

Nov 5 – Leave USA to travel to Bangkok

Details on trip and air options to come via email soon. Arrive next day when land portion begins.

Nov 6 – Welcome to the ancient Lanna Kingdom

Sawasdee! Welcome to the Lands of Smiles! AirPort arrival and transport to the Pullman Bangkok Hotel G, located in the heart of the city. This ultra-modern hotel has it all, from excellent restaurants to a rooftop pool to spectacular city views. It's also near the Sky Train which takes you everywhere including famous Jim Thompson house.

Krungthepmahanakorn or Bangkok as we know it - is the capital city and the focal point for Thailand. It is the country's spiritual, cultural, political, commercial, educational and diplomatic center with endless choice of sightseeing and entertainment opportunities. There are numerous canal (klong) networks as well as the Chaophraya River, giving it the name of "Venice of the East". Just google Bangkok to view all the things to do here. Activities are endless and the city never sleeps now with the best rooftop bars in the world.

Pullman Bangkok Hotel G (2 nights)

Nov 7 - Bangkok Full Day Temple Tour

Today is a day of touring Bangkok and its legendary temples. We start out in Chinatown, Thailand's largest Chinese community and a stop at **Wat Trimit**, home to the world's largest gold seated Buddha, measuring more than 16 feet in height and weighing five and a half tons.

Then it's on to the ornate Wat Benjamaborphit, commonly known as **Marble Temple**, because of its Carrera marble pillars, a marble courtyard and two large marble *singhas* (lions) guarding the entrance to the bot. The interiors are a mixture of gilded beams and lacquer. It is home to an assembly hall which houses 52 images of Buddha.

Our last stop will be at iconic **Wat Po**, home to the 3rd biggest colossal reclining Buddha in Thailand. If we time it correctly, we will be able to witness the afternoon chanting of monks in the main chapel which is not commonly seen by tourists. At tour's end, we all enjoy our unique AFS group Thai massage at the Temple's School of massage. So unique but you can opt for the 1 hour foot massage.

We'll be back in late afternoon for you to prepare for our welcome dinner at **Cabbage & Condom Restaurant**. The name is unusual, but the family style food is incredible. Proceeds from the restaurant help fund family planning services in Bangkok.

Pullman Bangkok Hotel G B/D

Nov 8 – River Kwai – Death Railway – Glamping at Hellfire Pass

Head out early and make our way west to the province of **Kanchanburi**. Sharing a border with Myanmar, Kanchanburi covers mountainous terrain, with tropical rainforests, wildlife sanctuaries, waterfalls and the famous River Kwai. Westop first at **the Cemetery of the Allied Prisoners of World War II** containing the graves of 6,982 Allied Prisoners of War. They perished from starvation, overwork, disease or execution during the construction of the "Death Railway" under the control of the Japanese army. (Time permitting we can visit the Thailand-Burma Railway Museum or Hellpass Museum to give some perspective to the horrors which occurred during the building of the railroad.)

The celebrated black iron bridge known as the **Bridge over the River Kwai** is our next stop. Made famous by movies and books, the bridge was the target of frequent Allied bombing raids during 1945, and was rebuilt after the war ended. We'll get to experience part of the route itself as we board the train for our own trip on the scenic and historic **Death Railway Route** to Nam Tok Station. The views along through the jungle gorge are gorgeous and we'll experience them at river level.

After lunch at a local restaurant, we continue to our home for the next two nights, the spectacular Hintok River Camp. Situated at Hellfire Pass and at river's edge, this stunning nature camp is glamping at it's finest. Our canvased rooms are air-conditioned with private bathrooms and verandas which look out over amazing views of the River Kwai. Mind the goats. Our past groups loved cocktails by the river.

The rest of the afternoon is free to get acquainted with the grounds which include a man-made, spring fed pool at the river's edge. Dinner is at the Camp's open-air restaurant known for its world-class cuisine.

Hintok River Camp @ Hellfire Pass (Tent) B, L, D

Nov 9 – Hintok to Mon Village by Long-Tailed Boat

After breakfast, board your long-tailed boat for a 45 minute boat ride downstream the Kwai Noi River to visit a village of the indigenous Mon People. Mon is an ethnic minority from neighboring Myanmar. Witness their daily life and learn some of their customs. We'll also visit their ornate temple which is probably one of the more unusual temples you have ever seen.

