ENCOUNTERS TRAVEL

Your passport to adventure

Thailand Encounters

COUNTRY(IES)	Thailand
TOUR TYPE	Private
TRANSPORT	A/C minibus & sleeper train
GROUP SIZE	Min: 2 | Max: 18
DURATION	12 days
STARTS	Bangkok, Thailand
ENDS	Bangkok, Thailand
MEALS	Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 3, Dinners - 3

TOUR ROUTE MAP **12 Days**



ROUTE: **Suvarnabhumi Airport** (Start) → **Bangkok** → **Kanchanaburi** → **Chiang Mai** → **Taeng River** → **Chiang Mai** → **Bangkok** (End)

HIGHLIGHTS

Floating markets in Bangkok, famous Death railway, Erawan Falls National Park, ancient Ayutthaya, trekking, bamboo rafting and hill tribe village around Chiang Mai

Itinerary

DAY 1 Arrive into Bangkok, transfer to hotel

Meet the transfer at Suvarnabhumi International Airport and travel directly to the Bangkok hotel. Once there, the remainder of the day is free with no included visits or activities. Independent exploration is possible but should not be described as part of the organised programme. The collection therefore functions as a straightforward international arrival and hotel transfer followed by unstructured leisure time in the capital.

ACTIVITIES

- **Arrive at Suvarnabhumi International Airport**
  Arrive at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok, Thailand to begin your tour. Meet your local representative and clear formalities before heading into the city.

- **Transfer from Bangkok Airport to Hotel**
  A road transfer from Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport into the city centre. Travel to your Bangkok hotel and settle in after your international journey.
- **Free Time in Bangkok**
  Enjoy free time in Bangkok, Thailand to rest after your flight or explore the streets near your hotel. Get a first feel for the capital's busy markets and vibrant atmosphere.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
Bangkok hotel	None	Single room supplement (THSGTE), Extra day in Bangkok - pre-tour

DAY 2 Bangkok, city tour

Spend the first part of the day among Bangkok’s royal and religious sites before continuing by boat through the Thonburi canals. Historic architecture provides the cultural focus early on, followed by a quieter look at riverside communities and urban water transport. The two parts of the day show both monumental and everyday sides of the capital.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Grand Palace in Bangkok**
  Visit the Grand Palace complex in central Bangkok, Thailand, home to royal halls and sacred temples. This landmark sits close to the Chao Phraya River and is one of the city's most important sights for the tour.
- **Explore Wat Pho in Bangkok**
  Explore Wat Pho in Bangkok, Thailand, home to the famous reclining Buddha and one of the city's oldest temple complexes. Wander through courtyards, chapels and stupas in this atmospheric riverside monastery.
- **Longtail Boat Cruise on Thonburi Canals**
  Board a longtail boat to cruise the canals of Thonburi on the west bank of Bangkok, Thailand. These waterways show quieter neighbourhoods and wooden houses that contrast with the modern city and add variety to the tour.
- **Explore Wat Arun in Bangkok**
  Visit Wat Arun, the Temple of Dawn, on the river in Bangkok, Thailand, with its steep central spire decorated in coloured ceramics. The temple stands on the Thonburi side of the Chao Phraya River and is a highlight of the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Bangkok hotel	Breakfast

