

Vietnam, Laos & Thailand – Hanoi to Chiang Mai



Trip Summary

Fantastically rich in culture, history, and tantalizing foods, this itinerary is chock full of learning, exploration, and discovery. Street foods and French-inspired delicacies, surprising tribal traditions, local weaving and crafts, boating on exotic rivers, ancient temples and modern museums, agricultural histories, the detritus of wars both colonial and Cold War, jungle wildlife and cloud forests, a mélange of fabulous waterfalls, riotous markets, and surprises quite literally at every turn await you.

Itinerary

Day 1: Hanoi

Upon arrival to Noi Bai Airport, your driver and guide will meet you • Transfer you to your hotel • Check-in and enjoy the rest of the day at leisure • *Overnight at La Siesta Hotel Trendy (none)*

Day 2: Hoan Kiem Lake / Old Quarter / B-52 Lake / Bia Hoi

Meet your guide then head to Ngoc Son Temple, located in the midst of Hoan Kiem Lake • Visit a traditional, local coffee place, to try Vietnam's local iced coffee • Then indulge in the delicious 'bánh mì' street food, a baguette sandwich filled with a variety of foods • Get deep into Hanoi's Old Quarter and witness the French architecture, including a gothic building constructed in 1886 • Explore Hoa Lo Prison (AKA 'The Hanoi Hilton'), where Vietnamese, American and French prisoners of war were kept • Witness 'B-52 Lake', where the wreckage of a U.S. B-52 bomber can be seen • Stop at a 'Bún Chả' restaurant to try Hanoi's specialties • Wander through the Temple of Literature, which was built in 1076 to be a university (the nation's first) for the royalty and members of the elite • Experience the surprisingly photogenic Hanoi railway tracks, which are sometimes located meters away from the front door of homes! • Finish with evening beers at the typical and well-known Bia Hoi, where you will taste local draft beer and finish the day like a local • *Overnight at La Siesta Hotel Trendy (B*, L)*

** Along the tour, you will be trying different street specialties, so we recommend avoiding the hotel's breakfast this day!*

Day 3: Ban Moi

Transfer to Topas Ecolodge • Have lunch and check-in at the ecolodge • In the afternoon, walk to the Red Dao village of Ban Moi • At the village, visit the local school and a local house to experience the friendly villagers' daily life • *Overnight at Topas Ecolodge (B, L)*

Day 4: Hoang Lien National Park / Nam Nhiu / Nam Cang

Transfer into Hoang Lien National Park to the trek starting point near Sin Chai village • The trails will soon lead you to the Red Dao village of Nam Nhiu, where you will meet the villagers, enjoy a cup of green tea in their house, and learn about their daily farming lives • After passing rice terraces, you will walk on a quiet road to arrive at the charming Nam Cang village • Your lunch is served at Nam Cang Riverside Lodge, with the jungle just behind and connected with the village by its own suspension bridge • You will explore the village and learn how the local villagers make writing paper by rice, silver jewelry and colorful embroidery • You may also want to take a swim in the river, before meeting your vehicle for the journey back • *Overnight at Topas Ecolodge (B, L)*



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Day 5: Luang Prabang, Laos

Transfer back to Noi Bai Airport for your flight to Luang Prabang • Welcome to Laos! • Proceed into the arrival area and meet your private guide and transfer to your hotel • The rest of the day is free at leisure • *Overnight at Satri House (B)*

Day 6: Wat Xieng Thong / National Museum / Phousi Mountain

At dawn, monastery bells toll and lines of golden-robed monks emerge to receive their morning alms from the townspeople – and from you (your guide will provide a prepared food basket to offer the monks) • See various meats, vegetables and spices the locals use at the Morning Market • Return to your hotel for breakfast • Transfer to the most popular of temples – Wat Xieng Thong, a 500-year-old temple that is the best example of the classic Luang Prabang style • Visit the National Museum, the former Royal Palace, to see relics from Laos' royalist past • Phousi Mountain overlooks the museum, so we will climb the 328 steps to the top and be rewarded with remarkable views • Transfer to the Kuang Si Waterfall, where crystal water cascades into idyllic turquoise pools (bring a bathing suit if you would like to swim!) • Visit the nearby Sunbear Refuge to learn more about the poaching of these endangered creatures • *Overnight at Satri House (B)*

