

THAILAND & LEGENDS OF SIAM

February 1-14, 2023

With optional excursion to Angkor Wat, Cambodia

Personally hosted and escorted by Larry Gelwix, the “Getaway Guru”

How does one describe “Legends of Siam?” Visions of ancient millennial temples, the timeless chants of Buddhist monks, flower markets, narrow canals and waterways, cuisine that bursts with flavor, shopping bargains galore, hill tribes clinging to traditional lifestyles, colorful costumes and festivals, floating down a jungle river in a long-tail boat stopping at remote villages, a real life setting that would be perfect for an Indiana Jones movie, and the “King and I,” all grace your imagination. You begin to realize this is no ordinary adventure. This is one of those extraordinary, life-changing experiences. This is an adventure for “travelers,” not for mere tourists.

Brief Itinerary Summary:

- Feb. 01** USA – Bangkok, evening departure
- Feb. 02** Cross International Date Line and “lose” a day (you “gain” it back on the way home)
- Feb. 03** Arrive in Bangkok, afternoon free, Chao Phraya River dinner cruise this evening
- Feb. 04** Bangkok city tour including Grand Palace, Wat Po, “klongs,” & other major sites
- Feb. 05** Free day open for independent activities
- Feb. 06** Bangkok – Chiang Rai, White Temple, shopping
- Feb. 07** Golden Triangle, Royal Family villa & gardens, Chiang Rai Night Market
- Feb. 08** Kok River by “long tail” boat to Chiang Mai with river stop at a remote native village
- Feb. 09** Wat Doi Suthep (“gold temple”), shopping, Chiang Mai Night Market
- Feb. 10** Elephant camp, orchid farm, and Chiang Dao Valley visit, shopping
- Feb. 11** Chiang Mai – Phuket, last chance for shopping, fine dining, & shopping
- Feb. 12** Phuket – Free day with optional activities
- Feb. 13** Phuket, Phang Nga Bay excursion
- Feb. 14** Phuket – USA return flights. Arrive home same day.



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Detailed Itinerary:

Feb. 01 USA – Bangkok, Thailand Evening departure and fly west over the Pacific crossing the International Date Line and “lose” a day (Sorry if Feb. 2 is your birthday!)

Feb. 03 Arrive Bangkok (D) Airport welcome by local hosts. Transfer to our hotel, perfectly situated in downtown Bangkok in close proximity to city attractions, nightlife, shopping, and restaurants. Balance of the morning and afternoon free. This evening after a restful afternoon we enjoy a dinner cruise on the Chao Phraya River to witness the temples and monuments illuminated at night. This is an exciting and memorable introduction to Bangkok.

Feb. 04 Bangkok: Highlights of the City of Angels (B,L) After breakfast, we embark on an excursion to see the highlights of the city, passing through the narrow streets of **Chinatown** and past **Pak Klong Talad**, the colorful fresh flower market, to the historical roots of Bangkok. We continue on to one of the great **Wonders of the World**, the magnificent **Royal Grand Palace** and **Wat Phra Kaew**, a Royal Temple within the palace grounds, dating back to 1782 AD and the Chakri Dynasty. (In Thailand, *wat* is a Hindu or Buddhist temple and a source of spiritual enlightenment.)



The main chapel houses the most revered religious icon in Thailand, the magnificent **Emerald Buddha**, cloaked in seasonal costumes of woven gold and jewels. We continue on a guided tour of the grounds, including the house occupied temporarily by Anna Leonowens, the English school teacher depicted in the 1951 Rodgers and Hammerstein Broadway musical, “**The King and I**,” starring Yul Brynner and more recently by Jodie Foster in “**Anna & The King**.”



One of the most impressive monuments along the river is **Wat Arun**, also known as the **Temple of Dawn**. We will enjoy lunch at one of Larry’s favorite Bangkok restaurants, the Supatra River House located right on the Chao Phraya riverfront. This is just a great meal! After lunch we depart in traditional Thai “long tail” boats and explore the city by water. Bangkok is the “Venice of the East” with more than 300 canals. We go where most tourists

never go. We explore the residential canals (“klongs”) of the city where the common people live and work. It a sensory experience never to be forgotten.

Feb. 05 Bangkok (B) Today is a free day to explore the many exciting areas of the city. It is easy to get around town, especially via Bangkok’s water and land taxis, Sky Train elevated rail system, and modern subway system. It is a perfect day for relaxing, shopping, and mixing with the locals. Optional tours are available to **Ayutthaya** and the **Summer Palace of the Royal Family, jungle bicycling, cooking classes, Weekend Market,** and more for you to enjoy.