DAY 3 Bangkok to Kanchanaburi

This journey travels west from Bangkok into the forested landscapes of Kanchanaburi, a region deeply connected to Thailand’s wartime history. The day follows historic transport routes linked to the River Kwai, combining overland travel with a memorable train journey. Visits to memorial sites provide insight into the human stories and legacy of the Second World War in this area. River travel introduces a quieter perspective on the landscape, shaped by waterways and jungle surroundings. The experience concludes with an overnight stay on a floating raft house, offering a peaceful setting immersed in nature.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Bangkok to Kanchanaburi**
  Drive west from Bangkok to Kanchanaburi in western Thailand, leaving the capital behind for a more rural province. The road journey sets up your visit to the famous River Kwai region on the tour.
- **Train Over the River Kwai in Kanchanaburi**
  Ride the historic railway across the River Kwai near Kanchanaburi, Thailand, learning about its wartime history. The line runs along riverside cliffs and over the bridge that has become a symbol of the area.
- **Explore Kanchanaburi War Cemetery**
  Visit the Allied War Cemetery in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, where many prisoners of war are buried. The peaceful site lies near the town centre and is a key stop for understanding the region's past on the tour.
- **Explore Kanchanaburi War Museum**
  Explore a local war museum in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, which tells the story of the Death Railway and River Kwai bridge. The museum stands close to the river and railway, making it easy to link with other sites.
- **River Kwai Boat Transfer to Floating Raft House on Kanchanaburi**
  Take a boat along the River Kwai in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, to reach your floating raft house accommodation. The short cruise gives you close views of the river scenery that surrounds this part of the tour.
- **Floating Raft House Stay in River Kwai, Kanchanaburi**
  Stay overnight in a floating raft house on the River Kwai near Kanchanaburi, Thailand. The simple lodge set on the river provides a memorable way to experience the jungle and river environment during the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Homestay	Breakfast,Dinner

DAY 4 Kanchanaburi, visit to Erawan Falls National Park

Visit Erawan Falls National Park before returning to Kanchanaburi. The source supports the waterfalls, jungle trails and freshwater pools but does not confirm swimming, guided hiking or a particular number of waterfall tiers visited. No additional Kanchanaburi sightseeing is specified after the return. The collection remains focused on the national park excursion and road journey back to town.

ACTIVITIES

- **Explore Erawan Falls National Park in Kanchanaburi**
  Spend time at Erawan National Park in Kanchanaburi Province, Thailand, famous for its tiered turquoise waterfalls. Forest trails and pools give you a natural break from towns and add a scenic highlight to the tour.
- **Return Journey to Kanchanaburi Town**
  Travel back from Erawan National Park to Kanchanaburi town in western Thailand. The drive returns you to your hotel base in Kanchanaburi at the end of the day's activities on the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Kanchanaburi hotel	Breakfast

DAY 5 Kanchanaburi, Ayutthaya tour, train to Chiang Mai

Leave Kanchanaburi for Ayutthaya and spend time exploring the historic park before boarding the overnight train north to Chiang Mai. The heritage visit fills the first part of the day, followed by the long rail journey into northern Thailand. The contrast between former royal capital and overnight travel gives the day a clear change of pace and setting.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Kanchanaburi to Ayutthaya**
  Drive from Kanchanaburi to Ayutthaya in central Thailand, moving from the river valley into a former royal capital. The road link connects two very different historic regions visited on the tour.
- **Ayutthaya Historical Park and Temples Tour**
  Explore Ayutthaya Historical Park in Ayutthaya, Thailand, visiting ancient temples and palace ruins from the former Siamese capital. The archaeological area lies on an island surrounded by rivers north of Bangkok and is a major cultural stop on the tour.
- **Train from Ayutthaya to Chiang Mai (Overnight Sleeper)**
  Board an overnight sleeper train from Ayutthaya to Chiang Mai in northern Thailand. The rail journey takes you up-country to the mountains, giving a different perspective on the country as the tour continues.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
On board sleeper train	Breakfast

DAY 6 Arrive in Chiang Mai, free day

Complete the overnight train journey and transfer from Chiang Mai railway station into the city. The remainder of the day is free, and suggestions such as the old city or cafés remain independent possibilities rather than included activities. No temple, market or evening programme is specified for this collection. The focus is therefore on the station transfer and an unstructured arrival period.

