

## Trip Dossier for Thailand – Islands & Hilltribes

Trip Code: FTIH Issue date: 27Nov 2007 Valid from: 01 January 2008

### 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 are met and transferred to your hotel. This afternoon we include a tour of Bangkok. The city is full of fascinating palaces, temples and markets. It is best explored from the water and our tour includes a trip by longtail boat to glide along the busy 'klongs' (canals) for which the city is famous. You'll pass many stilt houses which face the Chao Phraya river and see local trade along the water. Local kids are everywhere too, jumping in the river, fishing and boating. Then climb into a tuk-tuk and we'll take you to visit an important temple - Wat Phra Keong, followed by a visit to the golden domes of the Grand Palace, with its stunning Emerald Buddha. We also recommend a walk in the park just behind the palace, where hundreds of people come to fly their kites each day. In the evening you can take dinner in a floating restaurant down on the river. **Hotel (breakfast)**

### Days 3 to 5 Ko Samet

Today you travel to the island of Ko Samet by minibus followed by a 45-minute ferry crossing. Ko Samet has some of the best beaches in Thailand and a thoroughly relaxed atmosphere. Less than seven kilometres off the coast of Rayong Province in the eastern Gulf of Thailand, it has been a safe anchorage for sailors since the 13th century and in the 19th century its sheer beauty was the inspiration for the literary masterpiece of Thailand's most famous romantic poet, Sunthorn Phu. It is part of the Khao Laem Ya – Samet National Marine Park and has developed into a much loved beach escape by both Thais and foreigners. Coves and beaches provide a choice of activities and you can snorkel, hunt for shells, take boat trips, watch the sunset, walk around the island or simply relax on the beach for the next few days. **Resort Hotel (breakfast)**

### Day 6 Drive to Bangkok and train to Chiang Mai

Today you take the ferry to the mainland and return to Bangkok by minibus, arriving in time to catch the evening train to Chiang Mai. Enjoy dinner as you speed through the Thai countryside, go to sleep to the sound of the wheels clacking on the tracks and wake in time to have breakfast before you arrive in the morning. **Sleeper Train (breakfast)**

### Day 7 In Chiang Mai

You are met at the station and transferred to your guesthouse in Chiang Mai. Surrounded by mountains and forests, this is the second largest city in Thailand but much more friendly than chaotic Bangkok. Rich in cultural heritage and a mecca for handicrafts, the old part of the city is contained in a square moat. After you have freshened up you take a tour of some of the many 'wats' (temples); there are over 300 in the city. You then visit the Tribal Museum to gain an understanding of the hilltribes before your trek to stay in one of their villages. The hilltribes make their living by growing crops and then moving on when the soil is exhausted. However, their economy is having to adapt to modern day tourism and agricultural practices as the available land is running out. There is an optional visit to a hilltribe near Chiang Mai. **Guesthouse (breakfast)**

### Day 8 Soppong

Today you drive through rolling hills and forest, almost to the border of Thailand and Burma, to the remote town of Soppong. The road winds through some stunning scenery of cultivated valleys and hilltop forests, and passes through Pai, an oasis in the middle of a broad valley. The jungle on the other side of the river has so far avoided the slash and burn of other parts of the country, and you will be able to see indigenous teak trees. Wild orchids are abundant and along the way you stop at a local market and an orchid nursery before arriving in the peaceful town of Soppong. Two temples anchor either end of the village which is a trading and market centre for the many hilltribes in the region. **Cottages (breakfast)**

### Day 9 Trek to HillTribe Village

Today you have an opportunity to visit a hilltribe village in the highland region. The villagers will welcome you to stay the night in one of their houses and get a feel for their way of life, which they have maintained for nearly 1000 years. The hilltribes migrated from southern China over 100 years ago and made their way to Thailand, Burma, Laos and Vietnam, where they still make their living from farming and artisan crafts. There are about 800,000 people divided into seven main tribes, and each tribe is quite distinct with its own customs and styles of dress. For instance the Karen women are famous for their weaving; the 'long-neck' Padaung women use brass rings to lengthen their necks; and the Padong men and



women decorate their teeth with gold. Your guide will brief you on local rules such as what to wear and whether you should ask permission before taking photographs or entering a house. **Cottage/bamboo hut (breakfast and lunch)**

#### Day 10 Soppong

Today you'll walk back to your base at Soppong. Optional activities include a ride on an elephant – it is magical sitting in a howdah 12 feet from the ground, swaying about; watch out for your legs as the elephant twitches its ears. There are more local excursions or you can visit Lod Cave, part of one of the largest cave systems in northern Thailand with wonderful limestone stalactites (these hang down – the stalagmites rise up!). They have been inhabited since prehistoric times. There are three chambers with a walkways to take you through the caves. To cross the river you'll have to jump on a bamboo raft. **Cottage (breakfast)**

#### Day 11 Drive Mai Hong Son and fly to Chiang Mai

This morning you drive to Mae Hong Son, known as the Switzerland of Thailand and encompassed by soaring hills and plunging valleys. Being right on the Thai/Burma border, there is a strong Burmese influence in its culture and architecture. It is a short hop back from here to Chiang Mai by plane. **Guesthouse (breakfast)**

#### Day 12 Chiang Mai

Today is free for you to enjoy Chiang Mai on your last day. This evening have a farewell meal at a local restaurant with a display of folk dancing. **Guesthouse (breakfast)**

#### Day 13 Fly to London

In the morning you'll begin your journey home. First you take an internal flight from Chiang Mai to Bangkok airport. Cross from the domestic terminal to Bangkok International and fly to London.