Feb. 06 Bangkok – Chiang Rai. (B)

Morning flight to Chiang Rai. Our tour includes a visit to the famous **Wat Rong Khun**, better known to visitors as the “White Temple”. The temple is a contemporary, unconventional art exhibit in the style of a Buddhist temple. The main building of the temple is reached by crossing a bridge over a small lake. In front of the bridge are outreaching hands symbolizing unrestrained desire. The bridge proclaims the way to happiness is by foregoing temptation, greed, and desire. After crossing the bridge we arrive at the “Gate of Heaven, guarded by two creatures representing Death and Rahu, who decides the fate of the dead. After visiting this temple, we continue on to additional sites of Chiang Rai.



Feb. 07 Chiang Rai & the Infamous Golden Triangle. (B,L,) After breakfast we depart for the ancient Lanna capitol of **Chiangsaen** on the **Mekong River**. Continue to the newly opened **Hall of Opium Museum** (sorry, no samples!), an excellent state-of-the-art exhibition focused on the 5,000 year history of the drug and its profound effects on society. Lunch at exciting local restaurant tucked away in the jungle (you will *never* forget today’s jungle journey and lunch!).

We continue onward to **Doi Tung Mountain**, the beautiful **Mae Fah Luang Botanical Gardens**, and the **Royal Villa**. A walking tour of the interior is possible if members of the Royal Family are not in residence. The gardens remind visitors of the Buchart Gardens in Victoria, BC. Chiang Rai has its own very popular night market just a block away from our hotel.



Feb. 08 Chiang Rai – Chiang Mai. (B,L) We head northward through the increasingly hilly terrain. The surrounding mountains are actually the foothills of the **Himalayas**. Others drive to Chiang Mai. Not us! We board **long-tail boats** for an exciting 2-½ hour ride up the scenic **Kok River** en route to **Chiang Mai**, stopping at a **remote hill tribe village** along the way. We continue by motorcoach into the lush **Chiang Dao Valley** for lunch at a resort hidden and tucked away in the middle of the jungle. After lunch we continue on through the jungle and mountains to Chiang Mai.

Once the capital of the ancient **Lanna Kingdom**, the city of **Chiang Mai** is more than 700 years old and you can see it everywhere with massive walls surrounding the city, five gates, and a moat. You will find the

northern province distinctively different from Bangkok and central plains with unique cuisine, art and architecture, and a charming and friendly “laid back” lifestyle. Outside the city, rugged mountains covered with dense forests and jungle provide ample habitat for elephants, wild orchids, and **remote hill tribe villages**. Upon arrival in Chiang Mai we transfer to our hotel located adjacent to the famous **Chiang Mai Night Bazaar**.

Feb. 09 Wat Doi Suthep. (B,L) Today we explore the nearby national parks and forests and make our way to **Wat Doi Suthep**, a spectacular temple perched on the side of a mountain overlooking Chiang Mai and the **Ping River Valley**. (Wat Doi Suthep is the famous “gold temple.”) Our guide will relate the fascinating tale of how the temple site was selected and the superhuman effort that was involved in building the road leading up to it. You can climb the impressive 300-step *naga* staircase or use the funicular tram. This is a lively, working temple and a resident monk will give you a personal blessing if you like, then ring the temple bells three times for good luck. (**Note from Larry:** “Doi Suthep is my favorite *wat* [temple] in all of Thailand. It is a site not to be missed in your travels. It is also known as the “Gold Temple.” Words cannot describe it!”) We



descend from the mountain, through the valleys, and back into Chiang Mai for a tour including major landmarks, temples, and shopping within the old city walls.



Chiang Mai is the **handicraft** capital of the Kingdom. This afternoon we visit **Sankampaeng Road**, home of traditional handicraft workshops and factories. Silk, cotton, hard-carved wood in all shapes and size, lacquer ware, silversmiths, handmade paper and umbrellas to name just a few of the shopping opportunities. For lunch we visit a famous local restaurant for their Thai buffet featuring a delicious northern Thai specialty – *khao soy* – a savory chicken curry noodle soup, plus a wide variety of Thai and Western delicacies. The balance of the day is at leisure with plenty of shopping time. You will find “anything and everything” from inexpensive Thai souvenirs to silks to food to jewelry to fine examples of traditional Thai workmanship and handicrafts. This will “blow you away!” Our hotel is perfectly located in the center of everything.

Feb. 10 Chiang Dao. (B,L) Following breakfast we venture into the mountains surrounding Chiang Mai. Our first stop is the an **Elephant Camp** for an “up close and personal” demonstration of the strength, agility, and intelligence of these massive pachyderms, followed by an unforgettable **elephant safari** through the forest and along the river. We continue to venture deeper into the **Chiang Dao Valley**...literally in the middle of nowhere! We next visit the famous orchid and butterfly plantation. We return to Chiang Mai late afternoon with plenty of time for shopping.



