Explore Northern Thailand

***Validity for departures between 01/01/2022 and 31/12/2023***

# Introduction

Northern Thailand is a treasure-trove filled with glittering temples, ancient ruins, exotic markets and sumptuous foods. Explore the capital of Siam's golden age at Sukhothai, ride an elephant through the rainforest of Lampang, browse the bustling markets of Chiang Mai, stay at a special homestay with local friends and enjoy a traditional *khan toke* dinner - there's so much to discover in Thailand's northern kingdom.

# Trip Map



# Itinerary

## Day 1 Bangkok

Sa-wat dee! Welcome to Thailand.

You can arrive at any time on day 1 as there are no activities planned until the important welcome meeting at 18:00. Your leader will leave a note at reception telling you where and when this important meeting will take place. Please ask a member of reception for this information.

Bangkok has so much to offer those with time to explore - why not take a riverboat to Chinatown and explore the crowded streets, or wander down the tourist mecca of Khao San Road?

Our comfortable hotel in Bangkok is centrally located near Khao San Rd and the Chao Phraya River and has ensuite bathrooms, air-conditioning and a swimming pool.

## Day 2 Sukhothai

This morning we leave the hustle and bustle heading north by train bound for Phistanulok (approx. 6 hrs), where we then transfer to Songthaews (open backed pick-ups) for the remaining journey to Sukhothai (approx. 1hr).

Sukhothai was the first ancient capital of Siam, established in the 13th century. Located on a fertile plain, Sukhothai means the "Dawn of Happiness" and is now famous as a UNESCO World Heritage Park celebrating the Golden Age of Thai civilisation.

Why not try a local central Thai dish like Sukhothai Noodles at the fascinating local night market, your leader can assist in your selections.

Our clean, comfortable guesthouse in Sukothai is centrally located near the night markets and has air conditioning and ensuite shower.

## Day 3 Lampang

The morning greets us with a bicycle day trip around the historical ruins of Old Sukhothai, set amid beautiful lakes and gardens (it is approx. 30 minutes from the guesthouse by songthaew).

Upon our arrival at the historical park, we hire bicycles and enjoy a few leisurely hours feeling the breeze in our hair and learning about the history of this fascinating place. We enjoy a home-cooked picnic lunch somewhere along the way, and conclude our afternoon with a visit to a ceramics factory and local market.

In the afternoon we head to Lampang (approx. 3 hours) where we stay the night. Our basic twin share fan-cooled rooms are located in the town centre and close to the river, with multi share bathrooms.

## Day 4 Homestay

In the morning, we visit the Elephant Conservation Centre near Lampang (approx. 45 minutes), where we can watch elephants having a communal bathing session as well as young and old elephants being taught the skills in the logging industry. Afterwards, we enjoy an unforgettable ride through the forest on the back of one of these magnificent creatures. After lunch there is time to visit the F.A.E. Elephant Hospital and then it's off to the warm and welcoming home of Sojourn's long-time friends.

We stay the night at a homestay in a small Thai village (approx. 1.5 hours from the Elephant Centre). Although accommodation is multi-share and basic (there will be fold-out mattresses on the floor and shared bathrooms), we experience everyday Thai life - something not many travellers get to do. In the evening, we are treated to a traditional northern Thai khan tohk dinner accompanied by live music and dancing.

## Days 5-7 Chiang Mai

In the morning of day 5 we may have the opportunity to offer alms to the monks as they go about their daily routine. We pack a delicious picnic lunch and visit some hot springs where you can have an optional well-deserved soak in the mineral pools or a massage. Afterwards we travel the short distance (approx. 40 minutes) to Chiang Mai.

Our accommodation provides a return to modernity, a great way to get refreshed before heading out to explore all Chiang Mai has to offer. A great night bazaar with lots of excellent food and plenty of colourful goodies for sale are waiting, and this is the perfect opportunity to unleash your bargaining skills. Later on, you might want to head down to a riverside bar for some live music and a couple of drinks.

The most vibrant city in northern Thailand, Chiang Mai has many famous temples and an interesting old city area. A great way to see the surrounding countryside is our cycling tour, on which you will visit temples and other places of interest. In your free time, you can visit the hilltop temple of Doi Suthep for stunning views over the city, attend Thai cooking classes, try bamboo rafting, shop or indulge in traditional Thai massage.

Our clean, comfortable guesthouse in Chiang Mai is located by the famous night markets and has ensuite bathrooms and air conditioning.

In the afternoon of day 7, we board an overnight train for the trip back to Bangkok (approx. 13 hours). We use soft sleeper class trains for our overnight train journey. Multi share compartments are air-conditioned, with bunk beds; sheets and pillow provided. Our baggage travels in the carriage with us. There is a food and drink service available on board.

## Day 8 Bangkok

Our train is scheduled to arrive into Bangkok early in the morning. We transfer back to the hotel and you are free to depart at any time after that. If you are booking flights or other transport out of Bangkok on this day, please keep in mind that train delays are frequent - we suggest you do not book a flight earlier than 2:00pm.

Please note no accommodation is included in Bangkok at the end of our tour. We have shared day rooms available for our use until midday. Additional accommodation is available - please enquire at time of booking.

