

Southeast Asia Program



Educational travel through Thailand, Laos,
Vietnam and Cambodia

pacific discovery
insightful small group adventures

PO Box 899, Nelson 7040, New Zealand, US freecall 1800 655 3415, fax +1 206 984 3763
info@pacificdiscovery.org www.pacificdiscovery.org

Program Information Booklet

Southeast Asia Program Overview	2
Pacific Discovery Program Content.....	3
Southeast Asia Program Details	5
Program Cost	6
Academic Credit Options.....	7
Volunteer and Community Project Overview.....	7
Program Itinerary.....	8
Program Route Map	12
Country Information.....	13
Climate	14
Leadership.....	14
Peace of Mind	14
Registration Information & Checklist	15
Any Questions?	15
Pre-departure Information for Registered Participants.....	16
Travel Insurance	16
Passports and Visas	16
Health	17
Spending Money.....	17
Keeping In Touch.....	17
Gear List	18
Gear Tips.....	19
Your International Flights to and from Bangkok	23
Extensions and changing your return dates	24
Recommended Books	26

Southeast Asia Program Overview

Southeast Asia is a melting pot of fascinating history, welcoming peoples, diverse cultures and dramatic landscapes ideally suited to an incredible and insightful adventure education experience. This semester program travels through the diverse and friendly Buddhist countries of Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. The program has a strong experiential education component, comprising hands-on volunteer work, opportunities for meaningful connections with local people, pushing personal boundaries, and gaining knowledge of Southeast Asia's history, societies and environments, facilitated by our knowledgeable program leaders.

This travel study abroad semester or gap year program is suitable for students, graduates and non-students, ideally 18-25 years. It is an excellent option for students or graduates wanting to be exposed to and immersed in cultures radically different to their own.

If you are looking for an experience that challenges you, broadens your horizons and merges cultural insights and environmental sensitivity with fun and adventure - explore Southeast Asia with us.

Program Dates

Fall 2011: September 23 – November 19

Spring 2012: January 20 – March 17

Program Start / Finish

Bangkok, Thailand

Program Cost

Program cost for Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 is USD\$6250

Highlights

- The ancient Thai historical capital of Sukhothai and its superb temples and monuments
- 3-day rafting, hiking and elephant trekking trip in the Umphang Wildlife Sanctuary
- Thai cooking course and traditional massage in Chiang Mai
- 2-day climbing and caving introductory course in Northern Thailand
- 2-day trekking trip in the Nam Ha Biodiversity Conservation area in Northern Laos
- 3-day riverboat journey down the Nam Tha and Mekong Rivers
- World Heritage town Luang Prabang, with its ambience, temples, waterfall and textiles
- Exploring the historic Old Quarter of Hanoi, Vietnam
- Mountainous Sapa with three different trekking options and fascinating highland cultures
- 3-day boating and sea kayaking trip in spectacular Halong Bay
- Moto-tour of Hue, the former imperial capital of Vietnam
- Gorgeous Hoi An – orphanage visit and a great beach nearby
- Markets and museums of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon)
- Get claustrophobic in Cu Chi's Vietnam War era tunnel systems and visit Wildlife at Risk centre
- Mekong Delta exploration by bike and riverboat with rural homestay
- Markets, museums and temples in Phnom Penh and Bangkok
- Insight into rural Cambodian life, home staying with a wonderful family in Takeo Province
- Battambang's bamboo train and countryside moto-tour
- Riverboat traverse of Tonle Sap Lake, through floating villages and Prek Toal Biosphere Reserve
- Exploring the amazing temples of Angkor Wat
- Intro to Scuba Diving and beach time in Southern Thailand
- Several volunteering days assisting with community development projects
- Series of informal lectures and discussions on history, culture and society
- Very personalized small group experience (compare with other programs of up to 40 students)
- Fantastic program leader/s supported by local guides

Pacific Discovery Program Content

Our programs are more than simply a travel or study abroad experience. We deliberately use an overseas adventure-travel environment to maximize the educational and life-skills potential for our participants. Each of our programs is designed to combine the following six interdependent components.

