

# Flavours of Thailand Cultural Explorer

Trip Code: SGTH

Version:



CULTURE



SELF-GUIDED



LEISURELY



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Discover emerald mountains and meet the indigenous hill tribes of northern Thailand
- Explore the golden temple of Doi Suthep and delve into the history of UNESCO Ayutthaya
- Experience the contrasts of buzzing Bangkok
- Enjoy a cooking class in Chiang Mai and immerse yourself into fragrant Thai flavours
- Relax surrounded by nature in Kanchanaburi, staying in floating raft houses on the River Kwai

## AT A GLANCE

- Self-Guided
- 4 days walking and sightseeing
- 3 days cycling and sightseeing
- 3 days/2 nights at leisure in Kanchanaburi
- Daily departures available
- GPS Travel App
- Max altitude 2565m
- Join at Chiang Mai / End In Bangkok

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

Take an unforgettable journey into the Land of Smiles to discover the stunning landscapes and welcoming culture of Thailand. On this fantastic self-guided holiday, you will explore some of the best highlights from Chiang Mai to Bangkok by foot and by bike, a great way to really delve into the heart of the destination.

Beginning in the north, you will be captivated by dreamy landscapes of emerald mountains and cascading waterfalls; and enjoy your first taste of Thai and Buddhist culture. Travelling south by rail, Ayutthaya and its UNESCO World Heritage listed archaeological ruins awaits, inviting you to explore on two wheels to discover its incredible history. Arriving to the capital city of Bangkok, you will experience the wonderful contrasts of this buzzing metropolis, which offers so much more than you might initially expect. Finally, unwind in Kanchanaburi, surrounded by beautiful nature and poignant history. Thailand really has something for everyone.

Travelling independently with the guidance of a self-guided travel app, you decide on the pace of your explorations on your holiday in Thailand. With a carefully balanced itinerary combining guided experiences with self-guided discovery, you will benefit from valuable cultural insights with your local guide, and also have the flexibility to take your time and delve into the sights and history of the places visited with the freedom of your self-guided app.

## Is this holiday for you?

This holiday is perfect for you if you enjoy the freedom of travelling independently from a group, while having the ease of holiday logistics and arrangements taken care of for you. With your self-guided travel app, you will have a local guide in your pocket to help you along your way as you explore the sights, tastes and culture of Thailand at your own pace.

The sightseeing walks and bike rides included in this itinerary are short and of a leisurely, exploratory nature. The cycling is on predominantly flat and paved terrain; on a mix of small city roads, quiet secondary roads and cycling lanes.

In the cities, you will stay in well-appointed 3\* hotels with pools, where you can be sure of a warm welcome and a comfortable base from which to set off on your daily explorations.

This holiday involves an overnight journey on the sleeper train; facilities on the train are basic but comfortable. Travelling on the train offers a fantastic opportunity to interact with local travellers and experience the culture of Thailand.

You will also spend two nights in a floating raft hotel in Kanchanaburi; the accommodation is simple, with no electricity, wi-fi or heated water. Staying off-grid, surrounded by the sounds of the forest and the river, you can relax and unwind, and reconnect with nature.

# Itinerary

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Version:

## Holiday Information

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### What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided travel app
- Local SIM card
- Self-guided assistance throughout
- An airport transfer on arrival
- Cooking class in Chiang Mai
- Guided morning Tak Bat ceremony in Chiang Mai
- Full day guided excursion to Doi Inthanon including transfers
- Transfer to Ayutthaya with overnight train
- Train transfer to Bangkok
- Transfer to Kanchanaburi
- Transfer from Kanchanaburi to Bangkok Airport on Day 12

## What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Travel to Chiang Mai
- Travel from Bangkok
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Personal equipment
- Bike hire for self-guided cycling days
- Entrance fees and tickets on self-guided excursions
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional

## GPS Travel App

This holiday is led by a self-guided travel app, which contains the personalised details of your complete holiday itinerary. This includes the GPS-led routes for you to follow on your self-guided walking and cycling tours, as well as attractions, coffee stops and points of interest in the towns and cities along the way. The app does not need to have Wi-Fi connection to work, you simply follow the instructions we provide you to download the app to your personal smartphone device before you leave home and you are ready to go.

