

## Trip Dossier for Thailand – Rainforest and Island Adventure

**Trip Code:** FTRI **Issue date:** 10 Aug 2009 **Valid from:** 01 Oct 2009

This trip is simply fantastic! It is a genuine pleasure to be in exotic Thailand; to enjoy its people, culture and tasty food. Your family will take part in activities that you will remember for years. In Bangkok you explore this vibrant city by Tuk Tuk and long tail boat. Taking the overnight train south you will stay in a rainforest lodge and explore on foot and on elephant back and sea kayak along the dramatic coast. Then visit a tropical island where you can snorkel in clear, warm water seeing thousands of iridescent fish and brightly coloured coral and playing on pure white sand beaches.

Due to seasonal weather variations we operate winter itineraries on the West Coast and summer itineraries on the East Coast.

### West Coast (November to April)

#### Day 1 Fly to Bangkok

Depart from London on an overnight flight to Bangkok.

#### Day 2 Arrive Bangkok

You'll arrive at Bangkok airport and will be met and transferred to your hotel. The afternoon is free for you to settle in and relax. Your hotel is close to the Khao San Road and within easy walking distance of many important historical sites as well as markets and shops. **Hotel 1 night, with swimming pool**

#### Day 3 Bangkok; train to Surat Thani

This morning you will be able to see the sights of Bangkok. Travelling by tuk tuk you will visit Phra Sumeru Fortress, which was built during the reign of Rama 1 and is the last of two remaining from the 14 originally built. Passing by Thammasart University you'll then visit the Amulet Market where various religious amulets, charms and traditional medicines are available and your guide will explain their significance. Your next stop is the temple of Wat Po; founded in 17<sup>th</sup> century it is the oldest Buddhist temple in Bangkok. You'll explore the temple complex including the Temple of the Reclining Buddha which houses one of the largest reclining Buddha's in the country, the soles of its feet are decorated with mother of pearl displaying the 108 auspicious signs of the Buddha. Onwards by tuk tuk to Phahurat Market, in the heart of Bangkok's little India – all kinds of fabrics, cloths, ornaments and accessories are sold here. Then you'll carry on to the Thieves Market in the Klong Thom quarter. This is a second-hand market for Thai and Chinese antiques, but the goods are no longer stolen!

Next you climb aboard a long tail boat for a journey along the river and into the klongs (canals) of Bangkok – the city used to be referred to as the "Venice of the East", and the vast network of klongs provide a vital transport network. As you navigate along the waterways you'll gain an insight into the lives of the people who live along the klongs. Then you have some free time before later this afternoon you will be driven to the station to catch the overnight sleeper train to Surat Thani in the south. **Sleeper train (breakfast)**

**Sleeper trains** - Most western visitors are quite happy using 2nd class sleepers, which are comfortable, safe, and great fun. Berths are not in compartments, but are arranged 'open plan' along the coach wall either side of a central aisle. During the evening and morning part of the journey, pairs of seats face each other on each side of the aisle. At night, each pair of seats pulls together to form the bottom bunk, and an upper bunk folds out from the wall. The attendant will make up your bunk with a proper mattress and fresh clean bedding, and will hook up the curtains which are provided for each bunk to give you privacy. There's plenty of luggage room, take a bike lock if you want to chain up your luggage for peace of mind. Security is not a problem, it's a great way to travel which saves time even compared to flying, and saves a hotel bill too.

#### Day 4 Drive to Khao Sok National Park; elephant ride

Arriving in the early morning at Surat Thani, you'll be taken to a local restaurant for breakfast and then you'll make your way inland to Khao Sok National Park (2 – 3 hrs). It's a fascinating drive: initially among the spectacular limestone cliffs of the coast, then through forest and eventually into mountains and rainforest. The journey takes up the best part of the morning and finally, as the roads become ever smaller, we reach our jungle lodge in Khao Sok National Park. The lodge we stay in is situated near a river, so the kids (and you) can take a dip after the journey. The restaurant and rooms are made from local wood, so the lodge feels like it is part of the forest. Everywhere you look, you are surrounded by all the sights and sounds of a jungle. Covering over 65,000 square kilometres, the park is one of the oldest jungles in Southeast Asia – over 150 million years old! It is full of wildlife, including elephant, gibbon, bear and langur. There are even tigers here, though it is very rare to see them. There are countless bird species too, as well as butterflies, and literally thousands of types of plants. This



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afternoon you will go for an elephant ride – it's a great way to see the forest and get close up to an elephant! After meeting your elephant, which has a kind of wooden saddle with a seat on its back, you'll climb aboard via some wooden steps and a specially designed platform. Normally, two people ride each elephant and its master (or mahout) will lead you along a trail. There's plenty to see along the way (look out for the rubber cups on the trees in the rubber plantation) but the fun of it all is the weird feeling of lolling along, and seeing friends and family riding along on an elephant near you. Keep your eyes peeled for monkeys playing in the trees too, and for hornbills and kingfishers. After your ride and feeding your elephant, we'll head back to the lodge. Later, as evening falls, the noise of insects, animals and birdsong reaches a crescendo and it is hard to be heard above the din! You'll need insect repellent while you are here, but don't be put off by this, the atmosphere is fantastic!