1. Educational component

Our programs are experiential education programs, meaning that learning is hands-on and tangible. For example, students will learn about a country's history and culture by immersing themselves in it - meeting local people and hearing life stories, first hand.

Experience on its own does not translate into learning. But learning from your experiences is important. To encourage 'learning from experience' our program leaders facilitate opportunities for participants to regularly reflect upon their experiences, and provide historical, cultural, geographical and environmental background so that personal experience can be connected with a broader understanding of place.

The educational component of our programs is multi-disciplinary and covers:

- ◆ Host country: history, politics, culture, geography, environment, environmental and social issues.
- ◆ Broader themes: globalization, development, environmentalism, religion, ethics and sustainability.
- ◆ How to travel: how to plan and safe, the realities of life on the road, ethical and sustainable travel.
- ◆ Outdoor education: where relevant, learning the soft and hard skills of a number of outdoor activities, such as backpacking, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking (varies by program).
- ◆ Group skills: how to work with a group, communication and trust.
- ◆ Development of personal leadership skills.

2. Volunteer component

Volunteer and community service elements built into our program itineraries allow participants to really immerse themselves in a place and share an experience with local people - bridging the gap that often exists between visitor and host. The rewards are tangible and often unexpected. Volunteer work helps build self confidence and self belief through participants having to learn new skills and take on new roles. Volunteer components vary by program. Examples of volunteer work undertaken by participants are building simple homes for marginalized poor, being a big brother/sister to an orphan, habitat restoration, species monitoring.

3. Cultural immersion component

Small groups mean that our participants are not travelling in a 'bubble' separated from local people. Instead we immerse participants in the local culture, through home-stays, volunteer projects, language study etc. Participants learn empathy for other cultures and build bridges of cultural understanding.

4. Travel component

Travel and the realities of 'life on the road' teaches a lot of valuable lessons - how to communicate and relate to people from different cultures, how to be happy with few possessions and a simple life, how to overcome temporary discomfort. Travel ultimately exposes participants to the myriad possibilities in the world and their lives and allows for personal growth free from the expectations of family, peers and co-workers.

Our goal is that participants will learn the 'art of travel' - what to take, how to plan, how to keep safe, how to find what you need in an unfamiliar place, the realities of life on the road. By the end of a program, we expect most participants will have learned the skills necessary to travel safely anywhere on earth.

5. Adventure education / Outdoor education component

Our programs are one long adventure. Aside from the fact that adventure can be a whole lot of fun, our programs are adventurous because personal growth occurs through challenge. We challenge participants at their own level, so that they can gain confidence through overcoming obstacles and challenges during the program.

A variety of outdoor or adventure activities are included in our programs, such as back packing, whitewater rafting, kayaking, rock climbing, mountain biking etc. These activities require physical effort, mastery of technique, teamwork and trust between members of the group, and immersion in the outdoor environment.

Pacific Discovery takes a 'challenge by choice' approach to the adventure components of our programs. We have had people from all levels of fitness and experience on our programs. Adventure activities and instruction are aimed at the novice/beginner level, however we are able to facilitate more challenge for people who are experienced in a particular discipline. Generally participants do need to have fitness at a level that they are able to comfortably walk for 2-3 hours with a small back pack.

6. Personal and leadership development component

By taking participants out of their comfort zone and challenging them physically, culturally and mentally, we encourage participants to gain confidence in their abilities and provide a supportive group environment where they can grow.

All of the components provide an enormous opportunity for participants to learn about themselves, to push their boundaries, question their assumptions, to stimulate problem solving and inquiry skills.

By giving participants responsibilities and freedom within the framework and safety of a well designed and carefully managed program, participants are empowered, helping them become more capable and self-reliant.

