

EXPLORE!

Tour Notes



Old Siam and The River Kwai + Islands In The Sun (OST 2015)



TOUR DURATION
23
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Moderate

Tour Type: Small Groups
Tour Comfort: Standard

tour Code: OST

Tour Highlights - Old Siam and The River Kwai + Islands In The Sun

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Island Hopping - Snorkelling, swimming and relaxing on some of Thailand's most beautiful beaches in the Andaman Sea

Tour Essentials

Accommodation: 3 nights Comfortable Hotel
3 nights Basic Overnight Train
12 nights Standard Hotel
2 nights Simple Raft House
2 nights Standard Bungalow

Included Meals: 19 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 6 dinners

Start Point: Join tour: Bangkok
End Point: Tour ends: Bangkok
Transport: Bus, Train, Boat
Countries: Thailand

Old Siam & The River Kwai + Islands In The Sun

On this Thai odyssey we start in the capital city of Bangkok then head north to the charming city of Chiang Mai. We explore the ancient temple ruins of Sukhothai and the former royal capital of Ayutthaya as well as cruise the Chao Phraya River in a converted rice barge. We see the infamous 'Bridge over the River Kwai' where we sleep in a jungle raft house and visit a Mon village. Finally heading south to relax on the idyllic islands of Koh Yao Noi, Koh Lanta and Koh Hai in the Andaman Sea.

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

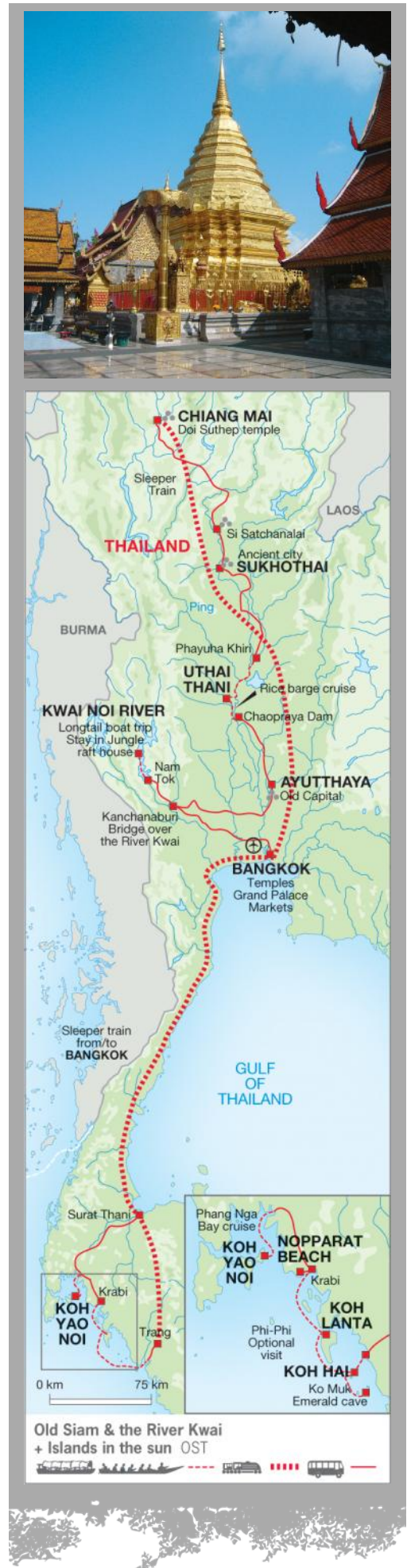
While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

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: **Basic 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: **Standard 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 a 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 that give it the reputation of being the handicraft capital of Thailand.

Overnight: **Standard 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 of 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 having a guided tour of the site we make our way to nearby Sukhothai.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**

Single Room Available


 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **6** In Sukhothai, explore old city ruins by bicycle; board 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 ancient 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

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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 labourers. We then take the train along part of the original route to Nam Tok 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 take time out 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 In Bangkok, visit Grand Palace and Wat Po; overnight train to Surat Thani

We have the day free to explore Bangkok further before meeting the rest of the group that will travel on with us to southern Thailand. We transfer to Hualampong rail station and board the overnight train to Surat Thani.

