



Thailand



Anita Isalska, Austin Bush, Tim Bewer, Celeste Brash,
David Eimer, Damian Harper, Andy Symington

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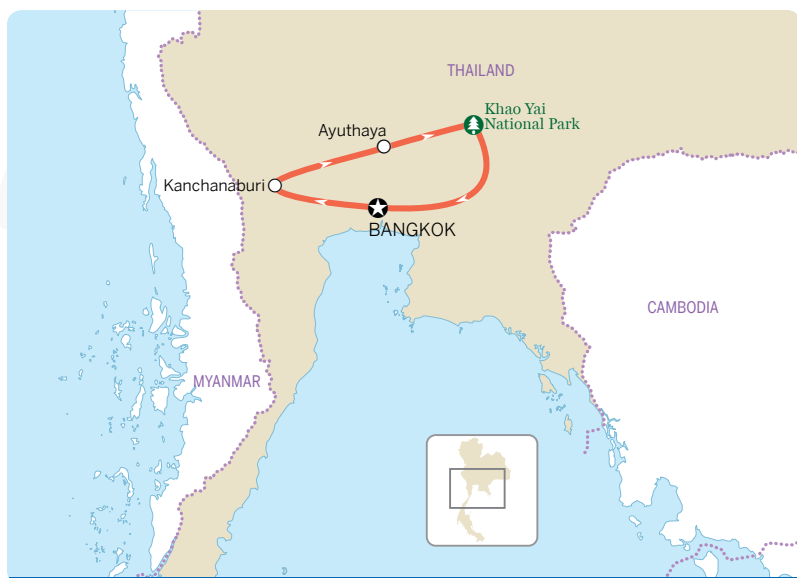
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Itineraries



1 WEEK **Bangkok & Around**

If time is not on your side, you can still explore jungles, temples and Thai culture – all of which are within easy reach of Bangkok.

After a quick look around the major temples and markets in the **capital**, and hitting its top restaurants, embark on the wonderfully scenic train ride to **Kanchanaburi**. Here, enjoy a dip in the seven-tiered Erawan waterfall before visiting the Hellfire Pass Memorial, a poignant tribute to the thousands of prisoners of war who died making the Death Railway during WWII. The nearby forests are ideal for adventure activities or outdoor excursions, such as ziplining over the forest canopies or cruising along the River Kwai.

Next, jump in a minivan bound for **Ayuthaya** and cycle around the impressive ruins of this erstwhile capital. Finally, head over to **Khao Yai National Park**, transiting through Pak Chong. Spend a day hiking through the jungle in search of elephants and tigers, and a night camping under the stars before winding your way back to Bangkok.



2
WEEKS

Thailand's Highlights

Thanks to expanded domestic air travel in the kingdom, you can zip from the mountains to the city to the beach with ease.

Start off in **Bangkok**, where you can master the public transit system, visit the gleaming temples of Wat Phra Kaew and Wat Pho, explore the shopping centres and party like a rock star. Getting lost in Bangkok is an under-appreciated pastime, and neighbourhoods like Chinatown have people-packed streets where you'll see the weird and the wonderful.

Fly (or take the scenic train) to **Chiang Mai**, which can keep you busy for several days with its Thai cooking classes, temples, monk chats, markets and fabulous food. Take a road trip to the surrounding countryside, where you can hike to hill-tribe villages and zipline through the forest. Don't forget to visit the cool highlands of Doi Suthep or Doi Inthanon, two famous northern mountains.

Ready for the beach? Take a direct flight from Chiang Mai south to the tropical island of **Ko Samui**, where you can choose to live it up in a five-star resort or villa, or relax in a low-key beach bungalow in one of the island's quieter corners (yes, some still exist).

Make a day trip to uninhabited Ang Thong Marine National Marine Park before a stop at **Ko Pha-Ngan**, an easy boat trip from Ko Samui. Head to one of its famous Full Moon Parties, or time your visit to miss the crowds and enjoy laid-back hammock hanging instead. Virtually next door is tiny **Ko Tao**, Thailand's diving-certification headquarters; there are plenty of shallow reefs near the shore for snorkellers, too.

Head back to Samui to fly on to your next destination, or make your way back to Bangkok for some last-minute shopping.



Top: Chinatown (p81),
Bangkok

Bottom: Ang
Thong National
Marine Park (p57)



LIKINI / SHUTTERSTOCK ©



3
WEEKS

Southern Islands & Beaches

Hitting all of Thailand's top beaches in one trip isn't easy, but some serious island-hopping means you can do it and still have bags of hammock time. This trip takes you there by land and sea, but if you need to hurry up, hop on a flight along the way.

