



*Elephant Steps*  
*Elephant-lovers holiday in Thailand*  
*Special group adventure*  
*Friday 5<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 21st November 2010*

***Introduction:***

Get the inside track on elephants in Thailand in this once-in-a-lifetime itinerary which not just takes in the elephant festival at Surin where elephants take part in their very own Olympics, but has extended stays at two different elephant conservation centres (Elephant Kraal and Elephant Nature Park) where you will get up close and personal to these magnificent creatures. You'll also explore a vast nature reserve for the chance to see some of the last remaining herds of wild elephants and other wildlife. As all Tell Tale holidays, you'll also get to see the country, feast on delicious authentic Thai food and meet 'real' local people. Welcome to Elephant Steps!

***Overview:***

Elephants have a rich history in Thailand. Many years ago, they roamed the vast jungles that sprawled across the country, then they played an active part in wars to protect the homeland, then they worked for many years, in large and small enterprises, often as a valued member of the family. These days, with a major employer the logging industry hardly existent, elephants have less sources of income, but no place in the wild to return to. Thailand has many tourist 'camps' where elephants are used for rides or 'circus tricks' but you'd rather bathe an elephant rather than ride one, this is the holiday for you.

***Style:***

As all Tell Tale holidays, this trip is a soft adventure which means it is very different from mainstream tourism but not as demanding as a typical adventure holiday. It does pack a lot in but you won't spend too much time on the road and you will fit in experiencing authentic Thailand and have a bit of relaxation too. However, the itinerary is more demanding than a typical Tell Tale trip in that as you will be caring for elephants for much of it, there will be a lot of physical activity. Also, the accommodation for some of the trip though fairly comfortable is rustic (although the sound of elephants snoring around you is a luxurious lullaby!). We have balanced this out with our choices elsewhere.

There will be **no single supplements**. The maximum group size will be 10 travellers, with a maximum of two couples or pairs of friends (who already know each other) within this number.

As our small group trips are for people who don't know each other, we feel that unlike our private tours, they do need to be escorted. Some tour operators would just outsource to a ground agent who would allocate you a tour leader who would also be your main guide throughout. At Tell Tale Travel, we'd prefer you discover everything from the real experts, it's the best experience and will also benefit local economies more. So the Tell Tale 'escort' will be very much part of the group and is simply there to see that things run smoothly and be the contact person for our network of local people and our local office.

Tell Tale Travel  
25a Kensington Church Street  
London  
W8 4LL



Call now to get your place:  
**0800 011 2571**  
9am – 9pm, 7 days a week

### Day 1 – Friday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Overnight direct flight from London Heathrow to Bangkok with Eva Air or Thai Airways.

### Day 2 - Saturday

Welcome to Thailand! You will be met at Bangkok airport and whisked away in an air-conditioned minibus to a centrally-located inn. This inn only has enough rooms to accommodate our maximum group size so you will have the whole or most of it to yourselves. You will have a little time to unpack and get settled in and have a dip in the small pool. Later on, you will be taken on a stroll through the local area for a special welcome dinner, in line with the trip theme, this will be at the world-famous Blue Elephant.



### Day 3 – Sunday



A lie-in this morning, before a late breakfast.

Then it's time for an afternoon of sightseeing with one of our expert Bangkok-based guides. Tong will pick you up and take you to the Chao Praya river which snakes through the city and take you on a boat - you'll see Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), which is covered in pieces of porcelain, before crossing the river and visiting the Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

This evening, your private minibus will take those who want to go to the lively Suan Lum night market. It is a perfect place to pick up lightweight clothes for your trip or haggle for handicrafts. After this, you will be driven to Lebua State Tower, where you can have a drink at the Sky Bar and enjoy the amazing views of the sprawling city and the Chao Praya river. *Alternatively this evening, you can have a free evening on your own. Although this is a group holiday, as it's a Tell Tale trip, we've built in as much flexibility as we can.*

**Tell Tale Tip** Bangkok's famous shopping centres are just a few stops away on the tourist-friendly overhead train.

### Day 4 – Monday

This morning, it's time to start your elephant adventures.

