

ITINERARY

THAILAND CULINARY TOUR ITINERARY

Day 1

Welcome to our Thailand culinary tour! Thailand is a fascinating, exotic, friendly country with something for everyone. Since you are reading this, you already know how delicious Thai food is, and Thailand is the perfect destination to learn to cook. We will pick you up at Bangkok International Airport and drive you to our 5-star Bangkok hotel perched on the banks of the Chao Phraya River. We have specifically chosen this hotel for its excellent location. Each room has a panoramic river view, and there are two swimming pools overlooking the river as well. You may wish to enjoy your first dinner in Thailand at one of the hotel's many restaurants or venture out to discover Bangkok's rich dining scene. As guests will be arriving throughout the day and evening, we have scheduled our first group meal for Day 2 of the tour.

Drive Time: Approximately 45 minutes, depending on traffic

Meals included: None

Day 2

We'll begin our Thailand culinary tour this morning with a visit to Wat Po in time to hear the monks' morning chanting. One of the oldest temples in Bangkok, Wat Po is home to the famous 45m reclining Buddha and is considered to be the birthplace of traditional Thai massage. From there we'll hop in a *tuk-tuk* (a three wheel, open-air taxi) for a short ride to the Grand Palace, Thailand's most important monument. One of the most spectacular palaces in Southeast Asia, construction was begun in 1782 by King Rama I, after he moved the capital from Thonburi to Bangkok. The complex houses not only the Royal residence and throne halls, but also government offices and the renowned Wat Phra Kaew, containing the Emerald Buddha, the symbol of the country. The palace and temple are an architectural wonder of golden stupas, walls and pillars encrusted in shining and colorful mosaics, glittering under the tropical sun.

Next we'll head to our welcome and orientation lunch, where our trip leader will give an overview of the tour and what to expect each day. Our lunch is hosted at an excellent and slightly retro Thai restaurant looking out on the Democracy Monument. After lunch we'll walk through Bangkok's wholesale flower market for a look at how the Thai people create flower offerings out of orchids, lotuses and other exotic blossoms. Then we'll head back to our hotel for a mid-afternoon break before our evening feast.

One of the best ways to experience the true flavor of a city is to walk its streets. This evening we'll go for a walk through Bangkok's Chinatown, one of the most densely populated, richly ethnic neighborhoods in the city. While walking along narrow lanes, peer into the doorways of Chinese pharmacies with their medicinal herbs and natural cures, or watch fresh Chinese delicacies being prepared and served, savoring the aromatic fragrance of spice and herbs that saturate the air. Pay special attention to the "funeral shops" where paper models of worldly items are sold, ensuring the deceased will have the comforts of home on their journey to the afterworld. We'll enjoy a private dinner served in an old Chinese shop house as Chef Jok cooks up a multi-course Chinese-Thai banquet using only the freshest ingredients of the day.

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 3

Get ready for your first Thai cooking class. After a light breakfast we will leave the hotel and head up the Chao Phraya

River by long-tail boat to Chef Tam's family home, which is located beside a klong (canal), amidst beautiful organic herb gardens. We'll begin our private class with a tour of the gardens, learning about the herbs used in Thai cooking. We'll then head to the open-air kitchen where Chef Tam will demonstrate Thai cooking techniques before going to our own cooking stations to cook our soup, two entrees and desert. You'll have plenty of time for questions, and when all the food is cooked we'll sit down for a lunch feast of Thailand culinary delights amidst the lovely gardens. After cooking class we'll head back to the hotel to freshen up.

Around 3:30 we'll take the hotel's shuttle boat and then the sky train to visit Jim Thompson's magnificent Thai-style house, containing a collection of Thai art objects and antiques. Jim Thompson was a famous American businessman who came to Thailand at the end of the World War II and rediscovered the Thai silk industry. His "House by the Klong", which is now a museum, consists of six separate old Ayutthaya period Thai teak houses joined together in one complex. Mr. Thompson disappeared in 1967 in the jungles of the Cameron Highlands of Malaysia, and what happened to him remains a mystery to this day.

Tonight is our last night in Bangkok, and you are free to venture out on the town or relax at the hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch

Day 4

Enjoy a relaxing morning at the hotel, before we drive to the airport around 11am. We'll take a short 1.5 hour flight to Chiang Rai, and then drive another 1.5 hours to our riverside resort at Ban Thaton, on the banks of the Mae Kok River, just a few miles from the Myanmar border. Relax at the pool before dinner, or simply wander the beautiful gardens and enjoy the sweeping views across the valley. After the hustle and bustle of Bangkok, you'll enjoy the change of pace in the Thai countryside.