"When my daughter Shira decided to take a gap year between high school and college, Pacific Discovery's Southeast Asia Program became part of that plan. What an amazing adventure it has been! The trip was very well thought out, each day packed with extraordinary experiences and meaningful interactions with peoples of different cultures. She saw remarkable things and learned so much. Her whole sense of the world shifted. Shira returned home with greater confidence, sure of her abilities to navigate any challenge. She gained a deeper understanding of other cultures and more clarity and insight about herself. All in all, a tremendously valuable learning experience."
Ruth Weizman (mother of Shira)

Southeast Asia Program Details

Suitability

Open to students, graduates and non-students, ideally 18-25 years. This is an excellent experiential study abroad or gap year option for students and graduates wanting to be exposed to and immersed in cultures radically different to their own and is suitable for anyone who wants to get a real feel for Southeast Asia's incredible diversity. You don't need to have had previous experience with travel or any of the activities offered.

Group Size

The group is limited to 14 participants, with a Pacific Discovery program leader. English-speaking local guides join us to assist with interpretation of historical sites, cultural experiences and activities.

Accommodation

Our accommodation varies from welcoming homestays and camping with shared facilities, to modern hotels and guesthouses with private bathrooms. Laundry, postal, telephone and email facilities will be available most days, except while on expeditions. Accommodation is diverse, comfortable and carefully chosen to fit our needs.

Meals

Food is a highlight when travelling in Asia and throughout there will be the opportunity to eat authentic Asian or Western style food. Special dietary requirements and vegetarians are catered for. One third of meals are included in the program cost. The remaining meals are not included to allow us a choice of when, where and what we eat. For the meals not included, you will have the option of dining out, or self-catering with others in the group. We recommend you budget the sum of \$500 for meals not included in the program cost, drinking water and snacks.

Transport

The itinerary has been designed to maximize comfort and safety whilst also giving you the opportunity to experience local transport and take part in daily life. We utilize chartered vans, trains, various boats, moto taxis, bicycles, rickshaws and elephants.

Free Days

During the program, we have free days reasonably spaced (approximately one per week), in towns or cities where there are sufficient facilities to allow you to catch up on personal needs such as resting, laundry, shopping, email etc.

Attitude

The program is a shared group experiences. We expect you to join the program with an open mind and a willingness to work together with your group mates to make the program an amazing experience for the whole group. Additionally, the program will be as much about the inner journey of personal growth and learning about yourself as it is about what you will experience in the outer physical journey. We expect you to be open to learning and challenging your ideas and assumptions.

Program Cost

Program cost for Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 is USD\$6,250.00

\$400 deposit due when you register; balance of program cost (\$5850) due 90-days before departure.

Included in Program Cost: Visas for all countries; All in-country transport including three flights within Asia and departure taxes; All accommodation; Many meals (see 'meals' above); All activities, excursions, entry fees and adventure travel as described in the itinerary; Numerous volunteer and community service projects; Series of informal lectures; Experienced program leader/s and local guides; Online image library for your program.

Not included in Program Cost: Travel (international flights) between your home and Bangkok, Thailand (refer international flights below); Some meals (approx. \$500); Travel insurance (approx. \$250); Optional academic credit (see next page)

International Flights (refer also page 23)

Flights from North America to Bangkok, Thailand, return

Our travel agent can assist you to arrange international flights from the your nearest regional airport in the USA or Canada, to Bangkok, and return. You have the option of utilizing the flights recommended for this program, or arranging your own travel to/from Bangkok. If you choose to buy your international tickets through our travel agent, you will generally be travelling with other participants in the group. The ticket cost is approximately USD\$1200. Pacific Discovery does not charge any fee or commission for assisting with flights – this is a free service that we offer to simplify program arrangements for you. Refer page 23.

Flights from other countries to / from Bangkok, Thailand

Our travel agent will be able to assist you with flights from your country. You are also welcome to arrange your own flights/travel to and from Bangkok, Thailand, for program start and at program finish. Please note that it is essential that you arrive in Bangkok for program start and a briefing/orientation. Please refer to page 23 for requirements of the dates/times to arrive and depart Bangkok.

