



Elephant Express



Make new friends on this express adventure for elephant lovers. Both human and animal!

You will kick off this 10-day trip with the inside track into real life in Bangkok, then spend 3 days getting up close and personal to elephants, learning how to look after them and riding them. You'll end your trip with a few days near a UNESCO protected natural reserve which you will explore whilst here.

This is a private tour and can be taken at your own pace. The itinerary can also be customised. Beach extensions are possible.



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Day 1 – Friday (you can also start this itinerary on a Monday)

Fly from London Heathrow with Thai Airways or Eva Air. It will be a direct flight departing from Heathrow overnight after 9pm and takes just under twelve hours, arriving in Bangkok between 3 and 4pm the following day, local time. *Regional departures are possible (though will be indirect). It is also possible to book this tour without flights if you are not from the UK.*

Day 2 – Saturday D

Welcome to Thailand! One of our drivers will meet you at the airport, just look out for a sign with the Tell Tale Travel ‘pink peacock’. Your driver will whisk you away from the hustle and bustle to a residential suburb. You’ll be close to the majestic Chao Praya river that runs through the sprawling city.

Here, you will arrive at your base for the next couple of days, in a private home, you will get an insight into real life in Bangkok. You will have plenty of privacy in your comfortable bedroom and private bathroom. We have worked hand in hand with our hosts to ensure the right balance of insider experiences and time on your own.

After you have had some time to relax and settle in, you will have a welcome dinner with the family. This will be a great introduction into Thai culture as well as food!

Day 3 – Sunday B L D

Today, you will have a day out with your hosts. They will take you out to the nearby island of Ko Kret which they know very well. This car-free island, set in the Chao Praya river, is home to descendants of the Mon people who originally came to the island in the 1700s.

Life on Ko Kret is far more relaxed than the rest of busy Bangkok - people sit in the shade beside their houses, completing household chores and chatting to pass the time. With its local villages and rice paddy fields, it even has a countryside feel. The people of Ko Kret are renowned for their fine craftsmanship skills in pottery, covered in intricate carvings, and you’ll end your day at a village where you can see this time-honored tradition.



If you would prefer to do more ‘mainstream’ sightseeing today, instead of this time with your hosts, we can arrange for a day in the centre of Bangkok with one of our professional guides instead.

This evening, you’ll have an informal Thai cooking lesson before feasting on your efforts for dinner.

Day 4 – Monday B L D

Early start this morning! It’s time for elephant adventures!



Your driver will pick you up for the 1-1.5. hour drive 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 kraal in Thailand was where wild elephants captured in the north and herded hundreds of miles 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’.

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9am – 9pm, 7 days a week

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 have appeared in historic scenes on television programmes and films such as Oliver Stone's *Alexander*.

Some of the elephants also have a regular 9-5 job, at the nearby historical site of Ayutthaya where they give visitors a (very short) ride around the temples and monuments to help fund the centre. 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.



You have an amazing experience of truly getting hands-on with elephants. You will be expected to muck in, so bring old clothes!

Accommodation here is in a rustic but comfortable air-conditioned 'chalet' for two with a private bathroom. Although it is a 3-day experience, you will only stay 2 nights as you'll arrive this morning and you will leave at the end of your last day. Please note that these three days at the elephant conservation centre will be on a 'join-in' basis.

Day 5 – Tuesday B L D

Full day at Elephant Stay. You won't just learn about elephants in Thailand, it will be hands-on, Caring for them, using the commands in your comprehensive handbook, riding them 'mahout'-style and bathing them in the river. Ewa and Michelle who run the centre for the Thai organisation will take good care of you.

You will most likely want a rest in the evening, but if you would like to visit Ayutthaya, we can arrange for our guide 'Uncle' Pok, who is based nearby, to take you out to see the temples lit up at night.

Day 6 – Wednesday B L

Day at Elephant Stay. Another day of activities with the elephants after which it's time to say goodbye to your elephant and your other new friends.

Your driver from Bangkok will be back to pick you up and take you on the 2-3 hour drive east.

You are heading to 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 (though sightings are relatively rare).



Arrival at lodge and time to settle into your comfortable bungalow which has air conditioning. Rest of evening at leisure. Your driver will be happy for you to stop for dinner on the way, or you can have it in

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the lodge's open-air restaurant. *This lodge is comfortable (but not luxurious) with a pool and tropical gardens, we have worked with them for several years. There are not many suitable options in the area (mostly aimed at backpackers or local visitors, with one very expensive hotel a distance away). There is one boutique option we also use – telephone us if you'd like to discuss pros/cons.*

Day 7 – Thursday B



You will have most of this day to relax. Have breakfast at leisure, then spend the rest of the morning and early afternoon by the large pool or enjoy the tropical gardens.

In the late afternoon, one of our guides will pick you up and take you to a nearby cave, home to millions of bats. This evening, you'll have the unforgettable sight of seeing them swarm into the darkening sky, in search of their night's feed. *Please note that the timing and experience will vary depending on the time of the year.*

This evening, we recommend having dinner at a local restaurant (your guide will arrange for the local driver to wait or come back for you).

Day 8 – Friday B

An early start this morning. Your guide will pick you up and you'll be in the park by 7am to catch 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 have a relatively sedate walk..or swing through the trees – it's up to you!



Then it's time to visit spectacular waterfalls, featured in the film *The Beach*. Time to stop at the park's café for lunch, then you'll 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 B

Day at leisure to enjoy the pool or relax with a good book. It is possible to arrange an extra activity on the ground.

Day 10 – Sunday B

Today, your driver from Bangkok will pick you up and take you to the airport in time for your international flight after midday. You will get back to London Heathrow at approximately 7pm UK time (same day). *Timings may vary if you are flying back to a UK regional airport, or have booked your flights separately.*

Please note that your itinerary may change before you leave or on the ground (improvements or unforeseeable circumstances), we will endeavour to keep you informed.

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The price for this trip is £1,600 per person, based on two people sharing a private tour. This includes direct international flights with Thai Airways or Eva Air, accommodation, activities, transport and meals marked as BLD (exceptions listed below). It is also possible to book this trip excluding flights for £1,000 per person, based on two people sharing a private tour.

Please allow approximately £25 per person for local expenses such as entrance fees plus whatever you wish to spend on items not included (see below).

EXCLUDED:

Meals not marked by a B L or a D

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

Entrance fees of a national type, examples are Khao Yai national park and any temples you visit

Tips for guides and drivers (this is discretionary, although there will be guidelines provided)

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