

Past, Present & Community Service (12 days)

Thailand



Please note: This itinerary can be modified to best suit your school's aims, learning objectives and budget.



This 12-day program is specifically designed to deepen students' understanding of Thailand's rich cultural heritage while engaging in a variety of outdoor education activities. The itinerary covers contemporary history, the unique cultures of hill tribes, and critical issues surrounding sustainable development.

A central highlight of the trip is a service-learning project, where students will assist in repairing and renovating classrooms and equipment at a local school in a remote northern village.

Additional activities include a thrilling ride on Bangkok's BTS Skytrain and an overnight train journey to Chiang Mai. Students will also experience mountain biking, an exhilarating zip-line adventure through the treetops, and white-water rafting. A "Great Race"-style urban challenge will see students working in teams to complete tasks throughout the city. The itinerary is rounded out with a Muay Thai kickboxing

session and a hands-on Thai cooking class, ensuring a diverse and engaging experience.

Day 1

Arrive Thailand



Upon arrival in Bangkok, we are welcomed by our tour leader and transferred by bus to the city centre. Along the way, our tour leader introduces us to some basic Thai phrases and provides essential tips for travelling in Thailand.

Our exploration of Bangkok begins with a ride on the BTS Skytrain, offering a unique perspective of the city as we glide past offices, apartment buildings, and sprawling shopping malls. This journey provides an excellent introduction to the city's modern transport infrastructure.

Next, we take a boat trip along Bangkok's canals, venturing into lesser-visited areas to observe daily life. Here, we witness how locals rely on these waterways for commuting, a practical solution to navigating the congested roads of a city that accommodates 11 million residents, alongside rural commuters and tourists. (meals: dinner)

Day 2

Bangkok



Did you know that Bangkok is just the city's nickname? Its full ceremonial name is Krung Thep Maha Nakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Yothaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit!

This morning, we set out to explore the vibrant sights, sounds, and smells of this renowned city. Our day begins with a riverboat ride along the Chao Phraya River, offering a glimpse into the daily life of Bangkok's residents.

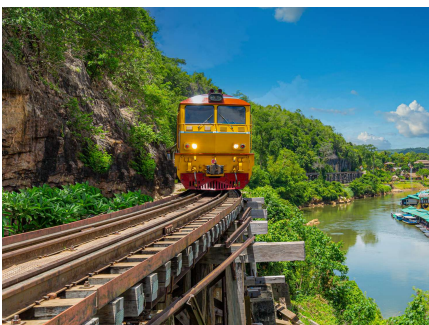
The boat takes us near the iconic Grand Palace, home to a stunning array of golden temples and the famous reclining Buddhas. Once the seat of monarchical power, these historic buildings now form the cultural and historic heart of Bangkok.

We then explore Wat Pho before heading to Bangkok's world-famous shopping districts. At MBK Mall—one of the city's largest and most affordable retail centres—we could practise our bargaining skills while shopping for souvenirs and local goods.

Throughout the day, our tour leader shares insights into Bangkok's rich history, its rapid development, and the ongoing challenges of balancing sustainability with a growing population. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 3

Kanchanaburi (Hellfire Pass)



We depart Bangkok by private coach and head towards Kanchanaburi province, a region bordering Myanmar and steeped in World War II history. This area witnessed immense suffering, particularly at the infamous Thai-Burma Railway and Hellfire Pass.

Our tour begins with a visit to Hellfire Pass, a section of the railway carved through solid rock by malnourished British, Dutch, and Australian prisoners of war (POWs), who were forced to work under brutal conditions for the Japanese army. The railway was intended to connect Japanese supply lines between Thailand and Myanmar to support their campaign against British forces in Myanmar.

We hear powerful accounts of the events and personal stories tied to this tragic chapter in history. We visit the largest war cemetery in Thailand, the final resting place of thousands of Allied soldiers. Here, we learn about Sir Edward "Weary" Dunlop, a renowned Australian doctor and surgeon who saved countless lives through his resourceful medical care and unwavering leadership. His courage and compassion made him an enduring role model for those under his care.

A visit to the DEATH Museum offers a sobering glimpse into the horrors of war, helping us understand the human cost of this conflict. We end the day at our Kanchanaburi hotel, providing time to reflect on the profound experiences and stories shared throughout the day. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 4

Ayutthaya - Overnight train to Chiang Mai



We journey north to Ayutthaya, the former royal capital of Siam and a thriving centre of trade, culture, and diplomacy. Strategically located on an island surrounded by three rivers with access to the sea, Ayutthaya flourished from 1350 to 1767. During its golden age, it was adorned with gilded temples and ornate palaces, becoming one of the world's largest and most cosmopolitan cities. However, in 1767, the city was tragically overrun and destroyed by Burmese forces.

