Thailand's Grand Temples, Northern Culture & Phuket Beaches – 12 Days

12D / 11N	Easy	Private	USD 1,495 / pax
Duration	Difficulty	Tour Type	Starting From

Explore Thailand's iconic landmarks and deep-rooted traditions from the vibrant capital of Bangkok to the cultural heart of Chiang Mai, concluding with a relaxing beach escape in Phuket.

DESTINATIONS & ROUTE

Bangkok → Chiang Mai → Phuket → Ayutthaya

TOUR OVERVIEW

This comprehensive 12-day journey through Thailand offers a rich tapestry of experiences, blending ancient history with modern life and natural beauty. Begin your adventure in Bangkok, a city of contrasts, where majestic palaces and revered temples stand alongside bustling markets and serene canals. You'll delve into the spiritual heart of the nation, witness traditional rituals, and navigate the city's waterways.

Venture beyond the capital to the historic city of Ayutthaya, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and explore the charming countryside of Samut Songkhram Province, home to unique markets. The tour then transports you to Chiang Mai, the cultural capital of the North, where you'll engage with gentle elephants, participate in spiritual ceremonies, and discover local village life amidst lush landscapes.

The final leg of your Thai exploration takes you south to the tropical paradise of Phuket. Here, pristine beaches and azure waters provide the perfect setting for relaxation after your cultural and historical discoveries. This itinerary is crafted for travelers seeking a balanced experience of Thailand's diverse offerings, from its spiritual heritage and vibrant markets to its stunning natural beauty and tranquil coastlines.

Expect comfortable private transfers throughout your journey, guided excursions, and opportunities to savor authentic Thai cuisine. Accommodation options cater to various preferences, ensuring a pleasant stay at each destination. This tour is suitable for all travelers looking to experience the essential highlights of Thailand with ease and depth.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

* Witness the early morning chanting ritual of monks at Wat Pho in Bangkok.
* Explore the grandeur of the Grand Palace and marvel at the revered Emerald Buddha.
* Cruise Bangkok's historic khlongs on an eco-friendly solar boat, visiting hidden temples.
* Experience the unique Maeklong Railway Market and the vibrant Damnoen Saduak Floating Market.
* Discover the ancient ruins and royal history of Ayutthaya, a UNESCO World Heritage site.
* Interact ethically with elephants at an Elephant Discovery Camp in Chiang Mai.
* Participate in a serene alms-giving ceremony and explore Chiang Mai's illuminated temples by tuk-tuk.
* Visit Mae Kampong Village to learn about traditional Thai rural life and local crafts.
* Relax on the beautiful beaches of Phuket, enjoying free time by the Andaman Sea.
* Savor traditional Northern Thai cuisine at a riverside restaurant with live music.

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DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 Bangkok Arrival & Leisure Time

Stay: Bangkok hotel | Transport: Private vehicle transfer

Upon your arrival at Bangkok's international airport, a dedicated driver will be waiting to provide a seamless transfer to your hotel. After checking in, the remainder of your first day is free for you to settle in and unwind at your own pace. You might choose to relax at the hotel, or perhaps take a short stroll to begin absorbing the city's unique atmosphere.
This initial period allows for adjustment to the local time and environment, preparing you for the exciting days of exploration ahead. Consider reviewing your itinerary or simply enjoying a quiet evening to recharge.

Activities: Airport pick-up; Hotel check-in; Leisure time

Day 2 Bangkok Temple Exploration & Canal Cruise

Meals: B,L | Stay: Bangkok hotel | Transport: Private vehicle, private solar boat