#### Day 14 Arrive in London

### Extension to Cambodia

#### Day 13 Fly from Bangkok to Siem Reap

From Bangkok you connect with a flight to Siem Reap and are met and transferred to your guesthouse. This is the jumping off point for your trip to the fabled temple complex of Angkor Wat. **Guesthouse (breakfast)**

#### Day 14 Guided tour of Angkor Wat

Angkor Wat is one of mankind's amazing achievements, built from around 800 to 1200 AD by the Khmer Empire. Over 200 of the temples have been restored in some way to allow visitors to imagine what it must have been like living during that period of time. There are actually over 1000 temple sites at Angkor, but most of them are now barely standing, if at all. For hundreds of years, the lost city of Angkor was a legend. Cambodian peasants living on the edge of the thick jungle around the Tonle Sap Lake, said they had found "temples built by gods or by giants," which puzzled the French colonialists who arrived in Indo-China in the 1860s, and so when Henri Mahout discovered the Angkor temples in 1860 he opened up this 'lost city' to the world. The legend became fact and historians and archaeologists came to Angkor to explain the meaning of these vast buildings. They found it hard to believe that Angkor had been built by the Cambodian people, believing the temples to have been built by another race who had conquered and occupied Cambodia maybe 2000 years before. However as the Sanskrit inscriptions were deciphered, the history of Angkor was slowly pieced together. During your time here you'll discover some of the main points of interest with a local guide and have free time to explore at your own pace. **Guesthouse (breakfast)**

#### Day 15 Boat trip on Tonle Sap Lake

You have a break from Angkor today and take a boat trip on Tonle Sap Lake, riding through the floating villages with their water houses, simple restaurants amongst the lily pads, schools – complete with a caged basketball court attached, and a holy water church. You can also visit a silk farm nearby. **Guesthouse (breakfast)**

#### Day 16 Guided tour of Angkor Wat

Today you return to the temples of Angkor Wat for further explorations. **Guesthouse (breakfast)**



### Day 17 Siem Reap Airport to Bangkok for overnight flight to London

This morning you transfer back to the airport for your flight to Bangkok and onward connection to London.

### Day 18 Arrive London

*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 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. Consequently there are factors over which we have no control and which could make changes necessary. We will always endeavour to keep you informed of any such changes in advance.*

### Optional Extras

These excursions, if available, can be arranged through your tour leader (per person cost shown below)

Chiang Mai Hill Tribes visit	£18.00
Soppong – Elephant Ride	£8.00
Soppong – Local Rides	£6.00
Soppong – cave visit	£6.00

### 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

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?** Thailand is a very friendly country and the food is fantastic. Kids of almost any age will enjoy this trip, but make sure they're prepared for a little 'culture shock' – especially in Northern Thailand. Expect basic conditions in the hill tribe village; elsewhere accommodation standards are good. There are opportunities for activities like snorkelling and elephant riding.

**Accommodation** Hotels used are 3-star standard. All have private facilities and are on a twin-share basis (mostly air-conditioned). The hill tribe village bamboo hut is simple and rustic, but very atmospheric.

### 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 = Baht65.49 and US\$1 = Baht31.60 (Nov 2007). Sterling Travellers' Cheques are readily accepted in banks and larger hotels. We recommend that you change money at the airport. Credit cards are accepted in larger hotels and some souvenir shops.



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**Tiping** 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. As a guideline, each traveller should allow £2-3 per day to cover tips for local staff.

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

**Time** Thailand is GMT +7 hours

**Packing List** Please refer to our separate "packing list"



## Clothing & Equipment List for Thailand – Islands & Hilltribes

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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.

The following list of clothing and equipment is intended to be fairly comprehensive and experienced travellers may well take a good deal less luggage than we recommend

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+		A variety of plastic bags	
Waterproof Jacket	1 lightweight		Sunglasses	
T-Shirts	3+		Personal First Aid Kit	
Long Trousers or Skirt	2		Large Water Bottle	
Short Trousers	2+		Camera, Film and Accessories	
Long Sleeve Shirt	2+		Torch and Batteries	
Track Suit Bottoms or Similar	Optional		Insect Repellent (with high DEET content)	
Sunhat / Baseball cap	Essential (styled to shade face, ears and neck)		Washing & Shaving Kit - wet wipes are refreshing	
Warm jacket	1		Towel or Sarong	
Thin Fleece or Sweatshirt	1		Reading Material	
Swim Wear	1		Guide Book & map	
			Loo Kit (in small bag) loo paper/tissues	

ITEM	Check	ITEM	Check
Passport/ Visa		Small Sewing Kit & Safety Pins	
Air Tickets		Universal travelling adapter	
Money/Travellers Cheques		Tooth Paste/Floss	
Cash Cards/Visa		Small Calculator	
Insurance Documents		Sweets and Snacks for the journey	
Trip Information and Itinerary		Cold Water Detergent	
Money Security Belt/Pouch		Biodegradable Soap	
Spectacles/Contact Lenses		Binoculars – optional	
Sunscreen – lots of it		Notebook/Diary/Pen	
Moisturising Cream & Lip salve – not in hand luggage		Small presents for local kids – biros, balloons, books	
Scissor/Mirror/Nail Clippers – not in hand luggage		Small toys and books for your kids	
		Goggles or mask, snorkel & fins	

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

