

Day-to-Day Itinerary

DAY 1: Depart U.S.

You fly overnight from the U.S. to Bangkok, losing one day en route as you cross the International Date Line over the Pacific.

DAY 2: Arrive in Bangkok, Thailand

Accommodations: Evergreen Laurel Hotel or similar

You arrive in Bangkok this evening. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist with the transfer to the hotel.

Evergreen Laurel Hotel: The Evergreen Laurel Hotel is conveniently located along Bangkok's main thoroughfare, Sathorn Road, not far from shops and the bustling Patpong Night Market. Amenities include an award-winning Chinese restaurant, café, lobby lounge, fitness center, and outdoor swimming pool. Each of the 160 air-conditioned rooms includes a safe, minibar, cable TV, complimentary Internet access, and private bath.

DAY 3: Explore Bangkok • Cooking demonstration

Meals included: B L

Accommodations: Evergreen Laurel Hotel or similar

Following breakfast, your Trip Leader, who will be with you throughout your trip, gives you a briefing on Bangkok. First, we'll walk through the bustling floral market. Our small group size allows us to truly experience daily life here where we'll observe garland making and sample fresh tropical fruit before continuing our exploration of Bangkok by canal. We'll sail aboard motorboats down the river and along the klongs, or canals, through residential areas on the outskirts of town. We become part of Bangkok's lifeblood as we cruise its network of rivers and klongs—a part of Bangkok most travelers never see. We'll then enjoy a cooking demonstration and lunch.

After lunch, we'll return to the hotel for an orientation walk of the surrounding area before free time to relax with dinner on your own.

DAY 4: Grand Palace & Emerald Buddha

Meals included: B D

Accommodations: Evergreen Laurel Hotel or similar

Following breakfast at our hotel, enjoy a tour of Bangkok. Step into the Old Kingdom of Siam at the Grand Palace of Thailand, a sprawling compound of ceremonial halls, gilded spires, and ornate buildings. The ancient city's defining

landmark since 1782, the palace became the centerpiece of a new Thai capital called Krung Thep (City of Angels), known outside of Thailand as Bangkok. It was King Mongkut (or Rama IV) who ruled from this palace, expanded trade with the West, and was romanticized in the musical *The King and I*.

The focal point of the palace is the Emerald Buddha. Carved out of jade and adorned with gold, the Emerald Buddha made a dramatic appearance in 1434, when it was found hidden in a temple stupa. Since 1785, the Emerald Buddha—the most highly revered image of the Buddha—has resided in the Royal Chapel of the Grand Palace.

Lunch is on your own with the rest of the afternoon free to make your own discoveries in Bangkok. Our Trip Leader will be happy to provide you with recommendations of what to do and see during your free time. Perhaps you'll take the Skytrain, the local transit system, to one of Bangkok's many ancient temples to further immerse yourself in Thai culture. Later, we'll board a cruise boat for our Welcome Dinner on the Chao Phraya River. After our cruise, we'll return to our hotel via tuk-tuk, a popular local mode of transportation.

DAY 5: Bangkok • Kanchanaburi

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: Hin Tok River Camp or similar

After breakfast, we'll journey to a floating market where we'll enjoy a walking tour. Then, we travel to Kanchanaburi Province, a green region where the riverside scenery belies its dramatic history, portrayed in the film *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. It was here that Allied POWs and Asian conscripts were forced to build the infamous World War II railway. In the summer of 1942, World War II was raging across Europe and Asia. The Allies were rapidly capturing the sea routes to Burma, forcing the Japanese to develop an overland supply route from the east to support their troops. The Japanese decided that the most viable option was a railway that followed the River Kwai through the dense jungle on either side. About 200,000 Asian laborers and 61,000 Allied prisoners of war built this 260-mile stretch of rail in abominable conditions—for every half-mile of track laid, 38 POWs perished. Our Trip Leader will share more of the history of this iconic site today.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll have a chance to walk over the original bridge on the River Kwai. Later, we'll set off for the Hin Tok River Camp, our home for the next two nights. Perched atop a mountain overlooking the River Kwai, our small group will enjoy a unique experience at this camp when we drift asleep to the sounds of nature in our luxury, tented, air-conditioned rooms. We'll have time to get settled in this afternoon before enjoying dinner at the camp.

