounded by lush green mountains and jungle. The walls are weaved from local bamboo decorated with wooden furniture reflecting Mon living style. Each is appointed with en-suite private bathroom, balcony and a hammock. To work in harmony with the

natural surroundings, the property does not use electricity and kerosene lamps are provided to light the rooms and evoke a romantic atmosphere.



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Thailand Country Guide

Entrance fees - collected in USD

Entrance fees to most sites are not included, although reasonably priced. In Thailand, we collect entrance fees on Day 2 of the tour (the amount is noted under exclusions on page one of this document). A breakdown of the entrance fee total is provided upon arrival. All funds collected in Thailand for entrance fees are payable in USD.

Tipping Kitty - collected in USD

At the start of your tour, we take a small tipping kitty (the amount is noted under exclusions) from all tour participants to cover tips throughout your holiday. This saves you the hassle of knowing when and how much to tip bellhops, luggage handlers, bus drivers, train conductors and other support staff throughout the tour.

This amount does not include a tip for your tour guides. For a job well done, we would suggest USD \$3 - 6 per person per day. Tipping your guide is an entirely personal gesture and ultimately the amount is up to you.

Voltage & Time

The voltage in Thailand is 220v. In Thailand there are 2 types of plugs are commonly accepted: 2 flat prong plugs (type A), the 2 round pin plug (type C). To cover all bases, it is best to pack an international travel adaptor!

Thailand is 7 hours ahead of GMT and does not observe daylight saving.

Climate

The best time to travel to Thailand – central and north including Bangkok, Kanchanaburi and Sukhothai is from November to April, with little rain, if any expected throughout this time. After the cooler winter months, from mid January temperatures start to rise reaching 30°C and more between March – May. Between May and July the south west monsoons arrive, travel during this time can still be pleasant with the rain coming in the form of short downpours, lasting an hour or two, clearing the way for warm, clear skies.

In August and September the rain continues to fall and temperatures remain high, though by October the mercury has fallen and November marks the start of the dry season in the central and north once again.

The far north and Chiang Rai are generally cooler than the surrounding regions with an annual average temperature of 25o C and with a lower humidity. The best time to travel is either the 'cool' season from Oct – Feb or the wet season (Jun - Sept) when aside from the rain, conditions are mild with temperatures around 25oC. March – May is warmer with temperatures rising to 36oC.

The Gulf of Thailand, including the Hua Hin coastal region has three defined seasons. From December to February you can expect blue skies, plenty of sunshine with refreshing sea breezes to keep temperatures at bay. From March – June there is still plenty of blue sky and temperatures will rise above 30°C. Rain is unlikely till the end of June when it comes in the form of hour-long afternoon downpours, clearing the way for more blue skies and bright sunshine. In late-August/September the monsoon arrives and you can expect sunny spells interspersed with rainy periods. Rainfall usually peaks between October and November.

Currency

The official currency in Thailand is the Baht.

Euro, British Pounds, US Dollars and other major currencies can be exchanged at banks

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or at any one on of the numerous exchange booths that line the streets of the big cities. You may also choose to purchase currency in advance, though its possibly not necessary as ATMs can be found everywhere with the exception of the hill tribe areas of Chiang Rai and if enroute between Chiang Rai and Chiang Khong border if crossing to Laos. It is not common to pay with a credit card at restaurants, cafes or shops for small purchases and if you do often there will be a surcharge applied or minimum charge required. It's advisable to request bank notes in smaller denominations, as it can sometimes be hard to get change from large notes and smaller notes are handy for smaller purchases and gratuities.

Traveller's Cheques are not recommended as they're often difficult to exchange and incur high fees.