Travel Time: Approximately 4.5 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch

Day 5

After breakfast we will drive about two hours to Mae Sai, the northernmost point in Thailand. As this is one of just a few official land crossings between Thailand and Myanmar, Mae Sai is an important trade hub, and it's an excellent place to observe border life and interactions between local tribes engaged in trade. Many Burmese come over daily from Tachilek to work or do business and then hurry back before the sun sets. Burmese lacquerware, gems, jade and other goods from Laos and Burma are sold in shops along the main street. After a local Northern Thai lunch, we'll drive 45 minutes to the infamous Golden Triangle, renowned for centuries as the center of the opium trade. From a hilltop viewpoint, we'll marvel at the splendour of the mighty Mekong joining with the Ruak to form the actual "triangle" with Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. We'll then visit the Hall of Opium museum, which provides fascinating insights into the history of Opium trade and the region as a whole.

Drive Time: About 5 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch

Day 6

This morning we are headed to the charming northern city of Chiang Mai, which is the principal religious center in

northern Thailand and the focal point of temples and monasteries. The moat bounding the historic old city is still intact, but the walls were largely destroyed during World War II. Here we will visit Wat Prathat, built some 600 years ago, this temple is Chiang Mai's most important and visible landmark, located near the summit of Doi Suthep, at 3,520 feet above sea level. After a drive up the mountain's winding road, the final climb to the site is via a magnificent Naga (dragon-headed serpent) staircase of 306 steps. The climb up is rewarded with a superb panoramic view over the city.

We'll enjoy lunch today at an authentic local restaurant that specializes in "Khao Soi" or Chiang Mai curry noodles. It is often made with chicken served over Chinese egg noodles, and garnished with fried noodles, shallots, cilantro, pickled mustard greens, fried whole chilis and a squeeze of lime juice. This dish is a combination of strong flavors, each distinct yet blended harmoniously into one delicious bowl.

After lunch we'll check in to our stunning 4-star boutique hotel, designed and decorated with impeccable style, inspired by traditional wooden homes found in Chiang Mai and intended to be as comfortable as your own home. The hotel is located in a heritage zone that is home to the city's greatest concentration of antique wooden buildings, yet is within walking distance of the commercial center of Chiang Mai and the famous Night Bazaar.

You'll have a little while to rest and refresh before we drive to a local organic farm for a private evening Thai cooking class culminating in a delicious dinner that we made ourselves. We'll learn how to pound curry paste, and then we'll use that paste to create one of Thailand's most delicious dishes, red curry chicken. We'll also make soup, spring rolls and finally, bananas in coconut milk.

Drive time: 4 hours

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 7

Today we will take a picturesque drive through the countryside to an elephant sanctuary. This conservation center is home to many rescued animals - including elephants, buffalo, and even birds. We will spend a relaxing day with these majestic animals, hearing about their pasts and learning how we can help with elephant conservation.

Saying goodbye to the animals, we will return to our hotel to relax. Those who are interested in Thai handicrafts may join our guide for an optional visit to local handicrafts factories including silk and lacquerware. You will see the artisans at work and will have an opportunity to shop in the factory showrooms. Please note that the quality of the merchandise is better than at the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, and the prices are commensurately higher. If you would also like to visit the night bazaar, please let our guide know and we will arrange a visit. The Night Bazaar is a great place to pick up gifts and hill tribe crafts, but be ready to bargain.

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch

Day 8

Today we will have our final Thailand culinary class where we'll learn to make healthy papaya salad, steamed fish and more. Our private chef, Yui, will also teach us how to carve raw vegetables. By the end of this class you'll be ready to throw a dinner party back home. The class will end around 2pm with a farewell lunch.

After lunch, we'll take a rickshaw from our hotel into the old city, getting a glimpse of how the locals live and work. In the late afternoon, you may choose to get a Thai massage. Traditional Thai massage includes both stretching of the joints

and muscles and applied pressure to the major channels of the body to aid regional blood flow, relieve aches and pain, and relax you mentally and physically. Otherwise you can take the rest of the afternoon to pick up some souvenirs, relax by the pool, or stroll around Chiang Mai's old town.

Meals included: Breakfast, lunch

Day 9

Today our Thailand culinary tour ends. You can choose to stay on in Chiang Mai, head back to Bangkok for your flight home, or fly to Phuket or Ko Samui for a few days in the island sun.

Meals included: Breakfast

Please note: This itinerary is designed to give you an idea of what to expect during our trip but is not set in stone. What we actually do on a given day is flexible and can be tailored to the interests of the group.

