EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Family Thai Hilltribe Adventure (FTH 2016 11+ YEARS)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TRIPDURATI
15
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: FTH

Trip Highlights - Family Thai Hilltribe Adventure

- ✓ Bangkok - Explore the glittering Grand Palace complex and the beautiful temple of the Reclining Buddha (Wat Po)
- ✓ Chiang Mai - Bustling walled old town and the serene hillside Doi Suthep Temple
- ✓ Lampang - Visit the elephant sanctuary
- ✓ Hilltribe Trek - Three day trek to some of the ethnic minority villages of Northern Thailand
- ✓ Koh Samet - Golden sand beaches and warm waters of the Gulf of Thailand

Trip Essentials

Accommodation:	7 nights Premium Hotel 2 nights Simple Overnight Train 2 nights Simple Village House 3 nights Standard Hotel
Included Meals:	12 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 2 dinners
Start Point:	Join trip: Bangkok
End Point:	Trip ends: Bangkok
Transport:	Bus, Train, Ferry
Countries:	Thailand
Minimum Age:	From 11 years

Family Thai Hilltribe Adventure

This active trip is designed to combine a taste of traditional local life with a jungle trek. Staying in bamboo stilt-houses, home to northern Thailand's hilltribes, we have the fantastic opportunity to experience their unique customs. Join us on a river cruise and meet elephants in a rescue centre. Finally we swim in the sparkling waters off a tropical island and discover vibrant Bangkok.

Why Book this trip

This tour allows families who are interested in walking and also meeting the local population to experience a homestay and trek to some of the most colourful ethnic minority villages in Thailand. This is combined with time in the capital and the ancient city of Chiang Mai along with a few days on the beach to rest after your adventure. A special mention needs to go to our visit to the Elephant Nature Park Sanctuary which is one of the largest elephant conservation centres in the country plus one of the few that have passed Explores policy on animal rehabilitation centres. Your family get the opportunity to feed the elephants and walk with them to the river.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Moderate

These moderately paced tours provide some busy days with plenty of experiences to enjoy, as well as time to relax along the way.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced Tour Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Bangkok with optional cruise along the city's Klongs

Arrive in Bangkok and check-in at your hotel. The rest of the day is free. You may choose to take an optional cruise along the city's Klongs in a traditional longtail boat. This is the ideal way to explore Bangkok's network of meandering waterways that branch off from the main channel of the Chao Phraya River. Traditional houses

back on to the water which provide some insight into local life. Keep a look out for monitor lizards and there is a fun opportunity to feed the many fish which reside here.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**
Triple Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Tour of Bangkok including the Grand Palace and Wat Po Temple

After a leisurely breakfast our sightseeing tour begins by tuk-tuk. A fun way to get around the city, the tuk-tuk is a firm favourite with kids and a great way to experience Bangkok. After a short drive, we arrive at the Grand Palace. The sheer scale and vibrant colours can't fail to impress as we learn about the Thai Royal Family before walking on to Wat Po - the Temple of the Reclining Buddha. After spending some time here we return to the hotel for some relaxation. In the evening you may like to have dinner on a floating restaurant before visiting the vibrant night market in Khao San Road.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel** **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Free day in Bangkok; overnight train to Chiang Mai

The day has been left free to allow time for personal exploration or relaxation. Should you wish to take in more sights of the city a short walk from the hotel takes you to the water taxi's, a fast and fun way to experience Bangkok and its riverlife. A few stops will bring you to Jim Thompson's House, a beautiful teak building holding a stunning collection of antiques and fabrics. A short guided tour takes you through his life and significance to the capital after World War II. Following a visit here, why not take the sky train to Chao Phraya River where a further boat journey will transport you to Wat Arun (Temple of the Dawn). Alternatively if you missed the long tail boat ride on day 1 there is the opportunity to do this instead. After freshening up back at the hotel (several day rooms are provided) we arrive at Bangkok railway station where we board our air conditioned overnight sleeper train to Chiang Mai. Berths are not in compartments, but are arranged open plan 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 a pillow, bedding and blanket. There's plenty of luggage room. A steward or stewardess from the restaurant car may come round and take your food or drink order, offering you a set menu with several choices, around 180 baht for dinner and 100 baht for breakfast. The meal will be delivered to your seat although you may want to have this in the restaurant car. Toilets and hand wash sinks are located at the end of each carriage.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4 Arrive Chiang Mai; visit Doi Suthep Temple