## **Lodge 1 night (breakfast)**

### **Day 5 Transfer to Koh Lanta Island**

This morning, you'll head off for a leisurely walk to explore and become acquainted with the rainforest and its inter-connected eco-system. Then reluctantly, we leave our rainforest lodge behind and head back to the coast. A drive and then an exciting ferry journey bring us to the paradise island of Koh Lanta. On the ferry, you'll see wonderful scenery as well as local boats and fishermen going about their simple lives. Keep your eyes peeled, as you may also see flying fish and dolphins. The white sands of Koh Lanta (known locally as the Island of the Long Beaches) are the setting for the final chapter in this magical and varied journey through Thailand. Your hotel is right on the beach, close to an isthmus on the warm waters of the Andaman Sea. On arrival the rest of the day is free to relax by the pool and take in the sheer beauty of the area. You can enjoy the beach near the hotel, or take goggles or mask and snorkel to explore underwater rocks and coral nearby. And, if you fancy a bit of a walk, there are superb deserted beaches to wander, where you can sometimes stop to watch local fishermen pulling in their catch. **Hotel 3 nights, swimming pool (breakfast & lunch)**

### **Day 6 Koh Lanta; boat ride and snorkelling in Lanta Marine National Park**

Today, we set off by speed-boat to explore the rich marine life of the Andaman Sea. The clear waters of these shores present ideal conditions for snorkelling. Our boat journey offshore (life-jackets provided) is exciting enough in itself, but an hour off the coast, tiny atolls with brilliant white sand, surrounded by crystal clear waters and coral, provide a clue to the pristine beauty that lies beneath the surface. We'll drop anchor and then, after you've been issued with a face mask that fits and been given some simple instruction as to how to snorkel, you're free to explore the ocean bed. Once you get used to breathing (it's actually a good idea to buy your own snorkel and practise in the pool at home) you'll find you can relax and spend a long time underwater. It's worth it. The coral is simply beautiful and there are hundreds of fish – with amazingly vivid colouring. It's like a scene from 'Finding Nemo' – and there are Nemo fish, as well as angel fish, giant clams, rays and countless other species that live on the brightly coloured coral and underwater plant-life here. On a good day, the visibility is well over 100 metres, and you can literally spend hours in these warm waters, fascinated by the marine spectacle. It's the highlight of the journey for most adults and children. As well as stopping to explore several different sites we'll also go ashore on one of the sandy islands, where a picnic lunch will be prepared, and you'll have a chance to bask in the sunshine for a while. Sure beats working... In the afternoon we'll return to our beach bungalows on Koh Lanta. **(breakfast & lunch)**

### **Day 7 Free day at Koh Lanta**

Today is left free for one last burst of paradise before you head home. You can play by the pool or the beach, or you may decide to head into the nearby town by taxi for shopping and to eat. The area is mostly inhabited by Muslims, who came from Malaysia over 200 years ago, and many of them still harvest the sea as they have for generations. Consequently, there are lots of fishing boats, a busy town and plenty of good shops and seafood restaurants to choose from. Typically, on your last evening together, the group will get together for a 'last supper'. **(breakfast)**

### **Day 8 Drive to Krabi; fly via Bangkok to London**

In the morning you'll begin your journey home. First a drive, then a ferry and then an internal flight from Krabi airport to Bangkok airport. You will be met and taken to your hotel in Bangkok. **Hotel 1 night (breakfast)**

### **Day 9 Morning free in Bangkok; flight to London**

This morning you transfer to the airport for your flight to London. **(breakfast)**



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## East Coast (May to October)

### Day 1 Fly to Bangkok

Depart from London on an overnight flight to Bangkok.

