



Island Camping and Northern Thailand Exploration

Thailand | Besant Hill School

Rustic Pathways Main Contact: Dustin Huffman

Contact Information: 440.856.6571 | dhuffman@rusticpathways.com

Day 1: Welcome to Thailand

Welcome to Thailand, the Land of Smiles! Rustic Pathways staff will pick you up at Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK) and you will have a chance to freshen up before dinner in the city this evening.

Overnight: Bangkok Hotel

Day 2: Start the Journey to Tarutao National Park

This morning you will start your trip to Southern Thailand! You will fly from Bangkok to Hat Yai and then take minivans across the Malay peninsula to the Pak Bara pier on the Andaman coast and catch the ferry to Koh Tarutao. This pristine Archipelago, once a notorious pirate den and later an infamous penal colony, is one of the only remaining areas of Thailand that has been left relatively unscathed by development and is now known for its pristine beaches, forests and spectacular coral reefs. Landing at the north end of the Island we will check into our bungalows and have time for a quick dip in the ocean before heading across the Island to see some of the historical sites and learn about this island's infamous past. Journey through the mountains to the East side of the Island to tour the penal colony and hear stories of bygone pirate lore. Back at the bungalows enjoy a round of Thai games on the beach as the sun sets.

Overnight: National Park Bungalows, Tarutao Island

Day 3: Exploring Koh Tarutao

Jump into kayaks to spend the day exploring the meandering inland estuaries. The intersection of fresh and saltwater environments creates a unique ecosystem characterized by mangrove forests and a wealth of flora and fauna species. You will learn the importance of these ecosystems for supporting entire food chains, the threats mangrove forests face and ways to protect them as you paddle inland. At the top of the estuary explore the Crocodile Cave (don't worry the former inhabitants have long since

left) and learn about the Karst topography that makes the stunning limestone cliffs and caves. After lunch, trek into the island interior to explore Koh Tarutao's pristine forests. Largely spared from the rampant deforestation that occurred in many other parts of SE Asia, Koh Taruato has one of the best remaining primary forest in Thailand and a host of rare species in residence. By now you will already be well familiar with the macaque monkeys and hornbills, and as you head deeper into the forest you be surrounded by the songs of the more than 100 bird species the island boasts. If you'd like, take a dip in the ocean on your way back to the National Park headquarters.

Overnight: National Park Bungalows, Tarutao Island

Day 4: Beach Camping and Hiking

Bid *Adieu* to the marvels of Koh Tarutao and take the ferry out to the Island of Koh Lipe. After the undeveloped peace and serenity of Tarutao, the resorts and restaurants of Lipe, visible from your boat, will be a sharp contrast. But for now this will be a just a view from offshore as we will take long-tailed boats across the channel to Koh Adang where we will spend the next 2 nights camping on the beautiful beach. After settling in and enjoying a swim in refreshing water we will take a hike up to a promontory overlooking the entire island chain. This was once a lookout point for pirates who would raid shipping in the nearby straits of Malacca, but for our group it will be a good place to examine the perils of rampant development on nearby Koh Lipe. Lipe is the one island in the archipelago that was allowed to be developed and as a result is dealing with many issues including lack of freshwater and conflicts over land rights between the indigenous Sea Gypsy communities and resort owners. Heading back to the camp we will have dinner and after the sun sets enjoy the spectacular starry night in display above.

Overnight: Camping on Adang Island



Day 5: Snorkeling & Sea Gypsies

On our final full day in the Taruatao National Park we will head out on a day-long snorkeling trip exploring the shoals, reefs and inlets, and seeing firsthand the amazing coral ecosystems. This area boasts some of the best diving and snorkeling spots in Asia and on our expedition we will learn about this unique and delicate ecosystem. Overfishing and coral bleaching caused by temperature changes in the water have threatened these areas and it has only been through a concerted effort on the part of the National Park and locals that these rare biodiversity hotspots have been protected. Along the way we will stop at a Sea Gypsy community to learn about their way of life and how they have adapted to the drastic changes that have occurred along the coast of the past 20 years.

Overnight: Camping on Adang Island

Day 6: Heading North for a Change of Scenery

Waking up early we will say goodbye to the Tarutao Archipelago and take the morning ferry back to the mainland. Disembarking at the Pak Bara pier, we will take minivans to the Hat Yai airport for your flight up to Chiang Mai. From Chiang Mai you will take a 3.5 hour drive through the lush mountains of rural Thailand to the Rustic Pathways Children's Home (RPCH).

The RPCH houses scholarship students of Karen ethnicity who live in rural mountain villages so they can receive education while staying in a safe and clean environment. Rustic Pathways students also stay at the base and if school schedule permits, will have an amazing opportunity to connect with local students with educational and team-building exercises.

Overnight: Rustic Pathways Children's Home, Mae Sariang



Day 7: Delve into Thai and Karen Culture

Today will be your opportunity to jump into Karen and Thai culture. Break into smaller groups and rotate between several activities designed to give you a deeper understanding of the local Thai and Karen culture. Visit a nearby village to learn about traditional weaving, learn about the legendary art of Muay Thai (Thai kickboxing and self-defense) with a training session at the open-air gym, learn useful Thai vocabulary and traditional Thai dance. Resident students will display their cultural in a fun and engaging show, and any talented students in your group you will have the chance to take the stage as well.

Overnight: Rustic Pathways Children's Home, Mae Sariang

Day 8 & 9 : Infrastructure Service Work in the Mountains

Break into smaller groups and head into the mountains to assist with an ongoing service projects in one of our partner villages. Prepare to get your hands dirty on a project that will depend on the time of year and needs of the community. Lend a helping hand to the locals with an infrastructure project like building a library or mixing cement for the floor of a local school building.

Overnight: Day 8: Village Homestay, Mae Sariang | Day 9: Chiang Mai Hotel

Day 10: Rock Climbing World-Class Limestone

Wake up in the cool morning air of Northern Thailand and get ready for your first day on the crag. The group will head East to Crazy Horse Horse Buttress, one of the best climbing sites in SE Asia to begin your intensive program. Arriving at the site, you will meet the instructors and get an introduction into the

gear and safety procedures before a warm up climb on one of the easier routes. If you have never rock climbed before, it may take a little bit to get comfortable but you will learn fast and the different textures and rock features of the limestone make this a wonderful natural jungle gym. There are plenty of routes to climb from easy to more challenging as you work on your balance, weight distribution and proper form so that you can ascend the rock using your energy as efficiently as possible. After a solid day at the crag we will head back to Chiang Mai for the night. Head to the local “Na Mo” market, popular with high school and university students for dinner and afterwards have some time to peruse the market or get a Thai tea and soak up the atmosphere.

Overnight: Chiang Mai Hotel



Day 11: Asian Elephant Conservation!

Embark on a once-in-a-lifetime experience at the Thai National Elephant Conservation Center (TECC). As forests across Asia decline, the Asian Elephant is at a critical juncture, with virtually no wild habitat left their numbers are in decline. The TECC is the largest center of its kind and the model Elephant sanctuary. Work with your own elephant and mahout. The mahout-elephant relationship is an ancient bond that nowadays only exists in a few places in the world. You will join the partnership for the day learning firsthand about this ancient bond and way of life, by riding your elephant, practice getting on and off, learn the commands and bathe with the elephant at the end of the day. You don't have to be an animal lover to appreciate these majestic animals and this is an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life. Tonight you will have a final dinner and discussion before shopping for souvenirs at the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar.

Overnight: Chiang Mai Hotel

Day 12: Saying Goodbye to the “Land of Smiles”

After breakfast, pack your bags and head to Chiang Mai where your journey home will begin. It will be hard to say goodbye, but you will take home many beautiful memories and lessons from this majestic country.

Program Details:

Program Cost (per student): \$2,795.00 USD + International Airfare (estimated at \$1,000) + Internal Airfare (estimated at \$280). Total estimated cost: \$4,075.00 USD

Note: This cost is based on a minimum of 15 students and 2 free chaperones (airfare and program cost will be covered).

Program Includes:

- 11 nights of accommodation
- All meals all days
- All transportation
- Rustic Pathways fulltime international and local guides
- All activities as detailed in your itinerary
- Single point of contact from Rustic Pathways for support leading up to the program
- Rustic Pathways 24-hour emergency support throughout program
- International SOS evacuation insurance
- All airport taxes and departure fees
- All fees, community service donations, and guide tips

An Important Note About Availability and Schedule Changes:

Rustic Pathways reserves the right to change, alter, or amend the daily itinerary for this trip at any time. Changes can be made for various reasons including changes in flight or program schedules, changes in the schedules of various external operators or partner organizations, changes due to weather or safety concerns, the addition of new activities into a trip, or the substitution of a new activity for an old activity. The itinerary shown here provides our best projection of the daily schedule for this program. As with any travel program, some changes may occur.