

Best of Northern Thailand

THAILAND - TRIP CODE OS

DISCOVERY

Why book this trip?

On this cultural journey we venture into the heart of Thailand where we discover ancient sights and cruise along bustling waterways. We see the infamous 'Bridge over the River Kwai', explore ruined temples, and spend a night on a jungle raft house.

- **Bangkok** - Explore the glittering Grand Palace complex and Wat Po, the temple of the Reclining Buddha
- **Sukhothai** - Cycle around the historic park and stay overnight in a homestay in Nathon Chan village
- **Chiang Mai** - Witness the excellent conservation work being done at Elephant Nature Park

**INCLUDED MEALS**

Breakfast: 9
Lunch: 2
Dinner: 3

TRIP STAFF

Explore Tour
Leader
Boat Crew
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)

TRANSPORT

Bus
Boat
Train

ACCOMMODATION

1 nights simple
homestay
6 nights
comfortable hotel
1 nights simple
overnight train
2 nights simple raft
house

TRIP PACE:

Full on

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join tour in Bangkok; Optional Longtail Canal trip

Arrive in Thailand's capital, the lively metropolis of Bangkok. The bustling street life of this energetic city is set to a backdrop of colourful, ornate shrines and modern glass-fronted high-rises, which jostle for position to dominate the city's skyline. It is a place where old meets new at every corner. Sample the fresh and tasty street food, haggle in the non-stop markets and take a cruise out on Chao Phraya River to witness stunning sunsets.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 6pm for the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Bangkok at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK), which is 45 minutes from our hotel. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up in the lobby at 8am on day 2.

Please note that if you wish to join the Optional Longtail Canal Trip today, you must arrive at the hotel by 1pm. If you are booking your own flights, we recommend giving yourself at least one hour to clear the airport. From the airport to the hotel is around one hours\ drive, so therefore the latest your flight can arrive is 10am.

**ACCOMMODATION:**

Royal Rattankosin Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 2 - In Bangkok, visit Grand Palace; sleeper train to Chiang Mai

Our sightseeing tour this morning is on foot and includes the Grand Palace with its stunning Emerald Buddha and Wat Po (Temple of the Reclining Buddha). The afternoon is left free, then in the evening we board the overnight train for Chiang Mai.



ACCOMMODATION:
Overnight Train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai

Grade: Simple Overnight Train



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 3 - Arrive in Chiang Mai; visit Doi Suthep temple; walking tour of Old Town

Chiang Mai offers a complete contrast and relief from the heat and noise of Bangkok. Its elevation is just over 300m, so the climate is most agreeable. Founded in the 13th century, it owes its prosperity mainly to the teak trade. Our sightseeing will include the famous Doi Suthep temple and an orientation walk of the old town.



ACCOMMODATION:
Park Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

DAY 4 - In Chiang Mai, included visit to Elephant Nature Park

This morning we head out to the Elephant Nature Park, one of the largest elephant conservation centres in Thailand. The park comprises of huge swathes of land for the elephants to roam in, along with an elephant nursery and hospital caring for sick and abandoned elephants. Its main function is for the treatment and care of rescued elephants although visitors and tourists are now admitted to assist and volunteer with the valuable conservation work. Our plan for the day will need to be flexible around the needs of the elephants, but is likely to include spending time on the viewing platform in the morning and in the afternoon we will walk down to the river with the elephants and centre's staff. Here we can witness these gentle giants as they happily splash around in the river, washing and cooling themselves down from the midday sun.

There are no elephant shows or elephant riding here, the day is all about spending quality time with these beautiful creatures and observing their natural behaviours when they are with their herd.



ACCOMMODATION:
Park Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 5 - Drive to Si Satchanalai temple ruins and continue to homestay in Nathon Chan village

Today we head south to Si Satchanalai the twin city to Sukhothai. Although architecturally very different, it is just as impressive in many ways with a variety of outside influences noticeable in the construction of the wats and chedis (religious memorials). The most impressive and most sacred is Wat Chang Lom. Situated in the heart of the old city it is decorated with 39 standing elephants and is unusual due to its Ceylonese-style chedi - the earliest of its kind in Thailand.

