

A Portrait of Thailand

Country(ies): Thailand

Tour type: Escorted

Transport: A/C minibus, flight, boat

Group size: Min: 6 | Max: 16

Days: 9 Days

Start location: Bangkok, Thailand

End location: Bangkok, Thailand

Departs On: Saturday

Meals: Breakfasts - 6, Lunches - 3, Dinners - 6

Highlights: Photography workshops with Me Ra Koh and Brian Tausend, Phu Chasai Mountain resort, Yi Peng & Loy Krathong festival of lights, Elephant Sanctuary, Khao Sok National Park, Snorkel/Diving Excursion, White Beaches at Mystery Location

Places Visited: Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Surat Thani & Khao Sok NP



Itinerary

Day 0: Depart home and fly to Thailand

Those travelling to the tour on flights from the west will generally always need to depart a day early. Flights are available from a range of airports on request.

OVERNIGHT: On flight

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: None

Day 1: Arrive in Thailand, Fly to Chiang Rai, to the jungle

This morning we transfer from our hotel to the airport and take a short flight north to Chiang Rai. You're met on your arrival, and we drive up into the hills to the gorgeous Phu Chasai Mountain Resort. Me Ra and Brian have stayed here on several occasions and fell in LOVE with it! They love the tranquility and beauty of the location, the friendly staff, and the great food!

There will be time in the afternoon today to look around the resort, start some photography exercises, and take a horse ride or enjoy some spa treatments if you wish.

OVERNIGHT: Chiang Rai hillside resort

MEALS: Dinner

EXTRAS: Single Room Supplement (THETPT)

Day 2: Phu Chasai Mountain Resort - various activities

Wake this morning in your bamboo cottage to a beautiful misty view over the rolling hills and valleys that stretch away from the resort. You'll discover first hand why this place is called "Mountain of the Clear Heart".

Me Ra and Brian will lead a first photography workshop after a leisurely breakfast and outline their plan for working on your photography techniques, composition and learning over the week ahead. The rest of the day is spent in and around the resort. Me Ra and Brian will choose from a range of activities to suit the group and the current weather and light conditions. These activities may include visiting the local market with one of the hotel chefs to guide you, learning about the exotic vegetation from a local favorite and friend, visiting the resort's own tea plantation, taking an easy walk on trails around the estate to rivers and waterfalls, or taking a fun cooking course. Mongolian horseback riding, a beautiful pool, and spa treatments are also available this morning. Throughout the day, you'll work on various photography exercises, and meet in the evening to review your images before enjoying a delicious evening meal together.

OVERNIGHT: Chiang Rai hillside resort

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 3: To Chiang Mai. Evening Yi Peng Lantern Release event

We leave Phu Chasai reluctantly this morning and drive down out of the hills and head towards Chiang Mai, around 4-5 hrs away. It's a lovely scenic drive past lush rice paddies, and we'll make several stops for gorgeous photos. This will include a visit to Wat Rong Khun, the White Temple, one of the most famous temples in Thailand. The brainchild of celebrated Thai artist Chaloomchai Khositphiphat, this all-white temple is ornately sculptured featuring

many gargoyles and murals depicting masses of people seeking the pits of hell through their willful misdeeds.

After we arrive in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand's most famous small city, we check into our hotel and make a quick turnaround before we head out again at 2.30pm for the evening's events. This tour has been timed to fit in with the Yi Peng / Loy Krathong EPIC lantern festival in Chiang Mai. This is a very special time of year throughout Thailand, and the festival is celebrated more in Chiang Mai than anywhere else.

A rough schedule for the evening is shown below:

2.30 pm : Depart the hotel

4:00 pm : Arrive at Lanna Dhutanga : Receive souvenir / Enjoy authentic Lanna Thai snacks, desserts and beverages. Enjoy seeing a Lanna & hill tribe cultural exhibition by scholarship students sponsored by the foundation / take photos / use the restroom at your convenience.

5:00 pm : Opening Ceremony Speech by the President of Doungtawan Santipap (The Sun of Peace) Foundation and the organizing committee who welcome all guests to the event.

5:30 pm : Break for the bathroom

6:00 pm : All honorable guests and tourists enter the ceremony area. Ceremony regulatory announcement by MC

6:30 pm : Chanting and Meditation led by the chairman of the sangkha

7:00 pm : Circumambulation Ceremony

7:30 pm : Lighting Ceremony

8:00 pm : Dhammachai sky lanterns releasing ceremony to pay homage to the Lord Buddha.