Overnight: **Basic Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Drive to Phang Nga Bay; island hopping cruise to Koh Yao Noi

We arrive at Surat Thani and if time allows we can enjoy a walk around a local market before driving south to the pier to board a private long tail boat, depending on group size we may have more than one boat, for a lazy cruise through picturesque Phang Nga Bay to our first island of Koh Yao Noi. As we make our way through a seascape dotted with craggy limestone islands we will make a couple of stops to visit small islands, so that we can enjoy the beaches and warm waters of this idyllic part of Thailand. We arrive at Koh Yao Noi in the mid afternoon and take a short drive in a local truck to our hotel base for the next two nights.

Overnight: **Standard Bungalow**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 13 Free day on Kho Yao Noi

Today is free for you to either relax under the shade of a palm tree or choose from a number of optional excursions including hiring a bicycle and cycling around the island to learn about daily life on the island; or kayaking to nearby islands; or taking an island tour to see a rubber plantation, rice farming and other local industries. Your tour leader will discuss various options with you.

Overnight: **Standard Bungalow**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 14 Public ferry to Ao Thalene for kayaking; drive to Nopparat beach in Krabi

This morning we transfer by local truck to the pier where we board a public long tail ferry to Ao Thalene pier from where we join other travellers on a kayaking excursion for around two to three hours. We then drive on to our hotel on Nopparat beach. On arrival we check into our hotel for the next two nights, after which the rest of the day is free to enjoy this stunning location at your leisure. Renowned for its limestone outcrops, the region is littered with caves that have unearthed prehistoric rock paintings and artefacts that date back some 40,000 years, one of the oldest finds of human habitation in South East Asia. These caves are also one of the prime sources worldwide for the nests of the Swiftlet that is used to make bird nest soup. Please note: rooms are air-conditioned and have fans. Hot water is available at certain times of the day.


Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 15 Free day in Krabi; optional cruise to Koh Phi Phi

A free day affords another opportunity to relax and enjoy the balmy serenity of these tropical shores, relaxing on the beach, or perhaps taking a walk through the surrounding area. Considered one of the most picturesque regions in southern Thailand, the area is blanketed in verdant vegetation, white beaches and numerous caves, islands and waterfalls just waiting to be explored. Alternatively you may wish to take the short trip to Krabi, to partake in an optional Thai cookery course, where an expert cook will teach even the most inexperienced the fundamentals of Thai cookery so that the fabulous cuisine can be recreated on your return home. For those looking for adventure farther afield there is the option to take a morning ferry to Phi Phi Island. Here, magnificent limestone cliffs rise out of the water while warm waves crash on the brilliant white sand. The undulating island is covered with rich vegetation and bright flowers and fringed with thatched roof houses. It was on Koh Phi Phi that the film *The Beach* was filmed.


Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 16 Public ferry to Koh Lanta; free afternoon

Transferring to the local pier we take a public ferry to the island of Koh Lanta, whose beautiful beaches have earned it the name of Pulau Satak by the local people (Island of the Long Beaches). Its white sands and forested hills present the ideal backdrop to our stay amidst the warm waters of the Andaman Sea and on our journey to the island we may even be accompanied by dolphins and flying fish, so keep your eyes peeled. On arrival we will transfer to our hotel and check in, after which the rest of the day is free to explore, or simply relax and take in the tranquil ambience of our idyllic surroundings. Inhabited largely by Muslims who arrived here from Malaysia 200 years ago, this beautiful island is some 25 kilometres long, with a steep ridge forming a forested interior. Parts of its lush interior are cultivated, but most villagers are still involved in the time-honoured occupation of fishing, much as their ancestors have been for generations. There are superb deserted beaches to wander along, or watch the fishermen pull in a catch, while children splash in the golden waters at sunset. This is the spot to forget your worries and relax and a Mai Tai cocktail, whilst watching the sunset offers a perfect end to the day.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 17 Free day on Koh Lanta

A free day on the island affords a wealth of opportunities to enjoy some optional excursions, including elephant rides and walks in the national park, a boat trip into the warm waters, or perhaps an excursion by bus around the island. The pristine waters of these shores present ideal opportunities for diving and snorkelling.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