You'll be taken on a 1-1.5. hour drive north to Ayutthaya, a capital of ancient Siam. Near the UNESCO-rated heritage site is the Elephant Kraal. Kraal is originally an Afrikaans word for enclosure - historically this was where wild elephants captured in the north and herded hundreds of miles through Thailand were entrapped before a display in front of the ruling monarch, this has not happened since 1906. These days, the kraal is home to more than 100 elephants, run by the Prakochaban centre which you can visit as 'Elephant Stay'.



Many of the elephants here are rescued from previously-hard lives, although there are also some baby elephants who were born here. This centre's belief is that by supporting the traditional role of elephants in Thai culture as working animals, elephants will have a sustainable future. Whilst the older elephants live a life of leisure, those of working age elephants have appeared in historic scenes on television programmes and films such as Oliver Stone's *Alexander*.

Tell Tale Travel  
25a Kensington Church Street  
London  
W8 4LL



Call now to get your place:  
**0800 011 2571**  
9am – 9pm, 7 days a week

Some of the elephants also have a regular 9-5 job, at the nearby historical site where they give visitors a (very short) ride around the temples and monuments, they certainly look the part, draped in the traditional magnificent royal insignia of red and yellow.

For the next three days, you will live and work with the conservation staff, the mahouts and their families, using the trusty handbook you will be given containing tips on how to care for and communicate with 'your' very own elephant. Not only will you have an amazing experience of truly getting hands-on with elephants but you will get a great grounding for the rest of your elephant adventure around Thailand. You will be expected to muck in, so bring old clothes!



Whilst evenings can be quite magical here, if any in the group would like to visit the nearest town to have a drink by the river after dinner, we will arrange local transport.

*Please note that due to the limited accommodation at the centre, whilst you will have a comfortable air-conditioned 'chalet' with a private bathroom, you will have to share with another member of the group for two nights (you will be moving on to other accommodation at the end of the last day).*

### **Day 6 – Wednesday**

At the end of the day, it's time to pack up and say goodbye to your elephant and the friends you would have made at the kraal. You will be taken on a drive east for the next part of the trip.

You are heading towards Khao Yai. Spanning an area of over 2,000 square kilometers, Khao Yai National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Sites with a wide range of altitudes going up to 1000m above sea level and a range of terrains from mountains to tropical jungle. It contains over 67 types of mammals, 320 types of birds and 3,000 species of plants and is one of the few remaining areas containing wild elephants. This drive would take 2-3 hours as a straight drive, but you will stop for dinner on the way.



Time to have a hot shower and relax in your own private air-conditioned bungalow, or have a drink together in the open-air restaurant.

### **Day 7 – Thursday**



You will have most of this day to relax at your leisure, enjoy the tropical gardens, or take a dip in the large pool. In the late afternoon, you will be taken for your visit to Khao Yai, you will be taken to the 'Bat Cave' where you'll see the bats at rest before the unforgettable sight of over two million bats swarm into the darkening sky, in search of insects for their dinner.

Dinner at the lodge.

### *Day 8 – Friday*

An early start this morning, you'll arrive in the national park at 7am when the animals are their most active. Khao Yai is home to much tropical birdlife and wildlife such as deer, gibbons, clouded leopards and herds of elephants. 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 your 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, your guide will keep a look out and be equipped with binoculars for animals further away and going to the mineral salt lick which is likely to give you elephant viewings. 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 9 – Saturday*

Time to see the playful side of elephants, you're heading to the once-a-year Surin festival! You will have to leave early as the drive from Khao Yai will take a while, although the roads should be relatively quiet as most people travel to the festival from Bangkok (making very crowded roads and trains). You will stop for breakfast on the way.

When you arrive at the Surin festival, you are free to get comfortable in your pre-booked 'VIP' seats or wander around as you wish. There will be 250 elephants at the festival, from all over Thailand taking part in everything from shows on their traditional life to 'Olympic games' such as tug of war and football. Our friends from the Elephant Nature Park usually visit Surin to provide a 'first aid tent' and to look for other elephants who could do with sanctuary, if you'd like to, Phyl will take you to meet them.

Then it's back for a drive to your lodge.

### *Day 10 – Sunday*

Mid morning departure from the lodge, you'll be taken on the 2-hour drive to Bangkok airport. A short flight to cross the country and you'll arrive in Chiang Mai, the 'rose of the north'. Your next destination is the Elephant Nature Park, however, first you will have a relaxing night in Chiang Mai.