Essential Packing

- Lightweight cotton garments including some items that cover your shoulders and knees
- Torch is staying overnight at the Jungle Rafts
- Two spare passport photos & 2 photocopies of your passport. You will need the passport copies if you are planning to cross into Myanmar
- Sleep sheet, towel and some warm clothes for your village stay if travelling on our Thailand, Temples & Tribes Tour
- Comfortable walking shoes (again especially if joining our Thailand Temples & Tribes Tour) in addition to flip flops/ thongs you can wear in the shower
- DEET based mosquito repellent & antihistamine cream
- Bring a 2 flat prong (type A) and a 2 round pin (type C) electrical adaptors. A universal adaptor will cover all bases
- Lightweight, fold up raincoat/ poncho
- A daypack for your day-to-day needs. Also handy if you don't want to take all your luggage with you on the Jungle Rafts (if applicable)
- Sunglasses, hat, sunscreen, swim costume

Arrival Transfers

If your tour or short stay includes an airport arrival transfer (as noted in the 'Inclusions'

section of these Trip Notes) our arrival procedure is as follows:

Arrive Bangkok - Suvarnabhumi International Airport OR Don Mueang International Airport and attend to immigration formalities before collecting your luggage and proceeding to the arrivals hall. Please enter the arrival hall via **Door 5**. Our On The Go Tours representative will be waiting in front of Door 5, holding a prominent On The Go Tours logo signboard. After meeting you will be escorted to our awaiting transportation and transferred to our tour start hotel.

If for any reason you have trouble locating our representative (after waiting 20 minutes in the arrival hall) or your flight is delayed please call the emergency contact number as stated on your tour voucher.

If arriving on day 1 of a holiday, that includes an airport arrival transfer as noted in the 'Inclusions' section of your Trip Notes) we will be at the airport, ready to transfer you to your hotel. Further if you are booking pre-tour accommodation with us an airport arrival transfer will also be provided. If arriving prior to 9am on day 1 (essentially on a flight that arrives very, very early in the morning) you will need to purchase a night of pre-tour accommodation to save you waiting until standard hotel check in time, which is generally 2pm.

Health Requirements

You should seek medical advice before travelling to Thailand from your local health practitioner and ensure that you receive all of the appropriate vaccinations. As a guide Hepatitis A, Typhoid and Tetanus are strongly recommended. If travelling to remote areas, further vaccinations including TB, Hepatitis B, Rabies, Diphtheria and Japanese encephalitis may also be necessary.

Malaria

Areas with Malaria: Rural only. Including forested areas that border Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia and Laos, and rural, forested areas in the districts of Phang Nga and Phuket. Malaria is not found in the cities of Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Koh Phangan, Koh

Samui, Pattaya, Phang Nga and Phuket. The risk of contracting Malaria in Thailand is low.

Bilharzia

May be present in some rivers and lakes and we recommend it best to avoid swimming in untested waterways.

Water

The tap water in Thailand is not safe to drink, only drink bottled mineral water, which is readily available from shops, hotels and restaurants.

Guides And Groups

Our Southeast Asia tours are modular which means that we offer sectors of our longer tours. On your holiday you may be joined by new travellers for a section of your tour and you may end your tour before or after other members of your group.

Guiding: For tours that start in Bangkok, a Thai guide will escort all arrangements throughout Thailand. If your tour continues to another country a qualified guide native to that country will escort the tour from there forward.

Our tours that end in Bangkok are not fully escorted for the Thailand sector. On our Signature Tours you will have a local guide for your Bangkok city tour. On our Budget Tours a local guide will meet you at the Cambodia border and escort you to your hotel, then you will be unescorted for the rest of your stay in Bangkok.

Transportation

On all our tours we use a combination of vehicles including mini buses, small and large size coaches. When travelling in the north of Thailand our vehicles of choice are mini buses as they are best equipped at navigating narrow winding roads and mountain passes. In these areas a number of mini buses rather than one large coach. Each vehicle comfortably accommodates 8 persons and tour guide will swap between vehicles offering commentary en-route, in addition to making stops to give more further information at points of interest.

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Shopping

Bangkok is rapidly gaining a reputation as a key shopping destination in Asia, with visitors being drawn by the variety of products and shopping environments, as well as the great prices. Chatuchak, is a market that gains momentum over the weekend to become arguably the largest in Southeast Asia, everything can be found here, from hand made jewellery to the latest fashions.

