



Philosopher's Trail

12 nights from \$3365

For Reservations Please Call 1-800-22-SWAIN

Destinations

Bangkok, Siem Reap, Phnom Penh, Vientiane, Luang Prabang, Chiang Mai

Includes

- Internal coach class air in Asia
- All round trip private airport transfers
- 3 nights Bangkok
- Canals and Grand Palace private half day tour
- Damnern Saduak floating markets private full day tour
- 2 nights Siem Reap
- Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat full day tour
- Bantey Srei and Ta Prohm Temple tour
- 1 night Phnom Penh
- National Museum and Royal Palace private half day tour
- 1 night Vientiane
- Vientiane private half day tour
- 2 nights Luang Prabang
- Luang Prabang private full day tour
- 2 nights Chiang Mai
- Elephants at work private half day tour
- Chiang Mai city and temple private half day tour
- Sunrise tour and Buddhist Monks
- 1 night Bangkok (airport hotel)
- 12 breakfasts



Day 1 Fly USA to Bangkok

Day 2 Welcome to Bangkok, Thailand

Upon arrival, you will clear customs and immigration before being met and transferred to your hotel by private vehicle.

Bangkok the 'City of Angels' is also described as the 'Venice of the East'. This is a large metropolis, with a population of over ten million of the most gracious people. Bangkok is a city of contrasts with its 'fairy tale' palaces, its glittering temples, its luxurious hotels, shopping centers, dining experiences and exciting nightlife. It has combined together the charm of the East and West in a traditional and modern vibrant city.

Day 3 Grand Palace private half day tour

This 3-hour tour is a 'must see' for all visitors to Bangkok. The Grand Palace complex, which includes the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Keow) is unquestionably one of the wonders of the world today. Within its enormous grounds is the most exotic Buddhist temple and at the heart of the temple itself is a fabulous Buddha image, carved from one piece of Jade, which is the holiest and most revered of religious objects in Thailand today.

Nearby is the Grand Palace, once the official home for the Kings of Siam - built in traditional Thai architecture mixed with European designs. You can also see the Royal Funeral Hall and the Royal Coronation Hall.

Bangkok private half day city and temple tour

Thailand has over 26,000 temples (or Wats). This tour will bring you to three of the most distinguished temples in Bangkok. Wat Trimitr, the temple of the Golden Buddha, features a statue made from solid Gold weighing 5.5 tons. It is a fine example of Sukhothai art and was discovered by chance from a layer of stucco during construction of the temple.

Passing through Chinatown your next stop is Wat Po, the temple of the reclining Buddha which is the largest and oldest in Bangkok. Your last stop is at Wat Benchamabopit or the marble temple. This magnificent monastery was built with white Italian marble from Carrara.

Day 4 Damern Saduak floating markets

Thailand's floating markets are among the most-photographed destinations in the country. The river and 'klong' markets give a realistic glance of how daily life must have been in earlier times. The floating markets are where the sellers, their boats laden with a wide variety of tropical fruits, flowers, vegetables and fresh produce, come to meet and barter their products with other traders. These days, modern supermarkets and department stores have largely replaced the traditional floating markets, but a few still survive.

The most popular floating market, one of the must-see one-day trips from Bangkok, is at Ratchaburi, about 60 miles to the west of Bangkok. The Damern Saduak market is the largest of its kind, attracting a large number of tourists each day. The lively and colorful images of boat vendors trading their agricultural products is one of the most fascinating and endearing images of Thailand.

Day 5 Fly Bangkok to Siem Reap

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Siem Reap. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your accommodation by private vehicle.

Protruding from steaming jungle, the ancient city of Angkor Wat is the main attraction to visitors of Siem Reap. The city's proximity to the legendary sandstone complex makes it the ideal gateway or base camp for day trips and longer itineraries. Relax and unwind in a local restaurant after a long day of exploring the world's largest religious monument, or stock up on necessities before tackling the 60 square miles of passageways and palaces.

Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom

Start today's tour with a visit to Angkor Temple, including Angkor Thorn, a forbidden Royal City and The Bayon. See the Victory Gate, Baphuon, Elephant Terrace and Leper King Terrace. Return to town for lunch.

This afternoon tour Angkor Wat, which features the longest continuous bas-relief in the world running along the outer gallery walls, narrating stories from the Hindu mythology. In 1992, UNESCO, declared the monument and whole city a World Heritage Site.

