



# Grand Tour of Thailand: Bangkok, Chiang Mai & Phuket

14 days | 17 days with Cambodia extension

From the moment you touch down in Thailand, you'll understand how it earned its nickname, the Land of Smiles. The country brims with joy: local fishing villages filled with friendly-as-can-be residents, regional dishes that hit a spicy-salty-sweet high note, and history that spans millennia. Over the course of this Grand Tour, you'll come to feel right at home—and the same goes for the extension to neighboring Cambodia.



## Your tour package includes

- 12 nights in handpicked hotels
- 12 breakfasts
- 4 lunches
- 4 dinners with beer or wine
- 1 cooking class
- 4 food tastings
- 12 sightseeing tours
- Expert Tour Director & local guides
- Private deluxe motor coach
- 3 on-tour flights

## Included highlights

- Grand Palace
- Damnoen Saduak Floating Market
- Organic Thai farm visit
- Ayutthaya Historical Park
- Oolong tea plantation
- Wat Phra That Doi Suthep
- Thai cooking class
- Chiang Mai Night Market
- ChangChill elephant sanctuary
- Buddhist monk chat
- Ao Phang Nga Bay National Park

## Tour pace

On this guided tour, you'll walk for at least 1 hour daily across uneven terrain with some hills.

## Group size

12-22

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## Overnight Flight → 1 night

### Day 1: Travel day

Board your overnight flight to Bangkok today.

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## Bangkok → 3 nights

### Day 2: Arrival in Bangkok

Welcome to Thailand! As you arrive at your hotel tonight, you might receive a wai: a traditional greeting where the hands are placed in a prayer-like position, followed by a gentle bow of the head. Return the greeting (or offer a warm smile back) then settle into your room.

### Day 3: Sightseeing tour of Bangkok

*Included meals: breakfast, welcome lunch, tasting*

Join your Tour Director for a sightseeing tour of Bangkok, the bustling capital city set on the banks of the Chao Phraya River.

- Explore the sprawling Grand Palace, home to the kings of Siam from 1782 to 1925. The landmark's exterior elegantly blends traditional Thai architecture with inspiration from the European Renaissance. Give it a good look before venturing on.
- While roaming the complex, pass by Wat Phra Kaew. Also known as the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, this structure is the spiritual core of Thai Buddhism and a pilgrimage site for the devout.
- Step inside the Temple of the Reclining Buddha, or Wat Pho, to admire the grandeur of the gilded, 150-foot-long statue depicting the Buddha's passing and attainment of nirvana. (It's the biggest reclining Buddha statue in the city!)
- Look over the nearby flower market's rainbow-hued rows of blooms before taking a walking tour of the Chinatown neighborhood—one of the largest in the world. Bursting with food stalls, ornate temples, and the rich history of its immigrants, it's truly a sight to behold.

Enjoy an included welcome lunch with your fellow travelers, then tour the city's canals, or klongs, on a converted rice barge as you sample local fruits.

### Day 4: Damnoen Saduak Floating Market, Maeklong Railway Market & organic farm visit

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting*

Leave the bustle of Bangkok behind for a day and go to the city's outskirts. Then, dive into a pair of uniquely Thai sites.

- Climb aboard a long-tail boat and glide past villages to the canal-crossed Damnoen Saduak Floating Market. Here, shoppers and merchants do business on the water, placing orders and transferring goods between vessels. Maneuver through its varied stalls and take it all in.
- Swap water for land, and one shopping hub for another, when you visit the Maeklong Railway Market. Built on an active rail line, it experiences a flurry of activity whenever a train comes rumbling by. Vendors will hurriedly pack up their stalls and duck out of the way; once the locomotive passes, they set back up and keep on selling.

From there, continue to a local organic farm to learn about eco-friendly agricultural practices from the farmers who till the land. Sample freshly picked fruit and a refreshing coconut drink, take part in a hands-on planting workshop, then head back to your hotel for some well-earned rest.

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## Chiang Rai → 2 nights

### Day 5: Sightseeing tour of Ayutthaya Historical Park & flight to Chiang Rai

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Bid Bangkok farewell and head north to the provincial capital of Ayutthaya, where you'll learn more about its royal history during a guided tour of the UNESCO-listed Ayutthaya Historical Park.

