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Chiang Rai Evening Stroll

After checking into your accommodation, we will take you out to dinner at a favorite restaurant specialising in some Chiang Rai classic dishes. Then, we'll drive to the famous golden clock tower, located at the very center of town. If the timing is right, we'll be rewarded with a sound and light show. From here we will walk to Chiang Rai's happening Night Bazaar. We'll stroll through the stalls and stands selling Lanna and hilltribe arts, clothing and crafts before settling in at one of the public dining areas to watch a folk music performance. We can try a few local snacks and enjoy some beverages.

Note: we usually do this on the first day after arriving overland from Chiang Mai or via plane from Bangkok.

Time: half-day (evening), 18:00-21:30 (flexible)

Explored by: walking and private vehicle

Inclusion: English speaking host, transportation, plenty of snacks, soft drinks and drinking water

Meals: dinner at a local restaurant



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Bikes and Giants

Today, we'll jump on bicycles and ride along small winding roads, over some manageable hills and through local villages. The pace will be leisurely and we'll stop at various places along the way to learn all about life in sleepy Chiang Rai. A highlight will be a visit to the impressive "Wat Rong Khun", or the "White Temple", one of Thailand's most unusual temple structures created by national artist Chalermchai Kositpipat.

Then, get ready for an ethical elephant experience at Elephant Valley. The first order of business will be lunch at the sanctuary followed by a fascinating afternoon watching these majestic creatures wander and graze bamboo groves, forests and grasslands.

This sanctuary truly puts the elephants first, while also offering visitors of all ages a unique opportunity to experience and learn about these amazing animals up close. Proceeds not only go towards providing the family of elephants with a natural habitat to live, but will also go towards elephant conservation efforts that are geared to providing the species as a whole with a secure future. As a true sanctuary, there's no riding, bathing or petting of the elephants by the visitors. Instead, the elephants remain undisturbed in their natural habitat, while professional elephant guides entertain, educate and inform guests about the elephants they are observing and about the species as a whole.

Note: bike riding takes place over approximately twenty kilometers on paved as well as dirt roads with minor hills. Non-cyclists can enjoy all of today's activities by private support van.

Time: full-day, 8:00 - 17:00

Explored by: biking, walking, and private vehicle

Inclusions: English speaking host, transportation, plenty of snacks, soft drinks and drinking water, and Elephant Valley Thailand afternoon experience

Meals: a local lunch will be served at Elephant Valley Thailand



CHIANG RAI SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

Bikes, Boats, Villages & Caves

Get ready for a full day of exploring a large swath of what the scenic countryside surrounding Chiang Rai has to offer. And we'll do it in the best way we know how: on bicycles with the breeze in our faces! The day will begin with a drive to a cave temple, Wat Tha Phra, where our mountain bikes will be waiting for us. We'll spend some time exploring this vernacular temple, get used to our bicycles, and then take off to pedal along the Kok River, through fertile farmland, creaking bamboo stands, and to a hilltribe village surrounded by limestone mountains.

Here we will have a local lunch, and then carry on through small back roads leading out of the village, up and over some medium-grade mountains, passing by further Ahka and Lisu settlements. When we've had enough biking, we'll board a private longtail boat waiting for us on the river and head back down the river to Chiang Rai town. Sit back, relax, and take in the scenery unfolding along the shores as you reflect on this epic day.

Note: bicycles are well-maintained, high-performance bikes with front suspension, helmets, gloves and water bottle. The bike ride covers 25 - 50 kilometres on sealed roads, dirt roads, and manageable hills.

Time: full-day, 09:00 - 16:00 (an early start is recommended)

Explored by: biking and longtail boat

Inclusion: English speaking host, support vehicle, plenty of snacks, soft drinks and drinking water

Meals: lunch at a local restaurant



CHIANG RAI SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

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Hilltribe Hike and Jungle Lunch

Today we will enjoy a unique northern Thailand experience. We will depart early after breakfast and make a two hour journey to the mountain ranges that straddle the Thai-Myanmar border. Our destination is the Lahu hilltribe chief village in Mae Ai district, a traditional settlement nestled in an idyllic valley. There we will be greeted by community leaders donning their finest handmade tribal costumes, who will take us on a stroll through their village. You will learn about Lahu architecture, spiritual practices, music, and daily life. A short hike from the village will take us to a small clearing by a stream where we will have a hands-on opportunity to prepare a Lahu feast using only locally procured ingredients and tools. Our Lahu guide will show us how villagers combine cultivated crops with foraged edibles to create their unique dishes. We'll observe how they create bamboo vessels and utensils through ingenious craftsmanship! This is a cooking and culinary experience unlike any other.

The afternoon will be spent hiking through forests and orchards, and along the gentle streams that dissect the hilly landscape. We will hike for around two to three hours, stopping regularly to learn about local flora and fauna as well as their relationship to the hilltribes of the area. The hike will take us to a small but beautiful, multi-tiered waterfall. Feel free to take a dip and cool off! Our hike will conclude here and a 4x4 truck will be waiting to take us back to the Lahu hilltribe village where we'll say goodbye to our Lahu hosts for the day and drive back to Chiang Rai.

Note: The drive from Chiang Rai to and from the Lahu hilltribe village takes around two hours each way. The final portion of the route up into the mountains is quite exhilarating with steep climbs and sharp corners.