Day 7: Luang Prabang / Mekong River

Visit a local fresh market, to meet today's chef and teacher, Mrs. Noy • After learning about local produce, board a boat to cross the Mekong River and meet the Noy family • Enjoy a simple private cooking lesson in the family's home with local specialties • Continue by boat downstream to visit villages where famous river weed snacks, rice crackers and other delicacies are produced • At the end of the day, while floating gently down the water, enjoy a Lao rice whiskey tasting while approaching Luang Prabang • *Overnight at Satri House (B, L)*

Day 8: Luang Prabang / Rice Tour / Buffalo Dairy

You will be picked up by a local tuk-tuk and head out to learn how rice is traditionally grown and produced • All the rice-growing steps are explained and demonstrated by local employees and you will take part in them, including plowing the paddy field with a buffalo! • Conclude your tour with a tasting of rice accompanied by a traditional dipping sauce, rice crackers and other local products made from the grain • After lunch, transfer to the Laos Buffalo Dairy to learn about milking, buffalo feeding (including bottle feeding calves), how the farm works with the local community, and more • Return to Luang Prabang • *Overnight at Satri House (B, L)*

Day 9: Mekong River Cruise / Pak Ou Caves / Ban

Transfer to the pier for your two-day cruise on the Mekong River • Visit the Pak Ou caves where thousands of buddha images are found • The second stop is at Ban, a Baw village where we will observe the process of making traditional rice alcohol • The boat arrives at Luang Say Lodge before sunset for a dinner served on the terrace overlooking the Mekong River • *Overnight at Luang Say Lodge (B, L, D)*

Day 10: Houei Xay / Houay Xay / Thailand

After a continental breakfast, the boat takes you to Houei Xay to observe a rural life along the Mekong River at a Kamu village • On your arrival at Houay Xay, meet your driver for a transfer to the

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Thai border • Upon arrival in Thailand, our guide will be waiting for you to transfer you to your hotel • The rest of the day is free at your leisure • *Overnight at The Legend Boutique River Resort & Spa (B, L)*

Day 11: Lao River / Namtock Khun Kon Forest Park

After a short safety briefing and bicycle fitting, cycle through small villages and rice fields, following the Lao River downstream • Visit the amazing white temple (Wat Rong Khun) and then lunch at a local restaurant • Finish cycling at Namtok Khun Kon Forest Park where you can enjoy playing in the Khun Kon waterfall, the highest and most scenic waterfall in Chiang Rai, 70 meters high • *Overnight at The Legend Boutique River Resort & Spa (B, L)*

Day 12: Doi Mae Salong / Chiang Mai

Start your day with a scenic drive to the top of Doi Mae Salong, a mountainous area inhabited by several hilltribes, such as the Yao and Akha • Learn about the village of Mae Salong, which was originally a settlement of Chinese who fled the Chinese Revolution • Visit one of the villages of the Padaung tribes, who originate from Burma and whose women are ornamented by copper rings placed around their throats to push down their shoulders and give the impression that their necks are elongated • Continue your drive to Chiang Mai • Upon arrival check in to your room with reminder of the day at your leisure • *Overnight at Tamarind Village (B)*

Day 13: Chiang Mai / Wat Ket / Ping River / Ban Haw

Reconvene with your guide for a walking tour of Chiang Mai • Visit a Christian church, built in 1968, then pass many beautiful old shop-houses as you follow Charoenrat Road • At Wat Ket, visit the fascinating temple museum • Cross the Ping River and enter Warorot Market with its colorful flowers, pungent spices and friendly, bustling crowds • Visit a Chinese shrine in the Chinatown of Chiang Mai • Continue your walk to the Chinese Muslim area of Ban Haw to visit the mosque and perhaps enjoy a bowl of traditional khao soi in one of our favorite restaurants • You will then return to your hotel with the reminder of the day at your leisure • *Overnight at Tamarind Village (B, L)*

