

Elephants and Waterfalls

A Family Adventure in Thailand



Tell Tale Travel has created this 15-day itinerary in Thailand for families to have their very own tropical wildlife and cultural adventure. This holiday is packed full of experiences - from bathing elephants and diving into waterfalls to watching a million bats swarm into the night, you will certainly return with memories to cherish for years to come. You'll trek up a mountain, feast on delicious Thai food, shop at markets and meet local people of all ages whom you will consider your friends by the time you get home.

This is a private tour and can be taken at your family's own pace. The itinerary can also be customised to suit you perfectly (subject to availability). Beach extensions are also possible.



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Day 1 - Saturday

Fly overnight from London Heathrow to Bangkok on a direct flight with Thai Airways or Eva Air (regional departures available via an add-on with BMI). The complimentary activity books we include in customer packs are very popular with teenagers as well as younger children.

Day 2 – Sunday

Welcome to Thailand! One of our drivers will meet you, just look out for a sign with the Tell Tale Travel ‘pink peacock’! He will whisk you away to your charming boutique hotel, a welcome oasis from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Set in the charm of Bangkok’s days of oriental renaissance, you’ll have a family suite which has its own small courtyard and living area as well as two bedrooms. You will have a little time to settle in, relax and look at our tips to make the most of Bangkok. Later, your driver will be back to take you through the city lit up at night to have dinner at an idyllic restaurant, located on the bank of the Chao Praya river which runs through the city.



Day 3 – Monday



This morning, you can have a lie-in before being picked up by our guide, who will take you to the main sites of the Grand Palace, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha Wat Pho, the oldest temple in Bangkok and Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn). This day, whilst a bit ‘touristy’ by Tell Tale Travel standards, will let you ‘tick off’ the main sights in Thailand, though you will also get a flavour of local life by taking in a local market and using public transport such as riverboat taxis.

Tong will drop you off at your hotel at around 4pm, which will give you some time to rest or relax. Later, your driver will pick you up for an evening at your leisure. Check our maps and tips to find something to suit your family – from the main shopping district with its western-style malls, a vast aquarium, dinner at rooftop restaurants or bargaining for clothes in a night bazaar – you can choose something to suit your family.

Day 4 – Tuesday

Time to get away from the big city and start your genuine eco-adventure! First, a short flight to Chiang Mai, which will act as your gateway to the north of Thailand, the old ‘Lanna’ kingdom, rich in culture and nature with beautiful diverse landscapes from rolling hills and valleys to jungle and waterfalls.

You will be picked up at the airport by one of our drivers who will take you to a residential area, Mae Rim in the Mae Sa valley, an ideal base to enjoy the nature, waterfalls and wildlife of the area, while still being close to the city of Chiang Mai. Here, you’ll be guests of Mae, her husband Por, their daughter Unn and her young son Idin. After settling into the top floor of the house which you will have to yourselves, you will have an afternoon tour of the local area, including visiting



grandson Idin's school where your children can chat to the local children in English and learn some Thai! This evening, you will have a home-cooked dinner with the family - it will certainly be one of the culinary highlights of your holiday.

Day 5 – Wednesday

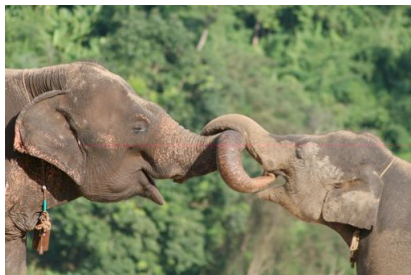
This morning, your driver will pick you up and take you to nearby Mae Sa Waterfalls. On the way, you will stop at an orchid farm, also home to butterflies who fly freely. When you get to the waterfalls, take your time to walk up the winding path around the 10 tiers of cascading waterfalls, there are plenty of tranquil spots to have your picnic lunch under the gigantic trees. The surrounding wilderness is full of tropical wildlife, especially birds. The songbirds and the butterflies flitting in and out of the trees are certainly beautiful.



This evening, your driver will be back to take you into Chiang Mai to visit the city by night. You can visit the famous night bazaar (although bear in mind it's touristy), or just have dinner at one of the many excellent restaurants the city has to offer, you can look at the map and tips in your customer pack.

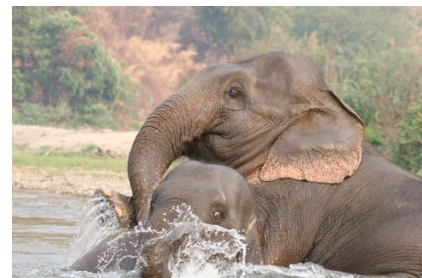
Days 6 and 7 – Thursday and Friday

These two days will certainly be one the highlights of your holiday, the memories of which you will probably cherish forever.