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 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Dinner

DAY **18** Public ferry to Koh Hai; free afternoon

A short boat transfer takes us to the beautiful island of Koh Hai, (sometimes called Koh Ngai), the least developed of the islands we stay on, and a true paradise that is perfect for exploring, with its fine white sandy beaches, clear water and vibrant coral reef. A landscape of ragged limestone outcrops and evergreen forests offer a spectacular backdrop to our stay here. Once we have checked in the rest of the day is free to enjoy as you wish.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY **19** From Koh Hai, boat trip to Ko Muk; swim through Emerald Cave; free afternoon

Our first full morning on Koh Hai sees us taking a boat trip to the nearby Trang Andaman Island of Koh Muk, where we stop off to visit the stunning Emerald Cave (Tham Morakot). An 80 metre swim along a limestone tunnel emerges at an inland beach, surrounded by enclosed cliffs covered in vegetation and an open pool of water that reflects the most beautiful emerald colour. This island is the perfect place to relax and unwind - perhaps taking the opportunity for further snorkelling or a walk through the forested interior to the other side of the island. Returning to Koh Hai the rest of our time on this glorious island is free to enjoy as you wish. You may like to take a walk into the forested slopes of the National Park, where crab-eating monkeys and monitor lizards travel down from the mountains to wander through the plantations of palms in search of food. Alternatively you can enjoy more of the spectacular reefs off shore, either from the beach, or by taking boat trips from the island.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **20** Free day on Koh Hai

Another free day affords an opportunity to return to the forested landscapes of the National Park, or perhaps to take a speedboat to nearby Rok Nok or Rok Nai, to enjoy some snorkelling and shopping. Of course you may just prefer to soak up the idyllic majesty of our island paradise and relax by the warm waters of the Trang Sea. This evening there is the option to take a sunset cruise from Koh Hai, a fitting way to spend our final night on the islands, before returning to the city.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **21** Free morning; afternoon public ferry to Trang, and overnight train to Bangkok

After a free morning we take the ferry back to the mainland, from where we take the overnight train from Trang back up to Bangkok.

Overnight: **Basic Overnight Train**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY **22** Free time in Bangkok

After arriving in Bangkok the rest of the day is left free in this vibrant and bustling capital city.

Overnight: **Comfortable Hotel**
Single Room Available

Swimming Pool Available 

 **Included Meals:** None

DAY **23** Tour ends in Bangkok

Our tour ends after breakfast. If you have time you may wish to wander through Chinatown for a different flavour of the city, or visit one of the many shopping malls and markets.

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

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Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 19 breakfasts, 6 lunches, 6 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\$ 12;

Bicycle hire US\$ 17

Koh Lanta - Elephant ride (2 hrs) US\$ 25, Bus excursion US\$ 45, Boat to Koh Roh US\$ 45

Koh Phi Phi - Sightseeing, snorkelling with lunch US\$ 50; Thai cookery course US\$ 55

Koh Hai - Speedboat to Rok Nok US\$ 75

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 recognized 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 approximately \$50 total for the combined 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 joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited, who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

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. N.B. shorts, open backed sandals and bare shoulders are not permitted in the Grand Palace. Bear in mind that the region is tropical (humid) and that days can be very hot. Casual clothes are the most practical (something with long sleeves, and long trousers for evenings), and tight fitting garments should be avoided. Laundry facilities are available on the islands. A swimming costume is a must.

Equipment

Bring a torch, a water bottle, insect repellent, a beach towel and high factor sunscreen. If you intend to do a lot of snorkeling we recommend you bring your own mask and snorkel, as local equipment is not always top quality. A disposable waterproof camera can be useful whilst snorkeling. Any qualified divers should remember to bring logbooks and certification with them if intending to dive.

Footwear

Comfy shoes, trainers & sandals.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Thailand

Population: 67,000,000

Size of Country: 514,000 sq km

Major Language: Thai, English

Religion: Buddhist

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 & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of 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 traditions, 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 <http://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 <http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/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 Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. 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.

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