



ROMANTIC THAILAND – HONEYMOON AND SPECIAL ADVENTURE



Includes

Transfers

Arrival and departure airport transfers are included in this tour

Escorted

Private local English-speaking guides on all tours mentioned as part of the itinerary. Private local trekking guide for hill tribe trek.

Transport

Private air-conditioned vehicles, domestic flights, First Class overnight train.

Activities

Extensive walking at sites, hill tribe trek, elephant ride, bamboo rafting.

Accommodation

5 nights luxury hotels (Bangkok & Chiang Mai), 3 nights boutique beach resort hotel (Railay Bay or Ao Nang, Krabi), 1 night aboard the Mekhala converted rice barge, 1 night basic shared accommodation on hill tribe trek, 1 overnight train, 1 night floating bungalows, 1 night resort (Kanchanaburi)

Meals

As per itinerary. B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner.

Entrance Fees

Included for all sites as part of the itinerary.

*Please note that these itineraries can be tailored to suit your dates, duration and budget. This tour can depart on any day. Ask for more details on quotation.

Itinerary

Thailand is quintessential Asia – a land of smiling faces and serene monks, exotic cuisine and colourful markets. Home to tranquil temples, fabulous jungle-clad mountains and the world's most beautiful islands, you'll embark upon a romantic adventure taking in the bustling streets of Bangkok and the colourful hill tribes in the north, ending the trip on a stunning tropical island lapped by warm turquoise waters.

Highlights

- Experience a hill tribe trek
- Go elephant riding and bamboo rafting
- Explore the exciting night markets in Chiang Mai
- Laze on the idyllic beaches of Railay Bay

DAY 1 - BANGKOK

Arrive in Bangkok Airport and transfer to your hotel.

Bangkok

A city of contrasts, Bangkok is both a modern urban sprawl and a series of small side streets where the shopkeepers and restaurant owners know as much about the gossip of the street as rice farmers or elephant keepers in rural villages. It's a hugely cosmopolitan city, with Arab, Indian and Chinese areas where you can be fitted for a linen suit by an Indian tailor, hear the call to prayer from a mosque or dine out in restaurants serving every conceivable kind of cuisine. The public ferryboats that cruise up and down the Chao Phraya River offer a good way to get around the city, and smaller longtail boats travel along the city's many klongs, or canals. For a view across the city, the Golden Mount is a temple on top of a hill which looks out across Bangkok. Head into the markets to pick up some bargains, dine out in the countless cafes and restaurants in every neighbourhood and just lose yourself in this remarkable city.

Royal Princess Hotel, Deluxe room

Royal Princess Larn Luang is a four-star hotel located in Bangkok's Rattanakosin Island, a historic district of Thailand's capital. Designed for business and leisure travellers alike, Royal Princess Larn Luang is situated on Larn Luang Road, just 20 kilometres from Bangkok International Airport and close to many of the premier attractions in Bangkok. Hotel guests are in a prime position to witness famous Bangkok sights such as the Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha as well as being conveniently close to Bangkok city centre.

For maximum comfort during your Bangkok hotel stay, Royal Princess Larn Luang offers 168 superbly furnished guest rooms with a thoughtful host of amenities alongside traditional Bangkok hospitality. All rooms at Royal Princess Larn Luang are equipped with internet connection, a minibar and a private balcony.

DAY 2 - BANGKOK

Morning at leisure. Afternoon private guided tour of the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Keow. Continue to Wat Pho to visit the reclining Buddha and experience a traditional Thai massage. (B)

Overnight as before at the Royal Princess Hotel.

Grand Palace & Wat Pra Keow

Your first sight of the magnificent Grand Palace and Wat Pra Keow will take your breath away. Although Thailand has many temples and palaces, these two are surely the most visited and highly respected in the region. They were built in 1782 as the royal residential complex of King Rama I and the resting place of the well travelled and sacred Emerald Buddha. After this, every time you see a saffron clad monk anywhere else in Thailand it will almost certainly take you back to your first visit to Wat Pra Keow and remind you of its wonderful peace and serenity.

Wat Pho

Wat Pho is also known as the Temple of the Reclining Buddha, named for the statue for which it is famous. The 46 by 15 metre gold covered Buddha is a fabulous sight with his massive mother of pearl inlaid soles displaying the 108 auspicious signs of the Buddha. Also respected as a centre for traditional Thai massage it is here that many people come to relieve the strains of modern life.

DAY 3 – MEKHALA RICE BARGE CRUISE

Free morning to relax by the pool or do some shopping. In the afternoon, transfer to the Mekhala, a beautifully restored rice barge and cruise up the mighty 'River of Kings' towards Ayuthaya. You will stop in a romantic setting for a cocktail as you watch the sun set. (BD)

Overnight on board the Mekhala.

Mekhala

The Mekhala is a traditional teak-wood rice barge which has been beautifully converted into a luxurious boutique hotel, with just 6 private cabins. Cruising between Bangkok and Ayuthaya, the shallow draft of the boat allows it to drift through the shallows, offering a glimpse of traditional life along the banks of the river; traditional wooden houses, lush green jungle, remote but ornate temples and children playing. Dinner is served by candlelight on the deck of the boat, and will be a delicious Thai feast.