Day 14: Doi Inthanon National Park / Doi Inthanon

Pick up from the hotel for your excursion to Doi Inthanon National Park, which boasts the greatest diversity of forest types and bird species found in any single park in the country • Experience the Mae Ya and Vatchirathan waterfalls and enjoy a picnic lunch • Visit the Royal Project of Baan Khun Glaang and stop at two chedis erected in the honor of the King and Queen • Proceed to the top of Doi Inthanon, which is the highest mountain of Thailand (2776M) and covered with evergreen forest, to walk for a couple of hours through unspoiled cloud forest • Return to Chiang Mai in the late afternoon • *Overnight at Tamarind Village (B, L)*

Day 15: Departure

Following another delicious breakfast, bid farewell to Thailand • Transfer to Chiang Mai International Airport for your onward flights • *No overnight (B)*

**Trip itineraries are subject to change without notice due to road, weather and other factors outside of our control, for the safety and enjoyment of our guests, as deemed necessary and appropriate by Austin Adventures.*



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Activities

Hiking: Easy to moderate hiking, the longest being just over 7km and taking 3-3.5 hours.

Biking: Easy to moderate riding on Day 11 in Chiang Rai; total distance 43-56 km; terrain is some unsealed roads and gently rolling hills.

Options at La Siesta Hotel Trendy:

Through local partners, the hotel offers a variety of day tours and cruises. Inquire at the hotel or search their website for more information.

Options at Topas Ecologe:

Topas Ecologe abounds with opportunities for walking and mountain biking. Options range from a few hours of relaxed walking or biking to a full day of more strenuous activities. Treks and rides take in visits to the villages inhabited by some of the unique ethnic minority groups who live in the area.

Options at Satri House:

Satri House offers a variety of overnight, half-day, and daylong cruise excursions on their own boat. Inquire at the hotel or search their website for more information.

Options at The Legend Boutique River Resort & Spa:

A wide range of tours have been created to explore Chiang Rai including trekking and mountain climbing. Kindly inquire at the tour desk in the lobby.

Options at Tamarind Village:

The hotel offers a complimentary daily walking tour of the area's historic sites and the opportunity to join in the offering of alms to the Buddhist monks of a neighboring temple. In addition, other cultural activities are available on a daily basis for guests to join. Some of these include umbrella painting, flower garland weaving, and a hill tribe weaving demonstration. The hotel's travel desk is located next to its Guest Services at the reception area. Half and full day tours to some of the area's most interesting sites can be arranged on a private or join-in basis.

Discovery:

Go to remote Vietnam to meet the ethnic Red Dao women, who wear some of the most colorful and diverse costumes of all Vietnam's ethnic groups and are famous for herbal bath, local medicine and embroidery. Explore small side streets, back alleys and temples of the historic and charming World Heritage Town of Luang Prabang. Learn all the steps of how rice is traditionally grown and produced and take part in the process, including plowing the paddy field with a buffalo! At a living crafts center, learn about textiles and meet the weavers who help keep these traditions alive. Experience water buffalo husbandry and milking. Meet local farmers and enjoy a cup of green tea in their homes. Visit a village of the long-neck Padaung tribes, who originate from Burma and use many copper rings placed around their women's throats to give the impression that their necks are elongated. Hike atop Doi Inthanon, Thailand's highest peak, to wander through unspoiled cloud forest. Learn how local Vietnamese villagers make rice paper, silver jewelry and colorful embroidery. Enjoy a private cooking lesson in a Laotian family's home with local specialties.

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Distinctive Accommodation

Nights 1 & 2: La Siesta Hotel Trendy

Many of this hotel's rooms overlook the eclectic and artistic rooftop city skyline. All rooms are equipped with full amenities and comfortable beds, soft linens and double-glazed windows, so you can enjoy an undisturbed night's sleep oblivious of the city outside. They offer buffet breakfast, free Wi-Fi, a restaurant, bar and spa. Rooms include daily bottled water, AC, flat screen TV's with cable, safe, refrigerator, minibar, tea and coffee, and a hair dryer.