Optional Extensions

Our program will surely have whet your appetite for further travel, and you may like to continue your adventures independently or with others in your group. At the time you make your international flight bookings, enquire about the options for a stopover elsewhere on your way home. Refer to page 24 for extension ideas.

"I learned so much about culture, eco-tourism and being conscious. I felt proud to be part of group that was also learning about responsible travel. This program pushed us to think critically about tourism and culture and gave me the building blocks I need to work overseas someday." Heather Bugni

Academic Credit Options

Academic credit is an optional, but integral component of our semester, summer and gap year travel study abroad programs. Hands-on, out-of-class educational opportunities can be a more effective way of learning than following a conventional classroom routine. The value of these educational experiences is continually being recognized and credit opportunities are made available to the participants on our programs through the cooperative efforts of supporting faculty. If you are interested in earning credit while on a Pacific Discovery program, please review the credit available for this program (as shown below) and refer to the website for course outlines and enrollment procedure, www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx. If you have further questions, don't hesitate to contact us. Credit offered on this program is transferable to other accredited universities, and can be combined to meet minimum credit requirements for your home school.

University of Oregon (www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx)

Open to any participant on this program.

International Studies credit, 400-level.

For non-UO students: 8 quarter credits available. Community education tuition fees apply.

For UO students: 8 or 12 credits available and regular UO tuition applies. UO financial aid can be retained if taking 12 UO credits on the program.

Seattle Central Community College (www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx)

Credit is available through the Seattle Central Community College Office of Cooperative Education and Service Learning, for individuals who wish to earn credit for a variety of travel experiences. Whether you are from the US, Canada, or elsewhere, you are able to undertake this optional independent-study credit while on a Pacific Discovery program. Most courses can be taken for 5 or 10 quarter credits and a maximum of 20 credits can be taken per quarter. This credit is available to any participant (worldwide) on any of our programs and is a particularly good option for gap-year students, under-grads and students wanting an economical credit option. Seattle Central is an accredited institution and credit may be transferable to your university or college – please check this with your academic advisor. Visit our website to view current courses offered and print course outlines.

Volunteer and Community Project Overview

During the program there are several opportunities for greater involvement with our host communities through assisting on community development projects. Volunteer projects vary from year to year depending upon needs identified by the communities. As an example, the Spring 2009 program undertook the following volunteer work:

- Working with a vocational training program for Burmese refugees in Chiang Mai.
- Working on a water filtration project, and with a rural volunteer school in Siem Reap.
- Working on housing construction for marginalized poor on the south coast of Cambodia.
- Working on conversational English with rural high school students in Cambodia.
- Day trip with orphans providing support and cultural exchange in Cambodia.

"I think the volunteer work we did was instrumental in making my time a life-changing experience. I feel so much more connected with the countries. Volunteering gave me a unique first-hand experience that such a small percentage of the population will ever be so fortunate to participate in." Audrey Richardson

Program Itinerary

Day 1-4. Our adventure begins! Arrive in Bangkok, Thailand, having journeyed from ‘the West’ to ‘the East’. In Bangkok, cultures entwine in a symphony of sounds, scents, sights and tastes - its sensory overload! We have a day in Bangkok for a comprehensive program briefing and acclimatization. Traversing the city by river-boat, sky-train and tuk-tuk to see Bangkok’s contrasts before enjoying a traditional Thai massage to unwind jet-lagged muscles.

Day 3-4. Burma. Next morning we take the Northern Line and travel by train to Thailand’s ancient capital, Sukhothai, a World Heritage Cultural Site. We explore the many ruins and temples before continuing by bus to Mae Sot, a remote town near the Burmese Border. After a night’s rest in Mae Sot we take a half day trip across the border into Burma, for a glimpse into Burmese life and to contrast the two countries. This also provides a valuable context for our volunteering in Chiang Mai.

Day 5. Wildlife sanctuary. From Mae Sot we scramble aboard local taxi-trucks to drive into the mist-covered, jungle-draped mountains, passing small villages and pockets of cultivated land. Our destination is Umphang, the first area in Thailand to establish an eco-tourism ethos, where we check into Thai style bungalows overlooking the river and sleepy town.