### Day 2 Arrive Bangkok

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### Day 3 Bangkok; train to Surat Thani

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Next you climb aboard a long tail boat for a journey along the river and into the klongs (canals) of Bangkok – the city used to be referred to as the "Venice of the East", and the vast network of klongs provide a vital transport network. As you navigate along the waterways you'll gain an insight into the lives of the people who live along the klongs. Then you have some free time before later this afternoon you will be driven to the station to catch the overnight sleeper train to Surat Thani in the south. **Sleeper train (breakfast)**

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### Day 4 Drive to Khao Sok National Park; elephant ride

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**Lodge 1 night (breakfast)**



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## **Day 5 Transfer to Koh Phangan Island**

This morning, you'll head off for a leisurely walk to explore and become acquainted with the rainforest and its inter-connected eco-system. Then reluctantly, we leave our rainforest lodge behind and head back to the coast. A drive and then an exciting ferry journey bring us to the paradise island of Koh Phangan. On the ferry, you'll see wonderful scenery as well as local boats and fishermen going about their simple lives. Keep your eyes peeled, as you may also see flying fish and dolphins. The paradise island of Koh Phangan is located in the Gulf of Siam and offers fantastic deserted beaches and great opportunity for snorkelling and swimming. If you want to be active you can go trekking in the footsteps of Thai Royalty in the Than Sadet National Park. Explore the natural caves and tranquil Tha Laem Nai, the salt-water lagoon lake featured in the movie 'The Beach'. Koh Phangan is 75% mountains covered in tropical jungle; the rest is beautiful coastline. Coconut export, tourism and fishing are the island's main economy.

**Hotel 3 nights, with swimming pool (breakfast & lunch)**

## **Day 6 Koh Phangan; boat ride and snorkelling**

Today, we set off by speed-boat to explore the rich marine life of the Gulf of Thailand. The clear waters of these shores present ideal conditions for snorkelling. Our boat journey offshore (life-jackets provided) is exciting enough in itself, but an hour off the coast, tiny atolls with brilliant white sand, surrounded by crystal clear waters and coral, provide a clue to the pristine beauty that lies beneath the surface. We'll drop anchor and then, after you've been issued with a face mask that fits and been given some simple instruction as to how to snorkel, you're free to explore the ocean bed. Once you get used to breathing (it's actually a good idea to buy your own snorkel and practise in the pool at home) you'll find you can relax and spend a long time underwater. It's worth it. The coral is simply beautiful and there are hundreds of fish – with amazingly vivid colouring. It's like a scene from 'Finding Nemo' – and there are Nemo fish, as well as angel fish, giant clams, rays and countless other species that live on the brightly coloured coral and underwater plant-life here. On a good day, the visibility is well over 100 meters, and you can literally spend hours in these warm waters, fascinated by the marine spectacle. It's the highlight of the journey for most adults and children. As well as stopping to explore several different 'dive-sites' we'll also go ashore on one of the sandy islands, where a picnic lunch will be prepared, and you'll have a chance to bask in the sunshine for a while. Sure beats working... In the afternoon we'll return to Koh Phangan.

**(breakfast & lunch)**

## **Day 7 Free day on Koh Phangan**

Today is at leisure. You can play by the pool or walk along the private beach and enjoy the wonderful facilities of the hotel.

**(breakfast)**

## **Day 8 Ferry to Koh Samui; fly via Bangkok to London**

In the morning you'll begin your journey home. First a drive, then a ferry and then an internal flight from Koh Samui airport to Bangkok airport. You will be met and taken to your hotel in Bangkok. **Hotel 1 night (breakfast)**

## **Day 9 Morning free in Bangkok; flight to London**

This morning you transfer back to the airport for your flight to London. **(breakfast)**

*This itinerary includes our group flights from London. If you are making other flight arrangements, please refer to your Confirmation Invoice and Joining Instructions for details of the start or end of the trip. Please remember international flights and trip dates do occasionally change, so please always purchase flexible tickets.*

*Each itinerary is planned many months in advance and although it is our intention to operate the itinerary as printed in the brochure and detailed here, it may be necessary to make some changes as a result of alterations to flight schedules, climatic conditions, limitations of infrastructure or other operational factors which are beyond our control. As a consequence, the order or location of overnight stops may vary from those outlined but we will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes. Included meals are indicated in the daily itinerary.*

**Climate** It's warm (or hot) all year round and there's very little variation in temperature throughout the year. The main seasons are: **Cool** – November to February; **Hot** – March to May; **Rainy** – June to October (please note that our itinerary varies at this time of year and visits the East Coast of Thailand, where the wet season is from October to January).

Average monthly temperatures are given below for Bangkok:

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
<b>Max °C</b>	32	33	34	35	34	33	32	32	32	31	31	31
<b>Min °C</b>	20	22	24	25	25	24	24	24	24	24	22	20
<b>Rainfall (mm)</b>	8	20	36	58	198	160	160	175	305	206	66	5

**Is this right for your family?** This trip is ideal for kids of five upwards. Everyone learns about rainforests at schools these days and your stay in Khao Sok National Park will really bring it to life. They'll also learn about Buddhism by visiting temples and seeing monks. And they'll love the sandy beaches, limpid waters and rainbow-coloured tropical fish of Southern Thailand's islands.

