

thailand jungle expedition, thailand



This expedition takes place in western Thailand's Kanchanaburi Province, location of the infamous Death Railway and Bridge over the River Kwai. Kanchanaburi is inhabited by a mixture of Burmese, Karen, Mon and Thai peoples. The challenge will take you through the rugged jungles in remote parts of the province close to the border with Burma.

You will spend six days trekking, rafting, kayaking and riding elephants through the forests and mountains of the Thung Yai Nareusan Wildlife Sanctuary. The Thung Yai area is home to the Karen people who traditionally live in small villages and forest communities. The hill tribe people know the region better than anybody else and will be your hosts and guides for the challenge.

You will stay overnight in a Karen village consisting of bamboo stilt houses and at a campsite on the banks of the river.

Once the challenge is complete, you will return to Bangkok, home to the Royal Palace and Wat Po.

Day 1: International Departure

Meet at the airport check-in desk for the flight to Bangkok, Thailand. Your Charity Challenge representative will be there to assist you with the check-in and any last minute questions.

Day 2: Bangkok

Arrive in Bangkok. Your tour-leader will meet you at the airport and organise a minibus transfer to a three star, air con hotel in the city's downtown, Banglamphu district. You will have the afternoon at leisure to recover from jet-lag by the hotel pool or for the energetic, the opportunity to discover some of Thailand's bustling capital city.

Explore some of the neighbourhood markets and temples or wander the nearby Khao San Road - Bangkok's answer to Portobello Road. Your expedition leader will be on hand for suggestions and advice.



Day 3: Kanchanaburi Province

An early start for your minibus drive Westwards to the remote settlement of Sangklaburi, situated on the edge of the huge Khao Laem Dam and close to Thailand's border with Burma.* Your drive will take you through historic Kanchanaburi Province and up the valley of the River Kwai where, during WW2, the invading Japanese army, using Allied POW labour, constructed the infamous 'Death Railway' to link Bangkok and Rangoon and facilitate their planned invasion of India.

A scenic drive (approx 6hrs) will be broken up by stops at some of the key historic sites, including the famous Bridge on the River Kwai and one of the area's many Allied POW cemeteries, as well as at some of the most scenic sites such as the spectacular Khao Laem Dam with its fascinating floating villages. Late afternoon check-in to the beautifully located, 'Burmese Inn', a small family-run resort of traditional wooden chalets set in a lakeside garden. Time for a local style dinner, of Thai and Burmese dishes and a good night's sleep before your challenge begins.

(*Burma's ruling military junta has recently renamed the country Myanmar though you will find most locals prefer to use the old name.)

NB: As stated in the introduction the exact itinerary in Thung Yai depends very much on weather conditions. Streams that chuckle down the valley in the dry season become impassable torrents by the end of the wet season.

Day 4: Thung Yai & the Karen People (approx 10-12kms trek)

Pack your daypacks for three days in the jungle! (You will leave the rest of your kit, in your main bags at the Burmese Inn). After breakfast, you will head off by pick-up truck to your starting point on the edge of the 3,200sq km Thung Yai Nareusan Wildlife Sanctuary. Thung Yai is part of Thailand's Western Forest Complex - a series of connecting national parks and wildlife sanctuaries forming one of the largest protected areas anywhere in S. E. Asia and home to many rare animals such as the tiger, leopard and elephant.

Please note that because of the dense terrain and shy nature of most jungle mammals it is highly unlikely to see any of the larger mammals during your trek, but what you will see is myriad colourful bird and butterfly species and plenty of exotic jungle insect, reptile and plant and flower varieties.

You will spend around six-eight hours trekking to one of the tribal villages in the sanctuary, where you will be guests of the Karen people. During the first part of the trek you will embark on a climb up to a small mountain where you will cross through a 100m long cave. You will then climb for another 2hrs up to a bigger mountain for a fantastic scenic view. After a rest and photo opportunity, you continue along the flat for 1hr on a high plateau, where you will have lunch. From there it's 2hrs descent to the other side of the mountain where there is a more or less flat track with bamboo forest and farm land until you reach the village. After a dinner of traditional Thai food cooked by our guides on open campfires, you will either stay overnight in tents pitched by the river or in one of the village houses or community buildings built of bamboo and raised from the ground on stilts. (Depending upon weather conditions).



