

# Thailand

## Curries and the Karen



Glittering temples, extravagant palaces and more culture than you can shake an incense stick at: discover a Thailand rarely seen by outsiders with soaring peaks and steaming jungles, tumbling waterfalls and heady history; all set against a back drop of a traditional way of life. Meet with women from ethnic minorities. Learn about the traditions governing many Thai families and the contrasts between rural and urban life. With the help of your experienced female Thai guide, this educational journey will enable you to experience the best of Thailand in a short, yet in-depth adventure.



### Recommended Itinerary:

Culture shock rating: 

**Days 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 will head out for dinner to experience Thailand's bustling capital. Bangkok is famous for its tuk tuks, khlong boats and street vendors serving up delicious Thai food, which we will sample at a local restaurant.

Physical rating: 

**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. Climbing aboard our transport, we travel past Thammasart University into Phra Chan (meaning "moon") Road to the Amulet Market, where various religious amulets, charms and traditional medicines are available.

Our next stop is Wat Po which derives its name from the original Wat Potaram. The temple is the centre of the Buddhist religion in Thailand, the country's first university and is still a centre of learning for traditional Thai massage and medicines. From here we continue our Tuk Tuk tour by heading to Phahurat Market, in the heart of Bangkok's little India where all kinds of fabrics, cloths, ornaments and accessories are sold along with stalls selling delicious Indian snacks. During the course of the morning we learn more about the role of women in Thailand's society through the eyes of our local female guide.

We visit Woeng Nakorn Kasem in the Khlong Thom quarter, also known as the "thieves market", then on to Wat Saket, location of the Golden Mount. Our guide will take us through the complex and up the 318 steps to the top of the Golden Mount where we have a 360 degree view of the surrounding old Rattankosin Island. Lunch is at a local market before we visit the spectacular Grand Palace, undoubtedly the city's most famous landmark. Built in 1782 - and for 150 years the home of the Thai King, the Royal court and the administrative seat of government - the Grand Palace of Bangkok is a fascinating and beautiful building that continues to leave visitors awestruck.

**Days 4/5: Sangkhlaburi, Three Pagoda Pass, Boat trip on Khao Laem lake, Lunch in a hill-tribe village** Today we leave frenetic Bangkok and escape to a completely contrasting side of Thailand. Set in a dramatic region of limestone mountains and forests, Sangkhlaburi is situated next to a serene lake. The view is staggering, especially in the morning as the mist dances playfully on the mountain tops and the local Thai, Karen and Mon people go about their daily ritual of offering alms to the monks. We will spend the day exploring the local area. The next day there's time for a quick swim in the lake before we visit the historical Three Pagodas Pass. The border area with Myanmar is a fascinating place to explore and the daily market has heaps of things for the avid treasure hunter to find. In the afternoon there will be a discussion on the role of women in rural society in Thailand and how this contrasts with urban life.

**Days 6/7: Meet Karen villagers, visit Hellfire Pass and the Bridge on the River Kwai, tour Kanchanaburi** After a short journey (approx. 2 hours) we come to a local village of Karen people, originating from Burma. We will have a fantastic chance to learn more about their lives before staying overnight in the pleasant town of Thong Pha Phum. The next day we take a bus to Hellfire Pass and walk through the hand-cut gorge whilst learning about the arduous lives of the POWs working in this district during World War II. Later we board a train on the infamous Thai-Burma railway to visit the iconic 'Bridge on the River Kwai'. We round off the day with a saamlaw (bicycle rickshaw) tour around the splendid monuments of Kanchanaburi.

**Day 8: Elephant Conservation Centre** We leave our hotel around 9am and drive to the Elephant conservatory (around 40 minutes). It is estimated that in 1900 there were 100,000 elephants roaming Thailand, today their numbers have decreased to an estimated 2,000 domestic and a further 2,000 in the wild. Elephant's World was founded in 2008, by Dr. Samart Prasithpolto and it functions as a 'retirement home' for elephants that have been injured or are too old to work. The home is a non-profit organization, funded exclusively by visitors and donations. Throughout the day we will be able to help gather food and then feed the elephants before walking with the elephants through the jungle to their night time resting areas. We spend the night in the centre after a truly magical day.

**Day 9: Erawan waterfalls, traditional Thai House, cooking school.** In the morning, we get to spend some more time with the elephants before driving towards Bangkok via the spectacular Erawan falls where there is a chance for a dip and a swim. Our last night in Thailand is spent with a host family in a traditional Thai house where we can try our hand at cooking Thai cuisine.

**Day 10: Bangkok and fly to UK** On our final day, depending on flight times, we can visit some local markets before taking a longtail boat along the 'River of Kings' to Bangkok. We transfer to the airport and catch our flight back to the UK.

**Important information:**

It is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. While every effort will be made to follow the above schedule, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes or natural events, we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some slight changes. Relax and have faith in your guides.



**DAYS FOR GIRLS** This trip can include a session working alongside Days for Girls, a grass roots organisation aimed at giving every woman and girl access to proper feminine hygiene products and health advice. For more information look on our website: [www.thestc.co.uk/travel/days-for-girls](http://www.thestc.co.uk/travel/days-for-girls)

**Women in Thailand**  
 Women in Thailand were among the first in Asia to be granted the right to vote in 1932. Despite this, they are still underrepresented in politics.  
 Many Thai women hold jobs and in fact the female population comprises the highest percentage of working women in South East Asia, Thai women are often the head of the household.  
 On this adventure to Thailand we will meet Thai women from a variety of backgrounds and learn about life for women in Thailand's hill-tribe villages.  
 We will also stay in a traditional Thai house on the tranquil outskirts of Bangkok and try our hand at cooking Thai cuisine under the watchful eye of our friendly hosts.  
 There is, unfortunately, a darker side to Thailand, though. Many women, particularly those from poorer backgrounds, continue to be at risk from human trafficking and forced prostitution.  
 Our expert and experienced guide will be able to discuss the many issues facing Thai women today.



**The School**  
 Travel Consultancy

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