THAILAND TRAVEL INFORMATION FROM ACCESS TRIPS

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE INFORMATION

Arrival Airport

You should arrive at Bangkok International Suvarnabhumi Airport (airport abbreviation: BKK). Bangkok is a major international hub that is serviced by most major airlines. Among others, the following airlines fly into Bangkok: United Airlines, Air Canada, Thai Airways, British Airways, Delta Air Lines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Japan Airlines, and QANTAS.

Departure Airport

You will depart from Chiang Mai International Airport (airport abbreviation: CNX). We intentionally end the tour in Chiang Mai to allow you the flexibility to travel onward in Thailand or to return to Bangkok to connect with your international airline.

Pick-up & Drop-off information

We provide complimentary group airport pick-ups and drop-offs on the first and last day of the tour. We will be waiting for you with a sign saying 'Access Trips' as you exit customs at Bangkok's airport. If you would like to be picked up from or dropped off to somewhere other than the airport, or on a different day, please [contact us](#) to discuss.

Flights

We do not book international flights to or from Thailand for our clients. If you would like assistance with purchasing your flights, please let us know and we will forward your contact information and trip details to our travel agent partner.

Internal airfare from Bangkok to Chiang Rai on Day 4 is included in the trip price.

TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS

Travel Insurance

Travel medical insurance, including emergency evacuation coverage, is compulsory for all our trips. We strongly recommend that you purchase travel insurance that includes cancellation protection so that you will be covered in the event that you are unable to attend our trip (due to injury, illness or other unforeseen circumstances). Please do not attend any of our trips without purchasing appropriate insurance coverage and providing the details to Access Trips.

We do not provide travel insurance for our clients. Additional details are on our website at: <http://www.accesstrips.com/company/insurance/>

Passports & Visas

All countries require a valid passport (with a minimum of 6 months validity). Citizens of some countries will also require a visa. To learn more about visa and entry requirements for Thailand, please check out the US Department of State's website: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/thailand>

Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documentation.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Emergency Contact

If your friends or family need to contact Access Trips due to an emergency while you are on the tour, please have them refer to the pre-departure email that is sent out three weeks prior to departure, which will have specific contact information relevant to your trip. If you need to contact Access Trips while traveling, please also refer to the emergency contact information in the pre-departure email.

Health Requirements

Guests with preexisting medical conditions are *required* to disclose this information prior to traveling with Access Trips, and all guests with preexisting conditions are required to provide a note from a doctor clearing them for travel to South Africa. The US Department of State recommends that travelers with medical prescriptions consider bringing small additional amounts of prescribed medicines as well as a copy of the prescription and a letter from the prescribing physician explaining the need for prescription.

We *strongly recommend* that all of our guests visit a travel doctor before embarking on international travel. Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that you receive any necessary vaccinations before traveling on your trip with us. If there is a chance that you may be pregnant during your trip, please discuss your travel plans with your doctor.

Please carefully review the health information section of the following webpage for up-to-date health information, including information on the quality of medical care, the availability of medications and the necessity for vaccinations in the destination country and the latest updates on the Zika virus: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/thailand>

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Fitness Requirements

Our trips are open to anyone who wants to explore our exotic destinations through cuisine. We do engage in multiple walking tours, some of which last several hours. This tour also includes scenic drives that last for a few hours.

Safety & Security

To maximize your safety during our tours you should exercise common sense and caution at all times. We recommend that you always stick to set travel arrangements, and avoid unknown areas. We also recommend that you wear minimal jewelry and that you keep valuable items (including cell phones) safely stored. Always keep a copy of your passport, airline tickets, and credit card numbers separate from where you keep the originals.

For more information on safety and security in Thailand, please review the safety and security section of the following webpage: <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/country/thailand>

Note: As a rule, do not drink tap water or use ice in Thailand, even in hotels. We strongly recommend drinking bottled water. We also strongly recommend avoiding eating unpeeled fruits and vegetables.

Age

Children ages 12 and up are welcome on group trips. Children under 12 are welcome on private tours. Please [contact us](#) with any questions.

CURRENCY, BANKING & SPENDING MONEY

The national currency is the Thai Baht (THB). There are exchange bureaus in airports, certain hotels and most banks. Counters require your passport for the transaction. For the latest currency exchange information please go to: <http://finance.yahoo.com/currency>

ATMs are available in all cities and major towns.

It is recommended to notify your bank or card issuer that you intend to travel abroad so that no block will be put on the usage of your credit or ATM cards.

Spending Money

Meals: All breakfasts, seven lunches and two dinners are included in the price. Please plan to bring at least US \$5-\$10 per lunch and US \$10-\$20 per dinner for those meals that are not included, as well as money for snacks and drinks.

Tipping: Tipping is not compulsory but it is greatly appreciated throughout Southeast Asia, especially in the service industry. For reference, we have provided a general guideline below.