Today, we explore this UNESCO World Heritage-listed cultural park by boat, admiring its stunning ancient architecture and waterways. Our guide provides insights into how Ayutthaya managed to resist colonial control, unlike many of its neighbouring regions. We then switch to bicycles for a leisurely tour of the flat terrain, discovering hidden laneways, crumbling ruins, and bustling waterways where large wooden rice barges continue to operate. In the evening, we transfer to Ayutthaya's central train station for our overnight journey to Chiang Mai. Travelling in air-conditioned soft-sleeper carriages, we cover approximately 900 kilometres over 14 hours.

Note: Snacks and drinks are available for purchase on board. Blankets and pillows are provided, and the train features Western-style toilets. Students should bring a takeaway meal to enjoy on the train. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 5

Arrive Chiang Mai



Arriving in Chiang Mai in the morning, we venture out to explore a city that, despite being large, maintains an overwhelmingly rural feel. We travel by local tuk-tuks and visit Chiang Mai's most significant sites, including the 700-year-old ancient brick moat and a former governor's residence. There is the time between activities to relax at the hotel swimming pool.

Mid-afternoon, we take part in a hands-on cooking class at a local farm learning the secrets of Thai cuisine famed for its intense mix of spicy, sour, sweet and salty flavours. Our course is hosted by a talented local chef who first gives us a guided tour of the farm gardens to introduce the produce and a wide variety of spices and essential ingredients. In pairs, and with a wok in hand, we prepare several tasty dishes for dinner. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 6

Chiang Mai



We start the day early with an authentic Muay Thai boxing class, making the most of the cooler morning hours. As Thailand's most popular sport for centuries, Muay Thai is renowned for its unique close-combat techniques. This energetic workout begins with a thorough warm-up, followed by instruction in both defensive and offensive moves. The highlight is stepping into the ring for sparring practice—against professional fighters!

After returning to the hotel for breakfast, we head to the Mae Taeng Valley for a white-water rafting experience. As we navigate the rapids, we are surrounded by the breathtaking beauty of the Thai rainforest, steep valleys, and towering bamboo groves.

Next, we gear up for a thrilling zip-line adventure, soaring through the treetops and across gullies high above the Mae Taeng River. The adrenaline rush and panoramic views make this an unforgettable experience. In the evening, we explore one of the city's bustling night markets. These vibrant bazaars offer a perfect opportunity to practice ethical and respectful bargaining skills. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Day 7

Chiang Mai – Mae Ngat Lake



We kick off the day with an exciting Great Race challenge, where students navigate the city in small groups, completing tasks that immerse them in Thai culture and society. Teams explore local markets to compare prices, purchase specific items, and gather photographic evidence. They also document observations about social patterns, noting key differences from their experiences back home. And yes, there's a prize for the winning team!

Later, we leave the city for an adventurous excursion, starting with a 12-kilometre mountain bike ride to the entrance of Sri Lanna National Park and Mae Ngat Lake. This man-made lake, known for its crystal-clear waters, plays a crucial role as a water source for Chiang Mai province.

We then board a speedboat and travel halfway across the lake to a recreational area, where we spend the afternoon swimming, kayaking, and participating in team-building activities. After a day of adventure, we return to the mainland by longboat and take a bus back to Chiang Mai.

Note: The bike ride is suitable for students with average fitness and basic cycling skills. The route is mostly flat, with a gentle incline towards the end. Mae Ngat Lake's leisure area offers facilities such as toilets, showers, changing rooms, and a small restaurant. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Days 8, 9, & 10

Chiang Dao



We leave the city behind and travel to the hill tribe region of Chiang Dao, a district that has served as a refuge for many Karen and Palong ethnic groups who fled Myanmar during the 1990s. Over the next three days, we will engage in a meaningful community project, working to renovate an underfunded local school to improve its educational resources and infrastructure.

Our work involves close collaboration with the school principal, local tradespeople, and the broader school community. Tasks include bricklaying, painting, building library shelves, and upgrading play equipment. In this school, students cherish even the simplest supplies like

a pen and a textbook—luxuries compared to the digital tools common elsewhere.

While staying in Ma Jon village, we immerse ourselves in the traditions of the Palong people, whose way of life remains largely unchanged from their ancestral homeland. Daily village life offers insight into the community's challenges, such as limited employment opportunities, water shortages during the dry season, and language barriers due to the inability to speak Thai.

Note: Village homestay facilities are simple. Each longhouse provides a thin mattress, pillow, and mosquito net, with communal sleeping arrangements. Shower facilities offer lukewarm water, and toilets are squat-style. Good quality walking shoes or boots are essential. (meals: 3 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 3 dinners)

*As an alternative to the school renovation project, we can participate in a habitat rejuvenation project where students improve the natural water source's habitat by planting native bushes and trees, providing a home, shelter, and food for wildlife. Otherwise, we may choose to help improve the village water storage and distribution system, repairing water piping and building new water storage reservoirs.