Thailand is famous for its elephants and the country has many 'camps' where elephants are used for rides or 'circus tricks'. No risk of that with Tell Tale Travel, not only will your day will be a completely different from the average tourist experience, you will escape any places which mistreat these magnificent creatures. You will visit Elephant Nature Park, a sanctuary for elephants, many of whom have previously been ill-treated, but now have a home here.

When you get to the sanctuary, you'll meet the conservation staff and have an introduction to elephants in Thailand and the problems they face, as well as the work the foundation behind the sanctuary is undertaking to improve their lives both at the park and the wider world. Then it's time to meet the elephants and learn from their 'mahouts' who communicate and care for them in a deeply personal way. You'll get up close to the elephants and after some training, scrub them down in the river!



The next morning, you'll start with a walk to see the elephants wandering freely in the forest, before another day caring for them. *Please note these two days are a 'join-in' experience with other people. Also note, although these are 'domesticated' elephants, they are sensitive and contact will be within the parameters of meeting an animal the size of an elephant for the first time! Accommodation at the park is rustic, although you will have private facilities and only need to take an overnight bag.*

Day 8 – Saturday



This morning, your driver will pick you up and take you into the historic city of Chiang Mai for some sightseeing. Part of the original layout of the city can still be seen today in the walls and moat. The river, which was once a considerable distance away, now flows through the centre. You can visit a selection of the many wats (temples) and religious sanctuaries before you visit handicraft villages in the outskirts of the modern city.

This evening, you will have an informal lesson in Thai cookery with the ladies of the house before feasting on your efforts.

Day 9 – Sunday

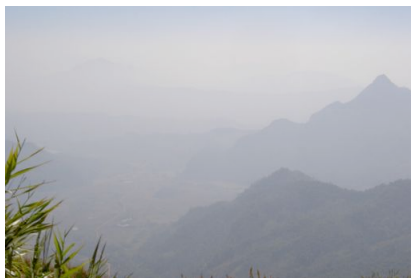
This morning, it's time to pack up and say goodbye to your new friends, Mae and her family. Whilst the drive north will take around four hours, you can sit back and enjoy the fabulous panoramic views. You will arrive in a breathtaking valley surrounded by high mountains, geographically situated by Thailand's northern border with Laos.

First, it's time for lunch on the terrace with your host Yui (a former trekking guide) who moved back to his home village with his Belgian-born wife Laetitia - they have made an idyllic home for their young children and the many animals they have adopted. Children can run around freely here whilst adults can relax and enjoy the tranquil setting. After lunch, you will have time to settle into your simple but charming chalets in the garden and relax on your verandahs.



Later, you will have a tour of the local area. You will see local people fishing in traditional ways, weaving baskets and farming and harvesting crops from tropical fruit trees to shallots.

Day 10 – Monday



Today, Yui will take you trekking, across the rice fields and into the neighbouring mountains. There are no trails, here so you'll certainly enjoy discovering real nature along the way. Once you reach the top, you can admire panoramic vistas of both beautiful untouched Thailand and neighbouring Laos. You'll have a barbeque lunch today – you'll have to build your own fire to cook your food. *This day can be set completely to your own sense of adventure and comfort level.*

Late, you can join in as the local villagers play football and *Sepak Takraw*, an imaginative Thai sport similar to volleyball, except that it uses a rattan ball, before dinner under a blanket of sparkling stars.

Day 11 -Tuesday

Today, you will visit a local school in a Hmong village to meet the children, then you will spend the day visiting level waterfalls nearby which are perfect for swimming. After a picnic lunch, you can have a walk or simply lie back and relax with a book.



When you get back, parents can enjoy some well-deserved pampering with a traditional Thai massage. This evening, you will venture to a freshwater prawn farm – you’ll learn how the prawns are reared before you have your delicious dinner.

Day 12 - Wednesday

Time for your next adventure. This morning, you will be driven to Chiang Rai airport from where you will take a short flight to Bangkok. Then it’s a few hours drive to Khao Yai National Park, Thailand’s oldest national park and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where you will arrive at an eco-lodge.

Although you will spend most of the day travelling, you should have a little bit of time to relax and settle in. This evening, you’ll be taken to the local village of Pak Chong where you can visit the night market. This is a genuine market for locals, not tourists and is a great place to see the locals of the Isan region and have an authentic dinner from a food stall.

Day 13 - Thursday

Today, you’ll have most of the day free to relax from your adventures so far. You can enjoy the swimming pool at the lodge or relax in the beautiful gardens.