Your day begins with an early visit to Wat Pho, where you can observe the monks' serene morning chanting ritual starting at 9:00 AM. Following this spiritual experience, explore the temple complex, home to the magnificent 45-meter Reclining Buddha. The journey continues to the Grand Palace, Thailand's most significant historical site, where you'll be captivated by the opulent architecture and royal halls. Within the palace grounds, witness the revered Emerald Buddha, a sacred national treasure. Lunch will be served at Never Ending Summer, a charming Thai restaurant by the Chao Phraya River. In the afternoon, board a private, eco-friendly solar boat for a unique cruise along the Chao Phraya River. This vessel silently glides into a network of 'khlongs' (canals), offering a glimpse into local life away from typical tourist routes. You'll stop at Wat Khun Chan, a seldom-visited temple, and enjoy a coffee break before heading to Wat Paknam, known for its distinctive white stupa and hidden museum.
The boat journey proceeds through Khlong Bang Khuntien to Poomjai Garden, a century-old organic permaculture site and restaurant operated by a local family. Here, you can walk through the garden, relax by the canal with a local drink, and appreciate their efforts in preserving rare plants and sourcing fresh ingredients. Afterwards, a private transfer will take you back to your hotel.

Activities: Monk chanting at Wat Pho; Explore Wat Pho; Visit Grand Palace; See Emerald Buddha; Lunch at Never Ending Summer; Private solar boat khlong cruise; Visit Wat Khun Chan; Coffee break; Visit Wat Paknam; Explore Poomjai Garden

Day 3 Samut Songkhram Countryside & Floating Markets

Meals: B,L | Stay: Bangkok hotel | Transport: Private vehicle, paddle boat, long-tail boat

After breakfast, depart Bangkok for a full-day excursion to Samut Songkhram Province, just an hour's drive from the capital. The urban landscape quickly transforms into a verdant countryside, offering a glimpse into traditional Thai rural life. Your first stop is a local railway station where a vibrant market operates directly on the tracks. Witness the spectacle as vendors swiftly clear their stalls when a train approaches, only to re-establish them moments after it passes.

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Next, proceed to the renowned Damnoen Saduak Floating Market. While popular with tourists, it provides an authentic representation of historical floating markets. Enjoy a relaxing paddle boat ride through the intricate canals, observing the market's older sections and the daily life along the waterways. Disembark to explore the bustling marketplace on foot, browsing stalls laden with tropical fruits and local delicacies.

For weekend tours, an alternative option is the less crowded Tha Kha Floating Market, which includes a paddle boat trip through backwaters and a visit to a traditional house producing coconut palm sugar. Lunch will be served at a local restaurant near the market. The afternoon continues with a long-tail boat ride to a local Buddhist temple and the King Rama II Memorial Park, known for its exquisite Thai-style pavilions. Later, return to your Bangkok hotel for an evening at leisure.

Activities: Visit Maeklong Railway Market; Paddle boat ride at Damnoen Saduak Floating Market (or Tha Kha Floating Market on weekends); Explore floating market on foot; Lunch at local restaurant; Long-tail boat ride to Buddhist temple; Visit King Rama II Memorial Park

Day 4 Ayutthaya Historical Park & River Views

Meals: B,L | Stay: Bangkok hotel | Transport: Private vehicle, tuk-tuk, local boat

At 8:00 AM, your guide and driver will pick you up from your Bangkok hotel for a full-day journey to Ayutthaya. The drive takes approximately 1.5 hours to reach the Bang Pa-In Summer Palace, a former royal retreat dating back to the 17th century. Here, you'll admire a stunning blend of Sino, Thai, and European architectural styles set amidst beautiful ponds and waterways, with most buildings from King Rama V's reign.

Continue to Ayutthaya city to visit the ancient temple of Wat Phra Si Sanphet, part of the former royal palace grounds. Afterwards, experience a ride in one of the world's oldest tuk-tuks to explore the ruins of the former capital. You'll walk through historical sites to see two particularly beautiful temples: Wat Chai Wattanaram and Wat Phra Si Sanphet.