ACTIVITIES

- **Transfer from Chiang Mai Railway Station to Hotel**
  Travel from Chiang Mai Railway Station to your hotel in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The short transfer keeps you within the city and settles you into your new base for the next part of the tour.
- **Free Time in Chiang Mai**
  Enjoy free time in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to wander the old city, visit temples or relax at a café. This relaxed northern city provides a softer pace before you start trekking on the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Chiang Mai hotel	None

DAY 7 Chiang Mai, begin Trekking

This journey moves from the city of Chiang Mai into the rural highlands of northern Thailand, highlighting local markets, forested landscapes, and village life. The route passes through regional trading hubs before reaching waterfall sites surrounded by lush countryside. A guided trek through Huay Nam Dang National Park leads into remote hill-tribe areas shaped by farming and forest traditions. The experience emphasizes connection with nature and rural communities. The day concludes with an overnight stay in simple village huts, offering insight into daily life in the northern highlands.

ACTIVITIES

- **Drive from Chiang Mai to Mae Malai Market**
  Drive from Chiang Mai to Mae Malai Market in Chiang Mai Province, northern Thailand. The roadside market is a common starting point for treks into the surrounding hills on the tour.
- **Explore Mae Malai Local Market in Chiang Mai Region**
  Stroll through Mae Malai local market near Chiang Mai, Thailand, where villagers sell produce, spices and snacks. This colourful stop introduces you to daily life in the region before heading into the hills.
- **Explore Pang Lan Waterfalls in Chiang Mai Region**
  Visit the Pang Lan Waterfalls in the hills of Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. The forested falls offer a scenic break and a good starting point for the trekking section of the tour.
- **Trek from Huay Nam Dang National Park to Baan Mae Jok Village**
  Trek through Huay Nam Dang National Park in northern Thailand to reach Baan Mae Jok, a Karen hill-tribe village. The walk takes you into forested hills above Chiang Mai and brings you close to rural community life on the tour.
- **Overnight Stay in Baan Mae Jok Village Huts**
  Spend the night in simple village huts at Baan Mae Jok in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. This homestay-style stop lets you experience Karen village culture as part of the trekking section of the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Village huts	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 8 Forest trekking

This trekking day continues through the forested valleys of northern Thailand, linking remote hill villages with river landscapes. The route passes through farmland, jungle paths, and traditional settlements, reflecting the rural way of life in the Mae Taeng area. Walking trails highlight the connection between villages and natural resources that shape daily living. The journey gradually descends toward the river valley, where travel slows and the scenery opens out. The day ends with an overnight stay at a riverside rafting camp, offering a peaceful setting surrounded by nature.

ACTIVITIES

- **Trek from Baan Mae Jok Village to Baan Pa Khao Lam Village**
  Hike from Baan Mae Jok to Baan Pa Khao Lam through forest and farmland in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. The trail links two Karen villages and deepens your immersion in hill-tribe areas on the tour.
- **Trek from Baan Pa Khao Lam Village to Mae Taeng Rafting Camp**
  Continue trekking from Baan Pa Khao Lam to a rafting camp near the Mae Taeng River in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. The walk finishes close to the river where the next day's bamboo rafting begins on the tour.
- **Overnight Stay in Mae Taeng Rafting Camp Huts**
  Stay overnight in basic huts at a rafting camp near the Mae Taeng River in northern Thailand. The camp is set among forest and fields and serves as your base before rafting as part of the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Village huts	Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

DAY 9 Trekking and bamboo rafting

This experience combines river travel and cultural encounters in the Mae Taeng region of northern Thailand. A bamboo rafting journey follows the gentle flow of the Mae Taeng River, offering a relaxed perspective on the surrounding countryside. Visits to nearby hill-tribe villages provide insight into traditional lifestyles shaped by the landscape. The day balances time on the water with meaningful cultural exchange. A return drive to Chiang Mai brings the journey back to the city after time spent in rural northern Thailand.