# Itinerary Disclaimer

The itinerary attached is correct at time of printing. Please note: occasionally our itineraries are updated during the year to incorporate improvements stemming from past travellers' comments and our own research. Our brochure is usually released in November each year. As such the information given in this itinerary may be slightly different to that in the brochure. It is VERY IMPORTANT that you print and review a final copy of your Trip Notes a couple of days prior to travel, in case there have been changes that affect your plans. For the latest updated trip notes please visit our website: [www.sojourntravel.com](http://www.sojourntravel.com)

# Included Activities

This is a list of included activities on this trip. All other activities are optional and at your own expense. For a list of optional activities and sightseeing available on this trip, see the optional activities section below. If you choose not to participate in the included activities on this itinerary, the cost will not be refunded.

* Day trip cycling around historical sights - Sukhothai
* Elephant Conservation Centre show and elephant ride - Lampang
* Visit local Northern Thai village, dinner and cultural show
* Entry fee to hot springs - en route to Chiang Mai

# Optional Activities

We list the following optional activities for your information. This is not an exhaustive list and should be used as a guide only.

They are not necessarily endorsed or recommended by Sojourn nor included in price of this trip. If you do any of them, you do so at your own risk and it must be clearly understood that your participation is your own decision and does not form part of your contract with Sojourn.

The receipt of commissions or kickbacks in exchange for recommending particular shops or services is ingrained in the culture of the Thai tourism industry. Rather than turn a blind eye to this unavoidable issue in some areas Sojourn has established a centralised fund whereby contributions from recommended suppliers are distributed between The Sojourn Foundation and local staff. Details of these arrangements will be provided by your leader at the commencement of your trip.

A priority in establishing this fund is that the experience of you our traveller is not compromised in any way. Please let us know via the feedback form completed after your trip if we are successfully meeting this objective.

Please note the following are approximate entrance costs and do not include transport to the sites if required, unless specified below.

* Bike ride, Bangkok – US$25
* Thai kickboxing exhibition, Bangkok - US$50
* Grand Palace, Bangkok - US$12
* Thai massage, Bangkok and Chiang Mai - US$9 p/h
* Bicycle tour, Chiang Mai - US$25
* Bamboo rafting, Chiang Mai - US$10
* Thai cookery course, Chiang Mai - US$25
* Doi Suthep Temple, Chiang Mai - US$2

# Spending Money

Every traveller is different and therefore spending money requirements will vary. Some travellers may drink more than others while other travellers like to purchase more souvenirs than most. Please consider your own spending habits when it comes to allowing for drinks, shopping, participating in optional activities and tipping. Please also remember the following specific recommendations when planning your trip.

# Tipping

If you are happy with the services provided a tip - though not compulsory - is appropriate. While it may not be customary to you, it is of great significance to the people who will take care of you during your travels, inspires excellent service, and is an entrenched feature of the tourism industry across many Sojourn destinations. Please note we recommend that any tips are given directly to the intended recipient by a member of your group as our group leaders are prohibited from collecting cash for tips.

The following amounts are based on local considerations and feedback from our past travellers:

**Restaurants:** Local markets and basic restaurants - round your bill up to the nearest THB20. More up-market restaurants we suggest 10% to 12% of your bill.

**Local guides:** Throughout your trip you may at times have a local guide in addition to your leader. We suggest TBH100 per day for local guides.

**Porters:** Throughout your trip you may at times have a porter in addition to your leader. We suggest THB80 per day for porters.

**Drivers:** You may have a range of drivers on your trip. Some may be with you for a short journey while others may be with you for several days. We would suggest a higher tip for those more involved with the group however a base of THB50 per day is generally appropriate.

**Local transport:** For a city tour we suggest THB50 per day.

**Your Group Leader:** You may also consider tipping your leader for outstanding service throughout your trip. The amount is entirely a personal preference; however as a guideline THB100 per person, per day can be used. Of course you are free to tip more or less as you see fit, depending on your perception of service quality and the length of your trip. Remember, a tip is not compulsory and should only be given when you receive excellent service.

# Visas

Please note that visas are the responsibility of the individual traveller. The visa requirements for your trip vary depending on where you are from and where you are going. We keep the following information up to date as much as possible, but rules do change. It is important that you check for yourself.

Make sure your passport is valid for at least 6 months after your return date. Be sure to check the date you require a visa from and the length of time you will need to cover, especially if you change countries during your trip.

Thailand: Citizens of Australia, NZ, UK, USA do not need visas to visit Thailand as a tourist. If entering by air you will be granted a 30 day stay. If entering by land you will be granted a 15 day stay only. In addition for those coming overland into Thailand you will require an onward ticket out of the country to obtain the visa. A visa extension can be obtained in Thailand at an immigration office and the cost is 1900 THB. Alternately you can obtain a visa before departure at your local Thai Embassy or Consulate that will allow a 30 day stay when entering at an overland border. Citizens of other countries should check with the relevant consulates as to whether a visa is required.

# Local Dress

When packing be aware that dress standards are conservative throughout Asia, especially outside major cities. To respect this and for your own comfort, we strongly recommend modest clothing. This means clothing that covers your shoulders and knees. Loose, lightweight, long clothing is both respectful and cool in the predominantly hot Asian climate. In many rural areas in Asia women will need to wear modest clothing even to swim. Singlets, tank tops and topless sun bathing are all unacceptable. When visiting religious sites men often need to wear long trousers and women a long skirt or sarong.

# Departure Dates 2022/2023

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| --- | --- |
| Start | Price |
| Mon 22 Aug 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 29 Aug 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 05 Sep 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 12 Sep 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 21 Sep 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 26 Sep 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 03 Oct 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 10 Oct 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 21 Oct 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 24 Oct 22 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 02 Apr 23 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 09 Apr 23 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 20 Apr 23 | AUD $1000 |
| Mon 23 Apr 23 | AUD $1000 |