Tour Guide/Drivers: If you are pleased with the services provided by your tour guide and driver, then a tip for their hard work will be very much appreciated. In general, we recommend around US \$10 -15 per day, per traveler for guides and US \$5-7 per day, per traveler for drivers if less than 4 people in a group. We recommend around US \$5-10 per day,

per traveler for guides and US \$3-5 per day, per traveler for drivers if there are 5 people or more.

Hotel & Restaurant Staff: We recommend 5-10% of the total bill in restaurants. Where you stay a couple of days in the same hotel, a tip to the maid service of \$2-3 per day is appreciated. For porters, US \$2-3 per use is customary.

Boat Cruise: When you travel on a local basic boat such as on the Chao Praya River, a suggested tip from US\$5-10 per boat is appreciated.

Other Expenses: You should also plan to take spending money for incidentals such as internet cafes, souvenir shopping and nightlife.

CULTURE

Thailand is a conservative country. Out of respect for the culture we are visiting, please note:

The king and royal family are revered by most Thai people. You should be respectful whenever mentioning the royal family.

Dress conservatively when visiting temples- women particularly should wear long skirts or pants, have their shoulders and knees covered.

Many temples state as you enter that photography is not allowed. Even if there is no sign, please be respectful and consider whether it is appropriate to be taking flash photography of a place of worship - especially if monks are present.

Remove your shoes when entering temples and do not sit with your feet towards the Buddha - sit either cross-legged, or with your feet tucked behind you.

Women should take care not to touch a monk.

Avoid patting children on the head.

Language: Most people speak Thai or a regional dialect.

CLIMATE

Our Thai culinary tours take us to a variety of Thai cities and villages, including Bangkok in the South Central region, Chiang Mai in the North Central region, and Ban Thaton in the mountains of the Northwest near the Burmese border. All of the locations we visit have warm to hot weather most of the year, with the following variations:

Cool Season

November through February - much of Central and Northern Thailand has moderate weather at this time. Expect warm days with cool nights and little or no rain. Mountainous areas may be cold at night.

Hot Season

March through June - This time of year is hot and dry. April is usually the hottest month.

Wet Season

July through October - this time of year you can expect regular rain periods, mostly in regular short bursts, with the occasional very heavy showers. Many people do travel to Thailand during the rainy season, but be aware that there can occasionally be significant rain.

Island Climates

Our Thai culinary tours do not include any of the islands. However, if you wish to add an island visit to the end of your Thailand tour, you may want to consider the different monsoon patterns that may affect your visit. Typhoons, or major rain storms, occasionally hit the island areas as well, and the typhoon season varies depending on which islands you are visiting.

Please check specific weather for your dates before you travel. You may consider a website such as Weather.com.

ELECTRICITY & COMMUNICATION

Thailand uses 220V, 50Hz and generally uses flat, two prong plugs.

There is complimentary wi-fi access in the common areas of all of hotels.

Most US cell phones will not work in Thailand, unless you have a specific international plan. Contact your cellular provider to see what options you have in terms of international calling plans.

WHAT TO TAKE

We strongly recommend using TSA approved luggage locks on your bags and to hand carry valuables on the plane.

We recommend that you pack as lightly as possible. There may not always be someone available to help you carry your bags so you should only bring as much as you can carry on your own.

We suggest that you bring the following items:

Clothing & Equipment

Warm-weather casual clothes

Sandals with straps and sturdy walking shoes

A pullover and a pair of trousers because it can get cool in the evenings in the mountains

Toiletries

Sunscreen / sunglasses / hat

Dramamine or similar tablets for motion sickness (some roads are very windy and there is a boat ride in Bangkok)

First-aid kit (should contain lip balm, aspirin, band aids, a cream for sore muscles (e.g. deep heat), Imodium or similar tablets for mild cases of diarrhea, extra prescription drugs you may be taking)

Travel Documents

Passport (with photocopies)

Travel insurance (with photocopies)

Airline tickets (with photocopies)

Credit and/or debit card and/or travelers cheques and/or cash. You should always advise your bank that you are traveling to Thailand.

Any entry visas or vaccination certificates required

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RECOMMENDED READING LIST

Click [here](#) to check out our recommended reading before your tour!

FINAL NOTE

This is a tool meant to help you decide what you should bring on your upcoming trip. It is by no means comprehensive. While we do our best to be as thorough as possible, we cannot foresee every possible condition. If you have any other questions, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#).

The information contained in this document is provided in good faith. Due to the nature of travel, details in this document may change. You should thus use the above information as an indication only and not as a contractual obligation on the part of Access Trips.