DAY 6: Discover Hellfire Pass • Boat ride on the River Kwai

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: Hin Tok River Camp or similar

This morning, we visit the Hellfire Pass Museum where we'll trace the World War II history of the "Death Railroad," before walking down the former River Kwai Railway. The area is now peaceful, but many lives were lost during the construction of one of the most difficult sections of the railway. After getting a glimpse into this sobering piece of history, our small group will board a longtail speedboat for a cruise on the River Kwai.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll return to our camp for some free time and then we'll have dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

DAY 7: Overland to Uthaitхани • Cruise on the Khiri Nava rice barge

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: 42C The Chic Hotel or similar

Today, we'll travel to Uthaitхани where our small group will enjoy a private cruise aboard the Khiri Nava, a large traditional wooden rice barge. We'll cruise past peaceful scenes of river life, and see many local people that live on the raft houses that line both sides of the Sakae Krang River. You might see farmers tending their small fish farms. We enjoy lunch as we cruise on the river for about an hour and a half.

Early this afternoon, we'll travel to the city of Nakhon Sawan. We'll head to our hotel before starting our discoveries of this locale that is lovingly referred to as the "Heavenly City." We'll set off for Sawan Park, a large public space where natural and man-made splendors abound. We'll take a stroll through the park, and as we do, we'll interact with the locals to get a true glimpse into daily life here.

Tonight, we'll have dinner at our hotel.

DAY 8: Sukhothai Province • Explore 13th-century Sukhothai

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: Le Charm Sukhothai Resort or similar

After breakfast this morning, we head for Sukhothai, Thailand's largest collection of historic ruins. This is the place where the Thai nation was born, the kingdom's magical and spiritual center. With its cache of remarkably preserved columns, shrines, temples, and palaces, it epitomizes old Siam. After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll explore the well-kept grounds of this historical park to view the remains of the royal palace and some 26 temples, and to learn about its most famous king, Ramkhamhaeng. Not only did this legendary ruler leave a great legacy of art and architecture, he left stones inscribed with a chronicle of his achievement. King Ramkhamhaeng is credited with inventing Thai script, as well as with amazing skill at hand-to-hand combat on elephant back, the spread of Theravada Buddhism, and developing relations with China. But even his colorful legend pales in comparison to the evocative palette of Sukhothai, which translates to "Dawn of Happiness."

We arrive at our hotel this afternoon where we'll check in and have some time to get settled in. Tonight, we'll walk to a nearby restaurant for dinner.

DAY 9: A Day in the Life of a Thai village

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: Le Charm Sukhothai Resort or similar

We rise early this morning to give alms at a local market. After returning to our hotel to refresh, we'll then depart for Ban Na Sraloi village, where we will have a chance to experience A Day in the Life of the local people. First, we'll visit a local school supported by Grand Circle Foundation (when in session). Then, we'll meet two women leaders of this community, who will guide us on our way through the village. We'll stop at a farmer's house and a rice mill to learn what agricultural life is like in Thailand, then our guides will bring us to their home for a round table discussion. Our small group will assist with the preparation of lunch and then we'll all enjoy the fruits of our labor with our hosts. After, we'll return to our hotel where you'll enjoy the rest of the day to explore on your own due to our additional night in Sukhothai.

This evening, we'll gather for dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 10: Overland to Chiang Mai

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: Amora Hotel Tapae

After breakfast, we'll begin our journey to Chiang Mai—the principal city of the north, a major cultural center, and a favorite with visitors. The city's medieval walls encircle more than 30 active Buddhist temples, and the metropolitan region boasts another 80 religious sites. Along the way, we'll have lunch at a local restaurant in Lampang. After checking into our hotel, we'll take an orientation walk around the neighborhood before you have some free time to get settled in. Dinner is at a local restaurant in Chiang Mai this evening.

DAY 11: Chiang Mai • Local hill tribe • Elephant care center visit • Home-Hosted Dinner

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: Amora Hotel Tapae or similar

This morning, we'll visit a local hill tribe. More than 20 distinct, semi-nomadic tribes inhabit northern Thailand and the borderlands of Burma and Laos. Some have obscure origins; most have their own language; and all have unique customs. Take note of their compact huts, their traditional clothing, and a way of life that has changed little in centuries. Today, we'll meet members of the Karen Long Neck Village where we'll discover age-old traditions, including how the women of the village wear large rings around their necks to give the appearance of elongated necks. After our village visit, we'll set off for an elephant care center where we'll enjoy a picnic lunch. Then, we'll learn more about these gentle giants, and we may even have a chance to feed and help bath the elephants living at the center.

Later, we'll return to the hotel for some free time this afternoon. Then, we enjoy making personal connections with the Thai people as we have a special Home-Hosted Dinner in the home of local residents. We'll have the opportunity to enjoy traditional cuisine while discussing the local culture and daily life in Chiang Mai.

