

Nature of the South - Thailand

Highlights

- ✚ Bangkok City tour and excursion to Ayutthaya
- ✚ Jungle safari adventures at Khao Yai National Park and Khao Sok National Park
- ✚ Four days beach resort at Koh Samui Island and much more

Travel through the beautiful jungles of Thailand's south. After an introduction with Bangkok you will move onward to Khao Yai National Park. Walk through refreshing forests with scenic mountain landscapes, along elephant trails and mountain streams. See magnificent waterfalls where you can take a swim. Via the ancient capital city Ayutthaya you travel by night train to Surat Thani. Here your Tree Tops safari starts, in the tropical rainforest of Khao Sok National Park where untouched jungle still exists. Being in the jungle itself with its uncountable sounds all around you is an experience in itself. The lake is an oasis of peace and an ideal place for relaxation. This dream holiday ends on the beaches of Koh Samui.

Itinerary

Day 1 Depart North America

Depart from North America today on an overnight connecting flight to Thailand.

Day 2 Bangkok

Welcome to Bangkok, the world's best city and Thailand's bustling capital arriving late evening. Upon arrival at Suvarnabhumi Airport, our local tour guide will greet and escort you to your hotel for check-in.

Bossotel Inn

Day 3 Bangkok

Visit Bangkok's most famous landmarks: the Grand Palace and the Wat Phra Kaew temple with the Emerald Buddha, the national Buddha statue. Several of Thailand's most significant religious ceremonies are here performed by the King. The entire complex contains more than 200 buildings, representing more than 200 years of history and architecture. The evening you will dine in the rotating restaurant of Thailand's highest

building: the Baiyoke Sky tower with 82 floors. Enjoy a delicious Thai meal and the nightly view over Bangkok city. Overnight stay in Bangkok.

Bossotel Inn (Breakfast and Dinner Included)

Day 4 Bangkok - Khao Yai

Khao Yai National Park

Travel from Bangkok to Khao Yai. After lunch visit the volcanic caves and the bat caves and see more than a million bats swarming out to hunt for nightly food. Falcons try to seize the bats as food, an experience not to be missed. Stay overnight in a spaciouly set up nature resort spread out over a large terrain with picturesque accommodation that fits perfectly in the natural landscape of Khao Yai.

Khao Yai Nature Life Resort (Breakfast Included)

Day 5 Khao Yai

This morning drive deep into the mountains and walk through refreshing and scenic landscapes of bizarre mountains where untouched jungle still exists. You will walk along elephant trails and mountain streams and see magnificent waterfalls where you can take a swim. Admire the magnificent views from the cliff at 1270m altitude. Depending on the season you will see flowering trees, wild orchids or beautiful butterflies. Animal life includes elephants, gaurs, monkeys, deer, bears and birds including the famous hornbill. The park has the biggest elephant population (200) in Thailand. In the afternoon visit the Salt Licks where elephants come to drink. Dinner (not included) will be served upon return in the hotel.

Khao Yai Nature Life Resort (Breakfast Included)

Day 6 Khao Yai - Ayutthaya - Bangkok - Surat Thani

Travel by train from Khao Yai to Ayutthaya, the old capital city of the central Thai kingdom from the 13th - 17th century. With influences from Dvaravati, Khmer, Mon, and Lawa cultures, Ayutthaya was able to create its own arts and culture from a delicate blend of those cultures. During the reigns of 33 kings, Ayutthaya gave Thailand a great number of fine buildings, monuments and works of art. In 1767 Ayutthaya was completely destroyed by the Burmese. The remains of this island city are of extreme archaeological importance and the extensively restored historical park in Thailand was selected a

UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. Countless ruins of palaces, temples and monuments are scattered over the historical park of Ayutthaya. In the afternoon transfer to Bangkok and continue to Surat Thani by night sleeper train.

Sleeper Train (Breakfast Included)

Day 7 Surat Thani - Khao Sok National Park

Tree Tops safari

Morning arrival at Surat Thani railway station. Transfer to the Khao Sok National Park, where you will arrive late morning. A guide will take you to the Tree Tops bungalows. After lunch we go for an exciting ride on the Khao Sok river. Depending on the height of the river we go canoeing or tubing, a fun activity of floating down the river in big car inner tyres. Along the way we may catch a glimpse of gibbons, langur's monkeys etc. Return to Tree Tops for a dinner of local cuisine.