Day 5: Sanepong (approx 10-12kms)

Leaving the village behind, you will continue your jungle trek, wading through the Songkaria River at times, through farming land and bamboo forest. You will enjoy lunch by the river followed by an undulating path before arriving to Jokipu, a very remote and poor Karen village. From there, depending on the water level, you may follow a river through dense jungle for 2hrs. If the river is too high, you will ascend another mountain covered by bamboo forest. After either the jungle or the mountain route you will head on through a rubber tree plantation to another small Karen Village (Mae Tew). Terrain and scenery encountered during your trek will vary considerably: through tall primary forest, dense secondary growth, bamboo forests, farmland and rice paddies and even rubber plantations. On occasions you will be hiking over hills and on others following river valleys where you'll have the chance to cool off in streams. You will arrive some 6-7 hrs later at the small river island of Mae Tiew for a paddle and for an overnight stay at your campsite.



Day 6: Songkaria & the Mon People (approx 5-7kms trekking + rafting)

This morning you will hike along the picturesque Songkaria River. This walk will be a 2-3hrs with 3-4 river crossings. You will also ascend and descend a fair hill before changing to rafts for the last leg downstream to the Mon settlement of Songkaria Village. Rafts will be either bamboo or rubber depending upon water conditions, which can vary from grades 1-3 rapids. After lunch in the village you will have the opportunity to explore the vicinity when your guide can explain some of the differences between the Mon and Karen ethnic groups. Whilst nowadays concentrations of Mon people are mostly found in Western/Central Thailand and Southern Burma, unlike the Karen, they were once part of the large Mon/Khmer family who inhabited much of S.E. Asia before the arrival of the Thais and Laos who migrated south from Southern China. The Mon culture and ethnic group became largely assimilated into Siam leaving only a few areas such as Kanchanaburi where relatively traditional Mon life has survived to the present day.

From Songkaria Village you will return by road to your starting point of Sangklaburi and the Burmese Inn, by way of a detour by pick-up truck to the historic 'Three Pagoda's Pass' border crossing some 8kms North. The only relatively easy crossing point between the two countries amongst hundreds of miles of rugged

mountains, the Three Pagoda's Pass has seen centuries of warring Burmese and Siamese kings leading their armies through this narrow valley.

Day 7: Sangklaburi & Thong Pa Pum

Following your time in the jungle, a day to relax and explore the Sangklaburi area before you take on the second part of the challenge. You will start the day with a boat trip around the lake where you will be able to see some of the region's distinctive floating fishing villages. The Mon villagers who live on the lake construct houses on bamboo rafts anchored to the lake floor or tied to trees, allowing their houses to simply rise and fall with water levels which throughout the year may vary up to 20 or 30 feet.

From here you'll visit the local handicrafts market and the imposing Mon temple: Wat Wang Wiwekaram before returning by way of the Mon village of Waeng Kha and Thailand's longest wooden bridge. In the afternoon you will depart from Sangklaburi for a short scenic drive down the lake shore to the small town of Thong Pa Pum - lying some 65-75kms away at the southern end of the lake and where you will enjoy a night's relaxation in the charming riverside chalets of Ban Huay Ulong Resort.



Day 8: Death Railway and Hellfire Pass (approx 8kms & 2-3 hrs kayaking)

Time to embark on the River Kwai section of your adventure with a short drive south-east to 'Hellfire Pass' and a hike along the route of the famous 'Death railway' itself. Hellfire Pass was one of the most notorious sections of the 'Death Railway', (so named because of the sheer numbers of deaths amongst both the POW and local workers during the railway's construction), where over 1,000 British and Australian POWs worked 16 hour shifts to hack a series of deep cuttings through solid rock resulting by the completion of the task in a 70% death rate.

Before visiting the pass itself you will begin by hiking some 2-3hrs along the route of the former railway itself. You will have then the chance to visit the fascinating, and highly moving, remembrance museum.

From here you will switch to kayaks for a journey down the Kwai River to the 'Jungle Rafts' Resort where you will spend the night in chalets.

