



# Northern Thailand Active Adventure

11 Days

## Day 1 | Chiang Mai

### ยินดีต้อนรับ (Welcome) to Chiang Mai!

At Chiang Mai International Airport (CNX), make your way to the Starbucks located near the domestic arrival, where a smiley Wild Women representative will greet you.

Hop aboard the group shuttle to the hotel, and maybe grab a Cantaloupe Cream Frappuccino for the ride! Alternatively, if you arrive earlier in the day (or 72 hours prior to Day 1 of the itinerary) a shuttle can take you to the rendezvous hotel.

At 4 p.m. we have a trip briefing and welcome drink in the Rachamankha Boutique Hotel lobby (where we are staying). This leading luxury hotel evokes Zen-like simplicity and the distinctive architecture is inspired by 11th century designs. From the serene colonnaded courtyards, tidy gardens to the open-air massage pavilion overlooking the pool, this property is a beautiful first embrace. Don't miss the in-house Library at Rachamankha that houses over 2,000 books on Thai art, culture and design.

Afterwards we can refresh, recharge and revive before gathering together for a memorable dinner at 5:30 p.m. at The House by Ginger. Featured in the 2024 Michelin Guide, this bistro-meets-resto and cocktail bar fuses classic Thai dishes and artisanal spirits with modern quirk. Organic vegetables and fresh herbs are pinched from their nearby Ginger Farm. Get ready for an authentic introduction to the fragrant spices and distinct flavors of from-scratch Thai cuisine in a nostalgic, relaxed space.

## Included Meals

Dinner

## Accommodations

Rachamankha Boutique Hotel



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## Day 2 | Chiang Mai

### Spice of Life

After an early breakfast we strike out at 8 a.m. to reach the trailhead that leads to Wat Pha Lat ('the monastery on the sloping rock'), one of Chiang Mai's most surprising and mysterious temples. We follow the historic monk's trail for one hour to the secret temple, tucked in a pocket of forest where we will participate in a lotus offering ceremony. Built during the reign of King Kuena (1355-1385), the temple is a silent tribute to the white elephant the King rode with his royal entourage. Upon the King's command, Wat Phra That Doi Suthep was built on the very spot where the elephant died of exhaustion. Three more temples were constructed on the mountain in memory of all the places his elephant had stopped and rested—Wat Pha Lat was one of those.

Lunch is at the Michelin-recommended Khaomao-Khaofang Restaurant. It's celebrated for its imaginary jungle experience complete with a cascading waterfall, blooming flowers and soundtrack that adds to the vibe. It's a Wild Women favorite!

In the early afternoon, we ooze into relaxation mode with a healing Thai massage at Fah Lanna Spa. Afterwards, we meet Mr. Prapat and his family for a walk through their robust organic gardens. Mr. Prapat will share stories of a typical Thai day, local traditions and architectural styles. There may be an opportunity to witness the intricacy of basket weaving, an impressive art that has remained unchanged for centuries.

After selecting some hyperlocal ingredients from the garden, we don aprons for an interactive cooking experience. The Prapat family will reveal recipe secrets and demonstrate techniques unique to the preparation of classic northern Thai dishes. We will sample our amateur efforts and enjoy dinner with the family in their home.

Satiated and inspired, we transfer back to our hotel to rest and anticipate our visit to the national park in the morning.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Rachamankha Boutique Hotel

### The Hike

1 hour



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## Day 3 | Mae Ngat Lake Reservoir

### The Bamboo Floating Houses

After breakfast, we make a beeline for Chet Si Fountain National Park to visit the park's famed *Bua Tong* ("Sticky Waterfalls"). The name of the falls is derived from the mineral deposit that makes the surface of the rocks super grippy. The limestone feels like a hardened sponge—no algae adheres to the rock allowing the falls to be ascended like Spiderwoman (there are also ropes and steps alongside the waterfall for the less daring).

We will enjoy the peaceful surroundings with local fruits, sweet cake and strong coffee before visiting the bamboo floating houses of Mae Ngat Lake Reservoir. Here, we climb in the narrow hull of a long tail boat for an exhilarating ride out onto the lake's placid waters for lunch at the Mountain Float restaurant at Mae Ngat Somboon Chon Dam in Sri Lanna National Park. After lunch we can swim or kayak before a 45-minute transfer to our hotel.

Tonight we are hugged by the wild and natural surroundings of our rural resort in Chiang Dao. At Azalea, the pool awaits! There are also complimentary bikes for guest use.

#### **Included Meals**

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

#### **Accommodations**

Azalea Village Wellness Resort & Residence

#### **Travel**

2 hours of driving



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## Day 4 | Chiang Dao

### Moving through Mountains

After an early bird breakfast, we leave the resort at 8:00 a.m. and transfer to the small village of Ban Yang pu Toh which sits in the foothills of the cone-shaped limestone mountain known as Doi Luang Chiang Dao. It rises 7,201 feet (2,195 m) above sea level, making it the third highest mountain in Thailand and a distinct part of the Himalayan mountain range. More than 300 species of birds live in this complex, biodiverse ecosystem.