This afternoon, you can relax in the garden of your charming accommodation in Chiang Mai, we have arranged a Thai massage each. Then you can spend the evening at leisure, Chiang Mai's riverside restaurants and famous night bazaar are only a walk or short trip by tuk tuk.

Tell Tale Travel  
25a Kensington Church Street  
London  
W8 4LL



Call now to get your place:  
**0800 011 2571**  
9am – 9pm, 7 days a week

### ***Days 11 to Day 15 – Monday to Friday***



You'll be at the Elephant Nature Park, a sanctuary for elephants, many of whom have previously been ill-treated, but now have a home here. The elephants here are encouraged to live as natural a life as possible. 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. Some of the elephants at the park have got some sad stories indeed but when you see the dignity of elephants like Jokia, who was blinded and forced to work in her previous life or Mae Boon Ma, the gentle lady who is an 'almost' white elephant, you will be glad that you are helping provide a home for many more elephants.



Your days at the sanctuary will be varied, helping with whatever needs doing, that could be helping build something, caring for elephants or joining in with the *Jumbo Express*, the park's mobile medical service for elephants who aren't lucky enough to live at the sanctuary.

Your sleeping quarters are rustic but comfortable bungalows, surrounded by sleeping elephants.

### ***Day 16 – Friday***

After your last day caring for elephants, you will be picked up and taken on an hour's drive to unwind before your flight home and the chance to stay in a real residential area in the countryside outside Chiang Mai.

### ***Day 17 – Saturday***

Wake up at your leisure at your large and luxurious private home, set in beautiful gardens with a swimming pool. Spend the morning relaxing as you wish.

You'll have lunch with your hostess, Khun Kaek, a delicious authentic Lanna meal. Lanna is the name for the ancient kingdom of 'a million ricefields' which is now northern Thailand and the food has Burmese, Lao and Chinese influences in its modern-day Thai cooking. As well as the rice, herbs and vegetables grown by Thai people who are traditionally lowland farmers, Chiang Mai is surrounded by hills inhabited by tribes from other countries who now grow crops as exotic as asparagus and strawberries.



After lunch, Khun Kaek will take you for a walk around the local area, then you can relax by the pool and enjoy a massage in the garden. This evening, you will have a special farewell dinner.

### ***Day 18 - Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2010***

This morning, you will be driven to Chiang Mai airport to take a short internal flight to Bangkok to connect to your international flight. You will get back to London Heathrow at approximately 7pm UK

Tell Tale Travel  
25a Kensington Church Street  
London  
W8 4LL



Call now to get your place:  
**0800 011 2571**  
9am – 9pm, 7 days a week

time (same day). *If you need to be back earlier, you can fly back the night before and return by 7am.*

---

***Dates and prices:***

5-21 November 2010 £2,100

*Price excluding flights for those who live outside the UK £1,500*

***Inclusions:***

Direct flights between London Heathrow and Bangkok with Eva Air or Thai Airways\*

Internal flights with Thai Airways or Bangkok Airways

Accommodation

Activities and excursions

Most meals

Transfers in private air-conditioned minibuses

Local transport

\* UK regional add-ons with BMI are available at a supplementary charge, however these are quite expensive and we recommend taking the train if possible.

***Exclusions:***

Entrance fees for temples and museums

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

Tips for guides and drivers (discretionary)

Some meals

**Spending money guideline - £250**

***Extra Terms and Conditions***

***(Please read with our standard booking conditions, if there is any conflict, the terms here apply)***

Please note that the itinerary may change before you leave due to improvements or on the ground (due to unforeseeable circumstances).

This group departure needs a minimum of 5 people (max 10 people). If by any chance, the minimum number is not reached two months before the departure date, the trip will be cancelled and those who have booked offered the choice of changing date or to another trip.

Please note we will not be offering any discounts for late bookings. In fact, the price of the holiday is calculated using certain flight codes, so if you leave it too late, they may not be available.

*We may increase the price of the holiday at any time before departure if there are changes in our ground costs, exchange rates or airlines taxes. However, our **no surcharges guarantee** applies from the moment your booking is made and your 20% deposit paid.*

Tell Tale Travel  
25a Kensington Church Street  
London  
W8 4LL



*Call now to get your place:*  
**0800 011 2571**  
9am – 9pm, 7 days a week