Nights 3 & 4: Topas Ecolodge

Topas Ecolodge is a small lodge situated on a beautiful hilltop deep in the mountains of Hoang Lien National Park. The lodge is based on sustainable principles to ensure minimum impact on the surrounding environment. They employ people from nearby villages and use local products and goods to bring further economic benefit to the community. They also have their own wastewater facility to prevent polluting the area. Their 33 mountain bungalows are built as rustic chalet-style single bedroom houses from local white granite. Each bungalow comes with a private balcony where you can enjoy the magnificent view of the towering peaks and endless valleys dotted with ethnic minority villages. There is a restaurant, lounge, pool and spa. Rooms have AC, mosquito netting, rain shower, minibar, tea and coffee, and a hair dryer.

Nights 5 – 8: Satri House

Set in the ancient city of Luang Prabang, your hotel is designed in a style inspired by Lao culture. The 28 rooms and 3 suites are furnished with crafted wood furniture, oversized balconies, spacious bath rooms with rain shower and separate toilet room, and bath tubs in the suites. Facilities include a restaurant, garden bar, library, outdoor swimming pools and spa. Rooms include personal safe, WIFI internet, hair dryer, individual air conditioning and ceiling fan, and flat screen TV available on request.

Night 9: Luang Say Lodge

Luang Say Lodge is a luxury teak and rosewood bungalow perched along the Mekong and backed by mountainous jungle. It features 20 bungalows, each elegantly furnished in dark-toned wood and white fabrics and offering panoramic Mekong views on three sides. A central riverbank restaurant is reached by wooden walkways and offers organic food. The buffet dinners of traditional Lao food and continental breakfasts are served here. Most of their vegetables are grown organically in their own garden or the local villages, with no artificial fertilizers or insecticides. You can either eat together or at your own separate table. The Lodge has a fully-equipped bar serving soft drinks, Lao beer, and spirits for purchase. On days with guests exceeding 20 people, they include an ethnic minority dance performance by lodge staff, local villagers and school children. Rooms are equipped with mosquito nets, electric fans, and a large private bathroom with hot shower and western style toilet.

Nights 10 & 11: The Legend Boutique River Resort & Spa

Resting on the banks of the Mae Kok River, the Legend provides an authentic atmosphere with a blend of northern Thai architectural details, local artwork and hand-plastered white walls. Offering 78 studios and villas, the rooms offer generous-sized beds, teakwood furnishings and spacious open-air seating areas. The infinity pool is perfect for panoramic views. The restaurants serve Thai and



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international cuisine with creative touches. There is a pool, gym, reading room, internet computers, souvenir shop, beauty salon, available babysitting services, as well as two bottles of drinking water, and hotel-branded bathroom amenities in your room.

Nights 12 – 14: Tamarind Village

Tamarind Village is a boutique property nestled in the heart of historic Chiang Mai. Surrounded by ancient temples and shopping streets, it takes its name from the magnificent 200-year-old tamarind tree that shelters the hotel. Set around a series of garden courtyards, the 41 guest rooms and five suites reflect the rich ethnic diversity of northern Thailand by using fabrics and patterns drawn from various tribes of the region. Hotel facilities include a spa and all-day dining at their restaurant which features a variety of northern Thai, classic Thai and international dishes. Guests can also dine poolside or enjoy in-room dining service. There is a gift shop, babysitting services, DVD player and DVD's upon request, free Wi-Fi, and laundry services. All rooms feature modern, fully equipped bathrooms, safes, and tea-making facilities.

Meals

The hallmark of an Austin Adventures vacation is our exceptional dining. All meals: breakfasts, lunches, snacks, dinners, refreshments and receptions are included as indicated by itinerary. (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner). Alcoholic beverages and related gratuities are not included in the trip price.