8.30 pm : End of the ceremony

8.45 pm : Depart for Chiang Mai

9.45-10 pm : Arrive back at the hotel. The hotel is arranging a special festival Gala Dinner this evening, and while we will have missed the meal, if other events are still continuing you may join these as this is covered in your room rate.

Important Notes:

- Tickets are non-refundable if the event does not go ahead
- Alcohol is prohibited
- Participants are kindly requested to dress in polite clothing.
- Please participate in religious activities with respect and peace for the sanctity of the ceremony.
- No drinking alcohol & No Smoking in the temple.

Photography: - You are not allowed to enter the ceremony area to take photos - You are only allowed to take photos from the seating area but not allowed to use selfie sticks, ladders, tripods, dolly equipment.

Tidiness: The highlights of this event are the Buddhist ritual including chanting, meditation and launching lanterns for peace. Please follow strictly to the instructions of the announcer for serenity and safety.

OVERNIGHT: Chiang Mai hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 4: Elephant Nature Park. Loy Krathong festival

Today we enjoy a full day visit to Elephant Nature Park; a natural home and sanctuary for elephants, buffalos, exotic birds and many other rescued animals. Our visit starts with a picturesque drive through Thailand's rural countryside. We'll hear the moving stories of rescued and orphaned elephants and witness how they have become a proud herd, free from abuse for the first time in their lives. Me Ra and Brian have supported the rescuing of elephants for years, and they know this experience will be magical. Past attendees have said this was one of their favorite, most moving days to the Elephant Nature Park. It is rewarding, inspiring and relaxing. We'll observe free roaming elephants (no riding) and other rescued animals enjoying the natural surroundings of the sanctuary. You will have the opportunity to feed, walk alongside, and help bathe the elephants in the river as they splash around. If going into the river is not for you then photograph the elephants from the bank as they play and bathe while you stay dry. Bring your wide-angle lens to capture these magnificent, gentle giants. Your visit helps support regional projects and offers an invaluable opportunity of helping elephant conservation.

*Park visits are all about spending quality time observing and being with the herd. We do not adhere to a strict schedule; the best way to make the most of your day's visit is to relax, watch, and learn from the elephants. Some fantastic photos are guaranteed here.

Back in Chiang Mai, you can head into town to enjoy more of the festival, perhaps making your own Krathongs and releasing them onto the river. There are sure to be some fantastic photo opportunities in town this evening. However, we have a very early start tomorrow morning, so please check out of your hotel room and pay all bills this evening, and aim for an early night.

OVERNIGHT: Chiang Mai hotel

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 5: Fly to Surat Thani, and on to Khao Sok National Park

We have a very early start this morning to make the most of our destination today as this second half of the tour takes you to more remote, exotic places. So, set your alarm and be ready to leave the hotel by 04.30am to head to the airport for a direct, short flight with Thai Air Asia to Surat Thani. Breakfast will be included on the plane.

On arrival we transfer to Khao Sok National Park (Cheaw Lan Lake) - approx. 2 hours drive away - and go off-the-beaten path to another of Me Ra and Brian's favorite places in Thailand. The spectacular scenery of Khao Sok National Park is formed by the erosion of limestone karsts and these rocky outcrops jut out amongst the lush jungle and forests surrounding the lake. Me Ra's family calls Khao Sok National Park "Jurassic Park" because when the longtail boat takes you between the limestone cliffs to your floating raft houses for the night, you will feel like you've reached the end of the world! Bring your telephoto lens and learn how to capture wildlife in their natural habitat, as well as the breathtaking scenery of the jungle (wildlife often spotted in Khao Sok includes Gibbon Apes, Great Hornbills, Wild Boar, Wild Elephants, various monkeys, and more!). Here you can also enjoy swimming, kayaking, floating in an inner tube and soaking in the surrounding sounds of the jungle.

Our accommodation for this night is one of the highlights of the tour, as we stay in basic but comfortable floating raft houses. The towering cliffs surrounding us in this remote part of the forest means we are happy to offer you NO WiFi; in fact no internet, no telephone signal and no electricity (except for a few hours at night)! What we DO offer you is the chance to enjoy one of the most natural, peaceful places in the world. Though peaceful doesn't actually mean quiet...the jungle is full of amazing sounds even at night!