Day 6 Banteay Srei and Ta Prohm Temples

True temple buffs won't want to miss the distinct complex of Banteay Srei. Located some 23 1/2 miles north of the main temples, the 10th-century buildings of Banteay Srei are done in a style unique to the high spires of Angkor. The site is a collection of low walls surrounding low-rise peaked structures of deep red sandstone.

Translated as 'The Citadel of Women,' it has well-preserved relief carvings on the squat central buildings and the intricate telling of ancient Hindu tales. Go with a guide who can explain the finer details of temple inscriptions.

The jungle foliage still has its hold on the dynamic temple of Ta Prohm, the only that was left in such a ruinous state when early archaeologists started freeing the temples from the jungle. Ta Prohm is a favorite for many; in fact, those very ruinous vines appeal to most. As large around as your average oak tree, the vines cleave massive stones in two or give way and grow over the top of temple ramparts. It's quite dynamic, and there are a few popular photo spots where the collision of temple and vine are most impressive. Sadly, Ta Prohm was looted quite heavily in recent years, and many of its stone reliquaries are lost.

Day 7 Fly Siem Reap to Phnom Penh

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Phnom Penh. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your accommodation by private vehicle.

Phnom Penh is a vibrant and bustling capital city where 10,000 cycles still share the street with motorbikes and cars, and a culture of sidewalk cafes established in recent years is thriving. The city is conveniently located on the banks where three rivers - the Mekong, the Tonle Sap and the Bassac, converge, known to Cambodia as Chatomuk, or four faces.

Phnom Penh's era of modern development and planning took place after independence in 1953, with the addition of tree lined avenues, gardens with fountains and several distinctive monuments reflecting the city's new found sense of freedom.

Phnom Penh tour

Cambodia's capital sits at the confluence of the Mekong, Bassac and Tonle Sap rivers. Considered the loveliest of the French-built cities of Indochina, it was founded as a small monastery in 1372 by a rich Khmer woman called Penh, after she found four Buddha statues in a tree trunk on the banks of the Mekong. She set up the monastery on a nearby hill or 'phnom' in Cambodian.

Today you will venture to Wat Phnom, National Museum, Silver Pagoda Elephant Room and Toul Sleng Museum. Wat Phnom is both a temple and location of the first pagoda built in 1372 by 'Penh' to house the four Buddha statues found on the banks of the Mekong. It is the only hill in the capital.

Next, visit the Royal Palace which stands on the site of the former citadel, Banteay Kev (built in 1813). Visitors are not allowed into some portions of the grounds, as the palace is the official residence of King Sihanouk.

The silver pagoda is often called the Pagoda of the Emerald Buddha or Wat Preah Kaeo after the statue housed there. The wooden temple was originally built by King Norodom in 1892 and inside its floor is comprised of more than 5000 silver blocks which together weigh nearly 6 tonnes.

Finally, tour the National Museum, designed by a French archeologist and painter, George Groslier, in Khmer style in 1920 to exhibit works previously scattered throughout the country. It contains a collection of Khmer art including the beautiful 6th century bronze statue of Vishnu.

Day 8 Fly Phnom Penh to Vientiane

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Vientiane. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your accommodation by private vehicle.

Laos is a country of ornate temples and shattering poverty, colorfully clad monks and unforgettably friendly villagers. Over 55% of the landscape is untouched rainforest that shelters elephants, leopards, gibbons, and black bears. No city captures Lao's rustic charm better than its capital, Vientiane. Lovingly restored temples share the skyline with internet cafes and international-standard hotels. French colonial mansions house the World Bank and UN agencies, while the Parisian Patuxay victory monument proudly crowns one of the city's rare paved roads.

Soak up Vientiane's laid-back atmosphere at the Morning Market by mixing with the city's most endearing attraction – its people. Pose in the arms of a gigantic Buddha at Buddha Park, or meditate under a sacred bodhi tree in the impressive Phra That Luang temple.

Vientiane private half day tour

Today's' sightseeing tour will include visits to Phra That Luang, Patuxay (Victory Monument) and the Talaat Sao Morning Market, the bustling hub of local commerce.