Alongside the self-guided app, you will also have support from our local self-guided assistants who are available at the end of the phone. You will be provided with a local SIM card with unlimited internet access on arrival in Chiang Mai, and have a welcome briefing with your self-guided assistant. Please ensure that your phone is unlocked to accept an additional SIM card. You can reach our local partners easily by phone, text or on WhatsApp at any point during your holiday and they will be happy to assist you.

While the travel app is running, your phone battery charge can be consumed faster than normal, so we strongly recommend that you pack a power bank with you just in case you require it.

## Self-Guided Families

Our Self-Guided Holidays are perfect for your next family holiday and are suitable for children of all ages.

Our partner hotels and accommodations are able to provide cots for young children, and some offer family rooms. We can also arrange hire of children's bikes and tag along bikes for most of our self-guided cycling trips and with trips such as Lake Constance and the Danube offering routes on designated cycle paths you can rest assured in keeping your family safe.

As a parent we trust that you know your own child's capabilities, so please read the itinerary details to ensure the distances covered each day are suitable for your family. If this is a first time walking holiday for your family, a centre based trip is a fantastic option as it allows you to easily opt out of a days walking if a day of building sand castles, swimming in the pool or visiting museums is calling instead.

Please discuss this further with our sales team who will be happy to assist in picking the best trip for your family.

## Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The trip starts in Chiang Mai Airport and ends at Bangkok Airport. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you.

For this trip we have included a pick up transfer from Chiang Mai International Airport to take you to your hotel in Chiang Mai on Day 1 of the itinerary. A driver will be waiting to meet you upon exiting Chiang Mai Airport.

The holiday ends on Day 12 with a transfer from Kanchanaburi to Bangkok Suvarnabhumi (International) Airport, timed for the check in of your departure flight from Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport. When booking your departure flight, please consider that the transfer takes around 4-5 hours, traffic dependent, so we would recommend a late afternoon or evening flight on this day. Alternatively, we can also assist with booking an extra night in Bangkok at the end of your trip if required.

Please ensure you inform our customer sales and support team as early as possible of your flight times so that we can arrange your transfers for you.

## Meal Plan

At hotels in Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya and Bangkok, your stay is arranged on a bed & breakfast basis to offer you the most flexibility where there are many options available in the towns and cities.

You also have a cooking class included in Chiang Mai where you will cook up a delicious Thai lunch under the guidance of your instructor.

Meals are not included on the sleeper train; we suggest that you bring some food on board with you. There is also a restaurant carriage, serving simple local fare. Please note that alcohol is not sold or permitted on Thai trains. When you arrive to Ayutthaya early in the morning of Day 6, early check in is included for you to have direct access to your hotel room on arrival, and breakfast is also available at the hotel this morning.

Your two night stay at the floating raft hotel in Kanchanaburi is arranged on a half board basis (dinner, bed and breakfast).

## Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. You should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) to treat your water. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

Thai cuisine is a delightful stimulus for the senses, utilising to great effect the base tastes of spiciness, sourness, saltiness, sweetness and bitterness, with flavours carefully balanced in every dish. Food and eating is an institution among Thais and you will find delicious local dishes at cheap and cheerful hawker stalls everywhere you go; sampling these freshly cooked dishes is a huge part of the adventure of getting under Thailand's skin.

You will find regional variations that take influence from neighbouring states and seasonality. Tasty northern specialties to sample include 'khao soi', a dish of boiled and crispy egg noodles with pork, chicken or beef in a curried soup; 'khep moo' and 'nam phrik num' - deep fried pork crackling and a roast chilli dip, served with sticky rice ('khao niaw').

Thai curries have a variety of curry pastes as their foundation; created by pounding, mashing and grinding an array of fresh and aromatic ingredients into a thick paste. Fragrant flavours typically come from chilli, galangal, lemongrass, kaffir lime, shrimp paste, garlic and shallots.

Perhaps a lesser-known culinary delight is the Thai salad known as 'yam'. These salads come in many permutations, with noodles ('yam wun sen'), meat (beef 'yam nua' or pork 'nam tok'), seafood (squid 'yam pla maek') or vegetables, but tying the dishes together is a generous dash of lime juice to give the salad its distinctive tang, and a sprinkling of fresh chillies to give it heat.

