



Thailand Highlights Tour Dossier

Classic Tour | 13 Days | Comfortable

Bangkok – Kanchanaburi – Chiang Rai – Mae Kampong – Chiang Mai

Thailand weaves a tapestry of glittering temples, lush jungle and golden sunshine, all entwined with a rich heritage that has remained staunchly unchanged for centuries. It is also fun-loving, friendly and exotic – discover more of Bangkok and the northern highlands.

Tour Highlights:

Bangkok - Thailand's capital; a modern day metropolis full of life, culture and history

Kanchanaburi - One of Thailand's largest provinces that is rich in history and scenic beauty

Chiang Rai - Ethnically diverse province set amongst stunning backdrops

Mae Kampong - Location of home-stay in traditional housing

Chiang Mai - Famous for its hill tribes, tea plantations and elephants



Thailand Highlights tour inclusions

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English-speaking National Escort (if your group is 10 or more passengers)

Personal expenditures e.g. drinks, optional excursions or shows, insurance of any kind, tipping, early check in or late checkout and other items not specified on the itinerary are at your own expense.

Classic Tours

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Indochina on an excellent value group tour travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully-inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

Comfortable

'Thailand Highlights' is a **comfortable** tour. Although this is the easiest pace of tour Wendy Wu Tours offers it still requires a reasonable level of fitness.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance
- For 1 night of the tour you will stay with a local family who will provide you with a mattress on the floor to sleep on, bathroom facilities will be shared

Of course, our National Escort and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

Country Profile: Thailand

Thailand is a beautiful country, offering travellers stunning scenery from fertile rice fields in the central plains, rising mountains and valleys in the north, to sandy white beaches at famous island destinations such as Phuket in the south. Thailand has an ancient history shaped by war and imperialism, as well as an immersion of culture and faith.

Itinerary Changes

1. It is our intention to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate. In these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements maintaining the integrity of your trip

Joining Your Tour

The tour is 13 days in duration including international flights. Travellers booked on 'Land Only' arrangements should make their own way to the starting point. Join the tour on Day 1 in Bangkok and end the tour on Day 12 in Chiang Mai. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

Important Information Regarding Flight Delays

Due to unforeseen circumstances, flights can be delayed, and therefore connecting flights may be missed. If you find yourself in this situation, please contact our Bangkok office on **+84 138 6228 (24 hours)** to urgently advise your arrival details have changed. Please ensure you have your trip number, tour name (both included in your final documentation) and new arrival details (flight number and arrival time) handy to pass on to our local office in Bangkok. This will ensure your National Escort/Local Guide can be informed of your most up to date information and ensure someone is at the airport to meet you on arrival.

If we are not advised of late changes and missed connections, Wendy Wu Tours cannot guarantee someone will be able to meet you upon arrival in Bangkok as our local office will have no way of knowing which flight you will be arriving on. Wendy Wu Tours will not be responsible for providing reimbursement of transportation costs from the airport to your hotel in the event that our local office was not advised of changes to arrival time.

Thailand Highlights Itinerary

DAY 1: AUSTRALIA TO BANGKOK

Fly to Bangkok with Singapore Airlines. You will be met at Bangkok airport in the arrivals hall by your Local Guide and/or National Escort from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, you will transfer approximately 1 hour to your hotel and check-in to your room. There is no sightseeing today. At some point, when the whole group has arrived, a tour introduction will be held in the hotel. Food and drinks will not be served at this meeting; it is simply an opportunity for your group to meet and learn more about travelling in Thailand.

Destination Information

Bangkok - Bangkok has been Thailand's dominant city since the 18th century. It was established as the capital after the former capital Ayutthaya was attacked by the Burmese and burned down. The emerging city, which was protected by a wall, was occupied by a large number of stilt and floating houses built to adapt to common seasonal flooding. Up until the Thailand War, Bangkok was still largely undeveloped until it became a popular place of rest and relaxation for the American soldiers, which resulted in a boom of nightclubs, massage parlours and bars. However, in the 80's and 90's, Bangkok underwent rapid modernisation and exploded into the metropolis it is today; a city that is lined with skyscrapers and is full of life. With a population of over 7 million, the fast pace of the city can be daunting for the first time visitor, yet beneath all of the hustle and bustle there are many hidden gems waiting to be discovered, offering a unique taste of Thai culture and history. Bangkok's dazzling neon signs, charming architecture, spicy Thai cuisine and colourful markets make for an exciting first few days of our tour.

