



WORLD DISCOVERY  
— HISTORY CULTURE WILDLIFE —

## Splendours of Thailand



The ancient capital Ayutthaya

### DAY 1 – Depart UK.

### DAY 2 – Arrival in Bangkok.

On arrival in Bangkok you will be met outside customs by a representative of World Discovery and taken by private car direct to your hotel.

### DAY 3 - Bangkok.

After a leisurely breakfast, your guide will meet you at your hotel and take you to the **Grand Palace**, arguably the most important cultural icon in the land. Once the royal abode, the palace is today used mainly for ceremonial functions. You are allowed inside to see the **Emerald Buddha**, the displays of royal artifacts and memorabilia, and wall decorations. Continue on foot to the **Royal Navy Club** for a simple Thai lunch. Board your private boat nearby, and cross the Chao Phraya River to the Thonburi district, where you will visit the **Wangderm Palace** and the **Royal Barge Museum**. The grand procession of Royal barges is seen only once a year during His Majesty the King's birthday celebrations (early December). See the actual boats in their dry docks. Now it's time to relax and experience life on the water with a beer or soft drink as your boat continues along Bangkok's old **klongs** (canals) and waterways. Today Bangkok is a modern cosmopolitan city but not many decades ago huge areas of the city were still accessed primarily by these kinds of canals. Return to your hotel in the late afternoon.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 4 - Embark on the Mekhala Cruise.

The morning is free for relaxation, shopping or some optional sightseeing. In the early afternoon your driver will take you to the pier to board the Mekhala Boat which departs at 2 o'clock on its journey along the Chao Phraya River. You will enjoy superb views of the Grand Palace and the Temple of Dawn. Just after the sunset, the Mekhala docks at **Wat Kai Tia**, a Thai temple set in a tranquil rural village. A candlelit dinner of mouth-watering Thai cuisine is served on the deck. Overnight on board in your air-conditioned cabin.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, dinner.**

## DAY 5 - Bang Pa-In, Ayutthaya. Fly to Chiang Mai.

A delicious breakfast is served on board while cruising. Your visit this morning is to the extravagant Summer Palace at **Bang Pa-In**, set in manicured gardens. Then continue to the ancient capital of **Ayutthaya** by road, and have lunch at a local restaurant before exploring the ruins of this once great capital. The glory of the Ayutthaya Empire (1350-1767 AD) is evident in the remains of temples such as **Wat Phra Sri Sanphet** and **Wat Chai Wattanaram**. A further visit is to **Wat Yai Chai Mongkol** with its white reclining Buddha and massive pagoda. In the late afternoon drive to Bangkok Airport for your flight to Chiang Mai. Upon your arrival, check in at your hotel and have dinner.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 6 - Chiang Mai.

After breakfast begin your guided exploration of Thailand's second city, once the capital of ancient Lanna, 'the Land of a Million Rice Fields'. You will start at the **Arts and Cultural Centre** where an orientation presentation will help you better understand the history, arts and culture of this northern region. Next visit **Wat Chedi Luang**, home to 'The Pillar of the City', a totem used in ancient Thai fertility rites because the temple itself marks the exact centre of Chiang Mai. After lunch in a local restaurant, you will go up to the summit of Doi Suthep Mountain (1,600 metres) to visit the 600 year old temple of **Wat Phra Doi Suthep**. Your guide will show you how modern Chiang Mai people 'make merit' using incense and flowers. You may join in merit making if you like. The ascent to the temple is via a magnificent Naga (dragon-headed serpent) staircase of 306 steps (a lift is available if this is too strenuous an option). On a clear day, the views over the city are magnificent. Return to your hotel. In the late evening you can visit Chiang Mai's famous night bazaar.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 7 - Lampang Elephant Conservation Centre.

After breakfast drive to the TECC (Thai Elephant Conservation Center) in Lampang. Here you will learn about the problems facing elephants today in Thailand, and also connect with the giant beasts themselves. You will be first be briefed on practical safety issues, so that you will be confident as you watch – up close – the mahouts bathing their elephants. You may enjoy a ride through the jungle on one of the elephants (about 30-40 minutes, depending on local conditions, decided by your mahout). Continue to a nearby local restaurant for lunch under the trees. After lunch visit the nearby town of Lampang with its 15th century temples, and also take a short ride in a traditional pony carriage, before returning to Chiang Mai.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 8 - Chiang Mai.

Today has been left free for you to explore Chiang Mai on your own.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 9 - By boat along the Mae Kok River to the 'Golden Triangle'.

Leave Chiang Mai after breakfast and drive to **Chiang Dao** caves, where you can explore many different levels of caverns. If you wish you may rent equipment enabling you to go deep into the caves; otherwise stay close to the well-lit areas. Continue to **Thaton** near the border with Burma for lunch in a local restaurant, and then board a local boat for the 4 hour boat ride into Chiang Rai town, with stops along the way at local villages. A number of ethnic groups including the Shan, Yao, Lisu, Karen and Akha inhabit the area, the largest group being the Karen, whose ancestors supposedly originated from Tibet.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch.**

## DAY 10 - Chiang Saen, Doi Tung.

The infamous 'Golden Triangle' was renowned for centuries as the centre of the opium trade. This remote spot on the mighty Mekong River is where the borders of Laos, Burma and Thailand converge. You will visit the **Hall of Opium**, which has excellent historical displays pertaining to the opium culture of this area. Then drive to **Chiang Saen** to visit the museum, with its local objets d'art, including Chiang Saen-style Buddha images and Lanna Thai artifacts. Scattered throughout the town are the ruins of the Chiang Saen Kingdom, founded in 1325, including chedis, images of the Buddha, and earthen city ramparts. You will have lunch in a local restaurant before driving to visit the **Doi Tung Royal Development Project**, an initiative launched in 1969 by King Bhumiphol to help the hilltribes in North Thailand and discourage the practice of slash-and burn techniques and widespread farming of opium poppy. You will meet representatives from the foundation to learn of the history of the area and continuing efforts to provide sustainable community development. The complex incorporates the beautiful **Mae Fa Luang Garden** and the Royal Villa. Return to your hotel for an afternoon at leisure. Enjoy a farewell dinner tonight.

**Meals included: Full breakfast, lunch, dinner.**

## DAY 11 - Depart for UK.

In the morning transfer to Chiang Rai Airport for the flight to Bangkok to connect with your flight to the UK.

**Meals included: Full breakfast.**

## DAY 12 - Arrive UK.

Your flight departs in the early morning and arrives in London the same morning.