Ban Yang Pu Toh Village is adjacent to the tall stands of evergreen forest that envelop the Doi Chiang Dao Wildlife Research Station. We follow the San Kang Jong – Huay Mae Mad trail with a female hill tribe guide through the sanctuary for two to three hours (depending on the group's pace) shaded by enormous trees. Here, we may be lucky to see rare, endangered species like the long-tailed gorals (an ungulate), Sumatran serows (forest goats), Asian golden cats, Deignan's babblers (a chatty tiny bird), Huia melasma (an endemic frog) or the Rhacophorus kio (an emerald flying frog).

We end our Chiang Dao loop back in Ban Yang Pu Toh village where we will be invited by locals to relax in the communal hot spring, an enterprise managed by the village. Lunch will be at a local restaurant before we continue onward (3 hours driving) to our slice of heaven stay (and dinner) at Phu Chaisai Mountain Resort in Chiang Rai.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Phu Chaisai Resort & Spa

### The Hike

The San Kang Jong–Huay Mae Mad trail is a moderate hike that takes approximately 2 to 3 hours (depending on group pace).

### Travel

3 hours (driving)



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## Day 5 | Chiang Rai

### Rivers and Ranges

We have a relaxed morning at Phu Chaisai. There are complimentary yoga classes available or you can follow the trails around the hotel grounds. Or, indulge in time by the pool! Lunch will be independent today.

At 2 p.m. we take part in a bamboo rafting experience on the Kham River in Chiang Rai. It's an authentic and playful way to see the towering mountains and lush vegetation that fringes the shoreline. This is a leisurely float, not a Class V Colorado River experience!

We can stop to walk to a nearby waterfall and enjoy tea in the shade (and sounds!) of the jungle.

This evening, we have dinner and a fire at Khon Phu Khao, known for its authentic Thai menu and ambient panorama of the undulating hills and mountain ranges that stretch across Thailand, Laos and Myanmar.

### **Included Meals**

Breakfast and dinner

### **Accommodations**

Phu Chaisai Resort & Spa

### **Travel**

2–3 hours (driving) to Chiang Rai and 50 minutes from Hloyo village to Phu Chaisai Mountain Resort



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## Day 6 | Phu Chaisai

### Mud Museum and Farm Visit

After breakfast, we will make tracks for Chiang Rai at 9 a.m. to meet the hill tribes around Chiang Rai in Mae Salong. In Hloyo Village, we are welcomed by the headman and residents of the Akha hill tribe. Here, we learn about Akha beliefs, religions and the traditional way of life and tour a Yohan Akha home. The local museum, located in a mud house, is filled with insightful displays about the history of the village and its bamboo house architecture.

Under the careful tutelage of local artisans, we learn how to make crafts with simply sourced materials. After this lesson, we step into the kitchen for a cooking demonstration by the mother of the house who will prepare typical Akha dishes using local ingredients and generational techniques.

We exchange stories and compare informal tasting notes over lunch with our gracious host. Afterwards, we walk through the village's pastoral area and observe how farmers and locals harmoniously coexist with the land, animals and forest of this region.

Tonight's dinner is independent and the Phu Chaisai restaurant offers authentic Northern Thai, Burmese and Akha regional cuisine in addition to vegetarian dishes, freshwater fish and pizza from the wood burning oven. The resort's menu is cultivated from its own tea plantation, organic farms and fruit orchards. Be sure to end your meal with a cup of Arabica coffee organically grown, harvested and custom -oasted by a local family-owned business.

#### **Included Meals**

Breakfast and lunch

#### **Accommodations**

Phu Chaisai Resort & Spa





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## Day 7 | Chiang Rai

### The White Temple

Following breakfast, we will depart the resort at 8 a.m. and drive one hour to Wat Rung Khun (the “White Temple”), an ornate contemporary temple with vivid murals and an eccentric sculpture garden. It’s one of the most famous and instantly recognized buildings in Thailand for its prevalence of white plaster representing the purity of Buddha. We spend two hours exploring the controversial and evocative art of the temple before pressing on to lunch and our accommodations.

Tonight’s stay is at Kaomai Lanna Hotel and Resort in the Sanpatong district. This boutique property has been designated as an UNESCO World Heritage site for its ode to northern Thailand’s tobacco industry. The former tobacco farm and 18 curing barns have been converted into thoughtfully curated guest rooms with colonial-style furnishings. Tobacco curing barns are fading from the landscape of northern Thailand as real estate projects and orchards replace them. Kaomai Lanna serves as a reminder of yesteryear, shadowed by old-growth trees.

