EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Old Siam and The River Kwai + Koh Samet Extension (OSK 2015)

CULTURAL DISCOVERY

TOURDURAT
15
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate
Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard
tour Code: OSK

Tour Highlights - Old Siam and The River Kwai + Koh Samet Extension

- ✓ Bangkok - Explore the glittering Grand Palace complex and Wat Po, the beautiful temple of the Reclining Buddha
- ✓ Chiang Mai - Bustling walled old town and the serene hillside Doi Suthep Temple
- ✓ Sukhothai - Cycle around the historic park housing the remains of this ancient capital
- ✓ Kanchanaburi - Jungle rafts, minority villages and the infamous Bridge on the River Kwai
- ✓ Koh Samet - Golden sand beaches and warm waters of the Gulf of Thailand

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	5 nights Comfortable Hotel 1 night Simple Overnight Train 6 nights Standard Hotel 2 nights Simple Raft House
Included Meals:	13 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Bangkok
End Point:	Tour ends: Bangkok
Transport:	Bus, Train, Boat
Countries:	Thailand

Old Siam & The River Kwai + Koh Samet Extension

Discover the cultural side to Thailand as we explore hilltop temples, cruise on a converted rice barge and unwind on the island of Koh Samet. We discover the ruined temples of the former royal capital Ayutthaya and visit the renowned 'Bridge over the River Kwai'. We take a longtail boat along the Kwai Noi River to jungle raft houses from where we ride elephants through the jungle, visit a Mon village and try bamboo rafting. Finally we travel to the tropical beaches of Koh Samet, an unspoilt National Park, where we can relax on the pristine beaches, snorkel in the clear waters or enjoy a boat trip around secluded bays.

Why Book this tour

This popular tour to Thailand not only gets under the skin of the destination and gives travellers an in-depth discovery of the history and culture of the country but also an extension to the beach on the island of Koh Samet. You will see ancient lost cities, journey by rice barge, and spend a night in a raft house on the legendary River Kwai. This is a great holiday for history lovers who want to understand the 'real' Thailand as well as spend a couple of days relaxing on the beach afterwards.

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.

Tour Comfort: Standard

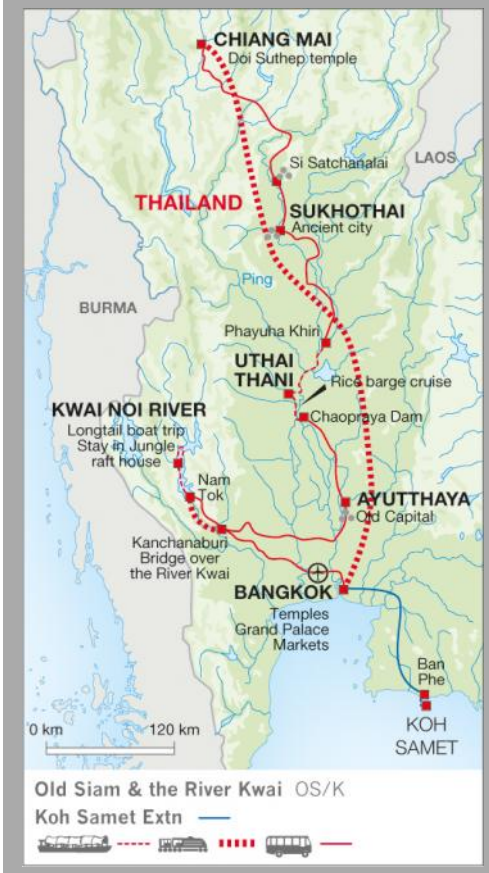
Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

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 tour 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.

DAY 1 Join tour in Bangkok

Arrive Bangkok and check-in at the hotel. The rest of the day is free. You may choose to take an optional cruise along the city's Klongs (canals) 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. The excursion will also include visits to the Royal Barge Museum and the iconic Wat Arun, the Temple of the Dawn, which was built to represent the towering slopes of Mount Meru, the home to the gods of Khmer mythology.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 In Bangkok, visit Grand Palace; sleeper train to Chiang Mai

Our sightseeing tour this morning is on foot and includes the Grand Palace with its stunning Emerald Buddha and Wat Po (Temple of the Reclining Buddha). The afternoon is left free, then in the evening we board the overnight train for Chiang Mai.

Overnight: **Simple Overnight Train**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3 Arrive in Chiang Mai; visit Doi Suthep temple; walking tour of Old Town

Chiang Mai offers a complete contrast and relief from the heat and noise of Bangkok. Its elevation is just over 300m, so the climate is most agreeable. Founded in the 13th century, it owes its prosperity mainly to the teak trade. Our sightseeing will include the famous Doi Suthep temple and an orientation walk of the old town.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: None

DAY 4 In Chiang Mai, free day with option to visit Lampang Elephant Sanctuary

Our second day in Chiang Mai is left free. In the morning there is the option to visit the Lampang elephant sanctuary, the largest elephant conservation centre in the country, hosting an elephant hospital caring not just for the sick, but also for abandoned elephants. In the afternoon you may choose to take a Thai cooking course, where an expert cook will teach even the most inexperienced the fundamentals of Thai cookery. Chiang Mai is easy to get around so you may decide to hire a bicycle, or alternatively spend time visiting the markets in the city reputed to be the handicraft capital of Thailand.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Drive to Si Satchanalai temple ruins en route to Sukhothai