Day 9: River Kwai & Elephant Camp (approx 4-5 hours kayaking)

A morning launch sees you on your way down the picturesque, jungle-lined River Kwai. The river can be quite fast flowing but without rapids or white water and provides plenty of chances for bathing and cooling off. With a stop off on the riverbank for lunch you will finish your day's kayaking at a riverside elephant camp for an opportunity for a short elephant ride before carrying on to Kanchanaburi town. The order of these activities can be altered dependent upon where you stay the night before.

Elephants were traditionally employed in the region's timber industry to haul the great teak logs down to the river for transportation downstream but with the ban on logging in Thailand in place since the 1970's many domesticated elephants are now restricted to providing transport for intrepid explorers.

Late afternoon / early evening you will transfer back to Bangkok (approx 2-3hrs) and your air con hotel in the city's downtown, Banglamphu district. Tonight you will celebrate the completion of your challenge with a celebratory meal in this fascinating town.

Day 10: Bangkok

Today signifies the end of the challenge and you can start to appreciate what all of the effort has been for. You can relax in Thailand's capital and enjoy a guided tour of some of the city's sites including the Royal Palace and fabulous Temple of the Emerald Buddha and Wat Po, home to the largest reclining Buddha in Thailand. Farewell lunch and transfer to the airport for your return flight to London.

Day 11: Arrive Home

Arrive at London Heathrow Airport.

N.B. The itinerary is there as a guide and may change due to unusual weather patterns, the strength of the group and so on. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary, however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your expedition leader will have the final say.

optional angkor wat extension

summary:

Extend your Asian experience and fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia. Here you can explore the ancient city of Angkor. Built from 879-1191AD by the Khmer civilization, Angkor represents one of humankind's most astonishing architectural achievements and in 1992, the city of Angkor became a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Day 10: Bangkok. Overnight Bangkok

After your day's sightseeing in Bangkok and the rest of your group have flown back to the UK you will spend the night in Thailand's capital city. Overnight hotel.

Day 11: Fly Siem Reap. Ta Prom Temple

This morning you will transfer to Bangkok airport for your flight to Siem Reap. On arrival you will drive to your centrally located hotel for some time to relax. Later in the afternoon when it's a little cooler you will be collected and driven to the ruins of Angkor Wat for an atmospheric sunset visit to jungle clad Ta Prom Temple which has been left to be reclaimed by nature and features incredible tree roots breaking through the stone carvings and walls, a fascinating tribute to the power of nature over man and an experience reminiscent of 'Indiana Jones' and 'Tomb Raider.' In the evening you can relax and enjoy the town of Siem Reap. Overnight hotel.

Day 12: Angkor Wat & Angkor Tom

You will leave early morning for sunrise over Angkor Wat, a must see on any trip to the complex. Angkor Wat itself is just one of the many temples in the region but is one of the best preserved and most impressive. It is worth climbing the remarkably steep and narrow steps of the central spire for the view over the whole temple surrounded by jungle. Late morning you will return to our hotel to relax by the pool, siesta or check-out the local markets. In the afternoon you will visit to the ruined city of Angkor Tom including, Bayon, Phimeanakas, and Baphuon Temples and the Terraces of the Elephants and Leper King. Angkor Thom, the old city central, is a fascinating ruin featuring many mysterious giant carved faces and some incredible wall carvings, and is one of the most remarkable sights in the area. Overnight hotel Siem Reap.



Day 13: Phnom Bakheng to Prei Rup

This morning's visit will include Phnom Bakheng, Angkor's earliest temple before moving on to the South Gate of Angkor Tom and the jungle temple of Preah Khan. Again, late morning you will return to the hotel to

miss the heat of the day and relax at your leisure. In the afternoon you will take a short jungle hike to the rarely visited Ta Nei Temple and the pyramid of Ta Keo. You can then enjoy sunset at Prei Rup before returning to Siem Reap for a final party night in the towns many bars and restaurants. Overnight hotel Siem Reap.

Day 14: Banteay Srei & Banteay Samre. Return to the UK.

Today you will head off into the surrounding countryside for a morning visit to the remoter temple sites of Banteay Srei & Banteay Samre. Banteay Srei was the only temple to be designed by a woman and still has much of its detailed relief's undamaged to be enjoyed. You can then spend your final afternoon visiting the Handicraft School, Aki Ra's Landmines Museum or relaxing by the pool before for your evening return flight to the UK via Bangkok.