For lunch, you have the option to try the famous Ayutthaya 'boat noodle soup' or fresh river prawns (lunch payment on spot). Following your meal, take a local boat ride to view the city's historical landscape from the water, offering a different perspective of the ancient ruins. The boat trip concludes with a visit to Wat Chai Wattanaram, a grand temple built in 1630 by King Prasat Thong, designed to resemble the Angkor temple complex. In the late afternoon, you will be transferred back to your hotel in Bangkok, with the evening free for your enjoyment.

Activities: Visit Bang Pa-In Summer Palace; Explore Wat Phra Si Sanphet ancient palace; Tuk-tuk tour of Ayutthaya; Visit Wat Chai Wattanaram; Lunch (optional boat noodles/river prawns); Local boat ride on the river

Day 5 Flight to Chiang Mai & Mae Ping River Cruise

Meals: B | Stay: Chiang Mai hotel | Transport: Private vehicle, domestic flight, long-tail boat

After breakfast, you will be transferred to the airport for a morning domestic flight to Chiang Mai. Upon arrival at Chiang Mai, your local guide and driver will meet you at the arrival gate and provide a short transfer to your hotel in the city center. After checking in and settling into your accommodation, you'll embark on an afternoon excursion.

A brief 30-minute drive takes you to the long-tail boat dock. Here, you'll board a traditional long-tail boat for a leisurely 30-minute cruise along the tranquil Mae Ping River. As you glide along, observe the contrasting scenery of traditional wooden

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houses and contemporary residences lining the riverbanks, offering a glimpse into local life.
Disembark at a boat landing and take a short 10-minute walk to Waroros Market, a bustling hub of local activity. This vibrant fresh food market provides an authentic experience of Northern Thai culture and daily commerce. After exploring the market, you will be transferred back to your hotel in Chiang Mai. The rest of the evening is at your leisure to relax or explore the city further.

Activities: Transfer to Bangkok airport; Flight to Chiang Mai; Transfer to Chiang Mai hotel; Mae Ping River cruise; Walk to Waroros Market; Explore Waroros Market

Day 6 Elephant Sanctuary & Mud Spa Experience

Meals: B,L | Stay: Chiang Mai hotel | Transport: Private vehicle (joined tour)

Today offers a heartwarming half-day experience at an Elephant Discovery Camp. You will be picked up from your hotel and driven approximately 1.5 hours south of Chiang Mai, through scenic rolling hills, lush forests, and local farming communities. Upon arrival at the sanctuary, you'll meet your guide and take a 10-15 minute walk through the jungle to reach the Elephant Jungle Sanctuary.
Here, you'll change into traditional Karen clothing and receive an introductory lesson covering elephant anatomy, history, and behavior. This educational session prepares you for a meaningful interaction with these magnificent animals. You'll have the opportunity to feed, interact with, and play with the elephants in their natural habitat, learning about their individual personalities and stories. Don't forget to capture these moments with photos!
A delicious lunch of traditional Thai food and fresh fruit will be provided. Following lunch, learn to prepare herbal medicine balls for the elephants, then feed them before walking with them to the river for a refreshing bath and brushing session. Conclude your unique encounter by joining the elephants for a therapeutic mud spa, followed by a swim in the river. After changing back into your clothes and bidding farewell to the elephants, you will be driven back to Chiang Mai, arriving after approximately 1.5 hours.

Activities: Drive to Elephant Jungle Sanctuary; Introductory lesson on elephants; Feed and interact with elephants; Lunch of Thai food and fruit; Make herbal medicine balls; Bathe and brush elephants; Mud spa with elephants; Swim in river

Day 7 Doi Suthep Alms & Chiang Mai Night Temples by Tuk-tuk

Meals: B,D | Stay: Chiang Mai hotel | Transport: Private vehicle, tuk-tuk

Your day begins early with a 6:00 AM departure from your hotel to the foothills of Doi Suthep Mountain. Here, you'll have the chance to purchase offerings and join local residents for the daily alms-giving ceremony, a profound Buddhist ritual where monks collect food and necessities barefoot. Continue up the mountain to Wat Doi Suthep, ascending 309 steps of the Golden Naga staircase to reach the temple's golden pagodas and enjoy panoramic views.
After visiting Doi Suthep, discover Wat Palad, also known as the 'Temple Below the Temple,' a serene and historically significant site over 650 years old. Next, proceed to Wat Umong, a 14th-century forest temple adorned with moss and plants, creating a unique, ancient atmosphere. Walk through its mysterious tunnels to the Viharn, where you'll experience a private blessing ceremony. Lunch is on your own, followed by an afternoon at leisure.

