

Thailand, Laos & Cambodia Adventure

Monday, 5th January to Wednesday, 21st January 2009

17 days

Accommodated — Bangkok to Bangkok

\$3800

Intimately experience the richness and diversity of many South-east Asian traditional cultures. Discover three World Heritage gems: Sukothai — the ancient Thai capital; Luang Prabang — a former capital of Laos; and Siem Reap — where the famous Angkor Wat and other great sites are located. Navigate the rapids of 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. An experienced Thai tour guide/facilitator from community development organizations (CBT, HADF and REST) will accompany the group throughout. This will enable closer insights to this scenic region's religions, culture and lifestyle.

Inclusions: All travel shown in the program including three flights— (Bangkok to Sukhothai, Luang Prabang to Siem Reap and Siem Reap to Bangkok as well as Laos and Cambodia visa fees access fees, accommodation meals, and all activities shown on the itinerary. Four nights are spent in village home-stay accommodation (*). Safarists will require sleeping bags and may wish to take a light air mattress.

Safarists are responsible for their own travel arrangements to & from Bangkok & travel insurance.

Numbers: Restricted to minimum 8 with a maximum of 18 safarists plus leaders and guides..

The Season: January is Northern Thailand's cool dry season. Daily temperatures: 22C° to 26C° (Max).

Payments: Because safarists need to book international travel as soon as possible and the flights shown on the itinerary must be booked and paid for by **31st July**, applications should be lodged by then together with a **\$1800** deposit. (This non refundable once the air-tickets have been paid for). The balance of **\$2000** is required by **5th November**.

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.

Coffee breaks in the afternoon at REST house and briefs about REST project.

Accommodation: Crystal Spring House (Baan Tan Kaew) or similar hotel.

Day 4; Thursday, 8th January:

Take a journey to Ban Mae Kam Pong, the CBT homestay.

Activity: Briefing about the village.

Follow the nature trail to waterfall

Learn about flora and fauna in the area

Join cooking with host family

Traditional Thai massage (optional)

Exchange culture

Discussion of lifestyle and culture related to nature and religion in Lanna (Northern Thailand)

Accommodation: Home stay with host family. *

Day 5; Friday, 9th January:

Merit making to the monks before breakfast. After breakfast, join pick up tea leaves and coffee bean with host family. On the way back to Chiang Mai visit San Kamphaeng Hot spring. Enjoy swimming in the hot spring pool and natural sauna there. End of the day with Khan Toke dinner in real Lanna atmosphere.

Accommodation: Crystal Spring House (Baan Tan Kaew) or similar hotel.

Day 6; Saturday 10th January:

Travel by van to Chiang Rai City. Take a long tail boat to Ruamit to visit the Karen Village. Enjoy on riding elephants. Go to have dinner at night market.

Accommodation: Golden Triangle Inn or similar

Day 7; Sunday, 11th January:

Drive to Doi Mae Salong to visit the museum, U-Long tea plantation. Have lunch with Yunannese food. After lunch, divide into two groups. Group A and Group B will make similar activities but different in traditional style in different hill-tribe villages.

Group A: Go to Jabusee Lahu village.

Group B: Go to Loh Yo Akha village.

Activity: Orientation about the home stay.

Welcome ceremony

Handicraft workshop

Join in to make a local dessert.

Observe the daily village life.

Draft Itinerary

Day 1; Monday, 5th January:

Group rendezvous at Bangkok Airport at 8.00 am to join the 9.10 a.m. flight to the ancient Thai capital, Sukothai, to meet Community Based Tourism (CBT) guides who will show the World Heritage highlights and icons of this city.

Accommodation: Ruean Thai Hotel.

Day 2; Tuesday, 6th January:

After exploring more of Sukothai travel to Chiang Mai by bus stopping along the way at Lampang Luang Temple (There is an up side down pagoda which is one of unseen in Thailand

Accommodation: Crystal Spring House (Baan Tan Kaew) or similar hotel.

Day 3; Wednesday 7th January:

Visit: Doi Suthep (1,676 m) and Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, one of the most sacred temples in the North.

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Tell the local stories

Discuss and exchange the life style.

Accommodation: Home stay *

Day 8; Monday, 12th January:

Activity: Trekking to Mae Chan River, learn about how human and forest support each other. Cook lunch in bamboo with the local style. Return the village in the afternoon. Chat and learn traditional herbal medicine and participate in a cultural exchange night after dinner.

Accommodation: Home stay *

Day 9; Tuesday, 13th January:

Leave villages and visit local primary school. Let have fun with children by play some games, teaching English and singing songs, etc. In the afternoon go to stay at Natural Resource Learning Centre. At night, enjoy with hill tribe performance by the Hill Area Art Lover Youth Club.

Accommodation: Natural Resource Learning Centre

Day 10; Wednesday, 14th January:

Travel by our mini buses to Mae Sai on the Thai-Myanmar border for lunch right on the border. This market city is the northernmost point of Thailand. Then via the Mekong River port of Chiang Saen, following the river to Chiang Khong, a market town.

Accommodation: Baan Tamilla Guest House.

Day 11; Thursday, 15th January:

Cross the border to enter Laos at Huay Xai. Board a riverboat to spend about eight hours travelling to small riverside village of Pak-Beng. *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 that drops 300 metres in elevation in this 300 km journey as it passes through wild mountainous country. There are many places where there are rapids. The Mekong valley has been the cradle to many great Asian civilizations.*

Accommodation: Homestay: Baan Had Tor *

Day 12; Friday, 16th January:

Continue the great journey down the Mekong to Luang Prabang (about eight hours on the river). Stopping on the way at Ting Cave. 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."*

Accommodation: Xiengmouane Guesthouse

Day 13; Saturday, 17th 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: Xiengmouane Guesthouse

Day 14; Sunday, 18th January:

Tour of the area outside Luang Prabang, Ban Phanom is famous for cotton and silk weaving, and some beautifully made handcrafts. The Lu people of Ban Phanom 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: Xiengmouane Guesthouse

Day 15; Monday, 19th January:

10.20 a.m. Take a flight from Luang Prabang to Siem Reap the Khmer Empire. In the late afternoon, go to explore Tonle Sap. (the great lake). This is the largest freshwater lake in South East Asia of huge importance to Cambodia. It and is an ecological hotspot that was designated as a UNESCO biosphere in 1997. Visit the fisherman village nearby. Dinner with Cambodia dish style.

Accommodation: Siem Reap Riverside

Day 16; Tuesday, 20th January:

Spend the day exploring the World Heritage of Angkor. UNESCO states, *"Angkor is one of the most important archaeological sites in South-East Asia. Stretching over some 400 km2, including forested area, Angkor Archaeological Park contains the magnificent remains of the different capitals of the Khmer Empire, from the 9th to the 15th century. They include the famous Temple of Angkor Wat and, at Angkor Thom, the Bayon Temple with its countless sculptural decorations. UNESCO has set up a wide-ranging program to safeguard this symbolic site and its surroundings."*

Accommodation: Siem Reap Riverside

Day 17; Wednesday, 21st January:

Fly from Siam Reap to Bangkok. The aim is to enable safarists to be at Bangkok International Airport by 4.00 pm to enable those who wish to catch the overnight flights back to Australia. Whatever the flight times there will be an interesting program either at the Angkor Wat and/or Bangkok gaining further cultural insights. The safari concludes at the Bangkok Airport at 4.00 pm.