



CUSTOM TOURING
Dare to Dream

**CLASSIC THAILAND
11 DAY SAMPLE ITINERARY**

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The “Land of Smiles” has seen rapid expansion and an increasing influx of tourists over the past 20 years, resulting in many of the original popular tourist sites becoming overdeveloped and overcrowded. With each passing season, more and more resorts spring up and parts of the country have lost their authenticity, making it a different destination to the Thailand visited a number of years ago.

Fortunately, if you look hard enough, you can still find those hidden and unspoilt gems that are unique, spiritual and beautiful. This tour aims to discover the Thailand of 20 years ago, while still including the unmissable highlights from Bangkok to Chiang Mai.

This is a private tour with your own guide, driver and vehicle.
4* accommodation all the way. No sharing activities with others.

DAY 1: ARRIVE BANGKOK

Dinner

Arrive in Bangkok. You will be met and transferred from the airport to your hotel, where you will spend 3 nights.

In the afternoon your guide will take you on a short walk to the nearby **Jim Thompson House & Museum**.



Jim Thompson was born in Greenville Delaware USA in 1906 and became an architect. After the end of World War II, he decided to settle in Thailand and became famous for producing Thai silks, following ancient traditional methods and he was credited with reviving the dying industry. He had fabulous taste and collected a great many objets d’art, which you can see here today. This is a world class collection housed in a charming Thai period house.. He mysteriously disappeared in 1967, after which it emerged that he had been a CIA operative. Read his interesting story here <http://www.jimthompsonhouse.com/life/index.asp>

Special authentic Thai set dinner this evening at the hotel’s renowned Miss Siam Restaurant.

Day 2: BANGKOK CITY TOUR & GRAND PALACE

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

This morning you will explore Bangkok’s temples and landmarks. Highlights include the **Grand Palace**, **Wat Phra Kaeo (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)** and **Wat Pho**. If there is one must-see sight, without which no visit to Bangkok would be complete, it is the dazzling, spectacular Grand Palace, undoubtedly the city’s most famous landmark.



For a little good luck, purchase a bowl of coins to drop into the 108 bronze bowls lining the length of the walls. Dropping the coins makes a lovely ringing sound and the money goes towards the monks' fund for renovating and preserving Wat Pho.

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 continues to awe visitors with its beautiful architecture and intricate detail, all of which is a proud salute to the creativity and craftsmanship of the Thai people. Its walls once housed the Thai war ministry, state departments, and even the mint. Today, the complex remains the spiritual heart of the Thai Kingdom.

Wat Phra Kaeo is renowned as the most beautiful and important Buddhist temple in Thailand. It houses the Emerald Buddha, the most highly revered Buddha image carved from a single block of fine jade. King Rama I brought the image from Vientiane when he captured the city in 1778. He built the temple and enshrined the Emerald Buddha there as a symbol of Siam's regained nationhood. The temple does not house any monks and serves as a personal chapel of the royal family.

Wat Pho is the largest and oldest wat (temple) and learning centre in the city, home to over 1,000 Buddha images and famed for its giant 46 mt long reclining Buddha, covered in gold leaf, the 5 mt long feet exquisitely decorated in mother-of-pearl.

Please note: At both the Grand Palace and Wat Pho, visitors should dress conservatively: No shorts, arms should be covered and shoes removed when entering the Grand Palace and any chapels. Slip-ons work well here, or Velcro fasteners. If you arrive at the front gate improperly dressed, there is a booth near the entrance where a covering sarong/shawl will be provided on payment of a deposit.

This complex is also the home of traditional **Thai massage** and medicine. Although there will not be time for a massage to-day, your guide can make an appointment for you to enjoy one at the hotel during free time. *(Not included)*

After lunch at the **Supatra River House Restaurant**, board a long-tail boat and cruise down the Chao Phraya River to see the **Temple of Dawn (Wat Arun)** and the homes of the local community.

Wat Arun is one of the most beautiful temples in Bangkok, not only because of its impressive riverside location, but it is also very different in design from the other temples you have visited. Its tallest spire is over 70 mts high and beautifully decorated with tiny pieces of coloured glass and Chinese porcelain, delicately placed into intricate patterns. Some say it is made up of pottery from a shipwreck.

Return to the hotel for a rest before transferring to **Siam Niramit** for a spectacular Thai Cultural Show and buffet dinner. (Golden Seats) <http://www.siamniramit.com/show.php>



Day 3: BANGKOK

Breakfast, Lunch

After breakfast, meet your guide to take a 1½ hour drive to the **Tha Kha Floating Market and Palm Sugar village**. Lunch at local restaurant before returning to Bangkok.