DAY 4 - BANGKOK

Disembarking the Mekhala you are transferred back to Bangkok* where you will have a free day to further explore or relax at your leisure. (B)

Overnight at the Royal Princess Hotel.

**We have built this extra day in Bangkok into your itinerary as the date of the Mekhala cruise can be subject to change. Therefore by leaving you days in Bangkok the days before and after the cruise is scheduled this means that should it be re-arranged then your itinerary should not be significantly disrupted.*

DAY 5 - BANGKOK – CHIANG MAI

After breakfast today you transfer to Bangkok airport for a domestic flight to Chiang Mai. On arrival, transfer to the Manathai Village Hotel, in the heart of Chiang Mai. In the afternoon your guide will escort you up to the hilltop temple of Doi Suthep. (B,L)

Chiang Mai

Chiang Mai, home of the Lanna kingdom, is often referred to as the 'Rose of the North', and you'll see why after just a few hours in this charming city. It is only a fraction of the size of Bangkok so it's easily accessible on foot, by tuk tuk or songthaew. The cooler temperatures also make it easy to wile away hours just strolling from wat to café to craft shop to massage centre in the old walled city. The night market is another 'must' while in town, but if you are tired of shopping there's lots of excellent bars, restaurants, live music, Thai boxing and cabaret shows to keep you entertained.

Doi Suthep

The temple of Doi Suthep is perched on top of a forested hill just outside Chiang Mai. Legend tells that King Ku Na travelled north from Sukhothai on a white elephant carrying a relic of the Lord Buddha. He let the elephant roam freely, having given it the task of finding a suitable site for a shrine to house the holy relic, and it finally collapsed on the mountain of Doi Suthep. Accordingly, the King ordered a striking gold plated shrine to be built for the holy relic on this spot and a beautiful temple and monastery were also added to the site. The site can be reached either by cable car or an impressive 300-step staircase flanked by ornate nagas (mythical serpents). The entire area shines with intricate gold decorations, even more beautiful when seen with a perfect sky-blue

background. An occasional monk might wander by, amidst the people who are praying, clutching lotus flower offerings and scented incense. Inside is a large decorated room which holds around one hundred Buddha images. Many people have their fortune told by throwing lucky sticks at the feet of a Buddha image; the first stick to be picked determines their future. From the edge of the temple walls you can see the most magnificent views of the city, surrounded by the rolling hills of northern Thailand.

Manathai Village Hotel, Junior Suite

"A beautiful little gem", is but one of the many ways guests have described the Manathai Village, Chiang Mai. An intimate boutique hotel, tucked away on a small residential Soi, in the very heart of Chiang Mai, where centuries old temples mix with architecture that reflects the passage of time and history.

Each of the 29 beautifully appointed Guest Houses are tastefully furnished reflecting a classical Thai style, skilfully infused with Thai Heritage elegance and at the same time possessing its own unique personality.

The Guest Houses encircle the refreshing centre pool and the natural flowing gardens and are next to the 100 year old Main House that immediately sets the tone of serenity, service and friendship for which the Manathai Village is known.

The Village is a fusion of contemporary and classical Thai Heritage with natural textures, woods and Thai fabrics, and with features, such as beamed ceilings and teak panelled sliding doors, showing an attention to detail that you will find quite exceptional. All furnishings and fixtures are authentically local northern Thai, many handmade and one of a kind.

The overall sensation is sensual and comfortable. A perfect setting for an unforgettable holiday or romantic get-away.

DAY 6 - CHIANG MAI – TRIBAL MOUNTAIN VILLAGE

Your day starts with a visit to an elephant training camp where you can see how these enormous creatures are trained for working in the jungle. After lunch you continue by pickup truck to a small tribal village from where you continue on foot through mountainous terrain – although the walking is easy – to a Palong village. You will spend the night in a traditional village house. (BLD)

The Palong are a Mon-Khmer Tribe from Burma and have only recently come to settle in Thailand. Their main livelihood is the cultivation of tanatep, a large leaf to wrap Burmese cigars. The Palong are easily recognised by the striking costume of their women – a red sarong, a blue jacket with red collar and a broad silver waistband. Other hill tribes in the area include the Karen, Lahu and Lisu, semi-nomadic peoples who began arriving in Thailand at the end of the 19th century after being pushed out of their native Tibet, Myanmar and China by civil war and political pressures. The hill tribes are unique, differing linguistically, ethnically, culturally and religiously from each other as much as they do from the Thais. It is often mistakenly believed that the hill tribes lead simple yet idyllic lives, unaffected by modern advances and global or even national concerns. In fact, they suffer from a lack of education and healthcare while competing pressure on land is drawing them into the Thai market economy. Our visits help to bring them an important source of income.

DAY 7 - ELEPHANT RIDE & BAMBOO RAFTING

After breakfast, board an elephant for a short ride through the jungle to a small river. You will then continue by bamboo raft down the river. Later return via an orchid garden and butterfly farm to Chiang Mai. (BL)

Overnight at the Manathai Village Hotel.