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At 6:00 PM, a local tuk-tuk will pick you up for an evening exploration of Chiang Mai. With a local guide, you'll visit various temples at sunset, experiencing a peaceful and magical ambiance as they illuminate without daytime crowds. Witness glittering structures shining like diamonds in the dark. Afterward, head to the Three Kings Monument to learn about Chiang Mai's history as the former Lanna Kingdom. The tuk-tuk then takes you to Warorot Market, a bustling night market filled with food, flowers, and local goods. Dinner will be at Sai Ping Restaurant, located on the Ping River, serving traditional Northern Thai dishes with live music. You can choose to return to your hotel or explore the nightlife independently.

Activities: Alms-giving ceremony at Doi Suthep foothills; Visit Wat Doi Suthep; Explore Wat Palad; Visit Wat Umong; Private blessing ceremony; Evening tuk-tuk tour; Visit illuminated temples; See Three Kings Monument; Explore Warorot Market; Dinner at Sai Ping Restaurant

Day 8 Mae Kampong Village Cultural Immersion

Meals: B,L | Stay: Chiang Mai hotel | Transport: Private vehicle

Today, you'll journey to Mae Kampong Village in the Mae On district, driving through the picturesque countryside of Chiang Mai. En route, a stop at a local market allows you to select fresh ingredients for your upcoming lunch, offering a glimpse into regional produce. Upon arrival at Mae Kampong, you'll receive a warm welcome from the villagers before beginning a leisurely stroll through the community forest.

During your walk, you'll pass by fragrant tea and coffee fields, learning about the local agricultural practices that sustain the village. Return to the village in time to observe your host family preparing lunch, providing insight into traditional Thai cooking methods in a rural setting. After enjoying a delicious home-cooked meal, take another walk around the village.

This afternoon exploration focuses on local craftsmanship and industry, where you can observe the processing of fermented tea leaves and discover various handmade village products. This offers a deeper understanding of the community's sustainable lifestyle and cultural heritage. In the late afternoon, you will be driven back through the mountains to your hotel in Chiang Mai, concluding a day rich in cultural immersion and natural beauty.

Activities: Drive to Mae Kampong Village; Stop at local market for ingredients; Stroll through community forest; Pass tea and coffee fields; Watch lunch preparation by host family; Lunch; Walk around village; Observe fermented tea leaf processing; Explore handmade village products

Day 9 Flight to Phuket & Beach Leisure

Meals: B | Stay: Phuket hotel | Transport: Private vehicle, domestic flight

Enjoy a leisurely morning in Chiang Mai, with free time to relax or do some last-minute souvenir shopping. At the designated time, your driver will pick you up from your hotel for a transfer to Chiang Mai airport. You'll then board a domestic flight to the tropical island of Phuket.

Upon arrival at Phuket airport, a private vehicle will be waiting to transfer you directly to your hotel. After checking in, the entire afternoon is yours to enjoy at leisure. You might choose to head straight to the beach, unwind by the hotel pool, or simply relax in your room after your journey. This marks the beginning of your three-night stay in Phuket, offering ample opportunity for sun, sea, and relaxation.

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Activities: Free time in Chiang Mai; Transfer to Chiang Mai airport; Flight to Phuket; Private airport pick-up in Phuket; Hotel check-in; Free afternoon at leisure; Relax on the beach

Day 10 Phuket Island Free Day

Meals: B | Stay: Phuket hotel

Today is entirely dedicated to your personal enjoyment and relaxation on Phuket Island. With no scheduled activities, you have the freedom to design your day as you wish. You might spend your time lounging on one of Phuket's world-renowned beaches, soaking up the tropical sun and swimming in the clear Andaman Sea waters. Popular options include Patong, Kata, or Karon beaches, each offering a unique atmosphere.