Upon arrival back in Bangkok, visit the glimmering Golden Buddha, the world's largest solid golden statue, housed at **Wat Traimit**.

Then travel in a Tuk Tuk to experience **Chinatown** market with world famous Thai cuisine under the strings of colourful lights hoisted up by local sellers at night.

Stop at a 24 hour **Flower Market**.

Free time for your own supper in Chinatown.

Day 4: BANGKOK – AYUTTHAYA – KHAO YAI NATIONAL PARK

Breakfast, Lunch

To-day you will discover the grandeur of Ayutthaya, the former capital of the Kingdom of Siam, home to more than a million people in the 1700s and a huge trading centre bringing together merchants from Holland, Portugal and Japan, the epicenter of international commerce. Sadly, it all came to a fiery end in 1767 when the Burmese invaded, set the city alight and totally destroyed it. The city never recovered.

You will hear the tales of palaces filled with gold, lavish ceremonies and decorative monasteries that were the envy of old world Europe. Take a walk in the beautiful grounds of the **Bang Pa-In Summer Palace**, constructed in 1632.

The Bang Pa In Summer Palace fell into disuse and became overgrown in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, until restoration began in the mid-19th century. Amidst vast gardens and landscaping stand the following buildings: a Chinese-style royal palace and throne room, a royal residence, a brightly painted lookout tower and a pavilion constructed in the middle of a pond. The palace remains largely open to visitors, as it is used only rarely by King Bhumibol Adulyadej and his family for banquets and special occasions.

Visit the ancient ruins in the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Ayutthaya town where you will see the temples and monasteries of **Wat Phra Sri Sanphet** and **Wat Chai Wattanaram**.

Lunch at a local restaurant to enjoy cuisine of the region.

Drive for about 2 ½ hours to the **Khao Yai National Park**.

Check in to your hotel for overnight.

Free time to visit nearby Palio-KhaoYai, an Italian-themed shopping centre with many shops, cafes and eateries, surrounded by nature and hills. Own dinner this evening, either at Palio Khao Yai, the hotel or a nearby restaurant.

****OPTION TO ADD A DAY HERE IN THE NATIONAL PARK FOR VIEWING THE WILDLIFE AND TAKING A WALK TO A WATERFALL, WITH ANOTHER NIGHT AT YOUR HOTEL**



Day 5: KHAO YAI NATIONAL PARK – PHIMAI – KHON KAEN

Breakfast, Lunch

To-day you will drive about 2 hours to the **Phimai Historical Park** to explore the ruins of the Phimai Sanctuary, one of the grandest and most important Khmer historical sites in Thailand. Based on stone inscriptions and the Baphuon architectural style, the sanctuary was most likely built at the end of the 11th century, with some characteristics similar to those of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Visit the **Phimai National Museum** where collections of artifacts date back many centuries, including a stone statue of King Jayavarman VII of Angkor Thom.

Lunch at a local restaurant to experience local food of the region.

After lunch, a 2 hour drive to Khon Kaen where you will spend 1 night. Free for dinner at the hotel.

Day 6: KHON KAEN - PHITSANULOKE - SUKHOTHAI

Breakfast, Lunch

Early departure this morning for a 5 hour drive to Phitsanuloke. Stop along the way at a typical roadside market to break the journey. Although to-day is a long drive, the beautiful scenery makes it worth while and includes mountains, jungle and small villages.

After lunch at a local restaurant, Sappraiwan, continue to Sukhothai, where you will check into your hotel. Spend 2 nights here. Free for dinner at the hotel.

Day 7: SUKHOTHAI

Breakfast, Lunch

This morning take a tour of **The Sukhothai Historical Park**

This impressive park consists of preserved ruins of royal palaces, Buddhist temples, the city gates, walls, moats, dams, ditches, ponds, canals and the water dyke control system – this park was the magical and spiritual center of the kingdom. This restoration by the Fine Arts Department, with the cooperation of UNESCO, has been undertaken not only with a view to fostering Thailand's national identity, but to safeguarding a fine example of mankind's cultural heritage.

