



Full Itinerary & Trip Details

Empowering Elephants



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Trip Overview



PRICE STARTING FROM

\$3,300

DURATION

12 days

IDEAL AGE

3 to 75 year olds

STARTS IN → ENDS IN

Chiang Rai → Chiang Mai

STYLE

Wildlife

Itinerary

Introduction

In a Nutshell

Elephants are great! By great, we don't mean enormous, humongous, gigantic, etc. That goes without saying. By great, we mean majestic, marvelous and simply amazing. What makes them so is their intelligence, their social codes and the grace of their behavior. Unfortunately, what is also great, is their pain and their suffering. In many cases, this is related to the hardest-to-live-with animal of them all- mankind. This adventure is designed to change this! But to really witness all of this, you have to view them in their natural habitat. We will be spending a few days with them in an elephant refuge, taking care of them, studying them, connecting-without-touching and helping them in their rehabilitative journey from being a working tool to living a free elephant life.

As to the location of this meaningful adventure, we have spared nothing: far from the touristy beaches and bustling capital to the south, the ancient Lanna Kingdom in modern-day northern Thailand, has an altogether different feel. Nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas, it is blessed with unparalleled natural beauty and home to a diverse range of people with fascinating cultures and history. In the elephant sanctuary, we will be working alongside local staff to provide the best environment and habitat possible for these incredible creatures, while learning new skills and making new friends. If this isn't rewarding enough, there are also fantastic tours, delicious meals, and unique activities available to explore the area, making this an unforgettable experience for all ages.

Project I.D

This adventure takes place at an elephant sanctuary that prides itself on its ethical values: there is no riding, bathing with, performing with or abusing of the elephants in any way, shape or form. This haven is unique in that the elephants have 40 acres of bamboo groves, forest, swamp and grasslands in which they roam and live as free animals. There are currently six elephants at the refuge. We will help enable the sanctuary staff's vision of letting elephants be elephants again in as natural an environment as possible after years of forced labor. Most of the work is done at a distance to allow the elephants to live as natural a lifestyle as possible. You'll be assigned tasks that match your capabilities and will most benefit the elephants and their home. Participants will prepare and plant food for the elephant's diet, feed them, as well as take part in observation duties and work to help maintain the refuge habitat itself. Aside from the daily chores, you'll have plenty of opportunities to simply relax and observe these amazing animals re-learning how to be elephants again.

To break up our contributonal work, after a few days at the sanctuary we'll immerse ourselves in

Day 1, Thursday:

Welcome to the ancient Lanna Kingdom in Northern Thailand! We'll be welcomed at Chiang Rai airport by the sanctuary staff and transferred to our home for much of our adventure, a beautiful boutique resort on the banks of the Kok River. Rest, relax, enjoy a swim and take in the beautiful surroundings. Enjoy a fantastic buffet of Asian and western dishes for dinner at the resort before a good night's sleep.

Day 2, Friday:

After a delicious breakfast, we'll travel to the sanctuary to meet the elephants, whose life and habitat we'll be improving during our stay. We'll receive an orientation from the local team and a personal tour by the sanctuary's founder and director. After a northern Thai lunch, sanctuary guides will provide further insights into the sanctuary and the life of Thai elephants. We'll get to see up close while a mahout washes and cares for the animal he loves. After giving the elephants a late afternoon snack, we'll head back to the resort in time for a swim before sunset. We'll enjoy a welcome meal with the sanctuary team, served at a restaurant specializing in Lanna region cuisine. . Then we will visit Chiang Rai's night bazaar and enjoy a traditional show*.

*As with all daytime and evening activities, you have the option to rest and relax at the resort and have your meals there.

Day 3, Saturday:

After breakfast, it's time to care for the elephants! We'll be assigned chores by the sanctuary guides that are most needed to benefit the elephants (within our abilities, of course). We'll be working alongside the sanctuary staff, gaining insights while helping. After lunch at the sanctuary, we will have our first look at the beautiful foothills of the Himalayas – we'll take a short trip to the remote, hill tribe coffee plantations, with stunning views and samples of the local brew. Then, there's nothing like a good waterfall to cool down. In the evening we will participate in the local, Saturday tradition of "walking street," which includes eating with the people of Chiang Rai, and lastly, a massage treatment of your choice. You've earned it!

Day 4, Sunday:

Morning time is elephant time! After lunch we will visit two fascinating local museums and a soak in a hot spring. The museums will provide an introduction to our Golden Triangle tour tomorrow. Still in the artsy spirit, in the evening we'll visit two of Chiang Rai's best galleries, and enjoy dinner and a glass of wine to top off our day.*

*A quiet evening at the resort, after an intense day, is a great option as well.

