

# Thailand: Nature, Culture & the Beaches | 12 Days



We have carefully tailor-made this itinerary to give our guests a well-rounded experience of fascinating Thailand. We start our journey from Bangkok, the most happening hub in Southeast Asia then head north to Chiang Mai, Thailand's symbol in cultural heritage and beyond to hill tribe villages to experience local culture first hand and appreciate natural beauty all around. We then head all the way down south to Ko Lanta Island to relax on its calm beaches.

### Trip Highlights

- Marvel at beautiful Erawan waterfall
- Experience the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar
- Visit Elephant Nature Park
- Trek in northern Thailand thru quaint rural hill tribe area
- Meeting the local people in the various villages, each with their own unique language, customs and dress
- Relax in sandy beaches of laid back and tranquil island of Ko Lanta

### Detailed Itinerary

#### Day 1: Arrive in Bangkok

Welcome to Thailand! Upon arrival in Bangkok a *travel-to-nature Asia* guide will be at the airport to greet and take us to our hotel. Please look out for your name-card once you exit out of arrival area.

Rest of the day free for individual activities. Overnight in Bangkok.

**Accommodation:** Rembrandt Hotel & Suites

#### Day 2: In Bangkok | Kanchanaburi

Tour of Bangkok including the Grand Palace and Wat Pho; afternoon to Kanchanaburi and a Samlaw (Rickshaw) ride to the 'Bridge on the River Kwai'.

This morning we take a short walk to the Chao Praya river where we board a long tail boat for a tour of the local canals. Please be advised there may be a possibility of larger groups being accommodated in a bigger boat. Bangkok was once known as the Venice of the East because of its intricate canal network. We get a glimpse of daily life as we pass locals selling their wares by the river. We will visit what to this day remains the home of the Thai Royal family at the Royal Palace complex followed by Wat Phra Kaew, home to the Emerald Buddha, one of Thailand's most venerated images. Another highlight is Wat Po, the largest temple in Bangkok, housing a 46 m long, 15 m high gold-plated reclining Buddha.

After lunch we transfer to Kanchanaburi, an area made famous by the movie 'Bridge on the River Kwai'. The film is fictional but uses the construction of the Burma Railway in 1942–43 for its historical setting. The Japanese used Allied POW's to build a railway from Thailand to Burma so they could supply their army without the dangers of sending supplies by sea. Thousands of POW's died under appalling conditions during its construction, and the line became known as the 'Death Railway'. Jumping in Samlaws (Rickshaws) we will visit the war museum, which is more a memorial to the thousands who were killed whilst constructing the 'death railway', and have a chance to pay our respects at the War Cemetery in town. After this we travel to the bridge itself, before returning to our resort on the banks of the river.

**Accommodation:** Felix River Kwai Resort Kanchanaburi

**Meal:** Breakfast

#### Day 3: In Bangkok

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Visit Hellfire Pass and Erawan National Park, famous for its beautiful waterfalls.

Today we take a full day tour to the picturesque Erawan Waterfalls and to Hellfire Pass, so called because POW's were forced to chisel through solid rock, working by firelight on a particularly difficult section of the line resulting in a heavy loss of life.

The afternoon is free to enjoy the falls area and there is a chance to enjoy some swimming or to walk to the top of the falls (approx 2 hours return trip).

**Accommodation:** Felix River Kwai Resort  
Kanchanaburi  
**Meal:** Breakfast

## Day 4: To Ayutthaya | Overnight sleeper train to Chiang Mai

Journey to Ayutthaya, ancient capital of Thailand; overnight sleeper train to Chiang Mai.

After breakfast we head to Ayutthaya, the 2nd royal capital of the Kingdom of Siam (approx 4 hours). At its peak the Kingdom encompassed large parts of present day Laos, Cambodia and Burma. Diplomatic and international trade missions found their way to Ayutthaya from countries as far away as Europe. It was not long before Ayutthaya became one of the most important trading centres of the region. The population grew to over 1 million people by the 17th Century, more than any European capital at the same time. Following decades of wars and then a siege that lasted nearly 2 years, Ayutthaya was invaded and destroyed by the Burmese army. Temples were ransacked and statues of gold stolen and carried off to Burma. Following this devastating defeat the Siamese Kingdom relocated its capital to Bangkok.

After lunch we transfer to a hotel where we have day rooms to freshen up in before boarding our overnight sleeper train bound for Chiang Mai.

**Accommodation:** Overnight train  
**Meal:** Breakfast



## Day 5: Arrive in Chiang Mai | Visit Wat Doi Suthep

Visit Wat Doi Suthep (temple); evening free for shopping in Chiang Mai's famous night market.

