



11 Days

Thailand

Mountains, Monks and Meditation

Venture into Northern Thailand to admire ancient wats, glittering temples and extravagant palaces as we embark on a journey of discovery on this 11 day Religious Studies trip. Discover a Thailand rarely seen by outsiders as we join local residents in giving alms to monks, receive meditation instruction in a majestic temple complex and journey to the ancient capital of Thailand, Sukhothai with its dramatic golden sculptures of the Buddha. We will wander through local markets, learn to cook some tasty Thai dishes, get a taste of local life on a hilltribe homestay and visit an elephant sanctuary along the way. Discover the best Thailand has to offer on this spiritual journey to the north.



Recommended tour itinerary

Day
1-2

Depart London, arrive Bangkok, Thai dinner

We will be met on arrival by our tour leader and transferred to our hotel. After check in we head out for dinner to experience Thailand's bustling capital. Bangkok is famous for its tuk tuks, klong boats and street vendors serving up delicious Thai food, which we will sample at a local restaurant.

Day
3

Bangkok city tour, Tuk Tuk adventure, Grand Palace

After breakfast at our hotel, we meet our local guide as we start our Bangkok tour by tuk tuk. We will visit the spectacular Grand Palace, undoubtedly the city's most famous landmark, Wat Po, the temple at the centre of the Buddhist religion in Thailand, and the Phahurat Market, in the heart of Bangkok's little India and home to a century old Sikh community. We also make a visit to the golden-domed Siri Guru Singh Sabha temple. Lunch will be at a local restaurant. In the afternoon we head to Wat Mahathat for a meditation class. Wat Mahathat houses the Vipassana Meditation Centre in the majestic setting of the temple complex. The three hour classes consist of an introductory meditation instruction followed by demonstrations of walking and sitting. Please expect to make a small donation as a show of respect and observe five basic Buddhist precepts. You will also be required to wear only white attire during the proceedings, which will be available to rent.

Day
4

Kanchanaburi

We will head out of Bangkok travelling west to Kanchanaburi. We spend time exploring the Jeath War Museum and the Allied War Cemetery. After lunch we continue to the Hellfire Pass Museum where we can walk through the hand-cut gorge and learn about the arduous lives of POWs working in this district during World War II. We then board a train on the infamous Thai-Burma railway to take us to the infamous 'Bridge on the River Kwai'. The later afternoon has a lighter note as we enjoy a saamlaw (bicycle rickshaw) tour around the town of Kanchanaburi - the perfect way to take in the splendour of this city and the monuments to its tragic past.

Day
5

Ayuthaya

This morning, we travel by bus to Ayuthaya, one of Thailand's ancient cities. There is time for a guided tour of the picturesque ruins and temples spread across the town; the ruins at Wat Phra Mahathat provide many photo opportunities and the Buddha head surrounded by Banyan tree roots is perhaps the most photographed site in Ayuthaya.

Day
6

Sukhothai

We travel from Ayuthaya to Sukhothai via a stop off at Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat (Phitsanlouke). Today we have a focus on two extensive temple complexes, the first is located on the banks of the Nan River near the Naresuan Bridge. Commonly known as Wat Yai, it is famous throughout Thailand for its golden sculpture of the Buddha called the Phra Buddha Chinnarat which many people in Thailand consider to be the most beautiful Buddha portrait in Thailand.

Sukhothai was once the Thai capital in the 13th century and is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. The province's temples and monuments have been restored and remain protected in the Sukhothai Historical Park. We will spend time viewing the most interesting sights including the Royal Palace and Wat Mahathat.





Day
6-7

Chiang Mai

We drive from Sukhothai to Lampang with a stop to view the Wat Phra That Lampang Luang temple that is said to enshrine a relic of the Buddha. We have an early lunch before continuing to Chiang Mai, or the 'Rose of the North', a vibrant city in northern Thailand, known for its beauty and the friendliness of the local people. In the afternoon we drive up and explore the famous temple complex of Doi Suthep. Drive along a scenic, winding mountain road that ends at an impressive 300-step naga-guarded stairway. The rewards justify the climb with one of the most beautiful temples in Thailand on display, not to mention fantastic panoramic views of the city and the opportunity to listen to hypnotic evening chanting by resident Buddhist monks. Our last stop of the day is to head back into the centre of town and explore the bustling night markets; dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Day
8

Chiang Mai, alms giving & cookery class

The day starts early as we jump in a fleet of Songthaew, an iconic public bus. Our first stop will be Kad Ton Payom, a flea market well known for its northern Thai cuisine. Afterwards, we have the chance to offer alms to monks, to 'make merit' and enjoy a traditional style breakfast. The next stop is Wat U-mong a 600 year-old temple famed for its large painted pagoda and underground tunnel. Soak up the peaceful atmosphere and perhaps take the opportunity to talk to the abbot about Buddhism and Dharma. Finally we visit Wat Suan Dok and mingle with monks to learn about their way of life. We will take some time out to learn more about basic meditation, before finishing the adventure by making an offering to the Sangkha. In the afternoon we discover some of the secrets of Thai cuisine by joining a cookery course. Learn about the main ingredients used in Thai cuisine, how they are used and stored and what alternatives you can substitute if you can't get them at home. The meal is usually rounded off with a tasting of seasonal Thai fruit.