After visiting the site we make our way to the small community of Natonchan, a rural village set amongst lush rice paddies where we will enjoy the warm hospitality of a homestay for the night. After being greeted by our hosts and having some time to settle into our rooms we head out to explore the village on foot. The villagers here still practice many cottage industries, and as we walk from house to house we will see how clothes are stitched on a bamboo sewing rig, cups and chopsticks are made from surrounding bamboo and ornaments are skilfully carved by local artisans. There will be plenty of opportunity to engage with the villagers whilst each of them demonstrates their craft. We return to our homestay for a sundowner and a hearty meal cooked by our hosts.

The homestay in Nathon Chan is simple but clean, comfortable and homely. Rooms are twin share with mattresses on the floor, all bedding and mosquito nets are provided and there are shared western toilets and showers. Please note that larger groups may be split between two nearby homes.



ACCOMMODATION:

Ban Natonjun Homestay (or similar)



Grade: Simple Homestay



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 6 - In Sukothai, explore old city ruins by bicycle; drive to Uthai Thani via UNESCO site of Kamphaengphet

This morning we make the short drive to Sukothai, and once here we plan to explore the old city by bicycle. Sukothai was the first capital of Siam; which was at the pinnacle of Thai civilisation for over 200 years up to the end of the 1400s. It then went into decline as Ayutthaya took over as the most important city in the area, and was deserted until it was discovered as a lost city in the jungle in the 19th Century. The city has now been fully excavated and it comprises 21 historical sites within the city walls and a further 70 outside. Leaving Sukhothai by bus, we continue our journey south towards Uthai Thani. Along the way we make a stop at the historical site of Kamphaengphet, a UNESCO World Heritage site and little-visited town which contains a wealth of 13th-17th century temples, statues and buildings. The ancient walled town featured as an important city under the Sukothai Kingdom by protecting it from invaders, and we will spend time exploring the old royal palace and temples before driving onto Uthai Thani.



ACCOMMODATION:

Payamai Resort (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 7 - Visit morning market; travel by boat and bus to Ayutthaya; visit Royal Palace

This morning we plan a visit to a local market before boarding a traditional boat for a trip along the Sakraekrang River . As we drift down the sleepy meandering waters we get a real insight into the authentic life of the indigenous river dwellers and boat people. There's plenty of time to relax and enjoy the passing scenery. The trip ends back at Utahai Thani for lunch. We then head south by bus where we reach another of Siam's stunning ancient capitals, Ayutthaya. Situated on an island at the confluence of three rivers, the Chao Phraya, Pa Sak and Lopburi Rivers, Ayutthaya had a very strong defensive position and retained its power for over 400 years, during which time it became extremely wealthy. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the city is still a stunning complex of palaces, shrines, stupas and monasteries. We will include a walking tour to visit the Royal Palace and a few wats.



ACCOMMODATION:
Ayothaya Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 8 - Drive to Kanchanaburi; journey on Death Railway and continue onto River Kwai; overnight in raft house

An early morning drive, by-passing Bangkok takes us to the River Kwai and Kanchanaburi, where we visit the war cemetery and the famous Bridge over the River Kwai. The building of the bridge and the Death Railway as it has become known, is one of the most infamous episodes of the Second World War. The Japanese built the railway to link Siam and Burma (Myanmar) using Prisoners of War between June 1942 and October 1943. It was to carry supplies to their fast expanding empire and by doing so it would cut almost 1300 miles off the sea route from Japan. The working conditions were atrocious and over 16000

allied troops lost their lives as well as an estimated 75,000 Asian forced labourers. We then take the train along part of the original route. We continue by bus to the Hellfire Pass and visit the Memorial Museum. Finally we transfer to longtail boats for a journey up the River Kwai to our Raft Houses, set in a tranquil location on the river's edge.