DAY 12: Chiang Mai • Optional Mae Kampong Village Nature Walk

Meals included: B

Accommodations: Amora Hotel Tapae or similar

After breakfast, we have a free day in Chiang Mai to pursue individual discoveries with lunch and dinner on your own. Or, you may join an optional tour to Mai Kampong, a lovely mountain village north of Chiang

Mai that specializes in fermented tea production. Upon arrival in Mae Kampong, we'll stop to view a small wooden temple built in the middle of a stream and admire the lush surroundings. Then, we'll enjoy a short walk in the village and a nature walk of 45 minutes to an hour in the surrounding woods. This optional tour also includes lunch at a local restaurant back in Chiang Mai before returning to our hotel.

Enjoy dinner on your own this evening.

DAY 13: Chiang Mai • Travel to Chiang Rai

Meals included: B L D

Accommodations: Wiang Inn Hotel or similar

After breakfast, we'll visit the temple of Wat Suan Dok and have a discussion with its Buddhist monks. Then, we'll return to our hotel to refresh and check out of our rooms before setting off for Chiang Rai. After lunch at a local restaurant, we'll make another stop at Wat Rong Khun, commonly referred to as the "White Temple." This contemporary, and controversial temple was constructed in 1997 by local artist Chalermchai Kositpipa. The striking all-white exterior is the least shocking aspect of this architectural treasure. Access the temple by crossing over a bridge that was built over a pit of reaching arms, meant to symbolize souls reaching up from hell. Then, step inside Wat Rong Khun where we'll be met by Buddhist art and murals of pop culture icons, including Harry Potter and Michael Jackson. While photography is prohibited in this temple, it will surely be an experience that you won't forget.

We'll depart the "White Temple" and continue our journey to Chiang Rai. Founded in the 13th century, Chiang Rai has no shortage of historical treasures, which we may discover today. We'll also get to know the laidback culture of this quiet town. Upon arrival, we'll head to our hotel where we'll check in before enjoying dinner.

DAY 14: Chiang Rai • Golden Triangle

Meals included: B L

Accommodations: Wiang Inn Hotel or similar

After breakfast, we'll depart for Doi Tung Royal Villa. Upon arrival, we'll board songthaews (large pick-up trucks that have been converted into the local mode of transport) to explore this royal residency that was constructed in the late 20th century under the order of the late Princess Srinagarindra. It is believed that besides serving as a home for the princess, Doi Tung's purpose was to dissuade the nearby hill tribes of growing opium. While exploring this area, we'll also see the

villa's vibrant garden as well as the Hall of Inspiration, which traces the history of the royal family and their contributions to Thailand.

Later this morning, we'll travel to the region formerly known as the Golden Triangle, arriving around noon. Before we begin our discoveries here, we'll enjoy lunch at a local restaurant in this region where opium warlords once held sway. At one time, the hill tribes in this region relied on the cultivation of opium for survival—including several bands of Chinese nationalist followers of Chiang Kai Shek, who have been living here (somewhat in hiding and in dwindling numbers) since the Revolution. But times have changed. The government has established many programs to introduce more viable crops, and most of the people are law-abiding farmers. Today, tourism has become a preferable alternative to drug smuggling, and the hill tribes are more concerned about preserving their old traditions.

This afternoon, we'll have the opportunity to see where Thailand's, Laos', and Burma's borders meet as we walk along the Mekong River. We'll return to the hotel later this afternoon, and dinner is on your own this evening.

DAY 15: Fly to Bangkok

Meals included: B D
Accommodations: Evergreen Laurel Hotel or similar

This morning, we fly to Bangkok. Lunch will be on your own today. After checking in to our hotel in Bangkok, spend a free afternoon making your own discoveries in the city.

Later, we gather for a Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant in Bangkok the evening.

DAY 16: Return to U.S.

Meals included: B

Very early this morning, we accompany you to the airport. You cross the International Date Line, arriving in the U.S. on the same day, in time to make connecting flights home.

PRE TRIP CAMBODIA:

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DAY 3: Fly to Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Meals included: B
Accommodations: Kraven Hotel or similar

This morning, you will have some time at leisure before we depart for our flight to Phnom Penh. We arrive there this afternoon and visit Wat Phnom, a Buddhist temple built in 1372 which is the central part of the city. It was constructed by "Lady Penh," a wealthy woman who helped to establish the capital. We then take an orientation walk before checking into our hotel. Dinner is on your own this evening.