From **Bangkok**, dip south into **Hua Hin**, an upmarket resort town where all the top hotel chains have a spot on the beach. Then on to **Prachuap Khiri Khan**, where you can hire a bike and check out the undulating coast, bays and laid-back beach scene.

Now for some island time, first stop **Ko Tao** (via Chumphon). Sign up for a dive course or enjoy a few days of snorkelling before island-hopping to **Ko Pha-Ngan** for Full Moon Party fun or an other-side-of-the-island escape. Retire to the resort island of **Ko Samui** for some pampering (or, if you have the energy, more partying), from where it's a short ferry ride to transport hub Surat Thani. Buses leave hourly for **Khao Sok National Park**, where you can enjoy some jungle time in one of the world's oldest rainforests before making the short transfer to Khao Lak, a sleepy beach resort that serves as the perfect base for dive trips to the world-famous **Similan Islands** and, to the north, the Surin Islands. Consider spending a few days on a live-aboard to linger in the underwater world full of rays, sharks and seahorses. Once you surface, go south to **Phuket** – Thailand's largest island – and gulp down the numerous attractions and activities on offer here (don't miss a day trip to Ao Phang-Nga).

From Phuket, jump on a boat bound for **Ko Phi-Phi**, a party island that stays up all night and still looks fantastic in the morning. From here you can head back to the mainland and explore the gorgeous coastline of **Krabi** (be sure to take a long-boat to Railay beach, regarded as one of the finest in Thailand) or ferry straight to **Ko Lanta** to collapse in a hammock and drink in the bucolic island life. Continue south by ferry past the beautiful **Trang Islands** to increasingly popular but still relatively undeveloped **Ko Lipe**, and catch a speedboat back to the mainland when you're ready to begin your journey home.



4

WEEKS The Grand Tour

A fully rounded trip to Thailand meanders through almost every corner of the kingdom. If you need to save time, hop on a flight – planes go everywhere these days.

Start off in **Bangkok**, and then take a train north to the ancient capital of **Ayuthaya**. Make a detour to the monkey town of **Lopburi**. From here, follow the culture trail north to **Sukhothai**, where you can cycle through the historic and crumbling ruins of another ancient capital. Hightail it to **Chiang Mai**, the ‘rose of the north’, and cycle around the old temples. Then switch back into the mountains to the party scene of **Pai**. Climb deeper into the hills to the Myanmar-influenced town of **Mae Hong Son**. Loop back to Chiang Mai.

By now the beach should be calling. Fly to the Gulf of Thailand and stop by **Ko Samui** for its resort-island trappings, **Ko Pha-Ngan** for beach bumming and partying, and **Ko Tao** for diving and snorkelling.

Next, get over to the Andaman Coast and its limestone mountains jutting out of the sea. **Ko Phi-Phi** is the prettiest, priciest and most party-fuelled of them all. Little **Ko Jum** holds tight to a fast-disappearing beach-shack, hippie vibe. The dive scene is the real attraction at gentrified **Ko Lanta**. Rock-climbers opt for mainland Krabi, particularly **Railay**.

If you’ve got the itch for more sand then continue down the peninsula to the **Trang Islands**, another collection of limestone sea mountains lapped by clear waters. Or opt for the idyllic islands offshore from Satun. There’s also emerging and midrange **Ko Bulon Leh**, rustic **Ko Tarutao** and laid-back **Ko Lipe**.

Or, you could skip the beaches south of Krabi and instead take a cultural antidote to the northeast, Thailand’s agricultural heartland. Transit through Bangkok and then crawl through the jungles of **Khao Yai National Park**. From here, head to Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat), a transit point for trips to the Angkor ruins at **Phimai**. Follow the Khmer trail east to **Phanom Rung**, the most important and visually impressive of the Angkor temples in Thailand. Surrounding Phanom Rung are a handful of smaller, more remote and forgotten temples with regal ambience.

Off the Beaten Track: Thailand

0 0 150 miles 300 km

THA TON

Come to this remote-feeling riverside town for the scenic long-tail boat to Chiang Rai, but stay for hill-tribe trekking and frontier exploration. (p360)