This city is blessed with a number of top quality shopping malls, perhaps the most popular for visitors is MBK. This 8 floor monstrosity offers everything from telephones to sushi, designer labels to unique designs. It is safe to assume that anything with a brand that is being sold out of a store bearing the same brand may not necessarily be the 'real deal'. There is something here for everyone, including a multi screen cinema showing the latest movies in English for those who would like to rest their weary feet whilst others continue on their spending spree.

Another wonderful feature of Bangkok are her nightmarkets. It seems that once the sun goes down, the temporary stalls come out, everywhere. Patpong is famous for its genuine fakes, Sukhumvit Road boats a similar reputation. The mixture of bargains, street food and general vibe of the city make these markets a highlight to explore by foot. Remember to haggle, and if you think something is over priced then walk away. They will not sell to you at a loss, so if they can make some money on the deal they will call you back.

Caveat emptor - Let the buyer beware! It is always safe to assume that anything with a brand on it is a copy and should be treated as such. Some of these copies can be incredibly good, leaving the untrained eye incapable of telling the difference. It is therefore always best to assume it is a copy unless you really know what you are looking at. The city is also well known for its scams. Some tailors will drastically overcharge for shoddy workmanship that is delivered minutes before you leave on your return flight so you can't get it changed. Some jewellers have been known to sell fake or greatly over priced

products. If the jewellers or tailors does not come highly recommended, a large amount of caution should be used.

IMPORTANT: Any purchases made whilst travelling are at your own discretion. Make sure you are completely happy at the product you are purchasing, on the go will not become involved at any time, at a later date or once you return home should your purchase not live up to your expectations. Proceed with caution.

A New Tailored Suit!

If you are looking to have suits made up, you might like to consider 'The Grand Fashion International' tailor shop. The shop is open from 9am - 9pm daily and is easy enough to get to by taxi, the address can be found in your welcome letter that you will receive upon arrival. The shop offers quality suiting and garments made to measure. Customer feedback so far has been very good. The shop works with cotton, linen, wool, wool blends and all other suiting fabrics, though it and if you were looking stretch fabrics, inexpensive cotton t's or crazy cheap - off the side of the road kind of stuff this would not be the place. Head to the night markets instead. Prices: Tailored ladies/men cotton blend shirts business shirts start at USD\$40, Ladies trousers fully lined at USD\$60, Mens blazer/jacket fully lined USD\$90 and a fully lined suit, with shirts from USD\$160.

The catch! You are going to need at least 48 hours to have items made. After making your order you would need 1 - 2 fittings to ensure that suit fits just right. The shop can send a car to pick you up from the hotel and transfer you to and from their premises for the fittings. My best advice would be at the time you are placing the order, schedule your fittings there and then so you can plan your time for the days ahead. If for example you arrived a day early, you could visit the tailor on this day then schedule your first fitting at say 4pm on day 1, then a final fitting (if required) at say 7.30pm on day 2). Don't be afraid to haggle a little with the tailor, they are lovely gentlemen and small savings can be made. Also do let them know that you are travelling with On the Go. They are aware of our itineraries and what

time fittings can be scheduled plus its in their best interest to keep you satisfied.

It's your choice to shop here, elsewhere or not at all in your free time.

Airline Luggage Allowance

If your tour includes international or domestic flights please be mindful that the free baggage allowance for Economy class travel within the region is strictly 20kg and 1 piece of hand luggage up to 6kg. Any additional weight is charged at a per kilo rate. You may wish to keep this in mind whilst shopping.

It's not like home

Travel to far - flung corners of the earth involves lifestyles and conditions that are sometimes very different from what you are used to back home. You must come prepared to cope with unusual situations, local inadequacies and unpredictable events as and when they occur. Foreign travel is definitely not suitable for people who expect or demand everything to go exactly as planned. With the greatest respect and in the interest of your ultimate enjoyment you must understand this. Things can and do change in foreign countries.

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