### Lone Parents

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries, including the UK, require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the relevant country embassy for further information on exactly what may be required. These details can be found on the Foreign & Commonwealth Website under the appropriate country [www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)

**Accommodation** Hotels used are 3-star standard. All have private facilities and are on a twin-share basis (mostly air-conditioned). The rainforest lodge in Khao Sok is simple and rustic, but very atmospheric. The indication of a swimming pool at a hotel should not be taken as a guarantee but rather an indication. You should also be aware that swimming pools at the hotels are often unheated and so can be cold in the winter months or even closed.

### Local Costs

A small bottle of mineral water (500ml)	£0.50
A large bottle of mineral water (1 litre)	£1.00
A can of coke (soft drinks)	£0.50
A carton or bottle of fruit juice	£1.00
A bottle of beer	£1.00
Tea or coffee	£0.50
A light lunch time snack – sandwich for example	£1.50
A two course meal* - excluding drinks	£2.00
A three course meal* - excluding drinks	£3.00

*\*Based on a mid range tourist restaurant.*

**Currency** The unit of currency is the Thai Baht. At the time of writing UK£1 = Baht 56.6 and US\$1 = Baht 33.9 (Aug 2009). Sterling Travellers' Cheques are accepted in banks and larger hotels however increasingly we recommend that you make use of the widespread ATM machines. We recommend that you change money at the airport. Credit cards are accepted in larger hotels and some souvenir shops.

**Tippling** is a recognised part of life and although at your discretion you will be expected to reward service. It should be remembered, however, that over-generosity could lead to jealousy in poor countries. Please remember that all tips should be a way for individuals to thank staff for good service.

Please also remember that your tour leader works hard and for long hours to make your holiday run smoothly, a suitable reward for good service would be £1-£2 from each person, per day. It is usual to collect this between yourselves as a group and present it to the leader on completion of the tour.

**Visas** British passport holders may enter Thailand for up to 30 days without obtaining a visa in advance of arrival. This visa-free entry of 30 days is limited to a maximum of 90 days in any six month period. Your passport must have at least six months validity and not be damaged.

**Language** The official language in Thailand is Thai, although English is widely spoken.



**Security** Whilst the vast majority of travellers never experience anything untoward it is worth taking precautions particularly in urban areas. You should take sensible precautions in crowded areas such as street markets and airports, where pick-pocketing is common, and keep clear of any street disturbances. Don't wear expensive jewellery, never leave your bags unattended, keep large amounts of money, cameras and mobile phones out of sight when walking in town centres, and avoid walking in city centres after dark. Keep copies of important documents, including passports, in a separate place to the documents themselves, together with details of credit cards. Leave copies at home with a friend too. Safeguard valuables, important documents and cash and deposit them in hotel safes, where practicable.

**Time** Thailand is GMT +7 hours

## Clothing & Equipment List – Rainforest and Island Adventure

Western clothing is acceptable everywhere, but outside beach resorts Thai people tend to dress conservatively. Out of respect for local culture we recommend that - particularly in rural areas - you dress accordingly i.e. no tight-fitting clothing, low-cut or sleeveless tops, etc. Shorts are OK in main tourist areas, but they (and skirts) should reach at least to the knee. Everyone should be prepared to cover bare arms and legs when entering religious buildings, and take off their shoes. A sun hat, sunglasses and high-factor sunscreen are all essential.

CLOTHING	NUMBER PER PERSON	Check	EQUIPMENT	Check
Walking Shoes/trainers	1 pair - all purpose wear		Soft-sided Bag 50 – 80litres	
Strong Sandals	1 pair		Lightweight Daypack – 25 litres	
Socks	4+		Sunglasses	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Personal First Aid Kit	
T-Shirts	3+		Large Water Bottle	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2		Camera, Memory cards and Accessories	
Short Trousers	2+		Torch and Batteries	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Insect Repellent (with high DEET content)	
Track Suit Bottoms or Similar	Optional		Washing & Shaving Kit - wet wipes are refreshing	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Towel or Sarong	
Warm jacket	1		Reading Material	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Guide Book & map	
Swim Wear	1		Loo Kit (in small bag) loo paper/tissues	

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa			
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Binoculars – optional	
Cash Cards/Visa		Sunscreen – lots of it	
Insurance Documents			
Trip Information and Itinerary			

For details regarding **hand luggage restrictions**, please visit [www.baa.com](http://www.baa.com) for details or click [here](#)