In the early morning the train pulls into Chiang Mai, 'The Rose of the North', known for its temples, markets and the many colourful hilltribes that live in the area. The morning is free to relax.

A walking tour through the old quarter of the city after lunch is followed by a visit to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep the most revered Buddhist shrine in the Chiang Mai region. Perched on the hill overlooking Chiang Mai, it provides us with a fantastic view of the area. Back in Chiang Mai people are working feverishly away to set up the famous 'Chiang Mai Night Bazaar' which is nothing short of a shoppers' paradise. For those not into shopping there are plenty of atmospheric restaurants lined along the Ping River. Overnight stay in Chiang Mai.

**Accommodation:** Imperial Maeping Hotel  
**Meal:** Breakfast

## Day 6: Day at leisure

Free day; option to visit Elephant Nature Park or take part in a Thai cookery course.

Today is a free day for private exploration or relaxation in this historical city. Chiang Mai is a former religious and cultural centre, twice coming under the control of the Burmese, so there is a strong Burmese influence reflected in the architecture of the city which one can explore. One popular option is a half

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day at a highly commended Thai Cooking School, where adults and children alike can learn the intricacies of Thai cooking. Under the supervision of an English-speaking Thai chef you have the opportunity to create your own 'gaeng keow wahn' or green coconut curry. You don't need to be a proficient cook to enjoy this activity but, be warned, you get to eat your creations at the end of the day!

You may instead wish to visit the Elephant Nature Park which is based just outside of the city. In the past elephants have been used in the logging industry but over a decade ago the Thai government banned logging leaving the elephants and their mahouts out of work. This is a centre set up for the long term care of these graceful animals and on a day visit to the centre you will be able to feed, and even bathe the elephants, as well as watching them roam in acres of lush parkland. We have chosen this option as we believe it to be the only responsible option available to see elephants in the area. Overnight stay in Chiang Mai.

**Accommodation:** Imperial Maeping Hotel

**Meal:** Breakfast



## Day 7: Trek past Lahu, Lisu and Karen Villages

Begin our two-day trek past Lahu, Lisu and Karen villages. We spend one night in a hilltribe village; return to Chiang Mai on evening of day eight.

This morning we start our two-day adventure into the Chiang Dao region, an 80 km drive north of Chiang Mai. This is an area that has spectacular scenery and is home to many of the minority groups that have

migrated into Thailand from Burma, Tibet and Southern China. The highlight of our trek is meeting the local people in the various villages, each with their own unique language, customs and dress. Our exact itinerary will vary during the year as we take into account the weather and local conditions, but the terrain is more rural than jungle. Various hilltribes grow rice and other vegetables on the slopes we walk past. A reasonable level of fitness is required, as we expect to be walking about 3-4 hours each day at a leisurely pace taking in the scenery.

The ground may be muddy and slippery during the rainy season (around July to October), though the scenery is at its most lush and spectacular to compensate. At night, we sleep in villagers' huts, where we will be sleeping communally on fold-out mattresses on the floors of the wooden/bamboo huts typical of the villages. There are shared squat toilets and basic washing facilities in most villages (i.e. a hose or water pipe). Warmer clothing and a 4 season sleeping bag are needed from November to February as the nights are usually quite cold during this period. You only need to carry a day pack while on trek, whatever you need for the evening will be transported to the village for you.

**Accommodation:** Local Villagers' Hut

**Meal:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## Day 8: Trek back to Chiang Mai

Today we trace back our trails to Chiang Mai. Overnight stay in Chiang Mai.

**Accommodation:** Imperial Maeping Hotel

**Meal:** Breakfast

## Day 9: Fly Chiang Mai - Krabi via Bangkok (1.95 hrs) | Transfer to Ko Lanta Yai

An early morning flight takes us back to Bangkok and connect flight to Krabi. Upon arrival we are transferred to the island of Ko Lanta Yai, approximately 3 hours by minivan and couple of short minute ferry rides.

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**Accommodation:** Southern Lanta Resort

**Meal:** Breakfast

### Day 10-11: Day at leisure by the beach in Ko Lanta Yai

We will be spending two days in Ko Lanta Yai just relaxing on the beaches.

**Accommodation:** Southern Lanta Resort

**Meal:** Breakfast



### Day 12: Ko Lanta - Phuket (by Speed boat)

Transfer from Ko Lanta to Phuket by speed boat

Pick up from your hotel at Ko Lanta and meet the boat crew of Satun Pakbara Speed Boat Club at Sala Dan Pier in the north of Ko Lanta Yai and cruise by convenient speed boat to Phuket with a short stopover on Koh Phi Phi to pickup/drop-off other transferring guests. Get dropped off at Rassada Port in the south of Phuket Town from where you will be picked up and transferred to your hotel.