Today we head south to Si Satchanalai the twin city to Sukhothai. Although architecturally very different, it is just as impressive in many ways with a variety of outside influences noticeable in the construction of the wats and chedis (religious memorials). The most impressive and most sacred is Wat Chang Lom. Situated in the heart of the old city it is decorated with 39 standing elephants and is unusual due to its Ceylonese-style chedi – the earliest of its kind in Thailand. After visiting the site we make our way to nearby Sukhothai.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6 In Sukothai, explore old city ruins by bicycle; rice barge on Chao Phraya River to Uthai Thani

Today we explore (Old) Sukhothai by bicycle, the first capital of Siam; which was at the pinnacle of Thai civilisation for over 200 years up to the end of the 1400s. It then went into decline as Ayutthaya took over as the most important city in the area, and was deserted until it was discovered as a 'lost city in the jungle' in the 19th Century. The city has now been fully excavated and it comprises 21 historical sites within the city walls and a further 70 outside. Leaving Sukhothai by bus, we drive to Phayuha Khiri where we embark on a leisurely cruise down the river aboard our converted rice barge. We enjoy dinner before disembarking at Uthai Thani for the night.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Visit morning market; travel by rice barge and bus to Ayutthaya; visit Royal Palace

This morning we plan a visit to a local market before re-boarding our rice barge once again. We will stop en route as we drift down the winding Chao Phraya river, giving us a real insight into the authentic life of the indigenous river dwellers and boat people. There's plenty of time to relax and enjoy the passing scenery. After lunch we arrive at Haopraya Dam and disembark. Heading south by bus

we reach another of Siam's stunning ancient capitals, Ayutthaya. Situated on an island at the confluence of three rivers, the Chao Phraya, Pa Sak and Lopburi rivers, Ayutthaya had a very strong defensive position and retained its power for over 400 years, during which time it became extremely wealthy. Now a UNESCO World Heritage site, the city is still a stunning complex of palaces, shrines, stupas and monasteries. We will include a walking tour to visit the Royal Palace and a few wats.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 8 Drive to Kanchanaburi; journey on Death Railway and by boat on River Kwai; overnight in raft houses

An early morning drive, by-passing Bangkok takes us to the River Kwai and Kanchanaburi, where we visit the war cemetery and the famous Bridge over the River Kwai. The building of the bridge and the Death Railway as it has become known, is one of the most infamous episodes of the Second World War. The Japanese built the railway to link Siam and Burma (Myanmar) using Prisoners of War between June 1942 and October 1943. It was to carry supplies to their fast expanding empire and by doing so it would cut almost 1300 miles off the sea route from Japan. The working conditions were atrocious and over 16000 allied troops lost their lives as well as an estimated 75,000 Asian forced labourer, we then take the train along part of the original route where we continue by bus to the Hellfire Pass and visit the Memorial Museum. Finally we transfer to longtail boats for a journey up the River Kwai to our Raft Houses, set in a tranquil location on the river's edge.

Overnight: **Simple Raft House**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9 In Kanchanburi, take bamboo rafts on River Kwai; visit Mon minority village

We spend a full day here exploring the jungle and the river by elephant and bamboo rafts. A visit to nearby Mon minority villages will also be organised or you may choose to relax with an optional Thai massage. Alternatively you may prefer to simply relax in your raft house and watch the world go by.

Overnight: **Simple Raft House**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 10 Return to Bangkok by boat and bus

We head back by longtail boat to Pak Sang Pier this morning and join our vehicle for the drive to Bangkok.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available **Swimming Pool Available**

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 11 Early morning transfer by minibus and ferry to Koh Samet

Please note: whilst on Koh Samet this extension is unescorted.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 12 On Koh Samet; free time

This is essentially a time for rest and relaxation. You could swim and unwind on the beach or there are various optional excursions such as boat trips and snorkelling that can be paid for locally. The next two days are free to do as little or as much as you like.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 13 On Koh Samet; free time

Today you have another opportunity to swim, snorkel or simply relax on the beach enjoying the sunshine.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 14 Return to Bangkok

Today we transfer by boat back to the mainland and drive to Bangkok.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 15 Tour ends in Bangkok

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

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 13 breakfasts, 3 lunches,3 dinners included in the price of this tour. 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 Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour 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 £: 2.50

Dinner £: 4.00

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

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 including visit to Royal Barge Museum US$ 18
Chiang Mai - Evening Folklore Show and Khan Toke Dinner US$ 14; Thai cooking course US$ 23; Lampang Elephant sanctuary US$ 16.

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. Accordingly, you should allow approximately £25.

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.

Foreign Exchange

Thailand

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 Tour

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.

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.

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

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

Explore Worldwide is an Introducer Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Ltd who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

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.

Vaccinations & Protection

Thailand

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and infectious hepatitis. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Although not compulsory, travellers may also wish to immunise themselves against Japanese encephalitis. 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 Tour

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

Pack essentially for hot weather. Lightweight rainwear is advisable all year. Shorts, open backed sandals and bare shoulders are not permitted in the Grand Palace in Bangkok.

Equipment

Bring a torch and waterbottle.

Footwear

Comfy shoes, trainers & sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

Should consist of a main piece of baggage and a daysac large enough to carry clothes for an overnight stop.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Thailand

Population: 67,000,000

Size of Country: 514,000 sq km

Major Language: Thai

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, elephant, 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 and traditional, 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 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour 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: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

These tour notes were printed on 28/11/2015 07:31:16