Day 5, Monday:

Our adventure goes up a notch today with the start of the Golden Triangle tour. After breakfast, we will visit the iconic White and Blue Temples. We then head east towards the ancient city of Chiang Saen, located on the banks of the mighty Mekong River, for a delicious lunch and tour of its ruins. Then we head north towards the famous Golden Triangle, where Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet. After visiting breathtaking viewpoints of the three countries, we'll take a private Mekong river tour. It will allow us to visit small markets in Laos and Myanmar, rewarding us with incredible views and even greater insights into the peoples and cultures of the region. Our resort's Lanna regionstyle rooms have views of the Mekong River, Laos and Myanmar. A delicious, alfresco dinner at the resort, offering the same spectacular vista, will be great close to a great day.

Day 6, Tuesday:

This morning we visit the Opium Hall for an incredible learning experience detailing the history of the drug globally, its negative impact on the local communities and what is being done locally to ensure a brighter future. Then it's on to Mae Sai, Thailand's northernmost town. Next is a visit to the majestic mountain ridge that separates Thailand and Myanmar, site of the deep cave where the 13 young soccer players were trapped in 2018. We'll have lunch in a coffee shop on the mountain top, while enjoying stunning views. Then on to Doi Tung to visit the botanical gardens, where we'll have a treetop walk and witness a royal villa restoration project. Back in our Golden Triangle resort, we will enjoy sunset drinks and more incredible views. Those who miss western cuisine, will enjoy dinner at a local pizza parlor, known as one of the best in northern Thailand.

Day 7, Wednesday:

More exploration! After a leisurely breakfast, we head to Doi Mae Salong mountain. We will visit remote hill tribe villages and see how different peoples and religions live side by side in peace and harmony. We'll continue to Thaton and have lunch at one of the region's famous orange plantations. Then it's time for a leisurely, long-tail boat ride all the way back to our initial resort in Chiang Rai, meandering through stunning, unspoiled green valleys along the way (our luggage will travel before us and wait for us in the resort, by the way). This evening we can take it easy and enjoy our dinner at the resort. A relaxing yoga class will help us unwind after today's trip.

Day 8, Thursday:

After breakfast, it's back to the sanctuary for our penultimate contributonal day. We will start with updates from the staff about comings and goings at the sanctuary while we were gone. After a morning's hard work and delicious lunch, it's decision time – you can either stay at the sanctuary, rest at the resort or visit Chiang Saen Lake, which is a biodiversity hotspot for

numerous species of birds in its wetlands. Come evening, we will regroup for an excursion to one of Chiang Rai's best restaurants, famous for its beautiful surroundings, excellent fusion dishes, great cakes and drinks.

Day 9, Friday:

Sadly, it's our last full day at the sanctuary. Contributional work is set for the morning. After lunch there are special tours and talks from the sanctuary team and founder, reflecting on the positive impact the last week's work has had and its potential long-lasting effects. In the evening, a special farewell meal is planned with all of the new friends we've been working with at the sanctuary. This Thai-style barbeque is a real treat for everyone.

Day 10, Saturday:

After breakfast, we return to the sanctuary to bid farewell to our new animal friends (we will enjoy the presence of some of our new human friends a little longer). We then head to Chiang Mai with a stop en route for lunch at northern Thailand's largest lake in Phayao province. This weekend we are staying at a lovely resort within the old city walls of Chiang Mai, just a short walk from the legendary, weekend local's market. That evening we have the option to eat at the hotel or venture out on our own to discover a little taste of Chiang Mai's historic charms and secrets.

Day 11, Sunday:

Our final day is a big one. After breakfast at the resort, we have a fantastic tour of Chiang Mai's old city markets and ancient temples, enjoying rickshaw rides and even meeting a revered monk to discuss the city's history. After lunch, we'll visit Doi Suthep mountain temple, one of Thailand's most esteemed temples -enjoy the view! Come evening, we'll be joined by some of the sanctuary team (*why did we say goodbye yesterday if they're coming along?) for a special evening banquet of northern Thai delights and performances of Lanna cultural dancing and martial arts – A true spectacle.

Day 12, Monday:

It's now time to say goodbye. The sanctuary staff will bid us farewell at the hotel and make sure we are on our way for transit to Chiang Mai airport and homebound.

What's Included

Accommodation

4-star-plus accommodation in upscale resorts throughout the adventure: All rooms have air conditioning, hot water showers, Wifi, TV, private balcony and access to swimming pools and gym facilities

Guide

Comprehensive and professional pre-departure travel guidance, 24/7 emergency hotline, experienced local field team.

Meals

Full board with varied meals every day and unlimited soft drinks and bottled water, throughout the adventure

Transport

Airport Transfers are included on arrival and departure days

Others

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