There is also a vast array of colourful tropical fruits to be sampled, some bizarre-looking (such as the rambutan with its covering of soft spines, concealing sweet white flesh within its hairy-looking shell); some pungent (namely the durian, a strong-smelling large fruit with a hard spiky shell and soft creamy flesh); to the more familiar mango, watermelon and papaya. Sampling these fruits in their prime season will likely enrapture you to their delicious flavours - so much better than out-of-season imports.

## Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

## Accommodation

For this holiday you will stay in hand-selected 3\* hotels in the vibrant cities of Chiang Mai, Ayutthaya and Bangkok. All hotels offer twin/double rooms with air conditioning, and showcase their charming blend of style, character and modern amenities alongside their unparalleled service. All hotels also have swimming pools, along with bars and restaurants serving up a mix of Thai and international cuisines.

It is possible to extend your stay with additional nights in Chiang Mai or Bangkok, just speak with one of our sales team for further information.

Your holiday includes travelling on the overnight sleeper train from Chiang Mai to Ayutthaya (Day 5). Journeying on the sleeper train is a fun part of the Thai travel experience and is a great way to get around in an environmentally friendly manner. For this overnight journey, you will travel in 2nd class air-conditioned sleeper berths. These are seats that are converted into upper and lower bunks for sleeping, each with privacy curtain, pillow and blanket. You take your luggage on board with you; these are stored on racks, under the seats, or on the floor next to your seats. The air conditioning can be effective, so it would be a good idea to have a warm layer and extra socks to hand. There are basic shared washroom facilities at the end of each carriage, with both squat toilets and sit down toilets.

You will also spend two nights at a river raft resort in Kanchanaburi, floating on the River Kwai amidst the jungle and only accessible by long tail boat. Staying at this remote location makes for a wonderful experience, perfect for unwinding whilst surrounded by nature and away from the hubbub of the city. The off-grid bamboo raft houses are simple and rustic: there is no electricity or wifi. Each twin/double room has a simple ensuite private bathroom (water is not heated), along with a shared terrace to the front and a small private deck to the rear. In each room, lighting is by kerosene lamp and hand torch, and mosquito nets are provided. Hammocks and sun loungers are set up on the terraces, ideal if you wish to soak in the surroundings of the floating resort and relax with a good book. The hotel offers activities such as boat trips, kayaking or SUP on the river; off-site excursions are also available. These can all be arranged with the hotel staff. You may find that elephants owned by local villagers visit the resort - we strongly discourage any animal interactions or contact such as feeding, petting or riding elephants. Please refer to KE's Sustainability pages for more information: <https://www.keadventure.com/about/ke-sustainability>

As the raft hotel is off-grid with no electricity supply, they do not have the facility to process card payments. As such, it is a good idea to have a supply of cash with you.

## Bike Hire

Bike hire for your self-guided cycling days are payable locally. You will find details of recommended bike hire companies in your self-guided travel app. We strongly recommend that you should take your own cycle helmet for the best comfort.

## Baggage Allowance

For this holiday you should take one piece of luggage and a day pack for your daily essentials. Keeping your luggage limited to one piece in a soft, lockable bag such as a duffle bag would be most practical when travelling by train.

For international flights please check your baggage allowance with your airline.



# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

**The information that we provide is for UK passport holders.**

A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel.

## Visa Thailand

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa for short stays.

From 1st May 2025, all foreign travellers entering Thailand by air, land or sea must submit a Thailand Digital Arrival Card (TDAC) online prior to arrival, which replaces the paper arrival card.

Travellers must complete the TDAC within the 3 days prior to arrival in Thailand. To complete the TDAC, go to the official website: <https://tdac.immigration.go.th>

A guide on how to complete the Thailand Digital Arrival Card can be found here: <https://tdac.immigration.go.th/manual/en/index.html>

## Health & Vaccinations

### VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you specifically require any vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella), along with hepatitis A and typhoid. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination is required if travelling from countries with risk of yellow fever transmission and for travellers having transited for more than 12 hrs through an airport of a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dentist check up. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

Dengue fever is a known risk in places visited. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you [take precautions to avoid mosquito bites](#).