Day 11

Chiang Dao – Chiang Rai



We wrap up our community project and take part in a heartfelt farewell ceremony, expressing our gratitude to the community for their hospitality. Afterward, we visit a nearby cave for a brief exploration before beginning our journey north to Chiang Rai.

Along the way, we stop at the iconic White Temple, a striking artistic masterpiece that blends Buddhist devotion with contemporary architectural flair. As we explore this stunning site, our tour leader provides insights into its design and significance.

We arrive in Chiang Rai around 5 pm, a town once notorious as the epicentre of the global opium trade, with the crop widely cultivated in the

surrounding region. Today, however, Chiang Rai is known for its warm hospitality and delicious cuisine. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 12

Golden Triangle - Depart Chiang Rai



Today, we journey to Thailand's renowned "Golden Triangle" region, once the epicentre of the world's opium trade. From a vantage point atop a small hill, we take in sweeping views of the meeting point of Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos.

A key highlight of the day is our visit to the Opium Museum, an impressive facility funded by the Royal Project. Through its engaging displays and multimedia storytelling, the museum chronicles the history of opium and the devastating impact of narcotics. It also details the significant measures taken by the Thai government and the King's mother to eradicate this destructive industry. We then return to Chiang Rai, where

we connect to our international flight home. (meals: breakfast, lunch)

Summary

Grading

Moderate; To get the most out of this trip, you need to be in good health. However, anyone with a good level of fitness will be able to take part. Some outdoor activities include physical exertion, and there may be long periods of exposure to the elements. You will be expected to walk every day and carry your luggage for short distances. The itinerary may include bike riding, climbing steps and trekking. If your itinerary includes community service work of any description, you will be expected to work diligently during this component. Conditions here may be basic with simple accommodation and bathroom facilities. Suitable packing lists will be provided to match the content of the itinerary.

Accommodation

School tours: Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels usually hold a 3-star equivalent rating. Separate sleeping areas and bathrooms are provided for boys, girls, and staff members at homestays.

Transport

Depending on the tour, modes of transport may include modern air-conditioned private coach, boat, train, plane.

Your Tour Leader

A tour leader accompanies all group tours. Your tour leader is the person who most influences the success of your trip. They have been meticulously trained and are very experienced in running tours. Every tour leader is locally employed, therefore they are the best person to showcase their country and culture. Their expertise and knowledge creates an insightful and authentic experience of the region. They are with you throughout your trip from breakfast time until the group returns to the hotel in the evening. They are contactable 24/7.

For more information on the role of the tour leader, local guides and accompanying teachers, please refer to our website.

Group Size

School tours: Minimum group size is 16 students with a minimum of 2 staff members.

There are no maximum participant numbers on any tour.

Service-Learning Programs

The local community instigates all our service-learning programs in response to their genuine needs and goals. Every program is conducted only after careful consultation with local community leaders and authorities.

We assess each program during the consultation process to ensure that it's sustainable, ethical, and empowers local people. Each project is designed to have lasting economic benefits that build wealth within the community – we're not in the business of tokenistic hand-outs.

- **Physical construction projects.** These projects include building, repairing or improving housing, schools, libraries, washroom facilities or other infrastructure and fittings. We also work with communities that require water reservoirs, irrigation systems and animal pens.

As you can imagine, these projects require lots of physical exertion, sweat and some exposure to the elements. Undertaking a construction project involves hiring expert local tradespeople, assistant builders and transport providers. More substantial construction projects require purchasing locally produced materials, hiring cooks and booking local homestay accommodation, all of which inject money into the host community. Fundraising is usually required for these projects.

- **Community engagement programs.** Through our strong relationships with local schools and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), students can help deliver social service and education initiatives within a community. Your students will work in government-run classrooms or vocational training programs to help teach English (by following a lesson plan prepared in advance), help implement health programs, or work alongside local students as they learn small business skills.

For more details about our service-learning programs, please refer to our website.

Land Trip Cost and Details

Cost per traveller from A\$ 2,050

Based on a minimum of:

16 students & 2 accompanying teachers/staff members.
**Smaller or larger group sizes priced on application*

Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- Professional *Adventure Travel* tour leader throughout the trip & additional specialist guides
- Extensive destination-specific risk management and assessment
- Meals (and drinking water) as listed in the itinerary
- 24-hour **IN COUNTRY** support
- Pre-departure support, briefings and planning meetings
- Tips for tour leaders, local guides & drivers

Exclusions

- International flights to/from Thailand
- Travel Visa costs (if required)
- Cost of Community projects/Service-learning programs \$2,000- \$3,800
- Spending money
- Travel insurance

Contact details

Edventure Travel

Tel: (+61 3) 9876 5058

info@edventuretravel.com.au

www.edventuretravel.com.au

