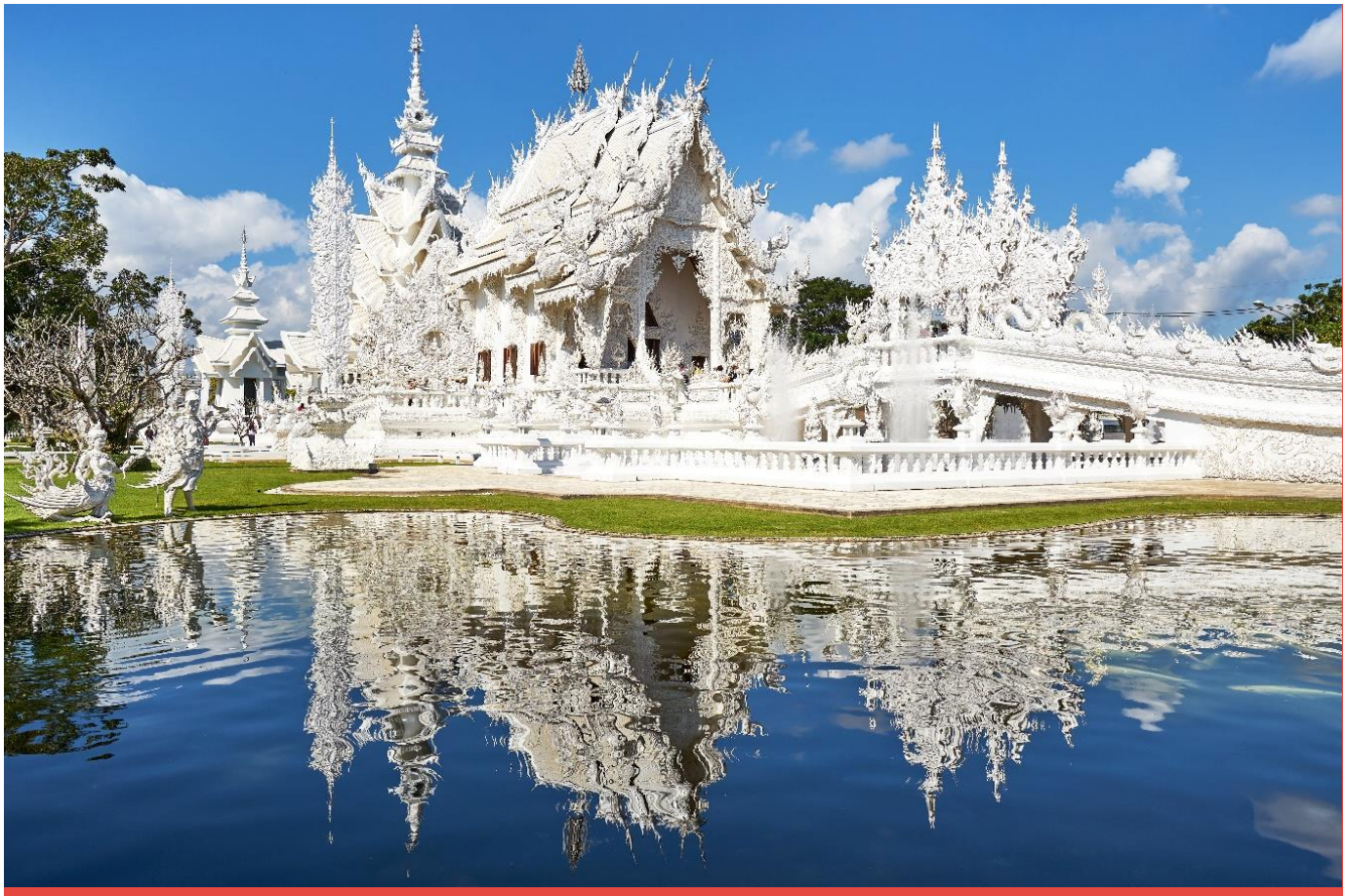


THAILAND HIGHLIGHTS

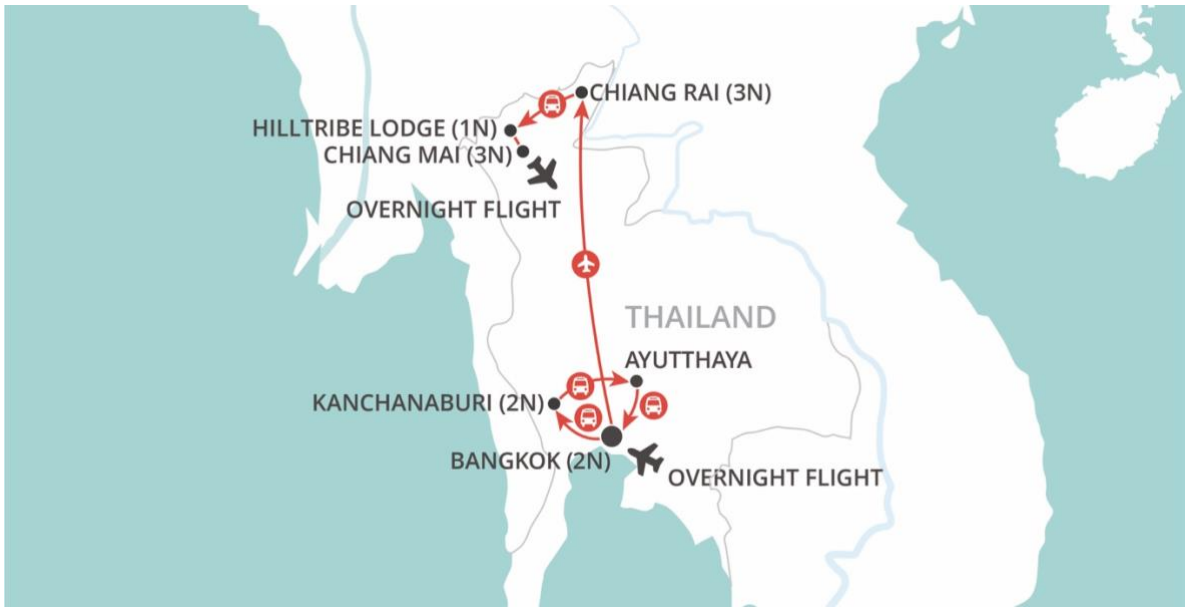
Classic Tour | 14 Days | Physical Level 1

Bangkok – Kanchanaburi – Chiang Rai – Hmong Hilltribe Lodge – Chiang Mai

A two-week journey from south to north, this perfect first-timer tour of Thailand encompasses all the top sights as well as venturing into less-explored areas. Explore pristine nature, learn to cook like a Thai, and immerse yourself local culture with a stay at a beautiful eco-lodge run by a local hill tribe community.

- Marvel at Bangkok's Grand Palace
- See the Bridge on the River Kwai
- Explore historic Ayutthaya
- Discover the rich cultural heritage of a Hmong hill tribe
- Visit an elephant rescue sanctuary
- Master Thai cuisine with a cooking class in Chiang Mai

TOUR MAP



CLASSIC TOUR INCLUSIONS:

- Return international economy flights, taxes and current fuel surcharges (unless a land only option is selected)
- All accommodation
- All meals (from dinner on the day of arrival until breakfast on the day of departure)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees
- All transportation and transfers
- English speaking Local Guides
- Specialist advice from our experienced travel consultants
- Safe and secure with IATA

The only things you may have to pay for are personal expenditure e.g. drinks, any optional excursions or shows if available, insurance of any kind, customary tipping, meals not included, early check in or late check out and other items not specified on the itinerary.