Cost: £395 per person sharing (based on 2 or more people in twin accommodation)

Single Supp: £60 (NB: there must be a minimum of 2 persons for this extension to run)

included

- 4 night's hotel accommodation in twin room on B&B basis
- Return flights: Bangkok to Siem Reap to Bangkok
- Transfers throughout extension
- 3 day Angkor Wat pass
- Local guide throughout extension
- Transfer to airport at the end for international flight
- Extension on travel insurance policy

excluded

- Lunch and dinner each day
- 1 passport photo for you Angkor Wat pass
- Cambodian visa: You do not need to apply for a Cambodian visa as you will obtain this at the airport whilst on your extension – the cost for this will be USD\$20 and you will also need 2 identical colour passport photos. You must hold a full ten-year passport with at least six months to run from the end of your expedition, and at least two blank pages for your visas and entry/exit stamps.
- Cambodia departure tax: USD\$25
- Personal expenses (ie: gifts, extra soft drinks or alcohol, laundry etc)
- Tips for local team

N.B. Times are approximate but the aim of the programme is to catch the best light and temperature during early morning and late afternoon and to avoid Angkor's scorching mid-day heat and crowds. We will do our very best to keep to the set itinerary, however we cannot be held responsible for any last minute changes that might occur. In all such circumstances, your local guide will have the final say.

optional koh chang / koh samui extension summary:

At the end of your Thailand Jungle Expedition why not reward yourself with a well deserved rest on the beautiful island of Koh Chang or Koh Samui.

Koh Chang is a tranquil, jungle clad island lying in the Eastern part of the Gulf of Thailand. Snorkeling, boat trips, elephant rides and spa massage treatments are just some of the options available during your relaxing extension.

Enjoy Koh Samui, Thailand's most famous island from the beach side resort of Lamai. This beautiful area has great access to the main town of Chaweng with its shops and bars yet is quiet and peaceful itself. Take an optional trip to Ang Thong Marine Park for some snorkeling or scuba diving.

Day 10: Bangkok. Overnight Bangkok

After your day's sightseeing in Bangkok and the rest of your group have flown back to the UK you will spend the night in Thailand's capital city. Overnight hotel.

Day 11: Fly Bangkok to Koh Chang or Koh Samui

This morning you will fly from Bangkok to Koh Chang (fly to Trat with public boat transfer to Koh Chang) or Koh Samui and transfer to your beach side resort for some well earned rest and relaxation after your jungle expedition. Overnight in a deluxe beachside room.



Day 12-13: Koh Chang or Koh Samui

Spend the next two days on your island in the sun. Enjoy snorkelling or scuba diving and maybe even enjoy a local Thai massage (extra cost). Spend the evening peacefully at your resort or head into one of the larger towns for a slice of Thai night life. Overnight in a deluxe beachside room.

Day 14: Koh Chang or Koh Samui to Bangkok. Fly to UK.

Spend your final morning on Koh Chang or Koh Samui making the most of your last minute Thai sunshine. This afternoon transfer to the island domestic airport for your flight back to Bangkok, connecting with your flight to the UK.

Day 15: Arrive Home

Arrive at London Heathrow Airport.

Cost: £380 per person sharing (based on 2 or more people in twin accommodation)

Single Supp: £105 (NB: there must be a minimum of 2 persons for this extension to run)



included

- Transfer to Bangkok airport for domestic flight to island
- Return domestic flights in Thailand with Bangkok Airways
- Accommodation in deluxe beachside room on a bed and breakfast basis
- Extension on travel insurance policy

excluded

- Tips for local staff
- Transfer to and from island airport to local island accommodation (approx £5pp one way)
- Meals other than breakfast

N.B. This extension is unescorted.

Koh Chang available November – April

Koh Samui available May – October

If you would like to book either of the above extensions or have any extension enquiries please call the Charity Challenge office on 020 8557 0000 or email flights@charitychallenge.com All bookings are subject to availability and group booking limitations. We therefore ask you to consider your travel plans as soon as possible and if you want to extend your challenge, please put in your request immediately