- Tour the ruins of palaces and monasteries—decorated with beautiful, saffron-robed statues of the Buddha—and discover how the city was once the capital of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, the predecessor of modern Thailand.
- Visit Wat Lokayasutha, the Temple of the Earth, and see its 42-meter-long stone statue of the reclining Buddha.

Sightseeing complete, go back to Bangkok and transfer to the airport. You'll fly to Chiang Rai, a

hilly city close to the Myanmar and Laotian borders, dotted with Buddhist shrines and ancient ruins. Once you arrive, enjoy an included dinner with your group, then catch up on rest in anticipation of tomorrow's adventures.

### Day 6: Mekong River cruise & oolong tea plantation sightseeing tour

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, tasting*

After breakfast, venture beyond Chiang Rai to explore the waterways, villages, and farms of the countryside. Begin by boarding a long-tail boat for a cruise along the Mekong—one of the longest rivers in Asia. You'll sail past the villages of hill tribes en route to the Golden Triangle, where Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos come together.

Disembark for an included lunch overlooking the Mekong, then make your way to Choui Fong Tea, a plantation that specializes in oolong. Link up with an expert for a guided tour, and after, sample three different kinds of local tea. Savor each sip—and the view of the terraced fields unfurling before you—then call it a day.

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## Chiang Mai → 3 nights

### Day 7: Chiang Mai via Wat Rong Khun, Doi Suthep & cooking class

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

Begin making your way to Chiang Mai, stopping to bask in the beauty of the region's most impressive landmarks as you go.

- Start at Wat Rong Khun. Completed in 1997, the White Temple is otherworldly in scope and scale, blending modern art with traditional Buddhist symbolism. Cross its main bridge, flanked by outreaching hands symbolizing unchecked desire, and admire the temple's fine craftsmanship up close.
- Visit Doi Suthep, half of a twin-peaked granite mountain overlooking Chiang Mai, and take a cable car to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. This mountaintop temple is steeped in legend and is one of the most sacred places in Thailand, making it a popular pilgrimage site during the Buddhist holidays of Makha Bucha and Visak.
- Soak up vistas of downtown Chiang Mai in the distance, then either ride the cable car

back to the base of Doi Suthep or, time permitting, opt for a one-hour hike down a well-marked trail. (Please note: If you choose to hike, be ready to negotiate steps and declines.)

End your evening with a Thai cooking class, where trained chefs will teach you how to prepare four classic dishes. Relax in a secluded village surrounded by rice paddies as you eat dinner, then continue to Chiang Mai and end your day.

#### Day 8: Chiang Mai Night Market

*Included meals: breakfast, tasting*

Rewind the clock during today's optional excursion and immerse yourself in traditional Thai life among the Mae Kampong hill tribe. Alternatively, stay behind and get to know Chiang Mai yourself. One must-see: the Old City. Protected by a wall, ringed by a moat, and packed with more than 300 temples, this cultural quarter showcases seven centuries of history.

Tonight, join your Tour Director to explore the Chiang Mai Night Market, a sprawling complex just outside the Old City's ancient walls. You're in for what's arguably the best night market experience in Thailand, where vendors sell everything from street food to clothing to antiques. Because prices here aren't fixed, the market is a beloved spot among bargain hunters, and you'll get plenty of free time to shop at your leisure.

+ Mae Kampong Hill Tribe: Village Visit & Hike

#### Day 9: Sightseeing tour of ChangChill elephant sanctuary

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch*

Drive through the countryside and visit ChangChill, an organization at the forefront of elephant welfare and responsible tourism in Chiang Mai.

- Hear how the group works with World Animal Protection, an animal rights nonprofit, to create a safe living environment for elephants and an educational experience for visitors.
- Walk along hillsides and through rice paddies, learning about Asian elephants as you watch them freely roam the sanctuary's grounds.
- Chat with the mahouts, or elephant caretakers, and enjoy a vegetarian meal overlooking the elephants' natural bathing spot.
- Help staffers prepare medicine and food for the gentle, giant residents.

Wrap up at ChangChill and look forward to your evening as you journey back to your hotel. Dig

into dinner—and another aspect of Thai culture—at a Lanna family's home on tonight's optional excursion, or set out on your own to track down a particular dish you've been craving. (Don't leave without trying the khao soi, a fragrant coconut curry noodle soup that's a Chiang Mai specialty.)

