

## Bangkok to Vientiane

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**Country(ies):** Thailand , Laos

**Tour type:** Private

**Transport:** A/C minibus/car, sleeper train & cruise boat

**Group size:** Min: 1 | Max: 0

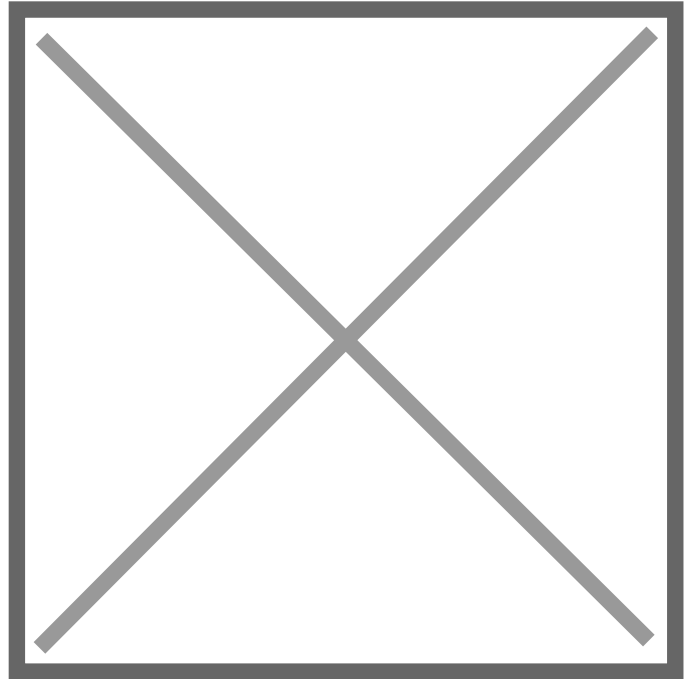
**Days:** 15 days

**Start Location:** Bangkok, Thailand

**End Location:** Vientiane, Laos

**Meals:** Breakfasts - 13, Lunches - 2, Dinners - 1

**Highlights:** Bustling Bangkok, Bridge on the River Kwai, Ancient Ayutthaya, Chiang Rai jungle scenery, Mekong river cruise, Cooking lesson, Buddhist monks of Luang Prabang, Kuang Si Waterfall



# Itinerary

## Day 1: Arrive in Bangkok, transfer to Hotel

Arrive Bangkok Airport. After customs and immigration formalities you will be met by our representative and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is free for you to begin exploring this fascinating city.

**OVERNIGHT:** Bangkok hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:** Single room supplement (THTMBV)

## Day 2: Bangkok city tour

Your Thailand trip begins this morning with a fully guided tour of the fascinating city of Bangkok. Starting at Wat Pho we visit the Golden Palace and the Reclining Buddha before enjoying a tour along the city's old waterways as we discover the secrets of ancient Siam hidden away amongst today's high-tech and bustling Bangkok. You'll also have the opportunity to visit China Town and the Flower Market today. The evening is free for you to sample the famous Bangkok nightlife.

**OVERNIGHT:** Bangkok hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 3: Kanchanaburi

Leaving Bangkok this morning we travel to the historic town of Kanchanaburi. Originally founded to protect Thailand from the Burmese the area is known today for being the site of the famous Bridge over the River Kwai. Occupied by Japanese troops during WWII the bridge and subsequent railway line was built by allied prisoners of war. Travelling by train along the bridge we will also visit the Allied War Cemetery and the local museum. Tonight, learn more about the culture of Thailand as we sleep in a traditional homestay.

**OVERNIGHT:** Kanchanaburi homestay

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 4: Kanchanaburi, Ayutthaya, overnight train to Chiang Mai

We depart Kanchanaburi this morning for the short trip to the former Siam capital of Ayutthaya. Now a UNESCO world heritage site the city flourished between the 14th and 18th centuries and is home to many ancient temples and Palaces. This evening we board the overnight train to Chiang Mai.

**OVERNIGHT:** Sleeper train

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 5: Arrive in Chiang Mai and begin tour

After arriving by sleeper train this morning we begin our tours to visit some of the beautiful and historic Buddhist Wats (temples) that give Chiang Mai its character, the tour will include a visit to Doi Suthep temple, where on a clear day you will be rewarded with amazing views over Chiang Mai. In the evening, explore the busy Night Bazaar, where you can try out your bartering skills.