CLASSIC TOURS:

These tours are designed for those who wish to see the iconic sites and magnificent treasures of Southeast Asia on an excellent value group tour whilst travelling with like-minded people. The tours are on a fully inclusive basis so you'll travel with the assurance that all your arrangements are taken care of. You will be accompanied by our dedicated and professional National Escorts and local guides, whose unparalleled knowledge will turn your holiday into an unforgettable experience.

PHYSICAL LEVEL 1:

All our tours feature a physical rating to help you select the right holiday for you. To travel on any of our tours requires unaided mobility and the ability to stroll around the sights.

'Thailand Highlights' is rated as a **physical level 1** tour. A reasonable level of fitness is required, and you should expect to be on your feet for much of the day. You'll be getting on and off coaches, trains or boats and walking around the sights, often including steps, plus occasional longer walks.

- There will be sightseeing on foot for both short and extended periods of time, often on uneven surfaces.
- You will be required to get on and off small boats without assistance.

Of course, our National Escorts and local guides will always endeavour to provide the highest level of service and assistance; however, they cannot be expected to cater for customers who are unfit to complete the itinerary.

If you require any more information about the pace of our tours, please contact our reservations team who will be happy to answer your questions.

JOINING YOUR TOUR:

The tour is 14 days in duration including international flights or 12 days in duration based on 'Land Only'.

Travellers booked on a 'Land Only' package, the price includes your arrival/departure airport transfers if arriving/departing on the start and conclusion date of your tour. Please advise your international flight times to our reservations team.

Join the tour on Day 2 in Bangkok and end the tour on Day 13 in Chiang Mai. Please refer to your final itinerary for more specific meeting instructions pertaining to your departure.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Days 1-2: Fly Overnight to Bangkok Meals: D

You will be met at Bangkok Airport by your local guide or National Escort from Wendy Wu Tours. Together with all other group members who may be arriving at a similar time, transfer approximately 1 hour to your hotel.



Destination Information

Bangkok - Bangkok has been Thailand's dominant city since the 18th century. It was established as the capital after the former one, Ayutthaya, was razed to the ground by the Burmese army. It was the centre point of the modernisation of Siam in the late 19th century, leading the introduction of rail transport, the printing press, healthcare and utilities infrastructure. With a population of over 10 million, the fast pace of the city can be intense; however, beneath the hustle and bustle, there are many hidden gems waiting to be discovered.

Day 3: Bangkok Meals: B, L, D

Bangkok's dazzling neon signs, charming architecture, Thai cuisine and lively markets make for an exciting introduction to this fascinating country. Enjoy a Bangkok city tour of the Grand Palace, Wat Pho and Chinatown before cruising down Chao Phraya River on a longboat to Pak Khlong Talaat Flower Market, whilst enjoying an alternative view of the city.



Sightseeing involves around 5 hours on foot today and involves hopping on and off the boats, often on unsteady and sometimes slippery surfaces, without handrails or assistance.

Destination Information

Wat Pho – Wat Pho is one of Bangkok's oldest and largest temples. Experience the monk's chant as you explore the grounds of the complex, spread over some 80,000 square metres. The largest reclining Buddha and the largest collection of Buddha images are housed here.

Grand Palace - The Grand Palace is the city's most famous landmark. From 1782 until 1925, it was the official residence of the Kings of Siam; it is still used for many royal ceremonies and state events. It Palace are several impressive buildings, including the Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

Temple of the Emerald Buddha – This royal chapel, found within the grounds of the Grand Palace, is one of the most sacred sites in Thailand. It houses a 26-inch-tall statue of the meditating Buddha; opinions differ as to whether it is made of jasper or jade, but it is believed to date to the 15th century. It is venerated as the palladium of Thailand; a protective figure which secures the country's safety.

Pak Khlong Talat Flower Market - The biggest wholesale and retail fresh flower market in Bangkok. Look out for the Phuang Malai garlands, often given as offerings or kept for good luck.