*Please note: Travelers should wear comfortable walking shoes and be prepared to walk along uneven paths with some hills.*

+ Lanna Family Home-Hosted Dinner

### Phuket Island → 3 nights

#### Day 10: Buddhist monk visit at Wat Suan Dok & flight to Phuket

*Included meals: breakfast, dinner*

This morning, visit the Wat Suan Dok Buddhist temple—distinguished by its gold leaf-covered, 160-foot-tall chedi, or stupa—to meet with a resident monk. They'll teach you about their faith and how they live, and you'll have the chance to ask them questions.

Afterward, transfer to the airport and fly to Phuket, where crystal clear water and powdery white sand await you. Sit down for an included dinner, served with beer or wine, with your group before retiring for the night.

#### Day 11: Sightseeing tour of Ao Phang Nga & Talu Island canoeing

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch*

Board a speedboat, push off Phuket Island, and skim over turquoise waves, bound for the jungle-crowned isles of Ao Phang Nga National Park.

- Boat between the park's towering limestone formations, or karsts. You'll pass thick mangrove forests, too—keep an eye out for some of the 200 bird species that call them home.
- Enjoy an included lunch on your boat, then motor to Talu Island. There, you'll get to canoe through dramatically arched sea caves with experienced local paddlers as your guides.
- Visit the iconic shores of Khao Phing Kan, better known to some as James Bond Island. It was made into a popular travel destination when it was chosen as a filming location for the 1974 movie, *The Man with the Golden Gun*.

#### Day 12: Free day on Phuket Island

*Included meals: breakfast*

Add another of Thailand's most famous destinations to your itinerary—and dive into

those enticing tropical waters—on today's optional excursion to the Phi Phi Islands. For something more low-key, stay behind and make the most of a day to yourself. (There's nothing wrong with a spot of sunbathing.)

+ Phi Phi Islands Cruise, Snorkeling & Lunch

### Bangkok → 1 night

#### Day 13: Flight to Bangkok

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner*

Fly to Bangkok this afternoon and spend your free time exploring the city at your leisure.

Tonight, head to a local restaurant and celebrate your trip with your fellow travelers during a farewell dinner, served with beer or wine.

### Flight Home

#### Day 14: Departure

*Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)*

Transfer to the airport and either fly home or to Cambodia for this tour's extension. (With the UNESCO-listed towers of Angkor Wat this close, why wouldn't you spend a few more days in Southeast Asia?)

### + Cambodia extension

Despite being squeezed between Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, and the sea, Cambodia's impossible to overlook. While the mesmerizing Angkor Wat complex may get most of the attention, there are plenty more treasures to uncover. From resort towns to lost capitals and ruined temples, this country offers up countless surprises. Join your Tour Director there and see for yourself.

### Siem Reap → 2 nights

#### Day 14: Flight to Siem Reap & sunset at Angkor Wat

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner*

Instead of flying home from Bangkok, you'll board a flight to Siem Reap, Cambodia. After landing, begin your trip's extension with an included lunch of Cambodian specialties. As the sun starts sinking toward the horizon, you'll head out for a tour of Angkor Wat—the world's largest religious monument and an outstanding example of Khmer architecture.

Learn how this UNESCO-recognized complex honors both Hinduism and Buddhism as you watch the sun dip behind its lotus blossom-shaped towers. Then, sit down for an included dinner with your groupmates.

#### **Day 15: Angkor Thom & Ta Prohm**

*Included meals: breakfast, lunch*

Leave Siem Reap once more for a final day of ruin-roaming with your Tour Director, beginning at Angkor Thom—the longest-serving capital of the Khmer Empire. Explore the complex, stopping to view the Terrace of the Elephants. This ornamental platform was named for the designs carved into its eastern wall and was used by King Jayavarman VII to observe the return of his victorious army.

Depart from Angkor Thom and enjoy an included lunch at a local restaurant before setting out for Ta Prohm. Decorated by bas-reliefs and shaded by trees shooting out from gaps in its stones, this 12th-century temple was made famous by the 2001 film, *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider*.