**Accommodation:** BS Airport Hotel

**Meal:** Breakfast

Note: BS Airport Hotel 3-star hotel is our Preferred property. It is located next to Phuket International Airport and 300 meters from Nai Yang Beach.

### Day 13: Depart Phuket

Today we will drive from Phan Thiet directly to Saigon Airport to catch our homeward-bound flight.

**Meal:** Breakfast

### Includes

- Airport (pick up/drop off) transfers by private A/C vehicle
- Twin room sharing accommodation at all hotel/resort as mentioned
- Daily breakfast throughout the trip and other meals as mentioned in the itinerary
- Domestic flight from Bangkok - Phuket
- Escorted by an English-speaking local professional Birding tour guide
- All relevant transfers and transportation in private air-conditioned vehicles
- Boat cruise on the canals and rivers
- All excursions and entry fees & permits to all the national parks & monuments.
- Applicable government taxes

### Excludes

- International flight tickets
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance & vaccinations
- Meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Personal clothing and equipment
- Tips for trip leader/guide, driver, hotel staff, and porters
- Items of personal nature such as alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, laundry, telephone calls and other unforeseen expenses
- Items/services not listed in the "included"
- Compulsory gala dinner on Christmas or New Year (if applicable)
- Extra expenses/payment for 'Optional' activities/programs if participated

### Accommodation

#### Rembrandt Hotel & Suites, Bangkok

In a variety of sizes and configurations catering to the diverse needs of guests traveling alone, as couples or in family groups, all of the guest accommodation at Rembrandt Hotel & Suites

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Bangkok feature a contemporary yet elegant design that reflects this centrally located Sukhumvit hotel's international standard while honoring the traditional grace and style for which Bangkok is renowned.

### Felix River Kwai Resort, Kanchanaburi

Felix River Kwai resort is the legendary riverside garden retreat of Kanchanaburi, designed and constructed in 1991. Its retro contemporary classic Thai influence architectural pavilions, built mainly with local hard redwoods, mountainous rocks and terracotta tiles sealed to create a comfortable homey ambience that nestled in it owned private pristine 53 acres lush tropical garden.



### The Imperial Mae Ping Hotel, Chiang Mai

The Imperial Mae Ping hotel is ideally located in central Chiang Mai, close to the nightlife street, Night Bazaar and the River Ping. Ideal for business and leisure travelers, the hotel offers 371 well-appointed rooms, each complete with modern amenities and city view. Enjoy a dip in landscaped swimming pools, working out in the gym, or relax by the pool.

### Southern Lanta Resort, Koh Lanta

Southern Lanta Resort is located right on the middle of Klong Dao Beach, the striking stretch of golden sandy beach and shallow clear water, an ideal place for tourists to relax. With hundred meters of private beach front and the vibrant natural surroundings, it has over hundred bungalows and apartments located on the spacious ground.



### BS Airport at Phuket

Situated in Sa Khu, the hotel is 1.4 km from Sirinat National Park and 3.9 km from Blue Canyon Country Club. Nai Thon Beach and Splash Jungle Water Park are also within 10 km. BS Airport at Phuket features a restaurant, 24-hour room service, and dry cleaning. Free WiFi in public areas and a free airport shuttle are also provided.

### Group/Individual

On this trip you will be traveling privately with your family & friends. Our representative/tour partner will look after your transfers to and from the airport and will be around to answer other questions you may have about your trip.

### Accommodation – Hotel, Resort

Your accommodation has been selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a fine heritage hotel in another or a family-run guesthouse or lodges in a smaller town. Accommodation in remote areas tend to be basic and may not have western amenities.

### Single Accommodation

Single (room) supplements are provided on request (single supplement charge applies) and are subject to availability.

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### Food & Transport

All breakfasts, 11 lunches and 11 dinners are included.

Southeast Asian cuisine is known for its abundance of freshly prepared dishes with strong aromatic flavours. There is a focus on herbs and citrus, ensuring each dish packs a punch; chilli features highly too, but is easily avoided if desired.

Typically, most dishes will come with rice and many are often served in a banana leaf with a variety of dips and herbs served separately.

Western food is readily available almost everywhere.

Vegetarian food is widely available; however, the offering will be fairly similar in most places. Please advise at time of booking if you have any dietary requirements.

For airport, sightseeing transfers, and for long drives we use a private air-con car, jeep, van depending upon group size.

### Weather

The weather will be hot and humid throughout, with daytime temperatures between 28C and 34C (82F and 93F). At times, it may reach 40C (104F). It is only a little cooler at nights. The region is mostly dry between December and April; there's a rainy season from May to November, when rain comes in short, heavy bursts with bright sunshine between.