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Arrival & Departures

Please plan on arriving early on the day of your trip departure (or, to be safe, at least one day prior to your trip departure). Day one of your itinerary starts at Noi Bai International Airport, depending on your arrival time, or from your Hanoi (Vietnam) hotel. Your trip ends with a drop-off at either the Noi Bai Airport or your Chiang Mai (Thailand) hotel.

Trip Price

Call for pricing

Trip Length

15 days/14 nights

2020 Dates

Departing weekly, call for availability

Host City

Arrive: Hanoi, Vietnam (HAN)

Depart: Chiang Mai, Thailand (CNX)

Reservations & Availability

1-800-575-1540

*Expand your knowledge, your wisdom,
and your mind via this three-nation
immersion into discovery.*



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Trip Reservations

Reservations, Deposits and Balances Due

To make a reservation, contact Austin Adventures with your choice of trip and dates. A \$750 per person deposit is required to confirm your reservation. **Some Custom and International programs may require additional deposits.** Full payment is required at the time of booking if your trip departs within 90 days. Choose one of the following contact methods:

Toll free: 800-575-1540

Phone: 406-655-4591

Online: austinadventures.com

Email: reservations@austinadventures.com

Mail: Austin Adventures, P.O. Box 81025, Billings, MT 59108

* You may also book your Austin Adventure with your preferred travel professional.

** We accept most major credit cards and personal checks (U.S. funds made payable to Austin Adventures). Please do not send cash.

Included in the Trip Price

- Double occupancy rooms with private baths.
- All meals as listed in detailed daily itinerary (B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner).
- Fully trained, English-speaking professional guides and knowledgeable local partners.
- Bikes, helmets and other necessary equipment – all safe and well maintained.
- Vehicle support and land transportation during the trip.
- Austin Adventures T-shirt, luggage tags and luggage service.
- Pre-departure and packing information.
- All entrance fees.

Not Included in the Trip Price

- Gratuities.
- All drinks.
- Meals as not designated in daily itinerary.
- Visa fees and/or visa authorization.
- All internal flights.
- Pre-and post-trip accommodations and associated expenses.
- Air and land transportation to/from host cities.
- All types of personal insurance.
- Personal expenses.

Pre-departure Information

After receiving your reservation and deposit, we'll send you a pre-trip planner with general information about the area you'll be visiting, a packing list, exercise guidelines, a guest information questionnaire and a liability release agreement for you to sign and return within 10 days.

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Private Custom Trips

Maybe your vacation schedule doesn't fit our list of trips and dates. Or perhaps you'd prefer a slightly different itinerary or level of luxury and activity. A Custom Adventure is the perfect answer. You pick the date and destination and brief us on the size of your group, what activities you want, your "must haves" and just how you like to relax and unwind. No detail is too small, no idea too outrageous. Our staff of experts will help create a tailor-made vacation that's just right for you and your group. In short, if you can dream it, we can make it happen.

Room Occupancy, Single Supplements, and Shared Room Assignments

All trip prices are based on double occupancy. Single rooms are available for an additional charge, referred to as a "single supplement." If you're traveling alone and wish to share a room, make the request at the time of booking. Austin Adventures will attempt to find a suitable roommate for you.

Minimum Age

The minimum age on our non-family designated adult and teen adventures is sixteen years old.

Cancellations and Refunds

The following cancellation policies and cancellation fees are in effect:

***As with deposits on some international and custom programs, refund schedule may vary, speak with your Adventure Consultant for details.

Cancellation 91 days or more before trip departure – Full trip payment refunded less a \$300 per person administration fee

Cancellation 61-90 days before trip departure – Full trip payment less 25% per person is refunded

Cancellation 31-60 days before trip departure – 50% of the trip payment is refunded

Cancellation 0-30 days before trip departure – No refund is given

Our Guarantee

Exceeding your expectations is our number one priority. In the unlikely event that you are dissatisfied with something during your trip, immediately notify your guide(s). If he or she is unable to resolve the issue, call our main office and give us the details of the problem, and a chance to correct it. We will do our best to find a resolution. If we are unable to do so during your trip, we will work with you upon your return home to arrive at a fair and equitable solution, including up to a full refund.