OVERNIGHT: Raft houses

MEALS: Breakfast, Dinner

EXTRAS: None

Day 6: Khao Sok National Park, to the Beach

Your adventure on the lake continues this morning with a short jungle trek, and then a fun bamboo raft trip to visit "Coral Cave". Inside the cave you will see stalactites and stalagmites that look remarkably like coral reefs. Wear your bathing suit under your clothes and jump in the lake if you feel daring! But keep your eyes and ears open for Gibbon Ape families that sing beautiful songs throughout the jungle's canopy. This place is magical.

After lunch we leave the lake and head to the coast and to our final destination of the tour. We're keeping your accommodation and location for the next few days a surprise. Me Ra and Brian have spent weeks and weeks at this place, and love it so much, they just have to keep it secret! Suffice to say, it's one of the most beautiful beaches in the world, with gorgeous accommodation and great spots to eat and drink while you enjoy the sunsets just steps from your door.

OVERNIGHT: Mystery location

MEALS: Breakfast, Lunch

EXTRAS: None

Day 7: Sunset snorkelling cruise

Our adventure continues today with a free morning on the beach and then a sunset boat trip to the scenic islands off the coast. We'll board a wooden Siamese Junk and head out to see 5 islands - Poda, Tup, Si, Ta Ming, Wasam & Gai where spend the afternoon swimming, snorkelling, kayaking and paddle boarding whilst taking in the breathtaking scenery of the surrounding islands. At sunset we have a mouth watering Thai Buffet and end the day swimming in the bioluminescent waters next to Pranang Beach. (Note, the itinerary for today will vary depending on tides and the time of the month).

Me Ra and Brian have brought you to this part of Thailand because it's not only a gorgeous place but one of the very best places in the world to snorkel or dive! If you think snorkeling in Hawaii or Mexico was wonderful, you haven't seen anything yet! We recommend you bring a rent or buy an underwater housing unit for your camera or an underwater point-and-shoot for this day. Brian and Me Ra will teach you specific shooting techniques for being underwater; how to use White Balance for best color, photo tips to getting great shots of sea life (and yourself!) during this unforgettable, dreamy, all day excursion.

This evening you could relax on your own or with some of your new friends or feel free to stick with Me Ra and Brian. Have a cocktail on the beach as you watch the magnificent sunset. Later, those interested can set up their tripods for a special night photography lesson with Brian on time lapse, shooting stars, night landscape and light motion.

OVERNIGHT: Mystery location

MEALS: Dinner

EXTRAS: Ko Phi Phi extension

Day 8: Free day by the sea

Your day is free to relax on the beach and explore your beautiful surroundings. For the adventurous, there will be an option to go rock climbing with Me Ra and Brian in the morning/early afternoon. This is not included in the tour, but we highly suggest you joining them. Beginners welcome! This area is one of the top places in the world to rock climb, and if Me Ra can do it with her fear of heights...we know you can too. Or, find your perfect spot and relax on the beach with a coconut smoothie. There's plenty of time to meet and review favorite images and have a last Q&A with Me Ra and Brian.

This evening we'll head out for a sumptuous, final, Thai cuisine, group dinner and look back on what we've enjoyed and seen. We'll reflect on your photography skills and how your knowledge has developed. And be on the lookout, there may be a few, final surprises from Me Ra and Brian!

Now...where to next with your camera and Me Ra and Brian to guide you!

OVERNIGHT: Mystery location

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: None

Day 9: Departure transfer to Krabi or Phuket airport

Your time is free today until we transfer you to the airport for your departure flight. Our location allows for transfers to both Krabi and Phuket airports. If you'd like assistance with flights, please don't hesitate to ask.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: None

EXTRAS: None

Included

- Photo workshops, hands-on instruction, tuition and mentoring by Me Ra Koh and Brian Tausend
- Airport departure transfers to Krabi (KBV) or Phuket airports (HKT)
- Internal flights from Bangkok to Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai to Surat Thani
- 2 nights' accommodation in Phu Chasai Mountain Resort & Spa in double/twin room on full board basis
- 2 nights' accommodation in boutique style hotel in Chiang Mai in double/twin room on breakfast only basis
- 1 night's accommodation in basic floating raft houses in Khao Sok in double/twin room on full board basis
- 3 nights' accommodation in a mystery location in double/twin room on room only basis
- All other meals as detailed in the itinerary
- Tours and transfers as mentioned by private a/c coach with driver
- Full day visit to Elephant Nature Park
- Hotel city taxes

Excluded

- International flights (available on request)
- Travel Insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for tour guides, drivers, restaurants etc.
- Any other items not mentioned above

Notes

Me Ra and Brian will host a couple of group calls prior to the trip to answer any questions and prep you with a list of suggested camera gear. Many of our students also have fun renting camera equipment for the trip. You don't need a fancy camera or lens to have the most amazing experiences or to take some great photos. As long as your camera is a DSLR (you are able to switch lenses), you're good to go! If you need suggestions on a new camera purchase, we are more than happy to help too.