### Baggage Allowance

The standard baggage weight limit on international flights (generally from Europe) is one checked baggage of 25kg (55lb) and hand baggage 7kg (15lbs).

We recommend packing only one piece of checked baggage. Luggage allowances for both hand and checked luggage are subject to change, we suggest you check the airline's website for the latest

information prior to your departure or purchasing your flight tickets.

## ESSENTIAL/PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### Passport & Visas

All nationalities require a passport that must be valid for 6 months beyond the intended length of stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents and to obtain your own visa, in accordance with the regulations of the country you are to visit. The information below is primarily for EU passport holders, and other nationalities should check with the relevant embassies. We are not responsible for the actions of local immigration and customs officials, whether at points of entry or otherwise, and any subsequent effects.

Visas are not required to enter Thailand for German and most other European countries including UK for up to 30 days. However, some other European nationals still need to obtain a visa.

**Please note:** Visa regulations can change without notice, therefore please check the current regulations or contact us.

### Vaccination & Health

Travel health can often be something people forget about before going away, but a little preparation and knowledge can go a long way to help you stay fit and healthy while abroad and enjoy holidays to the fullest.

There are no mandatory vaccination requirements. Recommended vaccinations are: hepatitis A, hepatitis B, typhoid, Japanese encephalitis, rabies, meningitis, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis), chickenpox, shingles, pneumonia, and influenza. The risk of malaria is slight, but you may wish to consult your GP or travel health clinic for further advice. You will also need a yellow fever vaccination certificate if you're arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever

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transmission or transiting for more than 12 hours through a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Please confirm your vaccine recommendations and requirements with your doctor or travel clinic.

Dengue fever, a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes, is a known risk in places visited. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available, so take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites.

### Local Time

GMT/UTC + 7 hours.

### Electricity

Thailand operates on 220 volts AC and 50 Hz. There are five plug types in Thailand - A, B, C, F & O. Type A is the plug which has two flat parallel pins, type B is similar to A with extra pin for grounding, type C & F plug has two round pins. Plug O is unique to Thailand but it works with plug C and F.

### ATM | Credit Cards

ATMs are a common sight in Thailand cities, and you should have no trouble locating one in most destinations. Rural areas have fewer ATM locations for obvious reason.

Thai ATMs work with MasterCard (Cirrus, Maestro) and Visa (Plus) cards. Your bank can confirm whether your card belongs to one of these networks.

ATM daily withdrawal limits vary depending on the bank. But generally, it's around ฿25,000 (US\$740). Unfortunately, the fees for using an ATM in Thailand are expensive. Most local banks charge ฿300 (around US\$9) per transaction for withdrawals with a foreign bank card.

While using ATM please be mindful of your surroundings.

If you bring cash, to get the best exchange rates for Baht, bigger denominations Euro/US\$ that are in pristine

conditions (no fold, no mark, no tear, no stain) are required.

### Extra Expenses & Spending Money

You will need to bring some extra money to cover drinks, laundry, souvenirs and any other personal expense, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Though it totally depends on individual but generally an approximate (rough estimate) amount of Euro 200 (US\$220) per person, per week should be sufficient (more if you enjoy a few beers); however, for those that can't resist a bargain or may wish to participate in all of the optional excursions, consider allocating a higher amount. Or if you are the one frugal with money probably allocating less would also be suffice.

Optional Tours may be offered in some city you visit during your tour. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits and if seats are available. Please ensure you have additional funds available if you feel you may wish to participate in any extra activities. Each optional tour/activity will be arranged locally by our local partner/guide, participation and tipping for optional excursions is completely at your discretion.

### Tipping

Tipping isn't mandatory or customary in Thailand, but it is always appreciated. If you're happy with the services provided by waiters, drivers and other service workers, leaving a small tip is a good way to show your appreciation.

### Itinerary Change

In case of some unusual events/incidents the order of programs (sightseeing, excursions etc.) might have to change in order to accommodate the local situations. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements while maintaining the overall integrity of your trip.

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The domestic airlines (if your program includes) may change their schedule frequently and, in such cases, our local partner/guide will inform you about the changes.

### Travel Insurance

We highly recommend to choose/get an insurance plan/policy that covers your requirements/needs. And please make sure to keep/carry a hard-copy of your travel insurance documents on your person while on tour. It's prudent to check thoroughly the inclusions and procedure to file claims prior to purchasing insurance coverage. *travel-to-nature Asia* will not be responsible for any costs incurred by you due to your failure to purchase appropriate travel insurance from the date of booking.

### Important Information

On all guided trips although our guides (leaders) are well trained to deal with different capabilities, if they have any concerns about someone's ability to safely partake in an activity, or their impact on other people's enjoyment, we authorize them to take necessary action which, in some circumstances, may involve asking someone to miss that activity.

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