DAY 2: DISCOVER BANGKOK

Enjoy a sightseeing tour of the city today. Tour the Grand Palace, Wat Pho and Chinatown before cruising down Chao Phraya River on a longboat to Pak Khlong Talaat Flower Market, while enjoying an alternative view of the city. Sightseeing involves around 5 hours on foot today and involves hopping on and off the boats, often on unsteady and sometimes slippery surfaces, without handrails or assistance. This evening enjoy a delicious Thai meal for dinner and enjoy a performance of traditional Thai dancing.

Destination Information

Wat Pho - One of Bangkok's largest temples. Experience the monk's chant as you explore the grounds of Wat Pho, which is over eight hectares. The largest reclining Buddha and the largest collection of Buddha images in Thailand are housed here.

Grand Palace - The Grand Palace is the city's most famous landmark. Built in 1782, for 150 years it was the home to the Thai King, the royal court and administrative seat of government. Within the Palace are several impressive buildings, including the Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

DAY 3: BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER KWAI

Rise early this morning and drive to the Railway Track Market in Smut Songkram and then onto Damnoen Saduak Floating Market where you will travel by a motorised or paddle wooden boats through the canals. Sightseeing involves hopping on and off the boats, often on unsteady and sometimes slippery surfaces, without handrails or assistance. Continue to Kanchanaburi stopping at the famous 'Bridge over the River Kwai' on the way. On arrival in Kanchanaburi visit the Allied War Cemetery and JEATH War Museum.

Destination Information

Railway Track Market - A open-air market with a little difference. Set on railway track; enjoy the unique experience as you see the vendors quickly pack up their stores as the train approaches the tracks.

Damnoen Saduak Floating Market - Step back in time to experience the traditional way farmers would trade their produce. The canals are lined with boats that are paddled by local women and piled high with vegetables, fruit and even souvenirs for the tourists. Sit back and soak up the atmosphere as the locals go about their daily life and entertain with their haggling techniques.

Bridge over the River Kwai - The infamous bridge built by prisoners of war during World War II, many of whom lost their lives during its construction.

Kanchanaburi - One of Thailand's largest province, that is rich in history and boasts undeniable scenic beauty.

Allied War Cemetery – See thousands of graves belonging to British, Dutch and Australian prisoners who died while building the bridge.

JEATH War Museum – The Museum displays many artefacts, photos and stories of the prisoners of World War II. There are graphic images of the terrible conditions and torment that the young men faced and the stories of those who survived; some group members may find this upsetting and confronting.

DAY 4: EXPLORE KANCHANBURI

This morning visit Hellfire Pass, a dramatic part of the railway that literally cuts through mountain and take a 3km walk through the pass. Explore the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum, which tells the stories of human suffering at the hands of this engineering feat before boarding the train at Nam Tok Railway Station. After lunch, travel back to Bangkok.

Please note the 3km walk will be on uneven ground, involves some steep steps and it is likely to be humid, be prepared for mosquitoes! If you do not wish to take part, you will still be able to see the pass from around 15 minutes' walk from the museum and you may remain in the museum area independently, please be aware that the group will be gone for around 2 hours.

Destination Information

Hellfire Pass - Was constructed for the Burma to Thailand railway by Prisoners of War. This part of the railway was particularly hard to build due to its remoteness and the scale of rock-cutting required. It took only six weeks to build this section, as the prisoners were forced to work 16-18 hour days and throughout the night. Its name derived from the eerie glow produced by the torches at night, reflecting off the gaunt faces of the prisoners.