Tree Tops (Lunch and Dinner Included)

Day 8 Khao Sok National Park

This morning an open van will take you to the lake. A local boat-ride through towering limestone mountains, honeycombed with caves and topped with dripping emerald foliage takes us to the jungle island where our Raft-house Resort is based. A boat ride takes us to the edge of a jungle waterfall and a trail into the dense rainforest for an all day trek to the top of a mountain lookout point. This offers an excellent chance to spot animals and birds. The reward at the top is a magnificent rock garden of wild orchids and a splendid view over the Khao Sok National Park.

Tree Tops (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner Included)

Day 9 Khao Sok National Park

After breakfast take a boat ride to nearby caves to observe bats and take a swim. The guide will have flashlights with him. On the way back we will visit a local fisherman's village. In the afternoon there is time for leisure, we can relax and swim, or explore the lake by canoe. After dinner we take a short animal spotting trek on the island behind the raft houses where you will stay overnight.

Tree Tops (Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner Included)

Day 10 Khao Sok National Park - Koh Samui

Early morning wakeup for a canoe tour to spot several different colonies of apes. About 9 o'clock we take the boat back to the head of the lake and the van takes us back to Tree Tops Lodge. From here you will travel by bus and ferry to your hotel on the tropical beach island Koh Samui. The rest of the day is free at leisure.

Arayaburi Resort (Breakfast Included)

Day 11 Koh Samui

Free at leisure to enjoy the sun, the sand and the sea.

Arayaburi Resort (Breakfast Included)

Day 12 Koh Samui

Free at leisure to enjoy the sun, the sand and the sea

Arayaburi Resort (Breakfast Included)

Day 13 Koh Samui - Bangkok

Today you will fly to Bangkok, for your connecting flight back home. This dream tour adventure ends upon your arrival at Bangkok International Airport.

(Breakfast Included)

Day 14 Bangkok - North America

Depart from Bangkok for your overnight flight to North America.

Extension (Additional \$987 CAD)

Day 1 Bangkok

Today you will get away from the hectic pace of Bangkok and escape to a world unknown to the tourist trail. Spend a day relaxing with a local fisherman and his family, along with your experience guide. Explore a beautiful place full of wildlife, traditional Thai agriculture and view how the locals really live on a daily basis.

The Berkeley Hotel (Breakfast included)

Day 2 Bangkok

Up early today as you will be picked up at 5:00 am for a VIP trip to Tiger Temple. This is a truly once-in-a-lifetime experience that you won't get anywhere else in the world. This is