Day
9

Elephant Nature Park

We say goodbye to Chiang Mai and set off by road to the Golden Triangle region. We make a stop along the way at an elephant camp and see these gentle giants take a morning bath and demonstrate how they were trained to haul timber in the forest. We observe our herd at play and watch them interact in each of their social groups. After lunch we explore the five interconnected Chiang Dao Caves before arriving at the charming small town of Doi Mae Salong. The region is famous for its Chinese tea traders and you can enjoy a cup of tea in a traditional Chinese tea house overlooking the mountains. We stay overnight at a local homestay in the picturesque village of Doi Mae Salong.

Day
10

Golden Triangle, Chiang Rai

After breakfast we visit the stunning region known as the Golden Triangle, where the borders of Thailand, Burma and Laos meet. We then enjoy lunch overlooking the mighty Mekong River and visit the fascinating hall of opium - an exhibition that details this notorious history. In the afternoon, we will climb on board a long-tail boat and travel on the Khong River to the old city of Chiang Saen, the ancient capital of the Lanna Kingdom. On the way, there is a chance to step foot into Laos. This point is famous for the local rice whiskey sold from distilleries on the banks of river. We stay overnight in Chiang Rai.

Day
11

Chiang Rai, flight to Bangkok & London

Today we visit the Wat Rong Kun, otherwise known as the 'White Temple'. Construction started in 1997, and it is expected to be a work in progress for another 60 to 70 years. Our next stop is the Hilltribe Museum. This is a public-benefit organisation which aims to help educate local and foreign tourists about the Hilltribes' fast disappearing culture. The Museum aims to preserve artifacts and to provide information to tourists and tour operators in order to aid responsible tourism. The Hilltribe Museum is under the supervision of the Population and Community Development Association (PDA). Day rooms will be arranged before transfer to Chiang Rai Airport for our flight back home to Bangkok and on to London.

Further information

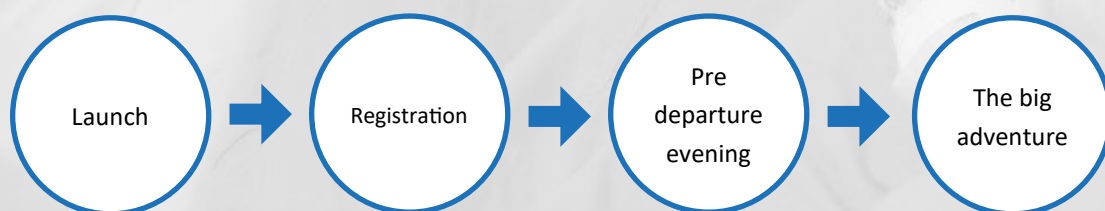
Look what's included!

- International flights
- All accommodation
- All food
- All transportation and activities
- Bi-lingual, first-aid qualified local tour leader
- Parent and student trip launch evening
- Pre-departure preparation evening
- 1-day offsite safety INSET day for staff
- ATOL financial protection
- Medical Emergency / Repatriation Travel Insurance
- Group first aid kit and prescription meds pack
- BS8848 safety management and risk assessments
- Detailed pre-departure information and kit lists
- Comprehensive teacher travel packs
- Permanent operations team in your destination
- 24-hour UK operational support whilst overseas
- Carbon offsetting of all flights
- Free t-shirt for every participant and teacher

What's excluded?

- Transport to airport in UK
- Drinks (advice will be given on purification of water)
- Visas or tourist cards if required
- Any required inoculations
- Personal spending money
- Tips for guides, drivers and porters
- Airport departure taxes paid locally
- Cancellation and personal effects insurance

Your educational journey timeline



Physical journey rating:



Some low level physical activities included in your trip, including walking on uneven terrain, maybe a morning/afternoon trek of two to four hours. That said, no physical preparation is required to make the most of the tour. High humidity and temperatures can occur at certain times of the year.

Culture shock rating:



Students should expect some culture shock. You'll be exposed to signs of poverty. The food will be quite different to home and English, whilst still spoken, will be less prevalent. Respecting the local culture will make it easier to fit in and get the most out of your trip. We're likely to visit remoter locations on this tour where access to western style services may be sporadic. Often on trips of this grading there are parts of the itinerary which are more remote, interspersed with sections which are more 'comfortable'.



A journey of 1,000 miles...

Starts with a single step... Contact us now to start your educational journey.

1 Get your tailor-made proposal and further information

If this itinerary doesn't quite scratch your educational travel itch then let us tailor-make one for you. Our wealth of experience and expert in-country contacts means we can design an itinerary just for you. Contact us for more information and a detailed quote.

2 Ask for risk assessments and marketing materials

We can provide initial risk assessments and destination threat assessments to help you with your expedition approval process. Ask for posters and your pre-booking information pack too.

3 Arrange a trip launch evening at your school

This is a chance for students and parents to hear more about the planned adventure with a comprehensive information evening and an opportunity for questions.



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