DAY 5: AYUTTHAYA

Discover the historical highlights of Ayutthaya by minivan on a day trip to the ancient capital of Thailand. Departing from Bangkok in the morning, drive 1 and half hours to Bang Pa-In Palace, boasting a mix of European, gothic and Thai-Buddhist architecture. There's time to explore the vast grounds that include several temple complexes, Wat Phra Sri Sanphet, a temple that forbids monks to enter (due to its 'royal' status), and then on to Wat Chai Wattanaram is a Buddhist temple in the city of Ayutthaya Historical Park the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, outside Ayutthaya island. Sightseeing will involve around 3 hours on foot today. Enjoy lunch at the local restaurant and take the road trip back to Bangkok, reaching your hotel around the late afternoon.

Destination Information

Ayutthaya - The former Thai Kingdom capital city from 1350 to 1767. It ultimately suffered destruction at the hands of the Burmese. On arrival visit the largest temple of Wat Phra Sisanphet, which was used as the Royal Temple Palace by several kings. The following sight is Wat Chai Wattanaram where the construction patterns are very interesting. Then continue to Bang - Pa - In Summer Palace, which served as the summer palace for many Thai monarchs from the 17th century. This structure has a captivating collection of marvelous pavilions in a variety of Thai, Chinese, Italian and Victorian architectural styles.

DAY 6: FLY TO CHIANG RAI

This morning, transfer to the airport for our flight 1 hour and 20 minute flight to Chiang Rai. This afternoon stop at the area known as the 'Golden Triangle'; the point where the borders of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet. Upon arrival we will enjoy a boat ride, crossing the Mekong River to Laos where we visit Don Sao Island. There is a small market on the island, selling Lao clothing, handicrafts and postcards, which we can send home with a Lao postmark from the small post office located here. This evening explore the colourful night market in Chiang Rai.

Destination Information

Chiang Rai - The northern-most province of Thailand sharing borders with Myanmar and Laos, and also one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in Thailand. The province is abundant with natural scenery; lush rice terraces, hills scattered with orchids and the mountains of Myanmar and Laos are visible in the distance.

DAY 7: MAE SALONG

This morning drive 1 and half hours to Mae Salong Mountain, renowned for its hill tribes and tea plantations. From the base of the mountain travel by truck to a plantation where you will have an opportunity to sample local tea. Enjoy lunch at a mountaintop restaurant before an excursion to Mae Salong, visiting a tea plantation, a Yao Tribe and an Akha village known as Ban Lorcha. Sightseeing today will include approximately 3 hours on foot.

Destination Information

Mae Salong - Once known as a centre for opium trade in the golden triangle, Mae Salong is now associated with tribal villages and for the production of excellent local tea.

Day 8: WHITE TEMPLE

Depart Chiang Rai and travel to Mae Kampong, stopping after 30 minutes to explore the Wat Rong Khun or 'White Temple'. Next, stop at local market, then continue to Mae Kampong, where you will meet your host family and be shown to your accommodation. In the evening, visit a nearby waterfall where you can either climb to the top or relax at the bottom where locals offer traditional Thai massage for a small price. Enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure to explore the village and relax, interact with our host families or enjoy some adventurous activities such as the 'Flight of the Gibbon' (flying fox) or some trekking. Please ask your guide for information about these optional activities, which are available at your own expense. In the evening, you will have the opportunity to observe or perhaps join in the preparation of your dinner, allowing us to experience and learn about our host family's way of life.

Each house accommodates 4 people and has shared bathroom facilities. You will more than likely sleep in your own room; however, single passengers may have to share. The family will provide you with a mattress on the floor, clean linen, a blanket and mosquito net. All meals will be cooked by your host family.

You will need to pack an overnight bag for tonight's homestay as your main luggage will be left in safe storage and collected tomorrow.

Visit wendywutours.com.au

Destination Information

White Temple - One of the most recognisable temples in Thailand, the White Temple is a contemporary Buddhist and Hindu temple designed by Thai artist Chalermchai Kositpipat in 1997.

Mae Kampong - Located 1,300 metres above sea level Mae Kampong retains a cool climate all year round. Nestled in among forested hillsides, the village consists of a maze of huts; the majority of the locals make a living through the production of Miang, a leaf used to make fermented tea.

