

# EXPLORE!



## The Mahouts Elephant Extension

THAILAND - TRIP CODE THE  
DISCOVERY

### Why book this trip?

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Spend three days deep in the forests of northern Thailand, learning about the behaviour of former captive elephants which have been returned to their forest home. Forage for food, fish from rivers and learn other bush skills, all in the company of the expert mahouts. Camp out overnight in the forest and spend two nights in a village homestay with a friendly host family from the Karen hilltribe.

- **This extension provides the opportunity for a unique experience in Asia** - to spend time witnessing elephants roam in their natural habitat. This has been set up by one of Explore's close partners, Mahouts Elephant Foundation, a UK charity working to improve the lives of Asian elephants.



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
 Breakfast: 3  
 Lunch: 3  
 Dinner: 3



**TRIP STAFF**  
 Local Guide(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
 Car  
 On Foot



**ACCOMMODATION**  
 2 nights simple  
 guesthouse  
 1 nights simple  
 tented camp



**TRIP PACE:**  
 Relaxed



**GROUP SIZE:**  
 4 - 6

## Itinerary

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

### DAY 1 - Fly to Chiang Mai and drive to Mahouts Village

This morning you will be collected from your hotel in Bangkok and transferred to the airport for the short flight north up to Chiang Mai, Thailand's sleepy garden city. Upon arrival you will be met by a representative and driven into rural north-west Thailand, a journey of four hours and home to Thailand's hilltribes. The destination village is home to the Karen tribe, the largest of Thailand's minority tribes and thought to originate from neighbouring Burma (Myanmar). Often confused with the so-called \ long-neck tribes\ (which are actually the Padung people), the Karen are principally subsistence farmers that are adept at cultivating rice and other staples in the lower mountains. They are also known to be skilled weavers, and have always shared a close affinity with elephants, serving as mahouts (elephant keepers) for generations.

On arrival in the village, you will meet the host family who will welcome you into the comfortable guesthouse before taking you on a short tour of the village, breaking the ice and serving as the first introduction into Karen culture.

Tonight you will dine with several of the villagers, sampling freshly prepared Karen food. Meals are usually a selection of in-season vegetables picked from the local area along with chicken or pork served in a spicy, hearty stew. And of course sticky rice, the Thai staple!

The village guesthouse is next to the host family's home, it is equipped with comfortable Karen-style mattresses (on the floor rather than raised on a base), duvets, mosquito nets and a private bathroom and shower.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
 Village Homestay (or similar)

**Grade: Simple Guesthouse**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: LUNCH & DINNER

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## **DAY 2 - Trek into the forest in search of elephants and learn forest skills with the mahouts**

After breakfast with the host family this morning you will set off on the walk to the forest camp, a walk of approximately one hour. Once here, you will be able to leave your overnight gear inside the tent before venturing further into the forest with the mahouts in search of the elephants. Please note you will be required to carry your own bag to and from the camp, so we recommend packing lightly with only the items you require.

During the trek the mahouts will teach you some basic skills in how to track elephants in the forests and how they forage for food from the undergrowth. Once with the elephants, we will spend the remainder of the day observing them in the natural habitat, learning about the natural behaviours of an elephant, the types of vegetation they eat and the benefit of allowing these elephants forage for themselves.

Dinner is served back at the base camp around a fire, and will likely be fresh river fish caught by the mahouts earlier that day, followed by a selection of vegetables foraged from the surroundings areas.

Mattresses are provided within the tents complete with bedding, pillows and solar power, allowing for a few hours of electricity for a reading light or to charge camera batteries. Please note this campsite is wild, and therefore there are no shower or bathroom facilities. Toilets are \ al fresco\.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Jungle Camp (or similar)



**Grade: Simple Tented Camp**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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## **DAY 3 - A further day watching elephants roam in their natural habitat. Afternoon walk back to the village**

You will wake this morning to the sound of the forest, with the birds singing and the gibbons calling whilst breakfast is prepared for you by the mahouts. After a leisurely breakfast you will once again make your way deeper into the forest for the amazing and unique spectacle of watching these elephants roam

in their natural environment. This programme has been put together by the Mahouts Elephant Foundation, a UK-based charity that is dedicated to improving the lives of Asian elephants. As well as setting up this incredible experience, they work towards changing attitudes within tourism, aiming to end cruel elephant shows and elephant riding packages by working towards moving elephants to a protected forest habitat. This model gives the elephant tourism industry and its mahouts a credible alternative, to be able to earn a living for their families and for the local economy to directly benefit, all while providing a safe and caring environment for these gentle giants.

After another morning spent with the elephants and learning of the good work being done here, you will say goodbye to these beautiful creatures and start the walk back to the village homestay. This evening at dinner there will be the chance to learn a little more of the Karen culture, and to try your hand at some of the traditional industries they practice such as basket weaving or textile work.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Village Homestay (or similar)



**Grade: Simple Guesthouse**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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#### **DAY 4 - Drive back to Chiang Mai airport, where the trip ends**

After breakfast this morning you will be collected from the village and driven back to Chiang Mai, a journey of approximately four hours. The trip ends at Chiang Mai airport.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **Trip information**

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### **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>.

<b>Time difference to GMT</b>	<b>Plugs</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Language</b>
+7	2 Pin Round	Buddhism	Thai

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## Budgeting and packing

### Clothing

Pack essentially for hot weather. Bear in mind that the region is tropical (humid) and that days can be very hot. Lightweight rainwear or an umbrella is advisable all year. Casual clothes are the most practical and something with long sleeves and long trousers for the evenings. A fleece is also recommended for the cooler evenings.

### Footwear

Comfortable walking shoes for the forest are highly recommended, along with a pair of sandals for crossing streams or for the evenings.

### Luggage

20kg

## 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.

<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£4.00 - 8.00	£1.5	£0.5

### Foreign Exchange

<b>Local currency</b>	<b>Recommended Currency For Exchange</b>
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.

<b>ATM Availability</b>	<b>Credit Card Acceptance</b>
ATMs are available in Bangkok but are limited on the islands.	Major stores and restaurants.

### **Travellers Cheques**

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

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## **Transport, Accommodation & Meals**

### **Transport Information**

Car, On Foot

### **Accommodation notes**

Accommodation on this trip is rated as 'Simple' and 2 nights will be spent in a village guesthouse, with 1 night in a wild camp. The village guesthouse is next to the host family's home, it is equipped with comfortable Karen-style mattresses (on the floor rather than raised on a base), duvets, mosquito nets and a private bathroom and shower. For the camping, mattresses are provided complete with bedding, pillows and solar power, allowing for a few hours of electricity for a reading light or to charge camera batteries. Please note the campsite is wild, and therefore there are no shower or bathroom facilities. Toilets are 'al fresco'.

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## **Essential Information**

### **FCO 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 and Commonwealth 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 consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://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 now 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 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.





**AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS**