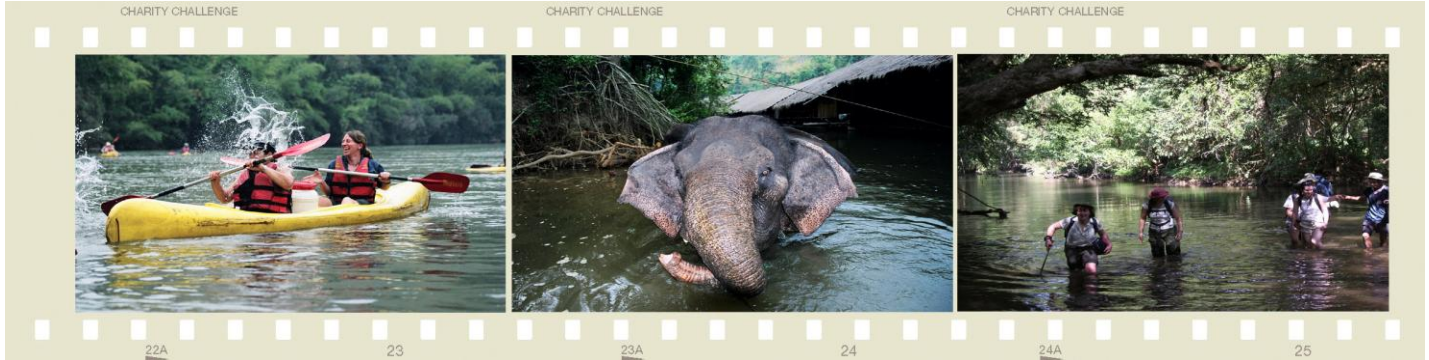


# thailand jungle expedition, thailand



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. .

During your Challenge you will visit and witness firsthand the donation locally by passing through one of the four Karen villages that Charity Challenge supports and present the children and adults of the village with much needed items such as clothes, mosquito nets and school books.

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: Kanchanaburi Province

Arrive in Bangkok. Meet your tour-leader at the airport and transfer by minibus to the nearby historic town of Kanchanaburi (2-3hrs drive). Check in and time to relax before a trip briefing followed by some time to stretch your legs and check-out some of the key historic sites, including the famous Bridge over the River Kwai and one of the area's many war cemeteries of the Allied POWs who died during the construction of the notorious 'Death Railway'.

## Day 3: Transfer to Sangklaburi

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 4 hrs) will be broken up by stops 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: Sanpong (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 alongside and cross over the picturesque Songkaria River. 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 riverside 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 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 extensions:

### Angkor wat (5 days, 4 nights)

- Explore the ancient city of Angkor which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and watch the stunning sunset.
- Visit the jungle temple of Preah Khan, Ta Nei Temple and the pyramid of Ta Keo.
- Morning visit to the remoter temple sites of Banteay Sre which was the only temple to be designed by a woman.
- Visit the Handicraft School, Aki Ra's Landmines Museum or relaxing by the pool.



For cost and further information, please visit the Thailand Jungle challenge page of our website, or click on "extensions" in your member's area.



### Koh chang, koh samui (5 days, 4 nights)

- Spend your day at leisure, relaxing, snorkelling, boat trip, elephant ride and spa message.
- Enjoy Koh Samui, one of the most famous Thailand's islands.
- Spend the evening into one of the larger towns for a slice of Thai night life.