Zika virus has been confirmed as active in this country. It is a tropical viral disease spread by daytime biting mosquitoes. There is currently no vaccine or prophylaxis available and therefore the best form of prevention is to avoid being bitten. We recommend you take the usual precautions to avoid mosquito bites. The mosquitoes that transmit ZIKV are unlikely to be found above 2,000m altitude. For more information, visit the website of the National Travel Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) at <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk>

### Severe Allergies

Please inform our KE Sales and support team of any severe allergies you may have before travel. We will always do our best to help but we are unable to guarantee an allergy free environment on our KE trips. We advise that you always carry your own treatment for the allergy with you such as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' if required. We also recommend that you discuss this with your accommodation on arrival so that they can better assist you.

### Currency

The unit of currency in Thailand is the Thai Baht.

### Preparing for your Holiday

The advantage of a self-guided holiday is that you decide the pace, however getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday would be a good idea. The walking tours in the itinerary are typically gentle and allow many opportunities for stops.

The sightseeing cycle rides on this holiday are of a leisurely nature, and you are free to decide when to stop for photos and refreshment breaks. The distances cycled are short and on flat terrain, no more than around 20km in a day and typically on paved roads or small paths. We would recommend you dust off your bike and head off on a few rides before your holiday.

## Climate

Thailand has a tropical climate that gives rise to three main seasons: the cool season (November to February), the hot season (March to May) and the rainy season (June to October).

The cool season from November to February is the most pleasant time to visit; temperatures can be anywhere between 29°C-32°C during the day, and with little rain. During the hot season, daytime temperatures can reach up to around 37°C in Bangkok, and it will feel more humid. You will also experience regional variations, as the uplands of the north are notably cooler and less humid. At higher altitudes, the temperatures during the day can vary between 18°C-26°C, and at night it can feel chilly.

During the rainy (monsoon) season, the rains can vary in length and intensity each year, but generally this season brings short-lived downpours in the afternoon or at night, and helps to alleviate the high temperatures and humidity. Daytime temperatures between June and October can reach an average high of 33°C.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

Travelers' Tales: Thailand - edited by James O'Reilly & Larry Habegger

Slithering South - Steve Van Beek

Thailand: A Short History - David K. Wyatt

To the River Kwai: Two Journeys - 1943, 1979 - John Stewart

The Bridge Over the River Kwai - Pierre Boulle

The Railway Man - Eric Lomax

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

- Hiking boots with good grip soles
- Functional base layer
- T-shirts
- Lightweight travel trousers/shorts
- Lightweight loose-fitting shirt / shawl to cover shoulders for temple visits
- Scarf / neck buff
- Hat

- Windproof jacket
- Fleece / extra layer
- Rain protection
- Rucksack (approx. 20 l)
- Small first aid kit for your rucksack
- Sunscreen
- Water bottle or hydration pack (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
- Camera (batteries/memory card)
- Mobile Phone (unlocked to accept an additional SIM card)
- Power bank
- Sun glasses
- Personal wash kit
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Tupperware for picnics
- Ear plugs
- Eye mask
- Swimsuit
- Small travel towel
- Sandals

- Insect repellent
- Headtorch & batteries

For self-guided cycling days:

- Cycle helmet
- Cycling shorts
- Handlebar mount compatible with your smart phone

\*Please dress respectfully and modestly when visiting temples. Loose fitting clothing that covers shoulders and knees are best. Avoid wearing clothing with religious themes (e.g. images of Buddha or Hindu deities).

## Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

## Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons in double or twin occupancy, however we can quote for any number of travellers, including solo travellers, contact our sales team for a quote.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights accommodation before or after your self-guided trip, ask our sales team to find out more about this.

Please DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Our sales team will also be happy to provide you a quote for scheduled flights from your nearest regional airport (where possible). Flight prices are subject to change depending on availability and seasonality. Flight prices will only be confirmed to you when all services have been arranged and confirmed for your requested dates.

# Why Choose KE

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## Why KE

On this holiday unique to KE, you will journey from north to south Thailand and experience its wonderful variety of landscapes and history along the way. With a carefully balanced mix of guided and self-guided excursions, plus utilising the train to travel between Chiang Mai and Bangkok, you will have the opportunity to really delve into the culture of this delightful country.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 03/04/2025 and the trip is subject to change