PHAYAO

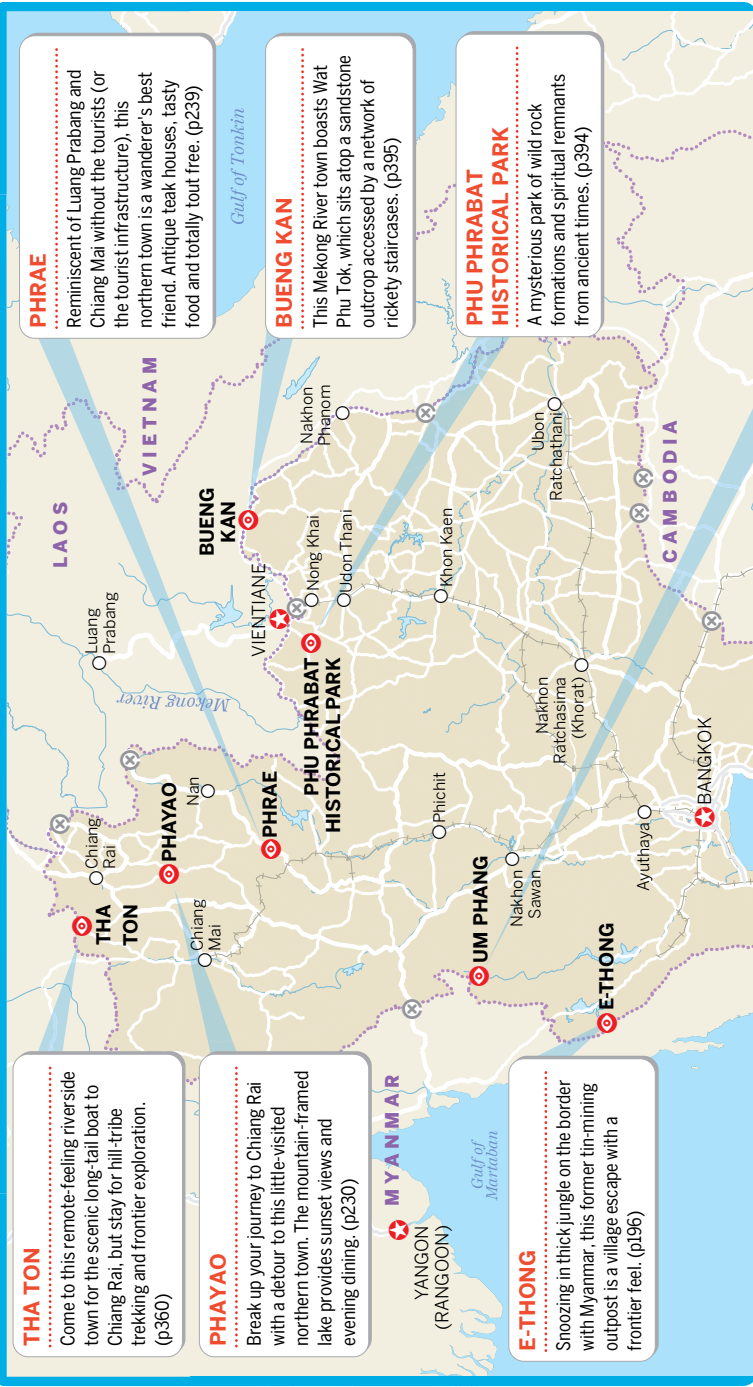
Break up your journey to Chiang Rai with a detour to this little-visited northern town. The mountain-framed lake provides sunset views and evening dining. (p230)

**MYANMAR**

YANGON
(RANGOON)

E-THONG

Snoozing in thick jungle on the border with Myanmar, this former tin-mining outpost is a village escape with a frontier feel. (p196)

**PHRAE**

Reminiscent of Luang Prabang and Chiang Mai without the tourists (or the tourist infrastructure), this northern town is a wanderer's best friend. Antique teak houses, tasty food and totally tout free. (p239)

BUENG KAN

This Mekong River town boasts Wat Phu Tok, which sits atop a sandstone outcrop accessed by a network of rickety staircases. (p395)

PHU PHRABAT HISTORICAL PARK

A mysterious park of wild rock formations and spiritual remnants from ancient times. (p394)



KUIBURI NATIONAL PARK

Take a Thai safari for virtually guaranteed wild elephant encounters. (p508)

KO PHAYAM

A beach retreat for the resort-averse, Ko Phayam has fine sand, a range of accommodation and motorbike-friendly paths. Sand and sea without the distractions. (p600)

KO PHAYAM

Surin Islands

Similan Islands

UM PHANG

In Thailand's western frontier, this mostly Karen village is surrounded by unspoilt wilderness, perfect for rafting, trekking and waterfall-spotting. (p279)

AO KHANOM

A pretty Gulf of Thailand bay with long beaches and regular visits from pink albino dolphins. It is a dreamy natural setting without much development. (p581)

KO SUKORN

Ko Sukorn is a cultural paradise filled with tawny beaches and rubber plantations. It's the perfect place to experience village life. (p690)