DAY 9: TRAVEL TO CHIANG MAI

Have breakfast with your host family and begin the 1 hour drive to Chiang Mai stopping at a handicraft village where you can buy lacquer products, silk, furniture and souvenirs. Upon arrival, check into your hotel and later visit the ancient city of Wiang Kum Kam, continue to Wat Chedi Luang and Wat Phra Singh. Sightseeing will be approximately 2 hours on foot today.

Destination Information

Chiang Mai - Located among tall mountains, Chiang Mai is the largest and most culturally significant city in northern Thailand. The city was founded in 1296 and was the capital of the Lanna Kingdom, which was eventually occupied by the Burmese. For the next 200 years Chiang Mai was virtually abandoned until it was again taken over by Siam in the 18th century. During the 20th century, Chiang Mai became a thriving centre for handicraft pottery, weaving, silverwork and woodcarving; however tourism took over in the 1960's as the main source of income. Today, Chiang Mai is famous for its hilltribes, tea plantations and elephants.

Wiang Kum Kam - In 1984, just outside the modern Chiang Mai metropolitan area, archaeologists uncovered the remains of this city, which was said to have been buried underground by years of flooding. Nearly 20 temple sites have been uncovered in the area, many in ruins, except for two that are still actively used today.

Wat Chedi Luang - Where the famous 'Emerald Buddha' was once enshrined.

DAY 10: CHIANG DAO ELEPHANT PARK

Today visit the Chiang Dao Elephant Camp. Return to Chiang Mai and enjoy the afternoon at leisure. After dinner tonight, there will be free time for shopping at the night market.

Destination Information

Call 1300 727 998 to speak to a Reservations Consultant

Chiang Dao Elephant Camp - Which was founded in 1969 and was one of the first elephant camps in Chiang Mai. The centre has implemented a successful breeding program and is currently home to 10 elephants.

DAY 11: COOKING CLASS

Enjoy a cooking class where you will learn to cook traditional Thai cuisine and enjoy your creation for lunch. Visit the market Talat Warorod. Later drive 1 hour to Wat Doi Suthep where you will have the option of climbing 300 steps to the top. This evening we enjoy a typical Thai (Kantoke) dinner while watching a performance of traditional song and dance from Northern Thailand by various hill tribes.

Destination Information

Talat Warorod - Chiang Mai's oldest and largest market. Stroll past stalls selling an assortment of items, from woks, toys and pickled tea leaves.

Wat Doi Suthep - One of Thailand's most sacred temples. Tucked away in the mountains at 1,056 metres above sea level, it offers a panoramic view of Chiang Mai. Here we can climb the Naga staircase or catch the cable car to visit the exquisite golden pagoda.

DAY 12: DEPART CHIANG MAI

Today you will be transferred from the hotel to the airport, according to the departure time of your flight home, please note if you have made a Land Only booking that your arrangements end after check out in Chiang Mai.

Due to flight schedules, Perth passengers will arrive home on Day 12.

DAY 13: ARRIVE AUSTRALIA

Arrive home today.

THAILAND HIGHLIGHTS TRAVEL INFORMATION

Visas

Australian passport holders do not need a visa for Thailand if they are travelling for less than 30 days for tourist purposes.

Insurance

We strongly encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the originals.

Eating in Indochina

Indochina is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. The food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics. Vietnam, for example, is perhaps best known for its fresh and aromatic dishes – relying heavily on flavours from fresh herbs such as mint, basil and dill.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your groups' arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. When dining in Vietnam, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetisers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in Indochina, forks and spoons are used

for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Vietnam is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Vietnamese cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

Accommodation

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities. Hotels are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between Australia and Indochina. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

Rest assured that all hotels used by Wendy Wu Tours are regularly inspected by our staff and our partners to ensure that standard meet your needs.

Please note double bed requests can be made at time of booking but cannot be guaranteed.

Transport

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. Roads in Southeast Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

Seatbelts: Please note that seatbelts are not compulsory by law in Indochina and therefore the local people largely choose not to wear them. For this reason, some vehicles may not be fitted with seatbelts or they may be hidden underneath protective seat covers. It is recommended that where seatbelts are available customers must use them and remain seated at all times while the vehicle is moving. If you have any concerns, please notify your National Escort/Local Guides.

Planes: Internal flights are based on economy class, with reputable airlines.