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#### **Day 17: Departure**

*Included meals: breakfast (excluding early morning departures)*

Transfer to the airport for your early morning flight home.

### **Bangkok → 1 night**

#### **Day 16: Cambodian Landmine Museum & flight to Bangkok**

*Included meals: breakfast, farewell dinner*

Before heading to the airport and beginning your journey home, spend your last full day in Cambodia reflecting on a heavy part of its modern history. This country suffered through numerous wars in the 20th century, and countless pieces of unexploded ordnance (UXO) were left buried in the soil in their wake. Today, you'll enter the Cambodian Landmine Museum, the headquarters of an organization dedicated to defusing UXO, to hear about their efforts and see their impact firsthand.

- Watch a short film about Aki Ra, a former Khmer Rouge child soldier who founded the museum.
- Take a guided audio tour of the museum, which is home to a collection of decommissioned explosives, and learn about the organization's de-mining projects and community development initiatives.
- Learn how the revenue from your visit supports relief projects for those harmed by landmines and UXO.

Later, fly back to Bangkok for a farewell dinner with your group, served with beer or wine.

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### **Flight home**

# Customize your experience

Customize your tour by adding excursion options. Excursions offered on the same day will occur at different times, so there's no need to choose. Save \$10 when you book your excursion up to three days before your tour departs.\* Excursions requiring advance reservation only list this discounted price. Call or go online to customize your tour: [goaheadtours.com/TAT](https://goaheadtours.com/TAT) | 1-800-597-0350

## **Day 8: Mae Kampong Hill Tribe: Village Visit & Hike**

\$65/\$75\* (6 hours, departs in the morning, lunch included)

The Mae Kampong Hill Tribe lives in Northern Thailand where members of the community continue to practice and share their storied traditions. Today, you'll head to their village to explore it alongside a local guide. Begin the day with a short hike through the mountains surrounding the village. You'll stop to view a waterfall as you hear about the beauty of the area from your guide. Continue into the village to learn about the traditional ways of life during a tea tasting. Farmers in the community have produced tea for over 200 years, and the area's fertile farmlands were one of the main reasons the villagers chose to live here. Then, enter the home of a village resident and get to the heart of traditional Thai cuisine during a home-hosted lunch. After enjoying some free time, travel back to Chiang Mai. Please note: Out of respect, we recommend wearing clothes that cover your knees and shoulders.

## **Day 9: Lanna Family Home-Hosted Dinner**

\$89/\$99\* (4 hours, departs in the evening, dinner included)

Make your way outside of Chiang Mai to join a local Lanna family in their open-air garden. Get a tour of the family's orchards and gardens before sitting down to enjoy a spread of traditional Thai dishes while learning about Lanna culture and traditions from your hosts.

## **Day 12: Phi Phi Islands Cruise, Snorkeling & Lunch**

\$105/\$115\* (8 hours, departs in the morning, includes lunch)

The tropical Phi Phi Islands (pronounced "pee pee") are literally paradise on Earth, and you'll spend the day beach-hopping alongside an expert guide on this excursion. Travel in style aboard a speedboat as you cruise to Phi Phi Don, admiring spectacular views of Phuket Harbor from your first-class seat. Here, stop to snorkel in the crystal-clear blue water (some of the best water in all of Thailand!) and admire one of the world's most abundant coral reef systems. Then, gaze up at the staggering limestone cliffs as you head to Monkey Island, where you'll stop for photos and a sighting of Long-Tailed Macaques. Finally, soak in the laid-back atmosphere of the islands and taste local specialties at an included lunch before boarding your boat back to Phuket.

\*Optional excursions may be purchased up to three days prior to departure or while on tour. Pre-purchased optional excursions cannot be canceled within three days prior to departure or while on tour. Select optional excursions require advance booking and cannot be purchased or canceled after the advanced reservation deadline. GAT accepts payment by cash, Visa or MasterCard for optional excursions purchased on tour. Additional fees may apply for optional excursions purchased on tour. Excursions require a minimum number of participants to operate. Details and prices are subject to change. Due to seasonal hours of operation and availability, some excursions may not operate. If this occurs, you will be refunded any payments made for that excursion post-tour. Learn more at [goaheadtours.com/terms](https://goaheadtours.com/terms)