Inside the City Walls are The Royal Palace and Wat Mahathat. This area is surrounded by a moat and contains two main compounds: the royal building and the sanctuary in the palace. In the royal compound are the ruins of the royal building called Noen Phrasal. A sanctuary lying to the west behind the Royal Palace compound is Wat Mahathat. It is Sukhothai's largest temple with a customary main Chedi in lotus-bud shape. At the base of the Chedi stand Buddhist disciples in adoration and on the pedestal are seated Buddha images.

In front of this is a large viharn formerly containing a remarkable seated bronze Buddha image in the Sukhothai style, cast and installed by King Lithai of Sukhothai in 1362. At the end of the 18th century, the image was removed to the Viharn Luang of Wat Suthat in Bangkok by the order of King Rama I and has been named Phra Si Sakaya Muni. Other temples in the complex include Wat Si-Sawai, Wat Traphang-Ngoen, Wat Chana-Songkhram and Wat Mai.



Lunch at a local restaurant.

Return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure to unwind in the atmosphere of a traditional Thai village, enjoying the hotel gardens, salted swimming pool and relaxing spa. *(For own account.)*

Free for dinner this evening.

Day 8: SUKHOTHAI – PHRAE – CHIANG RAI

Breakfast, Lunch

Morning check out and drive about 2 hours to **Phrae**. Visit **Baan Pratabjai**, a traditional Thai style teak house/museum with magnificent teak pillars and furniture. Browse in souvenir and textile shops. Explore the Burmese style temple of **Wat Chom Sawan**.

On to **Ban Tung Hong**, a village well-known for dyeing the famous Mo Hom fabric, using local plants which provide the blue and indigo colours for the dyeing process, which you will be able to watch. There will be opportunity to buy some of their beautiful clothing and other products.

After lunch at Yung Kao restaurant, continue to the northern city of Chiang Rai, a 3 hour drive, with a short stop along the way at **Kwan Phayao Lake** for coffee.

This freshwater lake is one of the largest semi natural wetlands in northern Thailand, with a total area 1,980 hectares, bordered by beautiful rice paddies covering an area of approximately 3,000 hectares.

Check into your hotel for 2 nights. Free for dinner at the hotel or take a shuttle into town.

Day 9: CHIANG RAI – AKHA VILLAGE – GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Breakfast, Lunch

To-day you will explore the upland villages of the **Akha and Yao ethnic-minority groups** for an introduction into their way of life. *(Take some money along and support their home industry with a few small souvenir purchases. You will be asked to pay for taking photographs of the villagers.)*

Visit **Chiang Sean**, a small ancient town on the banks of the Mekong River followed by the infamous **Golden Triangle**, which was known internationally as the epi-centre of the illicit opium trade. From a local hill, you will see the point where Laos, Myanmar and Thailand meet.

After lunch at a local restaurant, drive on to **Mae Sai**, the northernmost point of Thailand and border post into Myanmar. There is a Border Market where many Myanmar citizens come to work as day labourers. Plenty of opportunity for shopping!

Return to your hotel. Take a shuttle to the night market for free time and own dinner.



Day 10: CHIANG RAI – CHIANG MAI

Breakfast, Lunch

Start the day with a visit to the **Hill Tribe museum** to learn about the various hill tribes: Lisu, Lahu, Akha, Yao, Hmong & Karen. Then visit **Baan Dam (Black House)**, a production of Thai National Artist Mr. Thawan Duchaneethis, set in an impressive park area with amazing wooden buildings, beautiful woodcarvings, skins and horn installations. Visit **Wat Rong Khun, the White Temple** designed by Thai National Artist, Mr. Chalermchai Kositpipat.

Lunch at the Cabbages & Condoms Restaurant in Wiang Pa Pao. Here you will not just be enjoying a great meal, but also contributing to the support of family planning and research into a cure for HIV, a project of this restaurant chain.

On the way to Chiang Mai, visit **Chiang Mai Celadon Pottery** to view, and perhaps buy, traditional Celadon products, beautiful ceramics and pottery in many different shades of green.

<http://www.chiangmaiceladon.com/>

On arrival in Chiang Mai, check into your hotel and relax for the rest of the day and evening. Own dinner at the hotel or stroll into town and find an interesting restaurant.

Day 11: CHIANG MAI - DEPARTURE

Breakfast, Lunch

Morning at leisure.

Then visit an **Orchid Farm** where you will also enjoy a traditional Thai buffet lunch.

Transfer to the Chiang Mai airport for international flight connection.

RATES ON REQUEST – WE CAN CUSTOMIZE TO SUIT YOUR PREFERENCES AND TIME AVAILABLE.

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