**OVERNIGHT:** Chiang Mai hotel

**MEALS:** None

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 6: Drive to Chiang Rai

After breakfast at your hotel we head east through beautiful mountainous landscapes to the quiet and scenic mountain city of Chiang Rai. In the evening, you'll have time to explore the town and be sure to visit the Night Market where you can sample an array of freshly prepared Thai Cuisine.

**OVERNIGHT:** Chiang Rai hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 7: Cross into Laos, Mekong cruise to Pakbeng

You'll cross the border into Laos today for a boat cruise along the Mekong to Pakbeng. During the day you'll stop for a picnic lunch on the riverbank and then visit a village of the Yao or Lu tribes along the way. The evening is free.

**OVERNIGHT:** Mekong cruise

**MEALS:** Breakfast,Lunch,Dinner

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 8: Continue cruising, drive to Luang Prabang

This morning, visit Pakbeng market, which is the favoured location for the local villagers to come and exchange their goods. After visiting the market, the second leg of your cruise begins which will take you to Pak Ou Village, located at the mouth of the Nam Ou River. Whilst here you'll visit the Tam Ting Caves, which contain over a thousand images of the Buddha. Your journey today ends in Luang Prabang a UNESCO World Heritage site. In the evening you have free time to begin exploring Luang Prabang.

**OVERNIGHT:** Luang Prabang hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 9: Guided tour of Luang Prabang

You have a guided tour of Luang Prabang today. The city is nestled in a beautiful setting surrounded by lush mountains, this sacred city offers endless opportunities for sightseeing. Today you will visit a number of different Wats and other interesting sites. In the afternoon you will have some free time to begin exploring further on your own.

**OVERNIGHT:** Luang Prabang hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 10: Optional Alms giving, visit Kuang Si Waterfalls**

This morning you will have the option of starting early to take part in the traditional Lao Rite of giving alms to the monks. Each morning, around 300 monks walk through the streets to silently collect offerings. After breakfast in your hotel you will travel to the stunning Kuang Si Waterfall. You'll see the falls cascading over numerous calcified tiers and down several hundred feet into a series of turquoise pools. If you feel like cooling off you can take a swim before we return to Luang Prabang. A local lunch is included before returning to your hotel. The remainder of the day is free.

**OVERNIGHT:** Luang Prabang hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 11: Luang Prabang cookery school**

Today you will learn the secrets of delicious Laotian cuisine. You'll be guided by the cookery school chef to visit the vibrant Phosy Market to purchase fresh ingredients. After returning to the school you'll cook fabulous dishes under a sunroof in the garden, before enjoying the dishes you prepared.

**OVERNIGHT:** Luang Prabang

**MEALS:** Breakfast, Lunch

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 12: Drive to Vang Vieng**

Today you have a 6-hour picturesque drive to Vang Vieng, where you'll have stunning views around almost every turn. In the afternoon you'll have plenty of free time to relax on the scenic banks of the Song River or explore the lovely town.

**OVERNIGHT:** Vang Vieng hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## **Day 13: Free day in Vang Vieng**

You have a free day in Vang Vieng today to explore at your leisure. You'll have options to go inner-tubing, kayaking, caving or even just relax and take in the beautiful views.

**OVERNIGHT:** Vang Vieng hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 14: Drive to Vientiane and tour

Today begins with a three hour drive to Vientiane. After arriving you'll visit Wat Sisaket, which has thousands of miniature Buddha statues which you will see. Today you'll also visit many other interesting sites and monuments.

**OVERNIGHT:** Vientiane hotel

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

## Day 15: Transfer to airport for departure

You have free time in Vientiane until we transfer you to the airport for departure.

**OVERNIGHT:** N/A

**MEALS:** Breakfast

**EXTRAS:**

### **Included:**

- All accommodation as stated in the itinerary
- All transport and transfers
- 24-hour airport arrival & departure transfer service
- Services of a local tour guide during sightseeing and activities
- Entrance fees to all sites mentioned in the itinerary
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary

### **Excluded:**

- International flights (available on request)
- Visa fees
- Travel insurance (compulsory, available on request)
- Meals not indicated in the itinerary
- Drinks, snacks and other personal expenses (e.g. laundry)
- Tips for tour leader, rafting guide and park guide
- Any other items not mentioned above

# Options

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Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

## No Options

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## 1. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

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## 2. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

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## 3. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

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## 4. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

[www.facebook.com/encounterstravel](https://www.facebook.com/encounterstravel)

<https://x.com/encounterstravel> (yes, without the 'e')

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## 5. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? [World Nomads Travel Insurance](#) offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

*IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.*

### **Covid-19**

**Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.**

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## 6. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.