Time: full-day, 7:30 - 16:00

Explored by: hiking and private vehicle

Inclusion: English speaking host, transportation, plenty of snacks, soft drinks and drinking water

Meals: local lunch prepared by the Lahu community



CHIANG RAI SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

Doi Mae Salong

Today we'll drive up to one of the Kingdom's most stunning destinations – Doi Mae Salong. This dramatic mountain region was settled first by indigenous hilltribe groups such as the Ahka and Lahu peoples, and more recently by Chinese settlers who fled the Communist Revolution in China in 1949. We'll drive roughly 75 kilometers up and over spectacular jungle-covered mountains enroute to this highland retreat. Hiking Anyone? We'll arrive early enough for a nice nature hike through terraced tea and rice plantations, taking in hill tribe villages and rolling mountains around the Doi Mae Salong area. By noon we will have certainly built up an appetite and we will treat ourselves to some delicious southern Chinese (Yunnanese food) for which the village of Doi Mae Salong is renowned.

Doi Mae Salong is also home to Thailand's premier Oolong tea production. We will have a tea tasting set up to try some of the many varieties and learn all about the process and importance of tea growing in northern Thailand.

Note: From Chiang Rai City, it takes around one and a half hours to reach Doi Mae Salong. The hike covers around ten kilometers.

Time: 09:00-16:00 (flexible)

Explored by: walking, hiking, and private vehicle

Inclusion: English speaking host, transportation, plenty of snacks, soft drinks and drinking water

Meals: lunch at a local restaurant



CHIANG RAI SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

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Artist's Home-Studio Visit

Acclaimed Chiang-Rai artist Sangiam Yarangsee is a master of impressionist painting, drawing inspiration from the vibrancy of nature in Northern Thailand. He has spent well over two decades painting almost every corner of the greater Golden Triangle region, first concentrating on hills, then moving on to cloudscapes, rivers in neighboring provinces and countries (Laos), the ocean in Thailand's far south and even landscapes in Europe and Nepal.

Today, we will have the opportunity to visit Sangiam's hilltop home-studio-gallery, which commands not only terrific views but also a fine collection of his works. Having experienced the rolling hills, valleys, and villages of Northern Thailand yourself, getting a chance to browse through Sangiam's colorful canvases and see these scenes through his eyes (i.e. brushes) will be a delight.

Note: this visit works well on the last day in Chiang Rai before transferring onwards or it can be added to one of our day trips. It can also be combined with other cool artsy places in Chiang Rai such as the White and Blue Temples and the Black House. Chiang Rai is an art hub in Thailand!

Private painting sessions by the artist can also be arranged.

Time: flexible

Inclusion: light snacks, soft drinks and drinking water



CHIANG RAI SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

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Extraordinary Road Trip from Chiang Rai/Golden Triangle to Chiang Mai

Today we'll drive to Chiang Mai via the scenic route through Fang town. The trip takes about five hours, but we'll break it up with some memorable experiences. We'll pick you up early from your hotel and transfer south to Chiang Mai Province with a lunch stop en-route. This will be no ordinary transfer day and no ordinary lunch. We will take the most scenic route, driving along the winding roads that straddle the Thai-Myanmar border. After around three hours we will stop for a special hilltribe jungle lunch. Taking a short, but worthwhile, detour off the main road, we'll head up to a Lahu hilltribe village where you will enjoy a traditionally prepared meal (ingredients are procured locally and made and eaten using bamboo vessels and utensils created on the spot!). Time permitting we can take a stroll through the village and learn about Lahu ways of life before continuing the picturesque journey east towards Chiang Rai. Before reaching your hotel, we can stop at some other locations along the way, such as the stunning Wat Tha Ton temple, with a view that stretches deep into Myanmar!

Note: if staying at the Four Seasons Tented Camp or the Anantara Golden Triangle, the drive would be an hour longer.

Time: full-day. 8:00-15:00 (an early start is recommended)

Explored by: private vehicle and walking

Inclusion: English speaking host, transportation, plenty of snacks, soft drinks and drinking water

Meals: special lunch near hilltribe village



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Northern Cycling Adventure

Get ready for an epic adventure in northern Thailand! Today we head out on our mountain bikes to the far-flung district of Mae Ai and a very cool resort along the Mae Kok River. We will snake along the river, covering scenic paths that straddle the jungle-covered mountains and rural roads that zig zag through lush fields and little hamlets. This is an epic adventure which will take you far off the beaten path while also providing a solid workout to match! Be prepared to cycle between 45 to 75 kilometers but we will, of course, have a support van by our side at all times as well. Along the way we will enjoy a local lunch and throughout the day we'll have time for spontaneous stops to learn about local life.

After the day's cycling adventure, enjoy the rest of the afternoon swimming in the resort's pool and relaxing on your balcony.

Note: bicycles are well-maintained, high-performance bikes with front suspension, helmets, gloves and water bottle. The bike ride can cover 45 - 75 kilometers.

Time: full-day, 08:00 - 17:00 (an early start is recommended)

Explored by: biking

Inclusion: English speaking host, support vehicle, plenty of snacks, soft drinks and drinking water

Meals: Meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner



CHIANG RAI SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

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The Smiling Albino Difference

Smiling Albino was conceived to create highly original, tailor-made travel experiences that we'd proudly take our friends and family on. Founded in 2000 by Canadians, Scott Coates and Daniel Fraser, we've grown from our original base in Thailand to offer adventures in Cambodia, Vietnam, Nepal, Laos and Myanmar, bringing unique travel experiences to thousands of happy guests.

Our bespoke trips are the result of continuous travel, innovation and refinement — combining multiple activities, incredible locations and world-class hosts. The signature of our experiences relies on the intimate relationships we've built with a huge network of people throughout the region, both in a professional and personal capacity, as well as through our social projects and work with local communities.

We don't just connect the dots, we create them, delivering unforgettable travel experiences.

We look forward to hosting you!

CHIANG RAI SIGNATURE EXPERIENCES

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