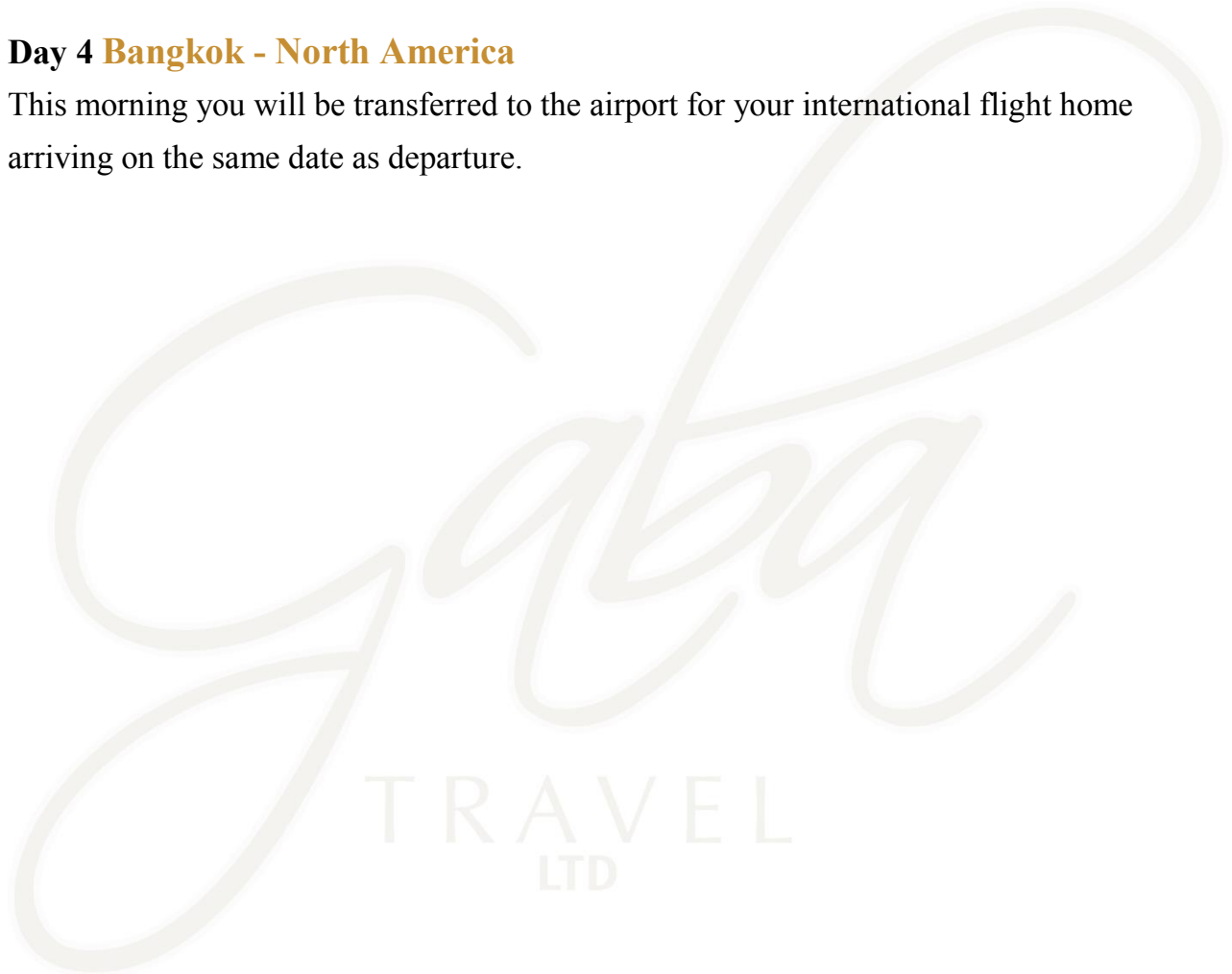
hands on with young tiger cubs and feeding, bathing and walking with the adult tigers. Don't forget your camera this day. After lunch you will return to Bangkok for free time. Berkeley Hotel Pratunam (Breakfast included)

Day 3 Bangkok

This is the last full day and your day to shop, explore or relax, as you wish. Berkeley Hotel Pratunam (Breakfast included)

Day 4 Bangkok - North America

This morning you will be transferred to the airport for your international flight home arriving on the same date as departure.



Price

\$2290.00 (land only) \$2080.00 USD

Price includes \$220.00 tour flights \$200.00 USD

Pricing is an estimate only and is subject to change based on availability and other factors. You can use this tour as the basis for a custom tour if you would like but pricing for custom tours may differ depending on changes made. Please note below what is included and not included below:

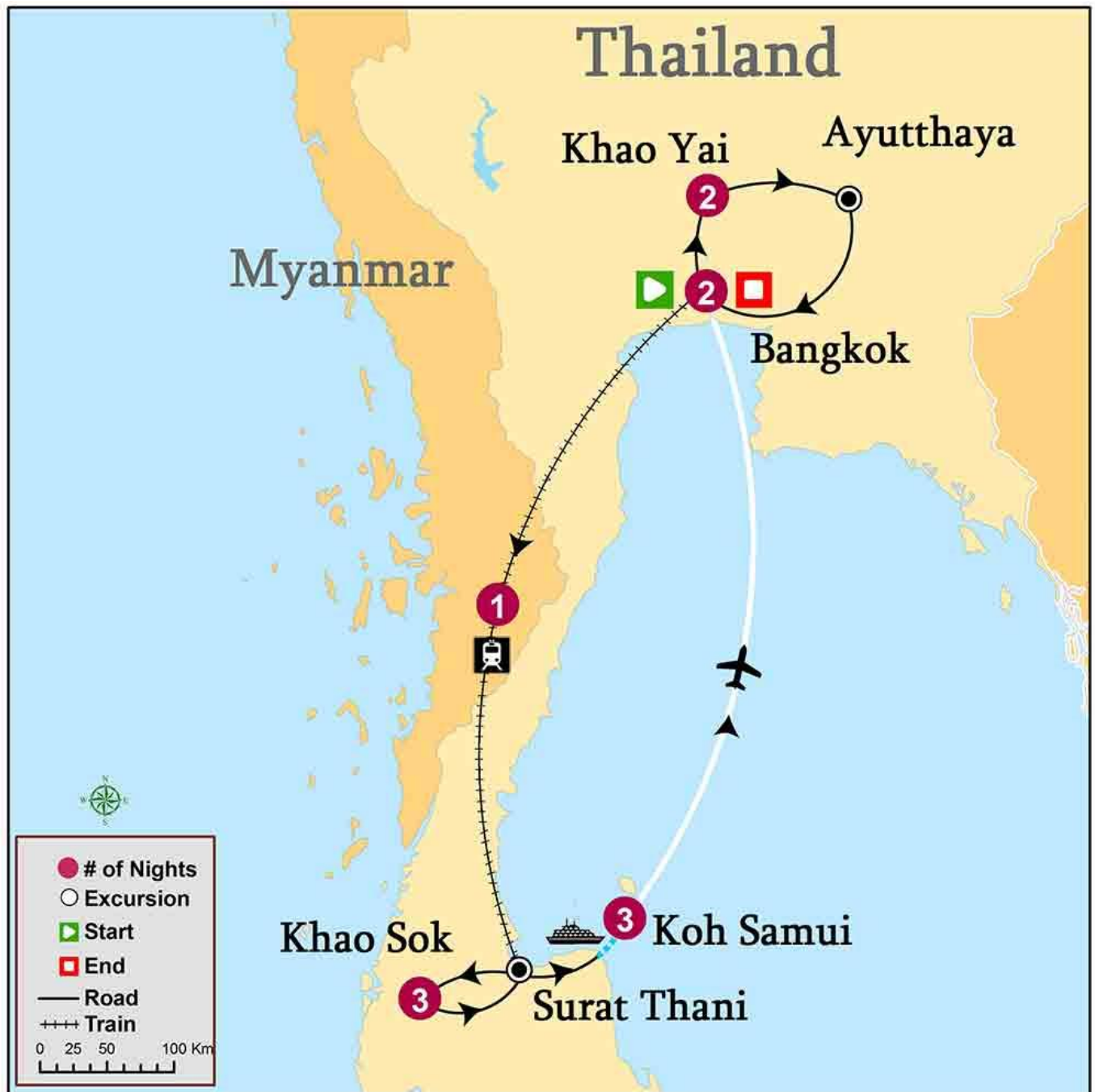
Included:

- ✓ All hotel accommodation
- ✓ All meals as per itinerary
- ✓ All sightseeing tours as specified by the itinerary
- ✓ Entrance fees as per the itinerary
- ✓ Private, knowledgeable English speaking guides
- ✓ Private air-conditioned transportation with licensed drivers
- ✓ All domestic flights: Koh Samui - Bangkok including airport taxes
- ✓ All hotel and airport transfers
- ✓ 1st Class berth overnight train
- ✓ All ferry passage

Not included:

- ⊗ Travel insurance
- ⊗ International flights
- ⊗ Excess baggage charges
- ⊗ Visa fees (if applicable)
- ⊗ Meals and beverages not specified on itinerary
- ⊗ Items of a personal nature such as laundry and gratuities

Map



Bangkok

Khao Yai

Surat Thani

Koh Samui

Travel Guide

Kingdom of Thailand (Prathet Thai)



Location: Asia

Status: UN Member Country

Capital City: Bangkok (*Krung Thep*)

Main Cities: Chiang Mai, Chon Buri, Phuket

Population: 66,000,000

Area: 513,120 km²

Currency: Baht (THB)

Languages: Thai, Chinese, Malay

Religions: Buddhist, Muslim

Calling code: +66

Drive on the left

As one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, Thailand has something for everyone with its rich culture and exotic adventures. Whether you are there to relax on one of the stunning beaches in the south, trek through the northern jungle, or indulge in sumptuous cuisine in the bustling capital city, the 'Land of Smiles' is the perfect holiday destination.

Best time to go

Anytime is a good time to visit Thailand. The high season is typically November through April when it is a bit dryer and cooler. To avoid the crowds, go from May to October.