Afterwards, we'll go by boat to pay a short visit to our Hintock's sister resort, a floating hotel on the river itself called River Kwai Jungle Rafts for some cool photos. We then will travel by long-tail boat back up river for lunch at our resort. The afternoon is free to relax, go mountain biking or enjoy the resort's natural spring pool.

Hintok River Camp @ Hellfire Pass B, D

Nov 10 - Bangkok - Chiang Mai B. (Domestic air - PG 225 3:10-4:30PM)

Say goodbye to Hintok and drive to Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport for our afternoon flight to Chiang Mai, just more than an hour away by air. As we fly in you'll see why Chiang Mai is known **as the Rose of the North. Surrounded by high mountain ranges, it's known for its stunning natural beauty and unique indigenous cultural identity. The terrain here is mainly jungles and mountains.**

We'll go immediately to our hotel the Holiday Inn Chiang Mai. Located on the Ping River, the hotel is convenient to everything. Just a 5 minute walk to the temples and night bazaar. Beautiful pool and 4 restaurants. Your evening is free.

Holiday Inn Chiang Mai(Deluxe River View Room) B

Nov 11 - Wat Phra That Doi Sutheep & the Lamphrun Lantern festival

We will spend our morning at what many say is Chiang Mai's "Must See," the 600-year-old **Wat Phra That Doi Suthep**. Located high up a winding mountain road, the gilded temple is home to monks as well as novices who are studying the ways of Buddha. We'll need to climb the 306 step dragon headed stair case to reach it but the views on Chiang Mai from here are SO worth it.

We'll return to the hotel for a free afternoon to prepare for the evening's outing to the **Lantern Festival at Doi Tri in Lamphun**. Held on the 15th waxing night of the 12th lunar month each year, the event celebrates life and includes a market, shows and dinner. Most importantly, we will get blessings from the monks and meditate briefly before releasing our lanterns to float high into the night sky.

Holiday Inn Chiang Mai(Deluxe River View Room) B

Nov 12 - Sankampaeng 3 Handicraft Villages and Loy Krathong Festival.

Chiang Mai is Thailand's "handicraft heaven" and today we see why. We spend the morning in the San Kamphaeng district, the heart of the silk and cotton home-based industries to witness the fascinating process of making and weaving fabric. We'll also see how the

famous Thai paper umbrellas are crafted as we visit the Bor Sang Umbrella Village, then it's off to Thai Celadon for ceramic before finally a stop to observe the intricacies of both lacquer ware and silverware production. Stock up here on the coolest holiday presents to bring home.

Our afternoon is free. Options include Thai Cooking class, Monk Chat at Wat Chedi Temple or a massage at the Woman's Prison, Blind School or any spa where treatments are half the cost of home. Then we meet for a celebration dinner as part of the **Loy Krathong Festival of Lights**. People gather along the Ping River where our hotel is located to celebrate this lunar festival. Floating candles will illuminate the waters of the river, streams and lakes. Our lanterns are cylinders made from banana leaves and thousands will fill the sky as we "release our sins" by setting the lanterns free and giving thanks for the new moon.

Holiday Inn Chiang Mai(Deluxe River View Room) B D

Nov 13 – Mahout For a Day - Patara Elephant Farm

This is an amazing day filled with getting to know all about elephants at the **Patara Elephant Farm**. One hundred percent dedicated to conservation! They rescue, adopt and care for elephants that have been exploited. The farm provides vast land for them to roam with a focus on recovery. They have operated 10 years with no deaths here due to the vet care given. At present, there are 36 ellies including babies. The Thai-owned and managed farm focuses also on breeding management of elephants. Visitors are restricted so we'll be paired in twos with our own ellie and learn how to feed and care for it. You'll be instructed on all techniques and commands. Then, we spend the entire day with our new-found friends in the jungle. There will be time spent bathing the elephants at a waterfall or stream and you will ride bareback dressed in Karen ethnic type clothes which the mahouts typically wear. This will be a day you will never forget.

We'll return to the hotel in the late afternoon, evening free.

Holiday Inn Chiang Mai(Deluxe River View Room) B

Nov 14 – Heading home B

Following breakfast, we will be transferred to Chiang Mai International Airport for your flights home.