



**ULTIMATE
JOURNEYS**

Specialising in Asia, Africa,
Australasia and the Americas

NORTHERN THAILAND TOUR

Departure: Weekly - Tuesday (Starting Bangkok/ending Chiang Mai)



Day 1 (Tuesday)

Bangkok-Bang Pa in Ayuthaya-Lopburi-Phitsanuloke

This morning the tour begins from Bangkok as we drive north out of the city to Bang Pa In, a lavish royal Summer Palace set in beautiful gardens. The Palace combines an exotic mixture of Thai and European architecture. Admire the beautiful Thai pavilion set in the middle of a lake, and an elegant house constructed entirely out of wood, and see some immaculate Thai topiary - bushes cut into the shapes of elephants!

After visit of Bang Pa In, we proceed to the ancient capital city of Siam-Ayutthaya. The city was ransacked by the Burmese but evidence of its splendor remains. Explore ruined temples and palaces, and admire the extensive canal and river network which helped Ayutthaya to flourish. You will have time to browse around numerous stalls selling Thai handicrafts. Lunch will be at a local restaurant.

After lunch, we will then drive through scenic countryside to Lopburi, the former summer capital of Siam. Artifacts of the Neolithic and Bronze Ages have been found in quantity in Lopburi, testifying to the antiquity of the city. From the 6th to 11th century, during the Dvaravati period, it was a major town.

You will see the magnificent stone carvings of Phra Prang Sam Yod, which is a 13th century laterite block shrine with three spires. Also included is a stop at the Kala shrine of Sarn Prakarn, which was a Buddhist sanctuary in the mid 13th century. Hundreds of monkeys have made this temple complex their home!

In the afternoon, you will drive further north to the town of Phitsanuloke which is spread along the banks of the Nan River, where numerous houseboats are moored. The shrine of Wat Mahathat in Phitsanuloke is venerated throughout Thailand and will provide you with an idea of the ancient style of Thai religious architecture. (L/D)
Accommodation : Amarin Lagoon or similar

Day 2 (Wednesday)

Phitsanuloke-Sukhothai-Sri Satchanalai-Chiang Rai

After breakfast, we visit Sukhothai, the ancient capital of Thailand in the 13th Century. The city was protected by no less than three rows of earthen ramparts and two moats, which enclosed the inner city. Admire beautiful standing Buddha statues as you explore the many ruined temples and monasteries.

About 55 km further north, we will visit Sri Satchanalai, which was Sukhothai's twin city. Lunch will be at a local restaurant.

This afternoon's drive takes us through rural Thailand and further north through jungle-clad hills. You will stop at the small town of Phayao, which dates back to the 11th century, to enjoy refreshments beside the lake.

Arrive in Chiang Rai in the late afternoon (B/L/D) *Accommodation: The Teak Garden Spa & Resort or similar*



Day 3 (Thursday)

Mae Salong-Mae Sai-Golden Triangle-Chiang Saen

North Thailand is famous for its colourful hill tribes and this morning we will board "pick-up" vans to climb narrow mountainous roads and visit several villages. The scenery is magnificent and we will enjoy mountain views from Doi Mae Salong, a Chinese settlement founded by Kuomintang soldiers who fled from China after Mao Tse Tung's victory in 1949. Some interesting Chinese hotel medicines are on sale here!

Stops are included at Akha and Yao Hill Tribe Villages, where the people continue to wear their fascinating traditional costumes and follow a very simple way of village life.

Return to the valley for lunch before driving to Mae Sai, Thailand's northernmost town near the Burma border. You can watch Thai and Burmese locals walking across the bridge separating the two countries. There are excellent opportunities to buy Burmese handicrafts at reasonable prices.

This is possibility for optional Burma Border crossing for approximately one hour walk to explore inside Burma (SUBJECT TO LOCAL BORDER SITUATION) or take a rickshaw ride around the market place. (Note: Two photocopies of your passport are required along with border pass fee if we can cross into Burma).

From Mae Sai, we will drive to the heart of the renowned Golden Triangle where the Ruak and Mekong Rivers meet. You can stand on a hilltop and enjoy views over Burma, Laos, Thailand and the mighty Mekong River. An optional boat trip will be available for those who want to get closer to Laos and Burma! Visit Chiang Saen, where evidence of the original 13th century city can still be seen. We will enjoy this lovely setting on the banks of the Mekong River; a tranquil spot with charming old temples and finely carved figures. Drive back to Chiang Rai for overnight. (B/L/D) *Accommodation: The Teak Garden Spa & Resort or similar*

Day 4 (Friday) Chiang Rai-Chiang Mai

After breakfast, depart Chiang Rai for Chiang Mai stopping on the way at Mae Ka Chan, famous for a hot spring which is a favourite bathing place for local people who believe it relieves their aches and pains. Lunch will be at a local restaurant. In the afternoon, you will drive through splendid mountain scenery and tropical jungle to the “Rose of the North” - Chiang Mai. Before arriving in the town, it will be your turn to work! Climb 290 steps to visit the hilltop temple of Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep which offers spectacular views of the Chiang Mai area (the less energetic will be pleased to know that there is a cable car up the hill!)

Tonight, you will be treated to the ceremonial northern Thai dinner, known as Kantoke. Traditional dishes will be served while you watch elegant dancers performing a series of folk stories. Colourfully dressed, Hill tribes will perform their own traditional dances after dinner. (B/L/D). *Accommodation: Empress Hotel or Chiangmai Orchid Hotel*

Day 5 (Saturday) Chiang Mai

A full day to enjoy the delights of Chiang Mai! In the morning we will visit one of the elephant camps where skilled “mahouts” show how elephants have worked in the jungles for centuries. You will be amazed by their strength and deftness. There will also be the chance to see the elephants relaxing as they bathe in the river!

We will have lunch at a local restaurant before heading out of town to the district of Sankampaeng, home to Chiang Mai’s famous cottage industries. Watch how artisans continue to make their products by hand and you will of course have the opportunity to hunt for that perfect souvenir! See silkworms and the process of spinning silk as well as the art of using handlooms to make intricate patterned silk fabrics. Marvel at the transformation of bamboo, silk and paper into hand-painted multi-coloured umbrellas and at skilled potters creating distinctive Thai celadon. Wood carvers are chipping away busily at teakwood to produce elegant ornaments and furniture. The process of making lacquerware is fascinating to watch too. They even use egg shells to create unusual designs. And of course there are silver items-plenty to tempt even the cautious shopper! (B/L/D)*Accommodation: Empress Hotel or Chiangmai Orchid Hotel*

Day 6 (Sunday) Chiang Mai

You can choose to spend a few days more exploring Chiang Mai or return to Bangkok by air or rail (cost not included) (B)

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE US TO INCLUDE THIS ARRANGEMENT IN YOUR ITINERARY
PLEASE CALL FOR COSTS AND FURTHER DETAILS**