Phra That Luang is the preeminent stupa in Laos, a national symbol and imposing at 144 ft. in height. It is not the original; the first, built in 1566 by King Setthathirat over the ruins of a 12th-century Khmer temple, was destroyed when the Siamese sacked Vientiane in 1828. It was rebuilt by the French in 1900, but the Lao people criticized it as not being true to the original. It was torn down in 1930 and remodeled to become what you see today.

Patuxay is the monument was completed in 1968 and dedicated to those who fought in the war of independence against the French. Ironically, the monument is an arch modeled on the Parisian Arc de Triomphe. Its detailing is typically Lao, however, with many kinnari figures - half woman, half bird.

Day 9 Fly Vientiane to Luang Prabang

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Luang Prabang. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your accommodation by private vehicle.

Laos's ancient capital, Luang Prabang, is a sleepy town with a sumptuous past. Since its heyday as Laos's first capital in 1353, this riverside hamlet has enchanted everyone from monks to monarchs with its splendid temples and serene mountain landscape. Literally meaning "great holy image," Luang Prabang has over 30 well-preserved temples adorned with fascinating mosaics and intricately carved wooden columns that hum with the chants of the faithful.

Day 10 Luang Prabang tour

Luang Prabang, the ancient capital city of the Lan Xang Kingdom, is famous for its historic temples and beautiful setting surrounded by mountains. In 1995 it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today you will spend a day sightseeing around Luang Prabang, visiting the following sites;

Wat Xieng Thong – built in 1560 and situated on the banks of the Mekong River, it is the most beautiful monastery in Luang Prabang and shows the typical Lao art style with old religious artifacts and some ancient masterpieces of Lao art.

Wat Wisunalat (Vat Visoun) was built in 1513 during the reign of Chao Wisunalat and is the oldest operating temple in Luang Prabang with a collection of gilded wooden Buddhas from the 15th and 16th centuries.

Wat Mai was constructed in 1821 during the reign of King Manthatourath and was once the residence of Phra Sangkharaj (the Patriarch of the Buddhist clergy).

Wat That Luang holds the ashes of King Sisavang Vong which are interred inside the large central stupa, erected in 1910. The inside of the huge sim dating back to 1820 contains a few Luang Prabang Buddhas and other artifacts.

Wat Saen is a Thai style temple built in 1718 and restored in 1957. The abbot Ajannn Khamjan who was ordained here in 1940 is one of the most revered monks in Luang Prabang and perhaps in all of Laos.

Day 11 Fly Luang Prabang to Chiang Mai

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Chiang Mai. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your accommodation by private vehicle.

Chiang Mai is the gateway city to Thailand's lush north and its rustic hill tribe villages. Dating back 700 years, the focal point is "Old City," the walled and moated remains of an imposing fortress.

Surrounding this historic site is a blossoming city containing all the characteristics of a modern town. World class restaurants and idyllic hotel retreats include the Four Seasons and Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi. This is the place to pet an elephant as you enjoy off-road driving on the back of a gentle giant, or take to a bamboo raft for a watery fun-filled afternoon.

Chiang Mai city and temple tour

Today your guide will meet you in your hotel lobby, and you will depart for the tour. The city of Chiang Mai has a wealth of beautiful and historic Buddhist Wats (temples), 36 Wats within the old city walls and many more in the surrounding countryside, and on this tour a visit to the most fascinating Wats is made.

Near the summit of Doi Suthep, a 1,600 meters peak named after the hermit Sudeva who lived on the mountain's slopes for many years is the 600 year old temple of Wat. After a drive up the mountain's winding road, the final climb to the site is via an enormous mythological Nagas (Dragon-headed serpent) staircase of 306 steps. Inside the cloister is an intriguing copper-plated chedi topped by a five- tier gold parasol, which contains partial relics of Lord Buddha. On a clear day, there are incomparable views over the city of Chiang Mai from the temple grounds.

Day 12 Sunrise tour and Buddhist monks

One of the most unique experiences in Thailand is a visit to a Buddhist temple to offer alms to the Buddhist monks. Each morning before dawn, the monks put on their distinctive saffron robes and quietly pad in their bare feet along the streets, carrying alms bowls and receiving boiled rice and condiments from the citizens of Thailand. In return people receive the monks' blessings. You can participate in this very special Thai custom by personally presenting alms; a brief exploration of the temple may be made as well, religious festivals permitting.