In contrast with the heat and bustle of Bangkok, the climate in Chiang Mai comes as quite a relief. The town is situated in a high valley at the foot of the majestic Doi Suthep Mountain. Founded in the 13th century, Chiang Mai is a city with a rich, colourful and turbulent history. As capital of the Lanna (Million Rice Fields) Kingdom, this area remained outside the rule of Bangkok until well into the 20th century. Upon arrival we take breakfast in our hotel before driving to the famous Doi Suthep Temple, where we learn that the location of the temple was chosen by... an elephant! The king's favourite white elephant was left to wander with a Buddha relic strapped onto its back - the monarch having decided that where the elephant stopped, a temple would be built. We then return for an orientation walk of the town including various markets. In preparation for our hilltribe trek, there will be a short briefing from your tour leader tonight.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel** **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 5 Drive to Pai; start Hilltribe trek to Red Lahu Village

Leaving Chiang Mai we head into the northern hills to spend the next three days exploring the area of the hilltribes where colourful tribes people inhabit the mountain slopes above an altitude of 300m. There are numerous individual tribes, each with its own particular beliefs, way of life and colour of dress. Our 4 hour morning transfer is punctuated with several stops including a tea making cafe where we watch the grinding of the leaves and can sample different flavours. We continue on and have lunch in the small town of Pai before driving to the start point of our trek. Here we are met by jeeps which take our overnight bags to the village, we just carry our day bag during the walk. Our trekking journey begins in the afternoon when we hike to a Red Lahu Village (approx 3 hrs walking), where we spend the night. The walk takes us through beautiful open scenery and we regularly stop to look at the flora and fauna or watch the locals at work in the fields. The pathway is clearly defined as we climb and descend three hills. Our Tour Leader carves bamboo walking sticks for everyone, these prove a real asset particularly with the uphills and river crossings. Once we arrive at the village we are taken to our sleeping quarters. The group is housed communally in one room with another room for cooking and eating. Foam mattresses, pillows, sleeping bags and mosquito nets are provided. After dinner we are greeted by traditionally dressed local

children who sing several songs and then expect us to sing in return! It is a nice gesture to offer them sweets or small toys which you may have picked up in the markets of Chiang Mai. After a satisfying dinner, the ladies of the village provide a wonderfully soothing massage on tired muscles and help us drop off to sleep.

Overnight: **Simple Village House**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6 Trek to White Karen Village via Tham Yao Cave

This morning we have time for a quick tour of the village before heading out on our days trek. The scenery today is less open and feels more wooded and shady. A welcome relief from the hot sun. There are numerous streams to cross and stepping stones to navigate. We may come across water buffalo on our journey and a picnic lunch of sandwiches and fresh fruit is provided by our crew. Firstly however they must make the table! This they do by cutting down bamboo, a very versatile material which serves as both a table top and legs. This afternoon our walk brings us to Tham Yao Cave. A vast and pristine cave system which provides a home to hundreds of bats. Our second village is a little less basic than the previous night; a local shop in the village selling ice creams is a very welcome sight after our days walk. Again we are all accommodated in one village house but we are split between several communal rooms here with bedding as described above. There is a basic bucket shower and several toilets and also the opportunity to charge phones/ cameras.

Overnight: **Simple Village House**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Morning trek through river before transferring to Mae Hong Son

Our final morning of trekking is a little more relaxed as the majority of the route takes us along the river. Splashing though the water and skimming stones on the river is a perfect end to our trekking adventure. After a couple of hours walking, we arrive at our third and final village. A celebratory cold drink is much deserved as we finish this element of the adventure and bid farewell to our trekking crew. We board our bus and drive on to our lunch stop before continuing to Mae Hong Son. Although over half the population of Mae Hong Son are from the various hilltribes, the town's location gives it a distinctly Burmese feel. It was only linked to the outside world by a paved road in the late 1960's. Our hotel is located in a tranquil setting next to the river and surrounded by mountains. The rest of the day is free to relax by the hotel pool.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 Cyle ride and boat trip on River Pai