Feb. 11 Chiang Mai – Phuket. (B) Late morning flight from Chiang Mai to the island of Phuket. We transfer from the airport to our resort. Phuket, the “Pearl of the South,” is widely known as the most beautiful of all the Thai islands. Phuket has a culture all of its own with a rich mixture of Thai and other Southeast Asia ethnicities. The island features the Andaman Sea and offers a varied terrain including powdery white sand beaches, limestone cliffs, forests, and tropical vegetation including microclimates throughout the island. Phuket is a bit of the Garden of Eden, South Pacific dreams, and Jurassic Park (without the dinosaurs). It really is a paradise never to be forgotten.

Feb. 12 Phuket. (B) Today is a free day to enjoy the white sand beaches, blue ocean waters, gentle trade winds, rainforests, jungle, shopping, and wonderful dining. The food...oh my gosh, the food! You may want to just relax or take a short drive to lively Patong City with its many restaurants, shopping areas, and nightlife.

Feb. 13 Phang Nga Bay. (B,D) Early this afternoon we head north to the Phang Nga Bay. A distinctive feature of **Phang Nga Bay** is the sheer limestone cliffs that jut vertically out of the emerald green water. James Bond Island and Koh Pannyi are just two of the more famous spots in this bay. A leisurely afternoon cruise takes us through the dramatic limestone islands. The interior of these islands are hallow and this is where the fun begins. Our large cruising boat will stop at several islands. In pairs we will board a kayak paddled by a local guide that will take us through a short exterior tunnel to the interior of the island which is hallow and open to the sky. Tropical birds and monkeys inhabit many of these islands. (Larry’s note, “The Phang Nga Bay sea kayak is absolutely, positively my favorite excursion in all of Thailand. The guide does the paddling, you just sit back and take in the experience. It is sensory overload.”) This excursion is perfect for people of all ages. We return to Phuket in our large boat at sunset with a light dinner served onboard. This is an experience not to be missed and will be talked about forever! (Actual tour times will be set according to the tides.)



Feb. 14 Phuket – USA. (B) After breakfast we transfer to the Phuket airport for our overseas flight back home. Crossing the International Date Line we “gain” a day and arrive home this same day.

Or, join Larry for an optional excursion to Angkor Wat, Cambodia. One of the great “Wonders of the World”

“Angkor Wat is of such extraordinary construction that it is not possible to describe it with a pen, particularly since it is like no other building in the world. It has towers and decoration and all the refinements which the human genius can conceive of.”

– António da Madalena, 1586

(António da Madalena was a Portuguese Capuchin friar who was the first Western visitor to Angkor in 1586)



Feb. 14 Phuket – Siem Reap, Cambodia. (B) We depart Phuket this morning and fly to Siem Reap, Cambodia, the nearest town to the incomparable ancient **Khmer** temple complex of **Angkor**. From the 9th to 15th centuries, **Angkor** was both the power base of a mighty military and political force, and the heart of a rich and sophisticated civilization. You will see magnificent and massive stone monuments, ancient temples, wide majestic causeways, imposing gateways and towers — all in a wonderful Indiana Jones type jungle setting! This evening we attend a unique performance of **Phare, the Cambodian Circus**. But this is no Barnum & Bailey circus act. Formed in 1994, this group of young Cambodians use a *Cirque du Soleil* style performance to deal with the trauma of the aftermath of the **Khmer Rouge** genocide. The hour-long show mixes traditional and modern theatre, music, dance, and acrobatics, juggling, and contortion in a story about Cambodian lives and society. This is an unforgettable experience! Evening free to explore the famous “Night Market” shopping bazaar.

Feb. 15 Angkor Wat. (B,L) After breakfast we explore the vast network of **Khmer** temples and historical antiquity. We start with the **great City of Angkor Thom**. As the last capital of the **Great Khmer Empire**, the city is surrounded by an 8-meter high wall in a perfect square shape. We enter the city through the **South gate** carved with elephants and four giant faces. A row of 54 gods and demons holding the sacred **Naga** snake line the entrance path. We continue to **Bayon Temple** located in the center of the ancient city. This 12th century masterpiece is covered with *bas relief* carvings depicting battles, warriors, musicians, elephants, and scenes of every day life. We next visit **Baphoun**, just recently opened to the public, as well as the **Terrace of the Elephants** and the **Terrace of the Leper King**, and **Phimeanakas**, a royal enclosure. After lunch, we visit the most famous temple, and one you will quickly recognize, the magnificent **Angkor Wat**. Built in the 12th century, this World Heritage Site covers over 500 acres. We will explore the many galleries, libraries, pavilions, courtyards, and water ponds reflecting the temple. Intricately carved *bas reliefs* extend the length of the outer walls and corridors.



