

# Thailand — Laos Adventure

**Dates:**

**Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> January to Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> January 2007**

**(16 days)**

**Cost: \$3000**

**Style: Hotels & Host Families**

**Start and Finish: Bangkok**

Discover two World Heritage cities (the ancient Thai capital, Sukothai and former Laotian capital Luang Prabang), Ride one of the world's greatest river (the Mekong). Appreciate the rich cultural diversity of Northern Thailand's hill tribes in the Golden Triangle region while enjoying spectacular mountain scenery and wonderful cuisine. Travel through one of the most diverse parts of SE Asia. Expert Thai guides from two community development organizations (HADF and REST) will enable closer insights to this scenic region's religions, culture and lifestyle.

**Inclusions:** All travel, access fees, accommodation meals on the itinerary and a one-day Thai cooking course are included. Five nights are spent in village home-stay accommodation. Safarists will require sleeping bags & (optionally) mattresses.

**Numbers:** Restricted to minimum 6, maximum 12 safarists.

**The Season:** January is Northern Thailand's cool dry season. Maximum daily temperatures: 22C° to 26C°.

**Payments:** Because safarists need to book international travel and our Thai domestic flights must be booked and paid for by the end of September, applications should be lodged by Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> September together with a \$700 deposit. (This non refundable once the air-tickets have been paid for) Safarists are responsible for their own travel arrangements to Bangkok, travel insurance and obtaining a visa to visit Laos.

**Leader:** John Sinclair has worked with non-government organizations in Thailand & Laos since 2000 developing ecotourism as a basis of community development. Together they have established this comfortable, well proven itinerary.

**Day 1; Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> January:** Group rendezvous at Bangkok Airport at 8.00 am. Join 9.10 a.m. flight to World Heritage city of Sukothai to meet REST guides who will show the highlights and icons of this ancient Thai capital. Hotel.

**Day 2; Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> January:** After exploring more of Sukothai travel to Chiang Mai by bus stopping along the way at Thai Elephants Conservation Centre in Lampang. Hotel.

**Day 3; Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> January:** Visit Doi Suthep (1,676 m) and Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, the most sacred temple in the North. Then depart Chiang Mai to follow the beautiful Mae Jaem River. See traditional weaving and the elders' traditional cloth museum at Ban Rai Phai Ngam. At Mae Jaem be entertained by Mae Jaem hosts. Accom: Village Homestays

**Day 4; Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> January:** Spend time sightseeing around the village of Baan Phmon, visiting old temples and weavers' workshops famous for the teenjok (famous hand weaving). Learn some natural therapy cures from the village "doctor" at Mor Meuang Centre in Ban Yang-Luang. Village Homestays

**Day 5; Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> January:** Merit making to the monks before breakfast. Travel to Doi Inthanon, the highest mountain in Thailand at 2,596m with its unique cloud forest, and Doi Ang Khang nature reserve famous for the 'Thousand Year Rose'. On the way back to Chiang Mai visit the Pakagayor, a Karen ethnic community whose lifestyle is intertwined with the jungle. Enjoy a Lanna dinner and a discussion of lifestyle and culture related to nature and religion in Lanna. Accom: Hotel in Chiang Mai.

**Day 6; Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> January:** Enjoy an all day Thai cooking class in Chiang Mai. Accom: Hotel in Chiang Mai.

**Day 7; Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> January:** Travel by mini-bus to Chiang Rai City. Take a boat ride on the Kok River to Ruamit to visit the Karen Village to experience an elephant ride before returning for a Khan-Toke Dinner together at Saban Nga Restaurant. Accom: Golden Triangle Inn.

**Day 8; Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> January:** Visit Pangsa hill tribe village. Trek to the waterfall to observe the traditional cooking style in the bamboo prepared by Lisu chef. Discover Lisu lifestyle in this developing village before enjoying dinner with host family. Accom: Village Homestays

**Day 9; Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> January:** The group will split up for the day. Half of the group will go to the Lahu village of Jakorna and half will go to the Akha village of Loh Yo to (Lahu village). In the respective, culturally different villages safarists will observe lifestyles and learn some handicrafts and traditional herbal medicine and participate in a cultural exchange night after dinner. Accom: Village Homestays

**Day 10; Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> January:** Leave villages and visit Doi Mae Salong Museum and tea plantation and after lunch in the town establish accommodation at the Tribal People Learning Resource Centre. Group A goes to Ban Pah Ka Suk Jai (Akha village) while Group B goes to Ban Jab Bu Si (Lahu village) for dinner and cultural exchange.

**Day 11; Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> January:** Travel to Mae Sai, the northernmost point of Thailand and crossing point into Myanmar. Then via the river port, Chiang Saen, and follow the Mekong River to Chiang Khong, a market town. Meet REST guide for Laos. Accom: Baan Tamilla Guest House.

**Day 12; Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> January:** Cross the border to enter Laos at Huay Xai. Board a riverboat to spend about eight hours travelling Had Tor, a small traditional Lu riverside village. The Mekong is the twelfth longest river in the world and the tenth largest in terms of volume. For almost half of its 1,800 km length, the Mekong passes through Laos. It is a dramatic, swiftly flowing river which drops 300 metres in elevation in this 300 km journey. There are many rapids. The Mekong valley has been the cradle to many great Asian civilizations. Overnight Homestays Had Tor.

**Day 13; Tuesday, 16<sup>th</sup> January:** After exploring Had Tor continue the great journey down the great Mekong River to Luang Prabang arriving about 4.00 pm. Stop on the way at Pak Ou. Luang Prabang is the jewel of Indochina and an UNESCO World Heritage site since 1995 described thus: "This town reflects the exceptional fusion of traditional architecture and urban structures built by 19th and 20th century European colonial rulers. Its unique township is remarkably well preserved, illustrating a key stage in the blending of these two distinct cultural traditions."

Accom: Hotel in Luang Prabang

**Day 14; Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> January:** Local guides will lead a cultural tour of Luang Prabang, an ancient royal city of only about 20,000 people at the junction of the Mekong and Khan Rivers, surrounded by mountains. Visit the National Museum, formerly the Royal Palace, which houses the Royal throne of Lan Xang kingdom in its original splendour, and many other treasures. Accommodation: Hotel in Luang Prabang

**Day 15; Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> January:** Tour of the area outside Luang Prabang. Ban Phnom is famous for cotton and silk weaving, and some beautifully made handicrafts. The Lu people of Ban Phnom came originally from Sip Song Panna in southern China. Visit the spectacular Kouangsy Waterfall deep in the forest, with its limestone weirs and pools. Pass through quaint villages with their traditional hydro-rice mills. Accommodation: Hotel in Luang Prabang.

**Day 16; Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> January:** Take a midday flight from Luang Prabang to Bangkok where safari concludes in time for safarists to catch evening flights to Australia.