Kaomai Estate 1955 is an extension of Kaomai Lanna and since 2016, projects have included the renovation of two museum buildings (housed in tobacco drying barns), a cafe conversion from a rare twin barn, an outdoor amphitheater and botanical signs identifying more than 100 different species.

Upon arrival, Kaomai's architecture expert will walk us through the evolution of the property and the transition from a tobacco farm to a resort on a 30 minute tour.

After the tour, we can take five by the poolside, wander around the gardens or visit the Tao Cah cafe, which serves house-blended herbal teas picked from the estate's own garden. Dinner will be at the resort tonight.

### **Included Meals**

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### **Accommodations**

Khao Mai Lanna Hotel & Resort

### **Travel**

4–5 hours of driving



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## Day 8 | ChangChill

### Meet the Elephants of Changchill

Today we meet the mahouts and four magnificent Asian elephants of ChangChill during a private tour. Supakorn Tananseth, the owner of ChangChill, comes from a family that has worked with elephants for several generations. Here, his wish was to provide his elephants better, ethically-sound living conditions by offering a 100% touch-free elephant experience. ChangChill's resident elephants have a more natural, free-roaming life where they can bathe, graze and socialize with each other, versus with humans.

We learn pachyderm personalities and behavior before joining a mahout on a short forest walk. Back at the pavilion, we can help feed the elephants (this is a touch-free experience) before having our own lunch and learning how to make a simple medicine and supplement for the elephants.

Afterwards, we transfer to the hill tribe community village of Baan Mea Sapok for a slow walk, traditional dinner and impactful homestay experience with the Karen tribe.

#### **Included Meals**

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

#### **Accommodations**

Karen Hill Tribe Community Village



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## Day 9 | Rafting along the Mea Wang River

### Bamboo and Bazaar

After breakfast, in Mae Wang National Park, we follow a path across Mae Wang mountain for two hours to Mae Win village, passing several waterfalls en route for a quick splash. Now that we are expert bamboo rafters after our Kham River experience, we will enjoy another raft along the Mae Wang river. Depending on water levels, we should enjoy the thrill of a few rapids on our one-hour float before a riverside lunch.

We return to Rachamankha Boutique Hotel in the early afternoon and have time to journal, catnap or AirDrop photos of elephants and the Sticky Waterfalls.

Later, at the Chiang Mai Night Market and Bazaar, our guide will provide a helpful orientation walk and can offer some suggestions on the best genuine street food to try. \*Note: Tonight's dinner is not included and we are free range to order whatever tempts us in the market!

Expect to see the unexpected—everything is for sale here! Football jerseys, noodles, furniture, samurai swords, sarongs...it will be one memorable shopping experience! If you're seeking local woven or embroidered textiles, fabric, dyed silks or sterling silver jewelry to remember your Thailand experience, this is the place to find it! Thailand is home to some of the biggest silver mines in the world and the historical threads of traditional textiles play a significant role in Thai heritage.

### Included Meals

Breakfast and lunch

### Accommodations

Rachamankha Boutique Hotel

### The Hike

2 hours

### Travel

1.5 hours of driving



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## Day 10 | Chiang Mai

### Hands-on Handicrafts

At 9:30 a.m. we will make our way to Ban Pong Huai Lan. In this small village we learn about the Royal Initiative Project and the Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, which revolves around primarily growing enough to eat and selling off the surplus bounty.

We visit Grandma Som's Farm, and enjoy a simple lunch cooked by the community. Later, we learn about handlooms, weaving and how to make a tiny rice box mobile. We also try Kanom-Khee-Maeo or "cat poop dessert." The sweet rice flour and coconut dessert is the cat's meow, no shit!

Mid-afternoon, we'll transfer to Baan Kang Wat, a small crafts village where we can take part in various workshops. Alternatively, there are cafes, smoothie joints and clothing shops if you'd prefer to wander.

Tonight's farewell dinner will be at the artsy Lamour Cafe and Restaurant in Chiang Mai. The garden setting, punchy fusion of northern and southern Thai flavors and art make for a lively night.

### Included Meals

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

### Accommodations

Rachamankha Boutique Hotel

### Travel

2 hours of driving



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# Day 11 | Chiang Mai

## Journey's End

Our trip comes to an end in a physical sense, but Thailand's powerful effect is guaranteed to stay deeply stitched in our DNA. We can enjoy breakfast at the hotel and nurse one last cup of Chiang Rai coffee.

It's time to say goodbye to your Wild Women tribe, swap contact info and future travel plans. Where next? You can book your departure flight anytime today. Please note, it's a 25 minute transfer to Chiang Mai International Airport (CNX).

### Included Meals

Breakfast



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# Trip Details

## Know Before You Go

For all of the logistical details you'll need to know prior to departure—including the packing list, arrival and departure details and suggested tipping information, click [HERE](#).

Itinerary version as of April 5, 2024.