Bamboo Rafting

Depending on water levels the rafting can range from a relaxing float taking in the sounds and sights of the jungle to an exhilarating ride negotiating boulders and rapids as you dodge the overhanging trees. Your guides will advise you on the best spots to jump in the river for a quick cool off. If you're lucky you may see elephants wading through the water, water buffalo submerged in the mud holes and local people fishing as you glide past. Waterproof cameras are advised!

DAY 8 – CHIANG MAI – NIGHT TRAIN

A free day to wander along the river or take in any of the great restaurants that abound in Chiang Mai. Later this afternoon you will be transferred to the train station for your first class overnight train to Bangkok. (B)

Overnight on board the train.

1st class sleeping-cars are modern and air-conditioned, with lockable 2-berth compartments with washbasin. Clean bedding, soap & towels are provided. The toilet at the end of the car even has a shower (cold water, but very welcome). The berths convert to a sofa for evening & morning use. A steward or stewardess from the restaurant car will come round and take your food or drink order, which will be delivered to your compartment. You'll be offered a set menu with a few choices, around 180 baht for dinner and 100 baht for breakfast.

DAY 9 – DEPARTURE TO KANCHANABURI

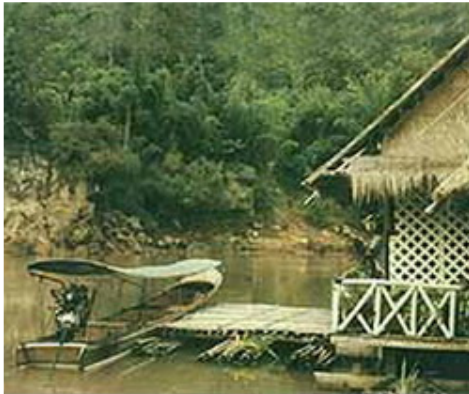
Around 06.40am today you will be transferred to the Hualumphong Train station and travel to Kanchanaburi and the River Kwai (less than three hours from Bangkok). En-route you will stop to board a long tail boat for a one-hour ride through the canals to the floating market of Damnoen Saduak. You also visit the spectacular Khao Bin cave and a pottery village before arriving at Kanchanaburi.

After lunch, proceed to the landing at Pak Saeng, where a long tail boat takes you, along the River Kwai, to the Floatel.

It is also possible to take an elephant ride, see a Burmese Mon dancing display or swim in the river. (B)

Overnight in floating bungalows.

The floating bungalows are built on bamboo-rafts surrounded by magnificent jungle. The accommodation is basic but does have private bath and shower. There is no electricity but the oil lamps create a very cosy atmosphere.



DAY 10 – BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER KWAI

Today you go to Nam Tok, the end of the Burmese railway. From here you take a slow local train along the notorious "Death Railway".

The scenery is stunning and you can enjoy spectacular views until you arrive after two hours later at the Bridge over the River Kwai. Here you visit the war cemetery and the JEATH museum. (B,L)

Overnight at the Mida Resort.

Mida Resort, Kanchanaburi

Welcome to Mida Resort Kanchanaburi. The perfect place for you to unwind and indulge in the natural beauty that is Kanchanaburi. This tranquil resort is serenely situated off the Srinakarin Dam Highway, near downtown Kanchanaburi.

DAY 11 - NATIONAL PARK – WATERFALLS - KRABI

The last day of your River Kwai adventure - you drive to the nearby National Park and visit the waterfalls, where you can swim or walk to the top of the falls.

On the way back to Bangkok you visit the Chedi of Nakhon Pathom (the tallest Buddhist monument in the world). At around 16:00hrs you will be transferred to the airport for your domestic flight to Krabi. On arrival, transfer to your hotel.

Overnight at Railay Bay Resort & Spa, Suite Cottage.

Railay Bay Resort & Spa

Located on Railay Beach in the Krabi province of Thailand, the resort provides maximum comfort with 130 rooms. The resort is set in lush gardens stretching from west to east Railay with plenty of coconut trees and tropical fauna placed between the bungalows and walkways to ensure that you will never find yourself in less than beautiful surroundings.

The resort's rooms and suites are the perfect place to relax after a fun-filled day. The 3 suites overlook the pristine ocean and the white sand beach. The other rooms are located perfectly among the landscaped gardens. The attention to detail and amenities in the rooms will provide a comfortable experience during your stay.

Each room is fully equipped with guest controlled air conditioning, coffee/tea maker, hair dryer, cable television, IDD telephone, and a personal in-room safe. The marble bathroom features a separate shower and bath.

DAY 12 TO DAY 13 – RAILAY BAY

Two full days to relax and unwind (B).

Overnight at Railay Bay Resort & Spa.

DAY 14 – RAILAY BAY – BANGKOK

Transfer to the airport for flight back to Bangkok and a connection to your international flight. (B)

This itinerary starts from £2395 per person.

Prices will depend on date of travel, inclusions and exclusions. Please contact us for details.

Itinerary Notes

** A supplement may apply at Christmas and Easter.*

** If the Mekhala date changes please note you will be informed in advance. We are usually given 2 weeks advance notice of any changes and you will be informed of the itinerary amendment.*