ACTIVITIES

- **Bamboo Rafting in Mae Taeng River**
  Travel by bamboo raft along the Mae Taeng River in Chiang Mai Province, Thailand, passing jungle banks and small settlements. This relaxed river journey is a key adventure highlight of the tour.
- **Explore Hill in Tribe Villages – Mae Taeng Area**
  Make short stops at hill-tribe villages along the Mae Taeng River in northern Thailand. These visits show how local communities live beside the river and complement the rafting experience on the tour.
- **Drive from Mae Taeng to Chiang Mai**
  Drive from the Mae Taeng area back to Chiang Mai city in northern Thailand. The road brings you down from the

hills to your hotel at the end of the trekking and rafting section of the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Chiang Mai hotel	Breakfast,Lunch

DAY 10 — Chiang Mai, free day, overnight train to Bangkok.

Spend the daytime at leisure in Chiang Mai before the scheduled station transfer. In the evening, board the overnight sleeper train for Bangkok. Markets, cafés and neighbourhood exploration are independent options during the free time rather than included visits. The collection is therefore divided between an unstructured period in the city and the formal rail journey south, with no additional sightseeing guaranteed.

ACTIVITIES

- **Free Time in Chiang Mai**
  Enjoy free time in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to wander the old city, visit temples or relax at a café. This relaxed northern city provides a softer pace before you start trekking on the tour.
- **Travel from Chiang Mai Hotel to Railway Station**
  Transfer from your hotel in Chiang Mai to the railway station in the city. This short drive sets you up for the overnight train back to Bangkok as the tour heads south again.
- **Train from Chiang Mai to Bangkok (Overnight Sleeper)**
  Board an overnight sleeper train from Chiang Mai to Bangkok, travelling through central Thailand at night. The rail journey returns you to the capital ready for the final days of the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
On board sleeper train	Breakfast

DAY 11 — Arrive in Bangkok, free day

Complete the overnight train journey and transfer from Bangkok railway station to the hotel. No organised sightseeing is attached to the arrival period, so the rest of the day is free for personal plans or relaxation. Suggestions such as markets or riverside areas remain optional possibilities rather than included activities. The focus is on returning to the capital, completing the station transfer and allowing flexible time afterwards.

ACTIVITIES

- **Transfer from Bangkok Railway Station to Hotel**
  Travel from the railway station in Bangkok, Thailand, back to your hotel in the city. The transfer keeps everything simple after your overnight train ride on the tour.
- **Free Time in Bangkok**
  Enjoy free time in Bangkok, Thailand to rest after your flight or explore the streets near your hotel. Get a first

feel for the capital's busy markets and vibrant atmosphere.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS
Bangkok hotel	None

DAY 12 — Bangkok, departure transfer to the airport

Transfer from the Bangkok hotel to the international airport for departure. The final road journey connects the city directly with the terminal and provides a simple conclusion to the trip. Once at the airport, the arranged travel services come to an end and you can continue with your onward flight and personal travel plans.

ACTIVITIES

- **Travel from Bangkok Hotel to Airport**
  A road transfer from your Bangkok hotel to Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Thailand. Travel out of the city in time for your departing flight.
- **Depart from Bangkok International Airport**
  Depart from Bangkok International Airport in Thailand on your onward or homebound flight. This marks the conclusion of your time in the country with the tour.

OVERNIGHT	MEALS	EXTRAS
N/A	Breakfast	Extra day in Bangkok - post-tour

INCLUDED

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Services of a local tour guide during sightseeing and activities
- Admission fees, rucksack, water canteen and lifejacket are supplied for trekking.
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

EXCLUDED

- International Flights
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, get a quote here)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (eg. laundry)
- Tips for tour leader, rafting guide and park guide
- Any other items not mentioned above

Tour 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.

No additional options available for this tour.

Important Notes

1 Accommodation

We use good quality hotels rated at the Thai 3-star level on this tour, together with village huts and a homestay. Hotel rooms all have air-conditioning and en-suite bathrooms.

Village huts:

Accommodation whilst trekking is in traditional bamboo huts, and a thin mattress, sheet and blanket is provided. Please note that for the trekking you may wish to bring a light sleeping bag or extra blanket with you. These may be hired in Chiang Mai if required.