Elephants at work tour

A pleasant morning is spent in the company of these magnificent gentle giants.

In present day Thailand, elephants are only used as tremendously powerful beasts of burden. But in the earlier times, they were a vital part of the King's army and played a very important role in Thai History. On this trip you will witness the traditional techniques still used in the training process. Wonder at the delicacy and preciseness of such gigantic creatures in action. For a small fee, the adventurous can also enjoy the short but unforgettable elephant ride!

On the return journey to the hotel a stop is made at the beautiful Mae Sa Waterfall, as well as one of the region's orchid farms displaying a full variety of some of Thailand's exquisite blooms.

Day 13 Fly Chiang Mai to Bangkok

Transfer to the airport for your flight to Bangkok. On arrival you will be met and transferred to your accommodation by private vehicle.

An exciting brew of traffic and temples, luxury hotels and labyrinth-like streets, the "City of Angels," is a hectic heaven. This inexhaustible energy is part of Bangkok's charm, and it has made this feisty capital one of Asia's favorite tourist destinations. Cutting through the heart of the city, the magnificent Chao Phraya River, "the River of Kings" provides easy access to Bangkok's numerous Buddhist temples and the Grand Palace, as well offering insight into Thai life.

Day 14 Fly Bangkok to USA

Hotels

For more information about the hotels visited in this itinerary please click the hotel name below.

City	Standard	Superior	Deluxe	Luxury
Bangkok	-	Sofitel Silom	Shangri-La Hotel	-
Siem Reap	-	Le Méridien Angkor	Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor	-
Phnom Penh	-	Intercontinental	Raffles Grand Hotel Le Royal	-
Vientiane	-	Green Park Boutique Hotel	Settha Palace Hotel	-
Luang Prabang	-	Villa Santi	La Residence Phou Vao	-
Chiang Mai	-	Holiday Inn (River View)	The Chedi	-
Bangkok (Airport)	-	Novotel Suvarnabhumi	Novotel Suvarnabhumi	-

Pricing

To determine pricing for your tour select the appropriate travel season and desired accommodation level from the table below.

	Standard	Superior	Deluxe	Luxury
4/1/09-9/30/09	-	\$3365	\$3920	-
10/1/09-10/31/09	-	\$3385	\$3870	-
11/1/09-11/30/09	-	\$3495	\$4080	-
12/1/09-12/31/09	-	\$3580	\$4270	-
1/1/10-3/31/10	-	\$3570	\$4250	-
Single Traveler Supplement <i>from</i>	-	\$1800	\$2190	-
Single Room Supplement <i>from</i>	-	\$970	\$1360	-

International Airfare Pricing

Routing: LAX/SFO-BKK-LAX/SFO

4/1-5/28/09, 8/17/09-10/25/09, 2/5/10-2/11/10, 3/12/10-3/31/10	\$1270
5/29/09-6/18/09, 7/20/09-8/16/09, 12/11/09-12/24/09	\$1430
6/19/09-7/19/09	\$1450
10/26/09-12/10/09, 12/25/09-2/4/10, 2/12/10-3/11/09	\$1160

Terms & Conditions

*Prices are per person, twin/double share in USD. Travel may be restricted to certain days of the week and be available from one or multiple US departure points. Add on fares are available from most US cities and surcharges may be applicable for travel on particular days of the week. Seats are limited and may not be available on every flight. Hotels and tours remain subject to availability. US and Foreign Govt. taxes and fees vary depending on the itinerary selected and may range from \$90 to \$395 per person. Passenger Facility Charges of up to \$18 per person and the September 11th Security Fee of up to \$10 per person, are not included. After ticketing changes may not be permissible in some circumstances, or a change fee may be applied. Cancellation penalties and other booking or alteration restrictions may exist. Please note that some air segments may be served by an associated carrier. Full payment for special deals may be required within a number of days of the reservation being made as nominated by your consultant at the time of booking (or 60 days prior to departure). Please note blackout dates may apply to Christmas, New Year and local special event periods. Prices indicated remain subject to change without notice. Group inquiries are welcome however specials remain subject to hotel and airline capacity control and therefore may not be applicable for group travel. The best deal available for group travel will always be given in lieu of the offer indicated. Unless otherwise indicated all travel must be completed by March 31, 2010 if not before.