ACCOMMODATION:
River Kwai Jungle View (or similar)



Grade: Simple Raft House



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

DAY 9 - In Kanchanburi, take bamboo rafts on River Kwai; visit Mon minority village or Lawa Cave

We spend a full day here exploring the jungle and the river both on foot and by bamboo rafts. There is the option to head out to Sai Yok National Park for a nature walk and waterfall visit.



ACCOMMODATION:
River Kwai Jungle View (or similar)



Grade: Simple Raft House



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

DAY 10 - Return to Bangkok via Maeklong railway market

We leave the peaceful surroundings of the Kwai Noi River this morning as we join the road and head back towards the capital. On our way back will we stop by the small town of Maeklong, home to one of the most unusual spots in Thailand. The Maeklong Railway Market was established in 1905 to better

transport the fresh seafood from the nearby port to the city and surrounding provinces. The market has been built, quite literally, on top of the railway and each time the provincial train rumbles through a mind-boggling spectacle unfolds; the shades and canopies are all folded back, produce is deftly rolled away from the tracks and then train slowly passes through, mere millimetres from the surrounding markets and vendors. We plan to arrive today in time to witness this bizarre but fascinating event, with time left to look around the market and the variety of fresh produce on offer.

We then continue on to Bangkok, where the rest of the afternoon has been left free for some last minute shopping or further exploration of this Asian metropolis.



ACCOMMODATION:
Royal Rattankosin Hotel (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



SWIMMING POOL AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

DAY 11 - Tour ends in Bangkok

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Bangkok.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Bangkok at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK), which is 45 minutes from our hotel.

If you have time you may wish to wander through Chinatown for a different flavour of the city.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

Trip information

Climate and country information

Thailand

Climate

Generally hot with high humidity. There is some rainfall from April to September with most days being hot (around 33 Degrees) and a light breeze on the islands. If it does rain, it will be more of a heavy tropical downpour that lasts a few hours. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at <http://www.explore.co.uk/weather>.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+7	2 Pin Round	Buddhism	Thai

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Bangkok - Longtail boat excursion on klongs including visit to Royal Barge Museum £14

Chiang Mai - Thai cooking course £23

Kanchanaburi - Sai Yok National Park £7

Clothing

Pack essentially for hot weather. Lightweight rainwear is advisable all year. Shorts, open backed sandals and bare shoulders are not permitted in the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

Footwear

Comfy shoes, trainers & sandals.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

Should consist of a main piece of baggage and a daypack large enough to carry clothes for an overnight stop.

Equipment

Bring a torch and waterbottle.

Tipping

Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Accordingly you should allow approximately £25.

Thailand

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£4.00 - 8.00	£1.5	£0.5

Foreign Exchange

Local currency	Recommended Currency For Exchange
Thai Baht	We recommend that you bring your money in GBP or US\$.

Where To Exchange

Most major towns and on the islands - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

ATM Availability

ATMs are available in Bangkok but are limited on the islands.

Credit Card Acceptance

Major stores and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Can be exchanged at banks and exchange offices throughout the tour although rates may not be as favourable.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Train

Essential Information

Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Thailand: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens for a stay of less than 30 days. All passports must have at least 6 months validity remaining on entry to Thailand. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London

departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Thailand

Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and infectious hepatitis. Although not compulsory, travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Dengue, Malaria and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

Additional Information



Koh Samet Beach Extension

Why not extend your trip with 3 nights on the beautiful white sand beaches of Koh Samet island? Please [click here](#) for more information.

Why book this trip

As one of our best selling tours this adventure to Thailand really gets under the skin of the destination and gives travellers an in-depth discovery of the history and culture of the country. Often associated only with beaches this trip is a revelation, as you will see ancient lost cities, explore glittering temples, and spend a night in a raft house on the legendary River Kwai. This is a great holiday for history lovers who want to understand the 'real' Thailand.

Reviews



AWARD WINNING
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE
PROMISE



AIRPORT
TRANSFERS