KO TARUTAO

Tarutao, part of a marine park, is so far south it is practically in Malaysia. But it is a top castaway contender with secluded alabaster beaches. (p695)

Phetchaburi

Chanthaburi

Phnom Penh

Prachuap Khiri Khan

Chumphon

Oranong

Surat Thani

Phuket Town

Ko Tao

Ko Phang-Ngan

Ko Samui

Ao Khanom

Ko Sukorn

Pattani

Satun

Ko Tarutao

Pulau Langkawi

Kota Bharu

Malaysia

Gulf of Thailand

Vietnam

Ho Chi Minh City

Behind the Scenes

SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

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THIS BOOK

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Destination Editors Tanya Parker, Dora Ball, Clifton Wilkinson

Product Editors Ross Taylor, Vicky Smith, Kate Chapman

Senior Cartographer Diana Von Holdt

Book Designer Wibowo Rusli

Assisting Editors Judith Bamber, Imogen Bannister, Melanie Dankel, Andrea Dobbin, Grace Dobell, Bruce Evans, Jennifer Hattam, Gabby Innes, Lou McGregor, Rosie Nicholson, Rachel Rawling, Tamara Sheward, Gabrielle Stefanos,

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Assisting Cartographer

Anita Banh

Assisting Book Designer
Virginia Moreno

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Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Body surfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro/MRT/MTR station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Skytrain/Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



David Eimer

Phuket & the Andaman Coast David has been a journalist and writer ever since abandoning the idea of a law career in 1990. After spells working in his native London and in Los Angeles, he moved to Beijing in 2005, where he contributed to a variety of newspapers and magazines in the UK. Since then he has travelled and lived across China and in numerous cities in Southeast Asia, including Bangkok, Phnom Penh and Yangon. He has been covering China, Myanmar and Thailand for Lonely Planet since 2006.



Damian Harper

Ko Samui & the Lower Gulf With two degrees (one in modern and classical Chinese from SOAS University of London), Damian has been writing for Lonely Planet for more than two decades, contributing to titles on places as diverse as China, Vietnam, Thailand, Ireland, London, Mallorca, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Hong Kong and the UK. A seasoned guidebook writer, Damian has penned articles for numerous newspapers and magazines, including *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, and currently makes Surrey, England, his home. Follow Damian on Instagram (damian.harper).



Andy Symington

Ko Chang & the Eastern Seaboard Andy has written or worked on more than a hundred books and other updates for Lonely Planet (especially in Europe and Latin America) and other publishing companies, and has published articles on numerous subjects for a variety of newspapers, magazines and websites. He part-owns and operates a rock bar, has written a novel and is currently working on several fiction and non-fiction writing projects. Originally from Australia, Andy moved to northern Spain many years ago. When he's not off with a backpack in some far-flung corner of the world, he can probably be found watching the tragically poor local football side or tasting local wines after a long walk in the nearby mountains.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Dublin, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Anita Isalska

Curator: Central Thailand Anita is a travel journalist, editor and copywriter whose work for Lonely Planet has taken her from Greek beach towns to Malaysian jungles, and plenty of places in between. After several merry years as an in-house editor and writer – with a few of them in Lonely Planet's London office – Anita now works freelance between the UK, Australia and any Balkan guesthouse with a good wi-fi connection. Anita writes about travel, food and culture for a host of websites and magazines. Read her writing on www.anitaisalska.com.



Austin Bush

Bangkok; Northern Thailand Austin originally came to Thailand in 1999 as part of a language study program hosted by Chiang Mai University. The lure of city life, employment and spicy food eventually led him to Bangkok. City life, employment and spicy food have managed to keep him there ever since.

Austin also contributed to the Plan, Understand and Survive sections of this book.



Tim Bower

Northeastern Thailand; Hua Hin & the Upper Gulf After briefly holding fort behind a desk as a legislative assistant, Tim decided he didn't have the ego to succeed in the political world (or the stomach to work around those who did). He quit his job at the capitol to backpack around West Africa, during which time he pondered what to do next. His answer was to write a travel guide to parks, forests, and wildlife areas of the gorgeous state of Wisconsin. He's been a freelance travel writer and photographer ever since.



Celeste Brash

Chiang Mai Province Like many California natives, Celeste now lives in Portland, Oregon. She arrived, however, after 15 years in French Polynesia, 18 months in Southeast Asia and a stint teaching English as a second language (in an American accent) in Brighton, England – among other things. She's been writing guidebooks for Lonely Planet since 2005 and her travel articles have appeared in publications from *BBC Travel* to *National Geographic*.

OVER MORE
PAGE WRITERS

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