Day 4: Bangkok - Kanchanaburi Meals: B, L, D



Rise early this morning to visit the Maeklong Railway Market in Samut Songkram, where vendors quickly pack up their stalls as trains pass directly through the market. Continue to Damnoen Saduak Floating Market, where you will travel on small boats through the canals.

Continue to Kanchanaburi, made famous by 'The Bridge on the River Kwai'. During the Japanese occupation of Thailand in WWII, tens of thousands of Allied POWs and Southeast Asian indentured labourers were forced to build the Thai-Burma Railway, often called the Death Railway; many of the prisoners died under the brutal conditions. Learn about their tragic story at the Thai-Burma Railway Museum, then pay respects to the victims at the Allied War Cemetery before checking in at your hotel.

Destination Information

Maeklong Railway Market - A open-air market with a little difference – set on the railway track! Enjoy the unique experience as you see the experienced vendors quickly pack up their stores as the train approaches.

Damnoen Saduak Floating Market - One of Thailand's most famous floating markets, consisting of a maze of narrow canals lined with sampans (small wooden boats) piled high with colourful fruit, street food and souvenirs. Hop in a longtail boat and soak up the atmosphere, watching as the traders entertain passersby.

Thai Burma Railway (Death Railway) - Japan invaded the then-neutral Thailand in 1941, and subsequently invaded Burma (now Myanmar), with the aim of seizing control of Burma from the UK. Japan's project aimed to connect Bangkok to Rangoon (Yangon) by rail to supply their troops. To complete such a huge undertaking, Japan used the forced labour of approximately 250,000 Southeast Asian civilians and over 60,000 Allied prisoners of war, who suffered under the brutal conditions. Over 100,000 of the victims died in its construction.

Allied War Cemetery – The last resting place of almost 7,000 prisoners of war. The graves here belong to British, Dutch and Australian PoWs who died while building the railway; the remains of the Americans were repatriated.

Day 5: **Kanchanaburi - Hellfire Pass** Meals: B, L, D



Visit Hellfire Pass, a dramatic part of the railway that literally cuts through mountain. Begin at the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum, which tells the stories of human suffering at the hands of this engineering feat, before a 3 kilometre walk through the pass. Finally, take a short train journey on the Death Railway and see more of this beautiful valley before returning to your hotel.

Please note the 3km walk will be on uneven ground, involves some steep steps and it is likely to be humid; bring mosquito repellent. If you do not wish to take part, you will still be able to see the pass from around 15 minutes' walk from the museum, and you may remain in the museum area independently.

Destination Information

Hellfire Pass - Constructed for the Burma Railway during the Japanese occupation of Thailand in the Second World War. This remote part of the railway was particularly hard to build due to the scale of rock-cutting required. Its name derived from the eerie glow produced by the torches at night.

Day 6: **Ayutthaya – Chiang Rai** Meals: B, L, D



After breakfast, drive to Ayutthaya, the historic capital of Siam from 1350 until its destruction by Burmese invaders in 1767.

Visit Wat Phra Sri Sanphet, with its three distinctive stupas, each of which hold the ashes of a king, and Wat Chaiwattanaram, built in 1630 to honour the king's mother. It was designed in the Khmer style and resembles a smaller Angkor. Admire the restored Bang Pa-In Summer Palace, with its vast gardens, throne room, gilded pavilions and brightly-painted lookout tower. Sightseeing around Ayutthaya will involve around 3 hours on foot.

This afternoon, transfer to Bangkok Airport for your 80-minute flight to Chiang Rai.

Day 7: Chiang Rai Meals: B, L, D



This morning, head out to see the area known as the 'Golden Triangle'; the point where the borders of Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet. This area was once a hub of opium production, but since the 1970s, Thailand has been promoting local initiatives to enable locals to switch to other sources of income, such as tea, coffee and tourism.

Continue to Mae Sai, the northernmost point of Thailand and an important trading town on the Myanmar border. Return to Chiang Rai for dinner; afterwards, you may wish to explore the colourful night market in Chiang Rai.