Note: The final itinerary and accommodations used are subject to minor alterations subject to availability and the final make up of the group.

Deposit payments are US\$500 to secure your place, with final balance payments due 8 weeks before departure.

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting.

However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements.

Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

Single Room Supplement (THETPT)

Min numbers: 2 Adults

Price: \$645.00

This option books a single room in all the accommodation throughout the tour. If you are a single traveller and would be happy to share a room, let us know and we will see if we can pair you up with another single traveller of the same sex. If a room share is not available when you book then we will add the single room supplement to your booking and it will be payable with your balance payment unless we have arranged a room share for you by then. If a room share is arranged after you have paid the supplement then we will refund it to you. Room shares are arranged in order of booking.

Tour Notes

1. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

Most of our Thailand tours start and finish in Bangkok, and include an arrival and departure airport transfer from/to Bangkok international airport (BKK). However, some tours also finish on one of Thailand's islands. Transfers back to Bangkok or to one of the nearby island airports can be arranged on request.

2. Culture and Customs

Dress code

The Thai people consider dressing appropriately to be important and respectful, so please follow their example. This means covering up your swimwear while not on the beach or by the pool, and while shorts and T-shirts are fine, please try not to look scruffy. Remember to take your shoes off before entering local houses or any religious buildings.

Temple etiquette

When entering temples you should wear clothes that cover your knees and shoulders. Women may be asked to wear long skirts, not trousers, and shorts are not appropriate for either sex. You may wear a shawl to cover up and these are sometimes available to hire before entry. Again please take your shoes off before entering.

Buddhist Culture

Thailand is a Buddhist country and Buddhism permeates nearly all aspects of society and culture, resulting in a country with different customs to much of the West. Rudeness and disrespect are frowned upon and you will be judged on your behaviour. Some tips for behaviour to avoid causing offence are; do not touch other people with your feet, point your feet at Buddhist statues or shrines (be careful of this when you sit), and don't touch the head of someone you don't know well. Public displays of affection are frowned upon, so save these until you are in private. You'll find being polite using a few Thai words will really pay dividends (thank you is Kawp Khun Kaa if you are female, and Kawp Khun Kraap if you are male. Your tour guide will provide more information and advice while you are on the tour; please don't hesitate to ask them any questions or for advice.

The Royal Family

The Thai people have huge respect for their Royal Family and this is enshrined in many laws as well. You should bear this in mind when speaking to Thai people and in simple things like remembering that Thai paper money has the King's face on and should therefore be treated carefully.

Drugs and Alcohol

Drugs are illegal in Thailand and heavy penalties including very large fines and jail time can be imposed. Don't think that because you are a tourist you are exempt or will be treated differently. Drinking is legal and you should not worry about having a few beers or cocktails while on tour. However remember to be respectful to your surroundings, fellow group members and the local population.

3. Entrance Fees

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. You will need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit.

4. Tipping

Tipping is not part of Thai culture but has become customary but not compulsory in the tourist and service industry. Tipping is always optional, and any amounts paid should reflect excellent service. You may therefore wish to tip your guide and driver at the end of the tour. You should not feel obliged to tip any particular amount, and should consider your personal budget. We are often asked to provide a guide however, and can suggest that approx. GBP 5 / USD 8 per person per day would be appropriate.

5. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

Thailand: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

Vietnam: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

Cambodia: Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

Laos: Additional vaccinations: Diptheria, Poliomyelitis, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

The above information can change at short notice. For up to date health information & vaccination requirements we recommend that you contact your medical practitioner or a travel clinic.

Malaria: Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting.

Yellow Fever: This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view a [World Health Organisation map](#) of areas where the virus is present in monkeys and therefore a potential risk to humans. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

6. Passports and Visas - Thailand

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

Most foreign nationals (including UK, EU, USA, CA, AU, NZ, SA) are granted a visa exemption on arrival for stays in the country of up to 30 days. If you are looking to spend longer in Thailand then you will need to leave the country and re-enter to extend your stay. We strongly recommend arranging your visa in advance if you would like to stay longer than 30 days in Thailand.