Kraven Hotel: Located in central Phnom Penh, the Kraven Hotel offers guests a rooftop bar, restaurant, outdoor swimming pool, and fitness center. Each of the 90 guestrooms includes central air conditioning, soundproof windows, television, safety deposit box, and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

DAY 4: Killing Fields

Meals included: B L D
Accommodations: Kraven Hotel or similar

Following breakfast at our hotel, we set out for a visit to the Killing Fields of Choeung Ek, a grim reminder of Cambodia's bloody past under Pol Pot. It is almost inconceivable to confront the nature of true evil here in this gentle land, but the Buddhist memorial at Choeung Ek commemorates the estimated 1.7 million victims of the Pol Pot genocide—and this execution site is just one of many throughout Cambodia.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we visit Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum. The Khmer Rouge used this former high school as a place to torture prisoners throughout the years from its rise to power in 1975 to its fall in 1979.

Afterwards, we return to the hotel for some free time in the afternoon. Travelers may elect to visit the Russian Market or the Royal Palace, on their own. The Palace was opened in 1870 under King Norodom, and now contains the Royal Residence, the Throne Hall, the Silver Pagoda, and several other historic buildings. Later, we'll gather together for dinner at a local restaurant this evening in Phnom Penh.

DAY 5: Overland to Siem Reap

Meals included: B L D
Accommodations: Treasure Oasis Hotel or similar

After breakfast this morning, we'll board a motorcoach for our trip to Siem Reap, a town within the boundaries of the ancient city of Angkor. We travel through Cambodia's Kampong Thom Province, catching glimpses of rural scenes. We'll stop en route to visit Skuon, a village famous for raising tarantulas and for its artisan stone carvers. We enjoy lunch at a local restaurant then head toward Siem Reap. Along the way, we will take a moment to visit the Ancient Bridge of Kampong Kdei.

After checking in to our hotel, we'll take an orientation walk and then have dinner at a restaurant in town.

Treasure Oasis Hotel: The Treasure Oasis Hotel is conveniently located in the heart of Siem Reap, about six miles from the Angkor Wat temples. Amenities include a restaurant, swimming pool, poolside bar, spa, and gym. There are 83 air-conditioned rooms, each with satellite TV, minibar, safe, tea- and coffee-making facilities, and private bath with hair dryer.

DAY 6: Angkor National Museum • Royal Shrine • Optional Banteay Srei tour

Meals included: B L
Accommodations: Treasure Oasis Hotel or similar

This morning, we depart to the Angkor National Museum to step into the age of the Khmer Empire, the main ancestral empire of the Cambodian people. You will learn the story behind one of the most colossal complexes, Angkor Wat, and the civilization's religions and customs. Ornate stone sculptures and art pieces depicting the religion and philosophy of the Khmer Empire will transport you to a world far from our own.

From there we move on to the Royal Shrine and the Psah Chat (Old Market). At this bustling market, souvenir shops and craft stands along the riverside offer an opportunity to take a part of your trip

home with you. After, we'll enjoy lunch in a local restaurant. Afterwards, enjoy the rest of the day yourself, with dinner on your own.

DAY 7: Explore Angkor • Home-Hosted Lunch

Meals included: B L D
Accommodations: Treasure Oasis Hotel

Today your Trip Leader will take you into the heart of ancient Angkor, a holy city that took centuries to build and whose scale is still breathtaking today: It sprawls across an area of roughly 96 square miles. The Khmer aristocrats who built the temples and monuments here between AD 800 and 1200 were motivated by their Hindu and Buddhist beliefs.

We'll begin at the South Gate of Angkor Thom, the capital city of Khmer rulers. We'll see intricate carvings at Bayon and tour Ta Prohm Temple, where fig and silk-cotton trees have sprouted up among the ruins. We'll then stop for a Home-Hosted Lunch at a nearby village.

Later, we return to explore Angkor Wat (whose name means simply "Angkor's main temple"), the masterpiece of Khmer architecture. Angkor Wat is a large pyramid temple, built between 1113 and 1150, surrounded by a great moat 570 feet wide. Note the bas-relief carvings throughout the temple, and enjoy a rice wine toast with our small group.

Tonight, we dine together at a local restaurant.

DAY 8: Floating Village • Fly to Bangkok, Thailand

Meals included: B

This morning, we travel by buffalo cart and boat to a floating village, where we learn about the life of its people. All commerce—including jewelry shops, vegetable markets, even a hair salon—takes place on the water. Then, we'll check out of the hotel and transfer to the Siem Reap airport for a flight back to Bangkok. Upon arrival, we transfer to our hotel, where we'll check into our hotel and begin our Discover Thailand adventure. This evening, you can venture out for dinner on your own.