## 7. Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

### How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

### The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can't fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

### Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

### Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
  - They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
  - Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
  - The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
  - The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.
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## 8. Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please [contact us](#).

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## 9. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't include your international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour.

Most of our Thailand tours start and finish in Bangkok, and include an arrival and departure airport transfer from/to Bangkok international airport (BKK). However, some tours also finish on one of Thailand's islands. Transfers back to Bangkok or to one of the nearby island airports can be arranged on request.

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

### Flight CO2 Emissions:

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint.

When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

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## 10. Entrance Fees

The tour price includes entrance fees to all the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. You will need to cover the cost of entrance to any other extra sites that you may wish to visit.

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## 11. Tipping

Tipping is not part of Thai culture but has become customary but not compulsory in the tourist and service industry. Tipping is always optional, and any amounts paid should reflect excellent service. You may therefore wish to tip your guide and driver at the end of the tour. You should not feel obliged to tip any particular amount, and should consider your personal budget. We are often asked to provide a guide however, and can suggest that approx. GBP 5 / USD 8 per person per day would be appropriate.

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## 12. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination. You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. In addition, additional courses or boosters normally recommended for the countries in this region are:

**Thailand:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

**Vietnam:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

**Cambodia:** Additional vaccinations: Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from or having transitted through an infected area.

**Laos:** Additional vaccinations: Diphtheria, Poliomyelitis, Hepatitis A, Tetanus, Typhoid. [Malaria map](#). Yellow Fever certificate: Required if arriving from an infected area.

The above information can change at short notice. For up to date health information & vaccination requirements we recommend that you contact your medical practitioner or a travel clinic.

**Malaria:** Vaccinations are not available against Malaria, which is a disease transmitted by mosquitoes that can be very serious and sometimes fatal. You should avoid mosquito bites by covering up bare skin with clothing such as long sleeves and long trousers and applying insect repellents to exposed skin. When necessary, sleep under a mosquito net. Mosquitoes are most active during and after sunset. You should consult with your GP/medical practitioner/travel clinic about the most appropriate malaria prophylactic medication to take for the regions you are visiting.

**Yellow Fever:** This disease is spread by infected mosquitoes that bite during the day. A Yellow Fever Certificate of vaccination may be required as a condition of entry depending on which country you are arriving from, or that you have travelled or transitted through recently (including connecting flights with stopovers of over 12 hours). You can view this US CDC information about where the virus is present and follow the links to further information detailing which countries need you to have a Yellow Fever vaccination as part of their entry requirements. Please ensure you have this certificate with you and to hand if necessary.

Please inform us of any pre-existing conditions such as diabetes or asthma and any prescription medicine you may be taking. We also need to know about any food allergies or physical disabilities that you may have.

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## 13. Passports and Visas - Thailand

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

Most foreign nationals (including UK, EU, USA, CA, AU, NZ, SA) are granted a visa exemption on arrival for stays in the country of up to 30 days. If you are looking to spend longer in Thailand then you will need to leave the country and re-enter to extend your stay. We strongly recommend arranging your visa in advance if you would like to stay longer than 30 days in Thailand.

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#### 14. Voltage

Sockets are two round or flat pronged and 220 volts (Type A, B, C). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already. If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

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#### 15. Time

The time in Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos is GMT plus 7 hours. Daylight saving adjustments are not observed.

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#### 16. What to take

**Luggage:** Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you to Thailand, though if your itinerary has many stops and different travel included within it, we recommend packing light and not bring any large cases. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips – you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always hotel porters to assist.

**Luggage limits:** There is no luggage limit for this tour. However, most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

**Climate and Clothing:** There are three reasonably well-defined seasons in Thailand, but unlike in Europe, where seasons are temperature based, Thailand is tropical and generally speaking warm all year round. Rains from the monsoon are the marker of seasons and the rainy season is from June to October. Pre-monsoon is from March to May, when the weather becomes progressively hotter. Post monsoon is from November to February when the weather is cooler. The range of temperature is more marked in the north where pre-monsoon can be very hot, though the heat is much drier than in the south. Winter in the north can feel cool, particularly in the mountains. Take light clothes with something warmer for the winter nights if you are travelling to the north. Some light raingear would be useful in the wet season.