7. Time

The time in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos is GMT plus 7 hours. Daylight saving adjustments are not observed.

8. Voltage

Sockets are two round or flat pronged and 220 volts (Type A, B, C). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already. If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

9. Money

The currency in Thailand is the Thai Baht (THB). You do not need to arrange to bring any Thai Baht with you to Thailand, as change facilities are readily available in the airport, hotels and banks. We recommend that you consider bringing both credit cards and some cash in a hard currency (e.g. GB Pounds, Euros, US Dollars).

ATMs are readily available in the arrivals hall of Bangkok airport and in most major towns. Many local shops in larger towns and resorts will accept VISA/Mastercard or Amex, but may charge fees of up to 10% - check before you pay. Travellers cheques are not recommended as they can not be changed in many places now, and can incur high fees.

For security we recommend that you use the safety deposit box in your hotel room or at the hotel reception if available. You should also be careful of pickpockets in crowded places, especially places like Khao San Road in Bangkok.

While in Thailand you will need sufficient funds to cover meals not included in the itinerary, drinks, snacks, souvenirs and personal expenses such as laundry. Check the Included/Excluded notes below the tour itinerary for more guidance. These should generally all be paid for in Thai Baht.

It is difficult to recommend a level of personal spending money which will suit everyone as this can differ greatly, but as a guideline, we would suggest allowing USD 15-25 per person per day as a minimum. Allow more if you plan on doing lots of shopping, or buying many alcoholic drinks.

10. What to take

Luggage: Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you to Thailand, though if your itinerary

has many stops and different travel included within it, we recommend packing light and not bring any large cases. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips – you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always hotel porters to assist.

Luggage limits: There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

Climate and Clothing: There are three reasonably well-defined seasons in Thailand, but unlike in Europe, where seasons are temperature based, Thailand is tropical and generally speaking warm all year round. Rains from the monsoon are the marker of seasons and the rainy season is from June to October. Pre-monsoon is from March to May, when the weather becomes progressively hotter. Post monsoon is from November to February when the weather is cooler. The range of temperature is more marked in the north where pre-monsoon can be very hot, though the heat is much drier than in the south. Winter in the north can feel cool, particularly in the mountains. Take light clothes with something warmer for the winter nights if you are travelling to the north. Some light raingear would be useful in the wet season.

Other items: We recommend you also bring:

- Cool footwear (sandals are ideal). If you are interested in exploring the reefs, a pair of reef shoes is recommended to avoid injuries. If you are trekking, then bring comfortable and sturdy walking shoes or light walking boots.
- Swimming costumes – rash-guards/t-shirts are recommended for snorkelling to avoid sunburn.
- Sunscreens, after sun lotions and personal hygiene products – Please adhere to 100ml restrictions for anything you wish to carry on hand-luggage on flights.
- Prescription medications (if required) – please bring supporting documents.
- Power adapter for phones, laptops etc
- Sunglasses and hats
- Basic first aid kit and toiletries
- Money belt
- Small torch
- Dive certification card and log book if you intend to participate in SCUBA diving.
- Sleeping bag if your tour includes any hill-tribe or village trekking

11. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

12. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and an ABTA Member (Y4447) and you can be confident when booking with us that your money is safe and protected.

Financial failure insurance is also provided through Affirma to protect all customers for the land portion of your tour. Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

13. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

14. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

www.twitter.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

15. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event). [More information...](#)

You may arrange your own insurance, or you can take advantage of a comprehensive policy that we can arrange for you through Endsleigh Insurance which has been designed to be suitable for our tours. The policy is available to travellers of all nationalities and you do not need to live in the UK to take out the policy. For full details of cover provided, prices and to apply for one of our policies, please complete [travel insurance application form](#).

Note: Any country that borders the Mediterranean is considered as 'Europe' for the purposes of travel insurance (including Turkey, Israel, Egypt and Morocco). If you are doing a tour that visits one country in 'Europe' and one that is 'Worldwide' (for example, an Egypt and Jordan tour), then you need a 'Worldwide' policy. When completing the form you should enter your travel dates including any extra days involved in overnight flights or connecting travel between your home and the tour. Our policies are not able to cover any extra time or activities other than your tour and options booked with us and your travel to & from home.

Note - to comply with insurance sales regulations, our travel insurance policies are only available to customers booking directly with us. If you have booked through a travel agent you will need to arrange your own insurance.

If you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally, or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

16. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print

of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.



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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