This evening, it’s time to head into Khao Yai National Park - spanning an area of over 2,000 square kilometers, this UNESCO World Heritage Site has a wide range of altitudes going up to 1000m above sea level and a range of terrains from mountains to tropical jungle. Khao Yai contains over 67 types of mammals, 320 types of birds and 3,000 species of plants. You will drive up to the Bat Cave just in time to see over a million bats swarm out for the night.

Day 14 – Friday

An early start this morning, you’ll arrive at Khao Yai at 7am when the animals are their most active. Khao Yai is home to much tropical birdlife and wildlife such as deer, gibbons, herds of elephants and clouded leopards. There are supposedly still tigers here, although it’s highly unlikely you will see one! You’ll start the morning with a trek through the park with a personal guide - this can be taken at your own pace, you can swing through the trees or have a more sedate walk – it’s up to you!



Then it’s time to visit spectacular waterfalls, featured in the film *The Beach* where you can swim and have your picnic lunch. You’ll then spend the afternoon driving in an open-topped vehicle, stopping for wildlife-spotting opportunities, your guide will keep a look out and be equipped with binoculars for animals further away. You can also visit the top of the mountain which is used as a radar station for aircraft – make sure to take a jumper, it can get quite chilly up here!

Day 15 – Saturday

This morning, you will be taken to Bangkok airport where you will catch your flight home, you will get back to London Heathrow at approximately 7pm UK time (same day). *It is also possible to have an extra day relaxing by the pool and fly back a day later, ask us for details.*

This 15-day private tour for your family includes direct international and internal flights with Thai Airways or Eva Air, accommodation, activities/excursions, private chauffeur-driven vehicles and most meals (except as listed below) costs £1,800 per adult / £1,350 per child under 12 at Easter and any time of the year except summer when it costs £2,000 / £1,500 due to peak flights. Christmas prices start at the same as summer prices but early booking is essential to get this price.

It is also possible to book this trip without flights if you live outside the UK.

Please allow £30 per person for local expenses such as entrance fees plus whatever you wish to spend on items not included below. Typically, a family of 4 spends £300-600 (depending on shopping and alcohol habits).

Please note that your itinerary may change, we will endeavour to keep you informed.

EXCLUDED:

Lunch: Days 2-4, 7-8, 12, 13, 15

Dinner: Days 2-3, 5, 12-14

Personal travel insurance

Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, internet access and alcoholic drinks

Expenses during free time

Tips for guides and drivers (discretionary)



Background Information

Tell Tale Travel is a specialist tour operator. Each trip is tailor-made yet affordable, while respectful of local people and places. We are small enough to give you true personal service yet experienced and knowledgeable enough to make sure you have the organisation and back-up you need. When you are on your holiday, you will have a detailed itinerary and plenty of tips and recommendations. As well as support from our unique network of local people, you can also contact either our London office or Thai office at any time.

Tell Tale Travel is a London-based company, subject to English law. We are licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority so your holiday will be protected by ATOL. We are also licensed by the Travel Trust Association which gives you 100% protection on all elements of your holiday.

What makes Tell Tale Travel holidays so special?

Hand-selected

Every element of a Tell Tale journey has been hand-selected by us, not by other people. We painstakingly hunt out the best authentic experiences. If we don't think it's the finest Thailand has to offer or we wouldn't want to do it, we won't tell you about it.

Local Insight

You'll meet local people that we have chosen to show you the real Thailand. Furthermore, you'll experience the overwhelming warmth of genuine hospitality throughout your holiday.

Just For You

You don't have to share your experience with a tour group or a tour leader. And as it's just for you – just tell us what you want to do and we'll make sure you do it.

Responsible Tourism

You will be able to see first-hand how your money benefits local people and communities. A supplementary income enables a better quality of life in small villages and a chance to share their culture, history and lifestyle with the outside world.

Hassle Free Organisation

We will organise everything we can. This means you can get the best Thailand has to offer, such as a particular scenic train journey without the inconvenience of organising it. Where we are not able to organise something in advance for you, we will give you guidance or a local contact.

Guidance

Guidebooks by their nature are out of date from the day they're published. We give you insider up-to-the-minute information on the best things to do. We also give you general advice that will help you throughout your journey to the extent of cultural and clothing tips depending on what you are doing on a particular day.

Fair Prices

We only sell our own holidays, this means we can make sure everyone involved, you and our network of local people, get a fair price. And unlike other operators, we don't have surcharges - if after you've booked, there's a rise in fuel surcharges or a change in exchange rates which makes our costs higher, you still pay the same.