Alternatively, you could explore the island's diverse attractions. Consider visiting Phuket Old Town with its Sino-Portuguese architecture, indulging in a traditional Thai massage, or trying out various water sports such as snorkeling or paddleboarding. The island also boasts numerous viewpoints offering breathtaking vistas, and vibrant local markets for souvenir hunting or sampling street food. Enjoy the flexibility to discover Phuket at your own pace.

Activities: Free time for sun and sea; Beach relaxation; Optional water sports; Explore Phuket Old Town; Enjoy local markets; Traditional Thai massage

Day 11 Phuket Beach Relaxation

Meals: B | Stay: Phuket hotel

Another full day is yours to savor the beauty and tranquility of Phuket. This continued free time allows for deeper relaxation or further exploration of the island's offerings. You might revisit a favorite beach or discover a new secluded cove. Consider booking an optional excursion, such as a boat trip to the nearby Phi Phi Islands or James Bond Island, for stunning limestone karsts and crystal-clear waters.

For those seeking cultural experiences, a visit to the Big Buddha, a prominent landmark offering panoramic views, could be a rewarding option. Food enthusiasts can delve into Phuket's culinary scene, from fine dining establishments to casual beachfront eateries. Enjoy the warm hospitality and the laid-back island vibe. This day is designed for you to fully unwind and create your own memorable moments in this tropical paradise.

Activities: Free time for sun and sea; Beach relaxation; Optional island excursions (e.g., Phi Phi Islands); Visit Big Buddha; Explore local cuisine; Shopping

Day 12 Phuket Departure

Meals: B | Transport: Private vehicle transfer

Your final day in Phuket is at your leisure until it's time for your departure. Depending on your flight schedule, you may have time for a last swim, a final meal, or some souvenir shopping. Enjoy the morning at your own pace, perhaps reflecting on the incredible journey through Thailand's diverse landscapes and cultures.

At the pre-arranged time, a private vehicle will pick you up from your hotel and transfer you to Phuket International Airport for

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your onward flight. This concludes your memorable 12-day Essential Thailand tour, leaving you with cherished memories of bustling cities, ancient temples, serene nature, and beautiful beaches.

Activities: Leisure time; Transfer to Phuket airport

WHAT'S INCLUDED

INCLUDED

- v Accommodation in Double/Twin room at specified hotels or similar with daily breakfast.
- v Local English speaking guides as mentioned in the program.
- v Meals as mentioned in the program: B= Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner.
- v Tours and transfers in private AC vehicles (Except join in tour by sharing transfer).
- v Entrance fees and sightseeing as mentioned in the program.
- v Excursions by boat as mentioned in the program.
- v Service charges and government tax.

NOT INCLUDED

- x International and domestic airfares.
- x Early check in/Late check out.
- x Meals and drinks which are not mentioned in the program.
- x Other services are not mentioned in the program.
- x Visa fees upon arrival in Thailand (according to the Nationality of the travelers).
- x Tips and personal expenses.
- x Travelers' Personal insurance.
- x Any services not clearly mentioned in the program.
- x Porters at hotel.
- x Surcharge for Peak season; Festivals; X-Mas; New Year (if any).

PRICE INCLUDES

- v Accommodation in Double/Twin room at specified hotels or similar with daily breakfast.
- v Local English speaking guides as mentioned in the program.
- v Meals as mentioned in the program: B= Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner.
- v Tours and transfers in private AC vehicles (Except join in tour by sharing transfer).
- v Entrance fees and sightseeing as mentioned in the program.
- v Excursions by boat as mentioned in the program.
- v Service charges and government tax.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Tour Code: IMP-DDE3A838AC65