General Information

Passport and visa

A passport with at least six months validity from the date of entry is required. Visitors from most countries who arrive in Thailand without a visa will be granted a 30 day stay if they have proof of an onward ticket and adequate funds. Some nationalities will need to pay around 1000 THB for a visa on arrival. A very select few nationalities cannot apply for a visa on arrival. We advise that you contact the Thai embassy or consulate in your country of origins for complete information. For longer stays, a visa should be applied for before departure. You need to enter Thailand within 90 days of the visa being issued, otherwise it will be invalid.

Money

Major credit cards are accepted by hotels and large shops but cash, in the form of the local currency Thai Baht, is the preferred tender elsewhere. Traveller's cheques are not generally accepted outside of hotels, so change them for cash at a bank exchange which you'll find in most tourist spots. ATM's are also widely available and accept most international cards. Several banks have restrictions on ATM card use abroad, thus we advise to verify this with your bank before departure.

Post and telecommunications

The Thai postal service is very reliable and there are also courier services widely available. Calling abroad is easy but expensive. Internet access is available in all major tourist places and you will find WiFi in most cafes in more built up areas.

Transportation

Traffic in Bangkok can be very bad, especially during the rainy season. Using the Metro or Sky Train is by far the fastest and most convenient way to get around. However, these do not cover the entire city. If using a taxi, try to make sure you get one on the meter. Tuk-tuks are another way of getting around. These motorised, three wheel cars tend to be more expensive than meter taxis, and prices are negotiated beforehand.

Motorbike taxis: Travel by motorbike in Thailand is not safe and under no circumstances is this sanctioned or recommended. Please note that travel by motorbike is not usually covered by insurance. Please check the fine print of your travel insurance policy to be sure of your coverage.

Health and Safety

Climate

Thailand has a tropical monsoon climate.

April and May are the hottest months of the year when even the locals complain about the heat.

June sees the beginning of the South West Monsoon, and brings with it the rainy season, which continues intermittently until the end of October.

From November to the end of February, the weather is cooler and less humid.

The North and North-East are generally cooler than Bangkok in the winter and hotter in the summer. In the far north, around Mae Hong Son, temperatures can occasionally drop as low as 20C.

Health and wellbeing

Healthcare in Thailand is some of the best in South East Asia, with most hospitals offering a Western level of service. However, be aware that it can be expensive. Each traveller is responsible for his or her own health. First and foremost, make sure that you have travel insurance for your trip.

Vaccinations

Before travelling to Thailand, please ensure you have adequate protection against disease. Contact your doctor for the latest medical advice on the vaccinations you need, no less than two months before your departure. Be aware that there is malaria risk in rural parts of Thailand.

Travel insurance (compulsory)

We do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, travel inevitably involves some risk and this should be recognised by holidaymakers. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment should any problems occur such as cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind. Please make sure your travel insurance covers all activities planned on your trip.

Culture & Customs

Etiquette and cultural differences

Experiencing different cultures is one of the joys of travelling, and it is important that these differences are respected. Thailand has cultural norms and taboos which we encourage visitors to understand and abide by.

Try not to get angry. Losing face by shouting or becoming abusive is one of the biggest faux pas in Thailand. It is extremely impolite and unlikely to achieve a positive outcome.

Refrain from public displays of affection, they are considered offensive. It is rare to see couples holding hands. However, it is quite common for friends of the same sex.

It is polite to remove your shoes before entering a house – look for shoes at the front door as a clue.

Thais greet each other with a slight bow and a prayer-like gesture, with the younger or lower-ranked person usually initiating the gesture. For foreigners and business, handshakes are acceptable.

Temple visit etiquette

Foreigners are always welcome in temples. However, it is important that a few simple rules of etiquette are followed:

Dress appropriately and act with the utmost respect when visiting Wats and temples.

Do not wear shorts or tank tops and make sure your shoulders and knees are covered.

Remove your shoes and hat before going into a monastery.

If you sit down in front of the dais (the platform on which the Buddha's are placed), sit with your feet to the side rather than in the lotus position.

Never point your finger or the soles of your feet towards a person or a figure of the Buddha.

A woman may accept something from a monk but should never touch a monk.

Show Respect and turn off mobile phones, remove headphones, lower your voice and avoid inappropriate conversation.

Food and drink

Thailand's cuisine is regarded by many people as some of the best in the world. Rich with citrus, coriander and liberal helpings of fresh chillies, the food has a characteristic tang that many fall in love with. Like all other Buddhist countries, vegetarian food is available in most restaurants.

