



Thailand



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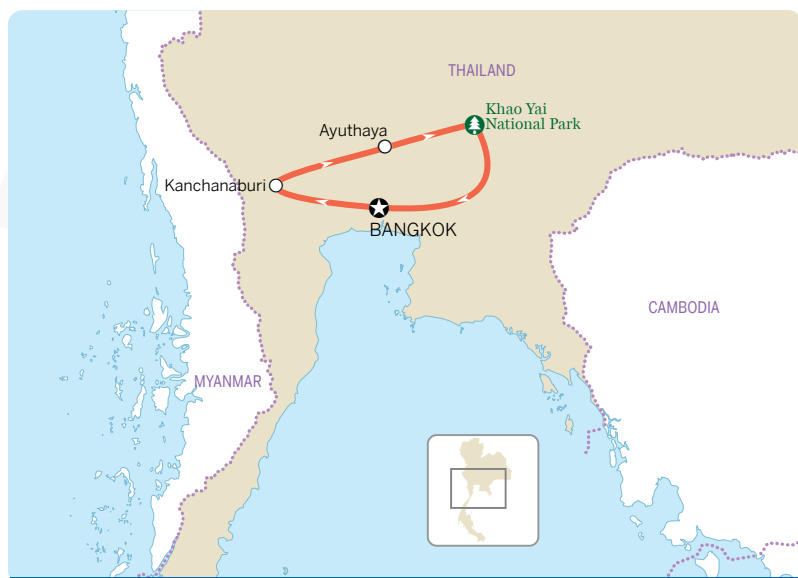
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Itineraries



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.



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 (p577)



IKONL / 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

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

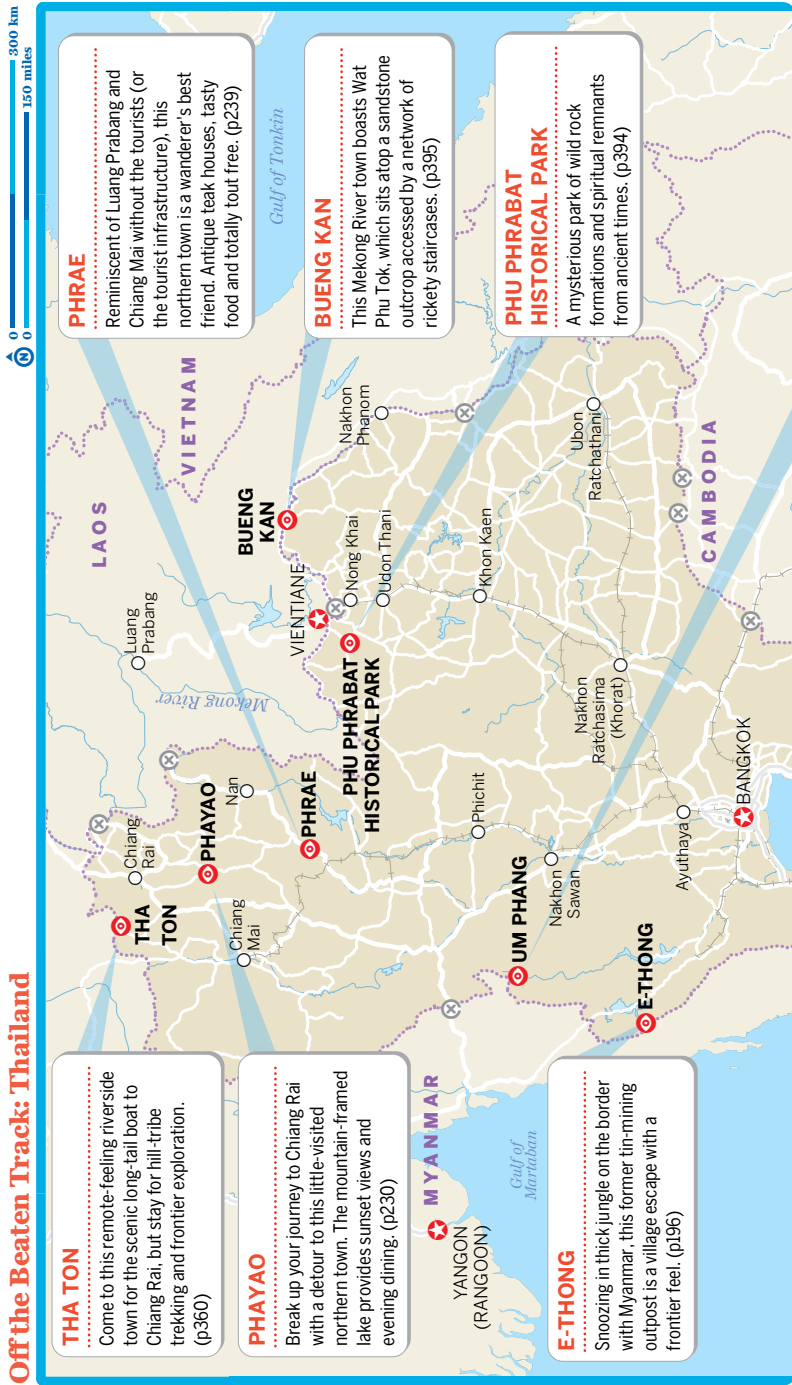
Reminiscent of Luang Prabang and Chiang Mai without the tourists (or the tourist infrastructure), this northern town is a wanderer's best friend. Antique teak houses, tasty food and totally tout free. (p239)

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)



Behind the Scenes

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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



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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'.

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