This morning we have a short cycle ride visit a temple which sits above the town offering expansive views of the surrounding area. In the afternoon, we then take a boat ride along the scenic River Pai. Similar in design to the long tail boats in Bangkok, they travel down the river giving the opportunity to spot colourful birdlife along the way and watch local people doing their daily chores. The afternoon is free for more walks, cycling, a mud spa or you may choose to relax and enjoy the facilities of the hotel.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 9 Return to Chiang Mai with optional Thai Cookery class

Today we return to Chiang Mai, the scenic bus journey will take around five hours including several stops plus lunch. Your main luggage will be waiting for you back at the hotel and the rest of the day is free. Later this afternoon we offer an optional Thai cookery class. You will meet your chef in the local market where he will explain and purchase the necessary ingredients, before being transferred to his kitchen (approx 30 mins). This is a stunning open air building which houses countless cooking stations. Everyone is encouraged to cook independently with children and parents working alongside each other. Each dish is demonstrated, before you then have a go yourself and whatever you produce is your dinner for the evening. The setting is stunning and provides a lovely cool environment. After dinner you are returned either back to the hotel or to Chiang Mai night market for a bit of bartering.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel** **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10 Visit Elephant Nature Park Sanctuary before catching the overnight train to Bangkok

This morning we head out to the Elephant Nature Park Sanctuary which is one of the largest elephant conservation centre in the country and also hosts an elephant nursery and hospital caring for sick and abandoned elephants. Its main functions are for the treatment and care of elephants although visitors and tourists are now admitted. We will feed the elephants from a viewing platform in the morning and in the afternoon we walk with the centre's staff with the elephants to the river that skirts the park. Bathing these

gentle giants as they splash around is a real highlight with the opportunity to go into the river with them or watch them on the river bank. The day is all about spending quality time with these gentle giants and observing them being with the herd. We say goodbye to the elephants and travel back to Chiang Mai where we prepare for our overnight sleeper train back to Bangkok.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Morning drive and ferry to Koh Samet with the afternoon on the beach

Our train arrives in the early morning into Bangkok where we are met and continue by minibus (3-4hrs driving) to Ban Phe port for the ferry to Koh Samet. We should arrive on the island around lunch time with the afternoon free to relax. The hotel has several pools and is located right on the beach front.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Included Meals: None

DAY 12 On Koh Samet, a tropical paradise

Only 6 km in length, Koh Samet is home to some of the best beaches in Thailand. White sands contrast vividly with the clear blue sea that laps the tree-lined shores of this idyllic island. Up until the 1980's Ko Samet was home to a small community of fishermen when the island then became a designated national park. The island still retains some of its original charm which you can experience for yourself over the two days that we are based upon the island. Relax and enjoy this tropical paradise, with the opportunity to do as much, or as little as you want.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 On Koh Samet with optional boat trip or watersports

Today is left free to explore/relax. You may just decide to enjoy the pristine beach, cooling down with a swim in the clear waters of the Gulf of Thailand. Alternatively you can take an optional boat trip to one of the nearby uninhabited islands. Watersports and snorkelling can all be arranged locally. The Queen Turtle Conservation Project is also a possible optional visit. Evenings can be spent in the beach front restaurants which are within close proximity to our hotel and specialise in freshly caught seafood dishes.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Return to Bangkok

After a final morning on Koh Samet, we head back to Bangkok. Please note, the trip starting on the 14th August 2016 has a flight back to the UK on Sunday morning at 1.10am arriving that day into London Heathrow. The hotel night for Saturday the 29th August has been booked for all clients. If you book a flight departing on the morning of the 30th August, Explore will still provide an airport transfer.

Overnight: **Premium Hotel** **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 In Bangkok. Tour ends

Tour ends after breakfast. If you have time you may wish to wander through Chinatown for a different flavour of the city.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Ability to swim required

An ability to swim is essential for your safe enjoyment of the water based activities on this trip. If you wish to participate in these activities then we insist that you are able to swim.