Here are some popular dishes:

Tom Yum Goong (spicy shrimp soup)

Pad Thai (Thai style fried noodles)

Som Tum (spicy green papaya salad)

Khao Pad (fried rice)

Gaeng Keow Wan Kai (chicken green curry)

Khao Niao Mamuang (sticky rice in coconut milk, served with mango)

Water

It is not advisable to drink tap water in Thailand. Bottled water is recommended but do check the expiry date before opening. Ice is widely used and is produced with treated water.

Public holidays

There are many public holidays in Thailand. The main one is the Thai New Year called Songkran. Songkran is celebrated all over the country, with its highlight in Chiang Mai where celebrations go on for over a week. Many Thai people travel back to their hometowns to visit local temples during this time. Be aware that this can make transportation more difficult. The most notable way of celebrating Songkran is by splashing water on each other. Large water fights break out across the country and innocent bystanders are favoured targets. Store your valuables and electronics carefully!

Helpful tips

Donations and gift giving

Although there is poverty in certain areas of Thailand, please read the following points about donations and gift giving.

Do not give money to people begging, especially children. This reinforces the belief that begging is an acceptable way to make a living. If children make money from begging, their parents are less likely to send them to school. Children working on the streets are also vulnerable to abuse. Giving money and goods to beggars can accentuate an unequal relationship between locals and visitors, with tourists being seen as purely money givers.

Do not give sweets to children in villages that we visit.

Do not feel that you necessarily have to give material things. Sometimes, giving your friendship, time and interest to locals can be the best gift of all.

Tipping

Tipping is a personal matter and travellers are encouraged to tip any amount they feel is appropriate. For your convenience, we have included a suggested tipping guide below:

Bellboy: 10-20 baht per suitcase / bag

Chambermaid: 20 – 40 baht per day

Guides: 100 – 150 baht per day for guides (depending on group size and performance)

Drivers: 100 per day, per person

Restaurants: in smart establishments you may find that the tip is already included in the bill. In local restaurants tips are not expected but you may wish to leave loose change on the table.

Price guide

Generally, things are cheap in Thailand. However as a tourist you will get overcharged if you are not careful. Haggling is considered a sport when it comes to non-food products. Always stay calm and polite and you'll be surprised at the discounts you may get. Be aware that many items for sale on street stands are counterfeit.

Street food

Phad Thai: THB 25 –50

Rice dish: THB 30 – 60

Restaurants

Western dishes: from THB 150

Thai dishes: from THB 80

Drinks

Soft drinks THB 10 – 20

Beer: THB 50 – 70

Fruit juice: THB 20 - 30

Water: THB 10 - 15

Other Items

DVDs (real): THB 100 - 200

SIM card: THB 100

Mobile phone: from THB 1000

TRAVEL
LTD

Pre-departure checklist

Travel insurance

Passport with at least six months validity from date of entry

Photocopy of passport

Visa or visa on arrival

Vaccinations

ATM cards/travellers cheques

All relevant tickets Reconfirmed

flights Lightweight clothing

Long-sleeved shirts and trousers (recommended for evenings)

Electrical adaptor: 220V, 50Hz; 2 pin plugs

A small bag/backpack for day and overnight trips

Appropriate shoes for trekking, cycling and walking

Insect repellent

Sunscreen

Medication/first aid kit

Please note: *Domestic airlines impose restrictions on baggage at approx 20kg maximum, so travel lightly where possible. Also be aware that train and boat cabins have limited space.*

TRAVEL
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VANCOUVER: 7290 Main Street, Vancouver, B.C. V5X 3J4

Tel: 604-324-3336 • **Fax:** 604-324-1590

Toll Free: 1-800-663-6696

www.gabatravel.com • **E-mail:** tours@gabatravel.com

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To Book Contact Us At tours@gabatravel.com



ABBOTSFORD

#28-31940 South Fraser Way
Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 1V6
Tel: 604-855-4888

SURREY

#101-12830-80th Ave.
Surrey, B.C. V3W 3A8
Tel: 604-507-4477
Toll Free: 1-800-661-5531

MISSISSAUGA

#10-7071-Airport Rd.
Mississauga, Ont., L4T 4J3
Tel: 905-673-3336