Development in Thailand

Although Thailand is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in Australia. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in Australia; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All of our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from you National Escort or Local Guides.

Thailand public holidays

If you are travelling within the below Thailand Public Holidays please note that celebrations can last a couple of days and during these times some businesses will be closed and coach, air and train travel may be affected. Chakri Memorial Day - 6th April, Labour Day - 1st May, Coronation Day - 5th May, Songkran Festival 15th - 18th April, the Queen's Birthday - 12th August, Chulalongkorn Day - 23rd October, the Kings Birthday - 5th December.

Souvenirs

We want to be able to give you an opportunity to buy souvenirs so we include some stops at museums or exhibitions, which demonstrates a craft or product unique to that region with pieces available to buy. We understand that souvenir hunting is not for everyone so we aim to take you to places, which hold local interest. We trust you will enjoy these opportunities to learn about local arts and crafts and understand their historical and cultural importance.

Group Size

Most of our groups consist of 10 travellers or more and will be accompanied by a National Escort. There will usually be no more than 28 travellers in each group although you may encounter other Wendy Wu tour groups while you are travelling.

All our departures are guaranteed to operate with a minimum of 8 travellers booked (unless cancelled due to factors beyond our control). However, at our discretion we may operate departures with a smaller group size as we try to operate advertised departures wherever it is viable to do so. For groups with fewer than 10 travellers, departures will operate with local guides only.

Tipping Policy

Tipping is a firm and expected element in the tourism industry. A nominated tipping amount is included in all group tour pricing, however is not collected in your final payment received by Wendy Wu Tours. This is so that it can be paid directly to your National Escort who will then distribute the tips among your main service providers – guides and drivers– on your behalf. Any other tipping, such as tips for bathroom attendants, hotel porters taking luggage to your room or river guides is at your discretion based on satisfaction of services received, as are gratuities for additional requested special services. The final tipping amount will be outlined in your final documentation.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognise that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

Packing List and Climate

You will find a complete packing list and a helpful climate chart in the 'Suggested Packing List', which will be included in the pre-departure information link sent within your deposit documentation. Seasonal weather patterns can be quite unpredictable. Up to the minute information on worldwide weather can be found on www.weather.com.

Luggage

All clients are limited to two items of luggage each; a suitcase with a maximum weight of 20kg and one piece of hand luggage with a maximum weight of 7kg. It is essential that your luggage is lockable. Please note that authorities will only allow bottles onto the aircraft if they have been checked in as main baggage. Bottles in hand luggage may be confiscated.

Exchanging Cash

Australian Dollars can be easily exchanged in Thailand, provided notes are new and undamaged. We suggest exchanging your money before travelling to remote areas and smaller towns, as exchange facilities can be limited. Your National Escort will remind you to do this before departure.

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Personal Expenses & Optional Tours

You will need to take some extra money to cover drinks, laundry and souvenirs, plus any additional sightseeing that may be offered to you. Based on the advice of previous customers an approximate amount of AUD\$250 should be sufficient; however for those that cannot resist a bargain, consider allocating a higher amount.

Optional tours may be offered in each city you visit during your tour at an additional cost. These are not included in the standard itinerary and will only be available if time permits. Each option will be arranged locally by your National Escort/Local Guide.

Climbing Steps

Some sightseeing involves climbing quite a number of steps. This means you sometimes need to walk from the bus park to the entrance, and/or need to climb some steps inside. People with knee or hip injuries, who have poor balance or are otherwise unable to complete these activities independently should consider the suitability of this itinerary carefully.

Cultural Differences

Thailand has many religions, cultures and histories. Please be considerate of the local beliefs and customs and dress with consideration.

Vaccinations and Your Health

We recommend that you contact either your GP or Travelvax (1300 360 164) for advice on vaccinations and travel health. Travelvax has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.travelvax.com.au.

Before You Leave

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.smartraveller.gov.au as in the event of an emergency, Australian Consular assistance will be more readily available. You can also access the Australian Government's travel advisory service for up to date information about your destination on the same website.

After your booking

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice with deposit documentation via email. This includes important information and links to access the visa application form and instructions sheet online (if applicable). Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2 weeks prior to departure.

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