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

The hotels on this tour are comfortable and well suited to families. Some provide inter connecting or triple rooms, whilst they all have wifi, swimming pools and offer generous breakfasts. Each are well located and provide a good base for the tour - the hotels in Bangkok and Chiang Mai are centrally positioned, whilst in Koh Samet we stay in bungalows right by the beach. In Mae Hon Song the hotel is a few minutes drive from town and is located in a tranquil setting by the lake.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 12 breakfasts, 2 lunches,2 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Thailand

Lunch £: 3.00 - 5.00

Dinner £: 4.00 - 8.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Thailand

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

Area Text: The ancient Kingdom of Thailand is a proud and independent place that burns fiercely with the white heat of modernity while revering the links to its historic past. In recent years the country has witnessed dramatic social and political upheaval, yet the royalist traces of ancient Siam, authentic street food and gorgeous silks still remain, coexisting with massive industry, high-energy nightlife and seminal hi-tech. Get used to the idea that Thailand is rapidly becoming a highly advanced 21st-century society and you can then enjoy its countless attractions to the full. Why not start with the weird and wonderful? Grab a mouthful of cooked bugs off a street stall or watch kickboxing before visiting an ancient temple to learn Thai massage. Top of the list for many people visiting Thailand are the beaches. Whether you are looking for a luxury hotel in a resort, or a quiet out-of-the-way place with just a handful of A-frame huts metres from the sea, it is here to be found. In the southwest, travellers will find many pleasures along the Andaman Coast, from world-famous diving sites, iconic islands and fabulous beaches to sea caves and towering limestone outcrops. On the Gulf Coast, Koh Samui offers pampering palaces, fine dining, action-packed beaches and quiet bays, while its sister island, Koh Phangan, draws 10,000 people to the world's largest outdoor party on the sands at Hat Rin. Further east, towards Cambodia, Koh Chang, with its thickly forested interior and rich wildlife, is the least known of Thailand's large islands. The hilltribes of the north represent another Thailand. With their distinctive cultures and traditional lifestyles, they provide a vivid counterpoint to the lowland Thais. Taking the time to trek through the forests of the north, rafting down its rivers and staying with ethnic minorities is a highlight for many visitors. The unofficial capital of the north is Chiang Mai whose laid-back charms are well known for seducing travellers. What's more, Isaan food from this region is also distinctive, similar to Lao cuisine and very popular. Even in Bangkok, you won't have to go far to find a street stall selling sticky rice, kai yang (grilled chicken) and som tam (papaya salad). Most visitors begin and end their stay in Bangkok. The capital has impressive historical sights, atmospheric canals, great food, throbbing nightlife and world-class shopping, but, most importantly, it provides a thrilling introduction to this captivating nation.

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Bangkok - Longtail boat excursion on klongs 1500THB (approx £30) - this is for the boat, per person cost is dependent on group size.
Jim Thompsons House: 100THB (approx £2)
Chiang Mai - Thai cookery course 800THB (approx £16)
Koh Samet - Snorkelling approx £30 (final cost depends on group size)

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour. Accordingly, you should allow US$24 for tipping.

Foreign Exchange

Thailand

Major Language: Thai

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in Bangkok but are limited on the islands.

Credit Card Acceptance: Major stores and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques: Can be exchanged at banks and exchange offices throughout the tour although rates may not be as favourable.

Local Currency: Thai Baht

Recommended Currency for Exchange: We recommend that you bring your money in GBP or US$.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns and on the islands - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a ‘flight inclusive’ package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific ‘Joining Instructions’ prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the ‘Land Only’ arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

EXPLORE!
The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

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Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Thailand: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens for a stay of less than 30 days. All passports must have at least 6 months validity remaining on entry to Thailand. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Lone Parents

Thailand

Single parents or other adults travelling alone with children should be aware that some countries require documentation confirming that the individual has authority to travel with the minor. It is crucial that you contact the Thailand embassy for further information on exactly what may be required.

Vaccinations & Protection

Thailand

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and infectious hepatitis. Although not compulsory, travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on Malaria and Zika Virus. Please take preventative measures to avoid mosquito bites - these include mosquito repellent as well as long trousers and long sleeve shirts to cover up when necessary. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider.

Preparing for your Trip

Walking Boots

Walking Boots:
During the wet season (June to October) we strongly recommend walking in good boots. Many people now trek in the lighter weight Goretex or leather boots. They have the advantage that they take little breaking in. The slightly heavier traditional leather walking boots are also good. Trainers are adequate for the trek in the dry season.
Avoid the types often found in high street shoe shops which are simply cheap trainers with a higher canvas side sewn on - they give little support and will probably not last the trek.
Above all, your boots must be well broken in and comfortable. We do not recommend borrowing or renting boots. It is a good idea to carry your boots in your hand luggage on international flights or wear them - should your luggage be delayed, your well broken in boots are the one thing which will be irreplaceable.