Destination Information

Chiang Rai Province - The northernmost province of Thailand, sharing borders with Myanmar and Laos, and also one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in Thailand. The province is abundant with natural scenery; lush rice terraces, hills scattered with orchids and the mountains of Myanmar and Laos are visible in the distance.

Chiang Rai City – This provincial capital city has a population of some 200,000 residents. Founded in 1262, it is the charming older brother of Chiang Mai, with a wonderfully relaxed atmosphere.

Day 8: Mae Salong Mountain Meals: B, L, D



Drive 90 minutes through rolling countryside to Mae Salong Mountain, renowned for its hill tribes and tea plantations. From the base of the mountain, visit a tea plantation, where you will have an opportunity to sample the local tea.

Enjoy lunch at a mountaintop restaurant before visiting Doi Tung Palace and Mae Fah Luang Garden. Drive back to Chiang Rai this afternoon and check in to your hotel before heading out for dinner at a local restaurant.

Destination Information

Doi Tung Palace and Mae Fah Luang Garden – A beautiful royal villa and once the home of Princess Srinagarindra, the mother of King Bhumibol, the Doi Tung Palace blends Lanna and Swiss architecture. Sitting proudly atop the mountain, the palace lies within the pristine and colourful botanical gardens.

Day 9: White Temple & Hmong Hilltribe Lodge Meals: B, L, D



Depart Chiang Rai and take a short 30-minute drive to explore Wat Rong Khun, 'the White Temple'. Stop at a market to browse before lunch a local restaurant.

This afternoon is spent crossing the countryside, passing forests, farms and villages to reach the Hmong Hilltribe Lodge, where you will be guests of the Hmong community. The Hmong Hilltribe Lodge is made up of ten individual houses, each comprising of four separate rooms with private bathrooms, arranged around a central communal area. This evening, enjoy a barbecue dinner accompanied by a Hmong cultural show.

Destination Information

White Temple - One of the most recognisable temples in Thailand, the unorthodox White Temple is a contemporary Buddhist and Hindu temple, an ongoing project started by Thai artist Chalermchai Kositpipat in 1997. Inside, you will see a surprising fusion of imagery depicting the 'wickedness of mankind', with images ranging from nuclear warfare to (less explicably) fictional characters such as Freddy Krueger, all interspersed with the faces of fiery demons.

Hmong Hilltribe Lodge - Built in traditional Hmong style with an eye for Western comforts, the guest cottages overlook the lush fields and hills surrounding the valley. Each guest room has an en-suite bathroom. The cottages include electric fans (but no air con), a mosquito net, a power outlet, hot water for showers, toiletries and slippers, towels and a shower cap.

Day 10: Elephant Care Centre & Bamboo Rafting Meals: B, L, D



Depart the Hmong Hilltribe lodge and visit the Thai Elephant Care Centre in Mae Rim this morning. The centre is located in the beautiful Mesa Valley and offers a peaceful retirement home for elephants rescued from illegal logging camps and elephant shows. Meet one of their caretakers, who will guide you through the centre, explaining about the centre and its inhabitants.

After stopping for lunch, make your way to Mae Daeng where you will enjoy a leisurely bamboo rafting trip on the Mae Daeng River. Sit back and take in the passing scenery as your boatman steers you along the river.

Please note that in the rainy season, between June and August, or after other periods of unexpectedly heavy rains, bamboo rafting may not be possible for safety reasons.

Continue to Chiang Mai, before enjoying dinner at a local restaurant this evening.

Destination Information

Chiang Mai - Nestled among high mountains, Chiang Mai is the largest and most culturally significant city in northern Thailand. The city was founded in 1296 and was the capital of the Lanna Kingdom after Chang Rai. During the 20th century, Chiang Mai became a thriving centre for handicraft pottery, weaving, silverwork and woodcarving; however, tourism took over in the 1960s as the main source of income. Today, Chiang Mai is famous for its hilltribes, tea plantations and elephants.