**Other items:** We recommend you also bring:

- Cool footwear (sandals are ideal). If you are interested in exploring the reefs, a pair of reef shoes is recommended to avoid injuries. If you are trekking, then bring comfortable and sturdy walking shoes or light walking boots.
  - Swimming costumes – rash-guards/t-shirts are recommended for snorkelling to avoid sunburn.
  - Sunscreens, after sun lotions and personal hygiene products – Please adhere to 100ml restrictions for anything you wish to carry on hand-luggage on flights.
  - Prescription medications (if required) – please bring supporting documents.
  - Power adapter for phones, laptops etc
  - Sunglasses and hats
  - Basic first aid kit and toiletries
  - Money belt
  - Small torch
  - Dive certification card and log book if you intend to participate in SCUBA diving.
  - Sleeping bag if your tour includes any hill-tribe or village trekking
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#### 17. Culture and Customs

### **Dress code**

The Thai people consider dressing appropriately to be important and respectful, so please follow their example. This means covering up your swimwear while not on the beach or by the pool, and while shorts and T-shirts are fine, please try not to look scruffy. Remember to take your shoes off before entering local houses or any religious buildings.

### **Temple etiquette**

When entering temples you should wear clothes that cover your knees and shoulders. Women may be asked to wear long skirts, not trousers, and shorts are not appropriate for either sex. You may wear a shawl to cover up and these are sometimes available to hire before entry. Again please take your shoes off before entering.

### **Buddhist Culture**

Thailand is a Buddhist country and Buddhism permeates nearly all aspects of society and culture, resulting in a country with different customs to much of the West. Rudeness and disrespect are frowned upon and you will be judged on your behaviour. Some tips for behaviour to avoid causing offence are; do not touch other people with your feet, point your feet at Buddhist statues or shrines (be careful of this when you sit), and don't touch the head of someone you don't know well. Public displays of affection are frowned upon, so save these until you are in private. You'll find being polite using a few Thai words will really pay dividends (thank you is Kawp Khun Kaa if you are female, and Kawp Khun Kraap if you are male. Your tour guide will provide more information and advice while you are on the tour; please don't hesitate to ask them any questions or for advice.

### **The Royal Family**

The Thai people have huge respect for their Royal Family and this is enshrined in many laws as well. You should bear this in mind when speaking to Thai people and in simple things like remembering that Thai paper money has the King's face on and should therefore be treated carefully.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Drugs are illegal in Thailand and heavy penalties including very large fines and jail time can be imposed. Don't think that because you are a tourist you are exempt or will be treated differently. Drinking is legal and you should not worry about having a few beers or cocktails while on tour. However remember to be respectful to your surroundings, fellow group members and the local population.

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## **18. Transfers**

Our South East Asia tours all include a 24-hour arrival and departure airport-hotel transfer service, and all other transfers throughout the tour. If you are already in the country then we will provide you with your first hotel details, contact numbers for our local representatives, and details of your first meeting time.

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## **19. Money - Laos**

The currency Laos is the 'Kip' (LAK).

Common notes:

- 100 kip
- 500 kip
- 1,000 kip
- 2,000 kip
- 5,000 kip

It's worth noting that US\$ are widely accepted throughout Laos and are often actually preferred for higher value purchases. Travellers arriving from Thailand will also find that the Thai baht is another currency welcomed in Laos. However, when paying in these currencies change will most likely be given in kip which should be kept for more day-to-day purchases and transactions. You can change money at any bank (08.30 & 16.00 Mon-Fri) although a variable commission will be charged. In general, it's a good idea to try and find the lower rates which

are usually available through exchange kiosks or hotels. In the capital city Vientiane you can exchange UK£ pound, Euros, AUS\$ and other currencies but in the smaller towns around the rest of the country, US\$ and Thai baht are preferred.

Traveller's cheques are widely accepted in major cities and do benefit from a slightly better rate but this can be offset by the commission charged to change them.

ATM's have now made it into Laos and these are available in Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Viang Vieng. For some reason, Mastercard is sometimes preferred to Visa but a lot of debit cards such as Cirrus and Maestro are now accepted. You can also use credit cards to pay for hotels and some restaurants but credit and debit cards are far from being accepted everywhere so having an alternate way of accessing funds is vital.

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## 20. Passports and Visas - Laos

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

15-day visas are available for most foreign nationals and cost US\$30. These are available on arrival into Vientiane International airport or when crossing into Laos from Thailand, either at the friendship bridge land border or even when crossing over from northern Thailand into Huay Xai. Longer 30 day tourist visas and business visas can be arranged prior to departure either in your home country or by using an agency in one of the neighbouring countries although this will incur a fee. When leaving the country by air there is a US\$10 departure tax payable at the airport.

As visa regulations often change we recommend that you check this information with your nearest consulate. Obtaining the correct visa is the responsibility of the traveller.

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**Note:** Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.

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