Trainers or Trekking sandals:
These are useful around camp, in towns, when travelling and to cross streams and rivers.

Climate

Thailand

Generally hot with high humidity. There is some rainfall from April to September with most days being hot (around 33 Degrees) and a light breeze on the islands. If it does rain, it will be more of a heavy tropical downpour that lasts a few hours. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at http://www.explore.co.uk/weather.

Clothing

Waterproofs:
Breathable waterproofs made from material such as Goretex not only protects against rain and wind but also stops you from overheating. They 'breathe' and avoid condensation which you will experience from nylon waterproofs. Ponchos can be purchased locally at a cost of approx £3. Your Tour Leader will be able to advise of this. If travelling during the dry season (March to May) you should not need to bring waterproofs.
Sweater/fleece jacket:
We recommend a thick sweater or fleece jacket as nights can be cold in the hilltribe area in the cooler months (Nov-Feb) . Make sure that your waterproof jacket is loose enough to wear over your sweater or fleece. If travelling during the warmer months this should not be required.
Socks:
It is best to wear a pair of liner socks under a pair of fairly thick loop stitch socks. This helps to protect your feet against blisters. Avoid nylon socks, they are abrasive, don't breathe well and can cause blisters.
Long Trousers:
For everyday walking, light cotton trousers or long shorts are the most suitable. Jeans are not recommended. Long trousers/skirts are also required in Bangkok during the temple visits.

Equipment

Plastic Bags:
If you pack bits and pieces in plastic bags inside your kit bag they will stay dry in case of rain and it will be easier for you to sort through. Remember, the less you have to unpack in the evening, the less you have to repack each morning! A bin liner to pack inside your daypack is also a good idea.
Sleeping Bag:
A light sleeping bag or blankets will be provided on the trek. If you prefer to sleep in your own sleeping bag then we recommend you bring a 4-season (temperature -5°C to 0°C) sleeping bag for November to February departures. 2-season (temperature 0°C to 5°C) for the rest of the year. A sleeping sheet liner (silk) can be useful in both hot and cold conditions.
Mosquito Net:
A mosquito net is provided while on the hilltribe trek.
Water Bottle:
Water along the trail must never be considered as drinkable. Take a 1.5 litre personal water bottle. Our support crew on the trek provide sterilized water each meal time to replenish your supplies. Also energy snacks (nuts, cereal bars etc.) are recommended whilst on trek.
Swimwear:
There are plenty of opportunities to swim.
Sunglasses:
A good pair of sunglasses are essential for protection against UV rays.
Sun Hat, High Factor Sun Cream/Block & Lip Salve:
Bring suncream (Factor 20 or more) to protect your skin against the sun. A combination sunblock/ lipsalve is ideal for facial protection.
Torch/Batteries/Bulb:
A small torch is essential during our stay at the village houses, a head torch is probably best. Remember to bring some spare batteries.
Toiletries:
Try to keep cosmetics to a minimum. Essentials are toothbrush/paste, soap, small towel. Wet wipes are great for a quick clean up.

Footwear

Trainers should be adequate for all activities on this trip, though if you have walking boots or trekking shoes they are useful for any walks. Light shoes or sandals can be brought for general travel. If you bring
boots, make sure that they are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip and we recommend that you wear/carry your walking boots as hand luggage on the international flight: should your luggage be delayed, your well broken-in boots will be irreplaceable.

Luggage: On Tour

This should consist of a main piece of luggage and a daypack to carry your personal day to day items such as sun cream, camera etc. You will also need to bring a holdall or kitbag for the trek as your main luggage will be left behind for four nights (two nights in the villages and two nights in Mao Hong Son). You will not be expected to carry this with you while trekking but it should be as light and compact as possible.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Thailand

Population: 67,000,000

Size of Country: 514,000 sq km

Major Language: Thai

ATM Availability: ATMs are available in Bangkok but are limited on the islands.

Religion: Buddhism

Time Difference to GMT: +7

Electric Supply & Plugs

Thailand

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is ‘Available’ or ‘Guaranteed’ we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2016 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2016. 2017/18 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2017.

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