Day 11: Countryside Experience Meals: B, L, D

Venture to the outskirts of Chiang Mai to experience hands-on farming inspired by Thailand's Sufficiency Economy philosophy at Happy Buffalo. Try your hand at traditional activities like ploughing, rice planting, and threshing, while supporting local farmers. Enjoy lunch featuring fresh local produce on the way back to Chiang Mai.



Day 12: Thai Cooking Class Meals: B, L, D

Enjoy a cooking class, learning to cook traditional Thai cuisine, and savour your creations for lunch. Later, drive 1 hour to Wat Doi Suthep where you will have the option of climbing the Naga staircase 300 steps to the top, or catch the cable car to visit the exquisite golden pagoda.

This evening, we enjoy a typical Thai (Khantoke) dinner while watching a performance of traditional song and dance from Northern Thailand by various hill tribes.



Days 13-14: Departure Meals: B

Transfer to the airport for your onward flight, arriving the following day. Late checkout is bookable in advance for those who have chosen a later flight option.

If you wish to extend your stay in Southeast Asia, please talk to our team about our various private extension packages before your departure. We have options for hiking in Sapa, beach breaks in Mui Ne, Phuket or Hua Hin, city stays in Singapore, and more.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

VISAS:

New Zealand passport holders can currently enter Thailand for tourism purposes without a visa for stays of up to 30 days. An online Thailand Digital Arrival Card must be completed before entry – details will be provided in your final documentation.

Please be advised that your passport must have at least six months validity left on it when you arrive back in New Zealand.

Please note the visa procedures and requirements may change at any time. These changes are often made by the relevant embassy or consulate; Wendy Wu Tours acts as a third party and has no influence on the process of a visa.

INSURANCE:

We strongly recommend that you take out a policy as soon as you pay your deposit. Wendy Wu Tours cannot in any way be made liable for any additional cost incurred by the customer on any tour due to the customer not having adequate travel insurance.

We also encourage all customers to take a copy of their travel insurance documents (especially relevant international contact numbers) with them while on tour. We advise that you check the inclusions and procedures for lodging claims prior to your departure. These documents should be stored separately from the original.

EATING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Southeast Asia is home to an incredibly rich food history. The local cuisine is known for its intense flavours, spices and some of the freshest ingredients you can find. In general, meals include either rice or noodles and are packed full of flavour. Lemongrass, ginger, lime leaves, coriander, fish sauce and soy sauce are used in most local dishes. Whilst Southeast Asian food has a reputation for being hot and spicy, each region actually has its own distinct characteristics.

Your itinerary has been carefully crafted to introduce you to a range of local dishes and we hope that you enjoy the culinary adventure ahead. All meals (excluding drinks) are included in our fully inclusive group tours from dinner on the day of your group's arrival until breakfast on your day of departure. When dining in Southeast Asia, although some restaurants have adopted a western approach to dining, expect some restaurants to follow the traditional communal style of eating. Typically, this will mean each diner has their own small bowl and may serve themselves from a variety of shared dishes. At some local restaurants, appetizers and main courses might be served when they are ready instead of following a particular order.

Determining when it's appropriate to use chopsticks, forks or spoons can be challenging for some travellers, even other Asians, as each country has different customs. In Vietnam, dishes are normally placed in the centre and people serve food for themselves with their own chopsticks and bowl. In Thailand and some other countries in Southeast Asia, fork and spoon are used for most dishes and chopsticks are typically provided to eat noodles. Usually chopsticks or other utensils are provided to scoop the food into your bowl to prevent your own chopsticks from touching the food that remains on the table. Dining in Southeast Asia is fairly casual with not too many rules. Leaving food on the plate is not considered rude.

Please refer to your travel guide for more information on Southeast Asian cuisine, including information for travellers with restricted diets.

DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

Although Southeast Asia is developing quickly, it still lacks the international standards of civil infrastructure and tourist facilities. Concepts of personal responsibility are also different to those in New Zealand. Consequently, tourist and public facilities may not uphold the same safety standards as in New Zealand; for example, you may see a hole in the road without a warning sign or safety barricade. All our suppliers meet local safety standards as a minimum. We want you to have an enjoyable holiday, so we ask that you take extra care, use your common sense, refer to notices and follow advice from your guide.

ACCOMMODATION:

Your accommodation is selected for convenience of location, comfort or character, and can range from a business hotel in one city to a family run guesthouse in a smaller town. In more remote areas, accommodation may be of a lower standard and may not have all western amenities.

Hotels on our tours are generally rated as local three to four-star standard, but please note that there is no international classification system for hotels and differences in facilities and quality do exist between New Zealand and Southeast Asia. All group tour hotels have private western bathroom facilities, air conditioning, TV and telephone. Plumbing and electricity supplies can be erratic and quite often the power in hotel rooms is turned off while guests are out of the room. If you experience any difficulty, please speak to your National Escort/Local Guide.

TIPPING POLICY:

Tipping while on holiday is common in most parts of the world and Southeast Asia is no exception. However, it is not always clear who it is appropriate to tip and how much. Furthermore, travellers may not have the right amounts of cash available at the right time. In order to avoid any inconvenience Wendy Wu Tours operates a tipping policy where a stated amount is given to your national escort at the beginning of your tour and tips are disbursed to local guides and drivers throughout your tour. The amount is designed to be at a reasonable level for travellers while being fair to the local people and includes a gratuity for the national escort.

If you are travelling in a smaller group with local guides only, then tipping is paid in each destination. To be fair to the guides we ask for slightly higher amounts per traveller with small groups.

We generally find that most customers appreciate the convenience of our tipping policy but we do recognize that it may not suit everyone. However, as this is a group tour we ask that everyone follows the same protocol to be fair to other group members and to ensure smooth operation of your tour.

ITINERARY CHANGES:

It is our intention is to adhere to the day-to-day itinerary as printed; however, the order of events or sightseeing may change as we look to improve our tours or as local conditions dictate; in these circumstances we will make the best possible arrangements whilst maintaining the integrity of your trip.

TRANSPORT:

Coaches: Coaches with air conditioning are used on our group tours for city sightseeing, short excursions to the countryside and longer transfers where necessary. However, mini buses may be used for smaller groups (under 10 passengers). In parts of Northern Thailand – where roads are often narrow, steep, or poorly maintained – smaller vans or minibuses are frequently required. Depending on group size, in areas where large coaches cannot operate, the group may be split into separate vehicles. Roads in Southeast Asia have generally improved over recent years, but traffic and/or weather conditions may extend driving times. Road construction work usually covers an enormous section of road - not just one or two kilometres as you may be used to. For this reason, the timings listed in the itinerary are approximations only.

VACCINATIONS AND YOUR HEALTH:

Wendy Wu does not give specific health advice, but we do recommend you see your doctor at least six weeks prior to travel for advice and to allow time for any necessary vaccinations. Please remember to take your itinerary with you. Safe travel has a comprehensive website that you may also find useful www.safetravel.govt.nz

BEFORE YOU LEAVE:

We strongly recommend registering your travel plans with www.safetravel.govt.nz as in the event of an emergency, New Zealand Consular assistance will be more readily available.
Up until the day you travel, it is vital you keep up to date and familiarised with the entry requirements as these can change at short notice. You are personally responsible for completing any entry forms, conducting any covid tests (if necessary), etc and adhering to countries' specific entry requirements. You can also access the New Zealand Government's travel advisory service for up-to-date information about your destination on the same website.

AFTER YOUR BOOKING:

Once you have booked with Wendy Wu Tours, you will receive a confirmation invoice. If a visa is required, our Visa Department will be in touch with the paperwork and next steps. Your final documentation pack will be sent to you approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure.

Updated: October 2026