2 Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. With this in mind we use public transport where we think it offers a good local experience – this may include 2nd class overnight sleeper trains, local buses and local ferries. We also use private transportation including jeeps, song- thaews or pickup trucks, and mini buses for sightseeing tours where required.

Sleeper trains:

The sleeper trains in Thailand are of a good standard and are popular with tourists. Each carriage has its own steward who ensures the train is kept clean and tidy, and from whom meals and drinks can be ordered to your seat. There is also a separate restaurant car. Each carriage will sleep approximately 40 people. On either side of the carriage there are 2 seats facing each other, with a window and small table. In the evening, the steward will convert these seats into beds for you, with a pillow, sheets and a blanket as well as a curtain for privacy.

3 Transfers

The tour includes a 24-hour arrival and departure airport-hotel transfer service in Bangkok airport and all other transfers.

4 Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

Our Thailand small-group departures to have a maximum of 12 travellers.

Private and tailor-made tours are available for any number of travellers and we will provide a price based on the number of people in your party.

At Encounters Travel we aim to only use local Thai guides and reps. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing. Please check our website for more details and profiles of some of our most famous guides.

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5 Chiang Mai Jungle Adventure

Jungle trek:

In general the trekking on this tour will not be too hard for anybody who is reasonably physically fit. We walk for around 1 ½ hours on the first day, mainly downhill, and for around 5-6 hours on the second day with some climbing and descending and plenty of breaks. The precise itinerary of the trekking may have to be changed from time to time to take into account the weather and local conditions, but the same concept is well maintained.

While trekking we sleep in villagers' huts. As the huts consist of a single all-purpose room, in which the villagers live and sleep, you will sleep on the covered balcony or a bamboo bed inside the hut. A thin mattress, sheet and a blanket will be provided but for additional comfort you may wish to bring a sleeping bag as in mountain areas it can be quite cool at night, especially in December/January.

Additional equipment such as a rucksack, water canteen, life-jacket is available from our office in Chiang Mai. Sleeping bags may also be hired from here.

As you are required to carry your own kit, unnecessary items should be avoided and left in secure storage in your hotel in Chiang Mai (a private porter can also be provided upon request for an additional charge).

Simple meals will be prepared by the porter by a stream, in a hill-tribe village or at some other suitable spot, during the day, and in one of the village huts in the evening & for breakfast.

Your guide has long experience of the country through which you will travel and is very familiar with the tribes' people and their customs. His advice on these subjects should be followed.

Elephant rides:

Elephant-back safaris are available in this region but not included in this tour. We no longer include elephant safaris on any of our Thailand tours due to animal welfare and safety concerns.

Rafting:

The rafts are of the basic bamboo-pole variety and can carry approximately from 4 to 8 people. The rafting can take from 4 to 6 hours depending on the season, and the water level & current. Along some parts of the river there are a lot of snags (dead trees, big rocks, broken wood, etc.), which can sometimes be dangerous. A life jacket (provided) is essential as it will not only keep you afloat, if by chance you should fall off the raft, but also help to prevent injury if hitting any of these snags. During the rainy season (or the dry season following heavy rainfall) the current will be quite strong and the guide will decide if the rafting should proceed or not. His advice on this matter should be strictly followed.

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6 Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on this tour starting on Sundays throughout the year. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 people. Departure dates and prices are listed on our website and on a separate dates & prices sheet available on request.

7 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.

8 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.

9 Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.
We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel’s insurance policy

directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see our website or booking conditions for more information.

10 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).

11 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

https://x.com/encounterstravl (yes, without the 'e')

12 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).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? World Nomads Travel Insurance offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or 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.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

13 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.

travel aware
gov.uk/travelaware

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14 Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can’t fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon’s efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.

- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
- They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
- Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
- The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
- The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.

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15 Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please contact us.

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16 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.

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

Flight CO2 Emissions:

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint.

When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

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17 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.

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18 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.

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19 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 vacinnation 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 this US CDC information about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. 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.

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20 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.

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21 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.

22 Time

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

23 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

24 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.