“The most impressive and best preserved of the Khmer temples.” – Fodor’s



Feb. 16 Angkor Wat, Great Tonle Sap Lake, & Siem Reap. (B,L) This morning we venture into the countryside to **Beng Melea**. A short walk through the forest brings us to the magnificent ruins of this overgrown and unrestored temple. Now you *know* you’re on an Indiana Jones movie set! Forgotten and undiscovered for centuries, **Beng Melea** has only recently been open to visitors. We continue on to the **Great Tonle Sap Lake**, the largest lake in Southeast Asia. We travel by boat to **Kampong Phluk**, a village built on stilts and submerged into the lake. We see floating houses and flooded forests, giving us an insight into rural Cambodian life. On the return to our hotel, we’ll stop at **Artisans d’Angkor**, a residential school dedicated to preserving traditional **Khmer arts, crafts, and lifestyle**.

Feb. 17 Siem Reap – USA. (B) After breakfast transfer to the Siem Reap Airport for our return flights home. We cross the International Date Line and “gain” a day arriving home this same day.

Larry’s thoughts on Angkor Wat

Travelers have been compiling lists ever since Antipater of Sidon came up with his Seven Wonders of the World, in the second century B.C. On my own list of wonders no place would have a more secure claim than Angkor, the capital of the ancient Khmer kingdom. Occupying 120 square miles of tropical forest near the present-day town of Siem Reap, in northwestern Cambodia, the archaeological district of Angkor consists of hundreds of sculptured stone Buddhist and Hindu temples built by the Khmer over 600 years. The ruins of the Angkor temples, built from the 9th to 15th centuries, are a must-see. At its height in the 13th century, the city of Angkor is estimated to have had a million residents. Angkor was the most advanced city in the world. The Khmer kingdom covered almost all of Southeast Asia, making it that era’s largest civilization. What makes Angkor Wat unique is that since its construction. Unlike other temples, Angkor Wat has remained a “working temple” since it was built in the 15th century and thus has never fallen into disrepair. UNESCO named the Angkor Archaeological Park, situated just outside of Siem Reap, Cambodia, a World Heritage Site for good reason. Please come and join me. Let me show you Cambodia and Angkor Wat.

THAILAND & Legends of Siam (February 3-14, 2023)

- \$2,495 per person/double occupancy
- \$699 additional for single occupancy

Optional Angkor Wat, Cambodia Excursion (February 14-17, 2023)

- \$979 per person/double occupancy
- \$235 additional for single occupancy

What is Included?

- First Class hotel accommodations and/or best available
- Thailand airfare: Bangkok-Chiang Rai & Chiang Mai-Phuket
- For Angkor Wat optional excursion Phuket-Siem Reap, Cambodia is included
- Comprehensive sightseeing as per itinerary
- Services of expert local guides
- Admissions & entrance fees as per itinerary
- Meals as listed: B: breakfast, L: lunch, D: dinner
- Bottled water is provided with included lunches and dinners
- Airport & hotel group luggage portorage
- All group transfers and ground transportation as per itinerary
- All current & applicable Thailand/Cambodia hotel taxes and fees



Larry Gelwix service volunteer at a rural school

What is not included?

- International airfare from your home city
- Anything not specifically listed as included
- Tips & gratuities to local tour guides & bus drivers. Details provided at booking

Deposit, Payment, & Cancellation Information:

- Deposit if \$500 per person at time of booking
- Balance due: November 1, 2022
- Cancellations after 7 days has a 50% cancellation penalty and all tours are nonrefundable after final payment
- International air cancellation: in most cases your international airfare is non-refundable after purchase
- Travel protection is highly recommended. Consult your Morris Columbus Travel advisor for details

FULL terms and conditions are provided on all booking

COVID-19 WAIVER and TERMS: By signing up for any tour I am agreeing to abide by all COVID-19 protocols while on tour as defined by the host country or business, which may include being fully vaccinated with booster, wearing a mask and producing proof of vaccination or negative test for COVID-19 prior to arrival. I understand that if I and/or my party does not follow all set protocols, it is grounds for removal from tour or specific tour activities.

INTERNATIONAL TRIPS: For all tours and cruises that include international air, a valid passport is required and must be valid for at least 6 months from the return date of the trip. Morris Murdock Escorted Tours must receive a copy of your passport information page by final payment date. Airlines have strict policies concerning name changes/corrections after tickets have been issued. If a name change/correction is required on your ticket, you will be required to cover the cost of any fees.

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