Day 6. Rafting. Drybag your gear and raft into the heart of the Umphang Wildlife Sanctuary through jungle shrouded limestone canyons, passing spectacular waterfalls ...keep your eyes open for wildlife including endangered Asian tigers! After lunch, we trek 3 hours to our jungle campsite. Here, you can put your feet up while our guides cook dinner and tell jungle tales.

Day 7. Trekking. Wake up with an invigorating swim in Thee Lor Su Falls, the most spectacular waterfall in Southeast Asia – it’s immense! Trek dense jungle trails and cross rickety bamboo bridges to arrive at the friendly Karen hill tribe village of Kho Tha, our home for the night. Most of the village houses are made entirely from bamboo and leaves. Not a nail in sight!

Day 8. Elephant trekking. Have you ever ridden an elephant? These gentle giants pick their way over steep jungle terrain to Palatha, a Karen village. From here, it’s a short trip back to Umphang for lunch, then down to Mae Sot for the night.

Day 9. We take an interesting drive through rural Thailand to the northern capital and cultural mecca, Chiang Mai, with a stop at Thailand’s oldest wooden temple. We’ll have dinner tonight in the kaleidoscopic, sprawling night bazaar that engulfs acres of the city center, with stalls selling a mind-boggling array of food, clothes and crafts.

Day 10. Chiang Mai. This morning you have the chance to climb the 300 serpent-edged stairs to the gilded and revered Wat Doi Suthep, a mountain top temple affording panoramic views of Chiang Mai. A visit to the informative Tribal Museum, offers insights into the culture and customs of Thailand’s many minority peoples. After lunch we begin ‘The Chiang Mai Challenge’, a scavenger hunt across the city, designed to get you out interacting with the locals.

Day 11-12. Climbing and caving. From an interesting rural area north of Chiang Mai we spend two days learning rock climbing, rapelling and caving, overnighting in a small village at the base of the cliffs.

Day 13. Volunteering. Back in Chiang Mai we’ll spend the morning assisting Burmese refugees at a free school and vocational training centre, followed by a fun and tasty Thai cooking course – sure to impress the folks back home!

Day 14. Today's journey takes us to the awakening town of Chiang Khong, on the banks of the mighty Mekong River. From our relaxing riverside guest house, gaze across the waters to the Laotian town of Huay Xai. Tomorrow...new country, new currency, new language, new food!

Day 15. Border crossing. Our first official border crossing. We cross the Mekong River to Huay Xai, Laos. After clearing immigration, we travel overland into the rugged, remote north of Laos to the small town of Luang Nam Tha and the idyllic Boat Landing Guesthouse.

Day 16-17. Trekking and village homestay. Spend two days trekking through the monsoon forest of the Nam Ha biodiversity conservation area, staying overnight in a local hill-tribe village.

Day 18-20. River expedition. Head down the Nam Tha River, a Mekong tributary, in open wooden boats, through a remote, forested and sparsely populated corner of Laos, homestay with our boat drivers in their fascinating village. On the second day we make it to the confluence with the Mekong and transfer boats to travel down the Mekong River, with plenty of space to lay back and enjoy the riverscapes – jungled hills, men fishing, kids playing on the riverbanks. Overnight ashore in the small village of Pak Beng. Our last day on the river takes us past the Pak Ou Caves, believed the most spiritually significant site in Laos and containing hundreds of Buddha images, before continuing to Luang Prabang.

Day 21-22. Beautiful Luang Prabang. Described by a previous participant as a town of 'colonial-French-Buddhist-jungle-rainforest fusion', this World Heritage City - with its glistening temple roofs, crumbling French colonial architecture and fantastic food, is hard to leave. We explore the temples, waterfalls, and silk weaving villages. How about getting up at dawn to watch the colorful procession of monks collecting alms (their day's food) from the local residents?

Day 23. Flight to Hanoi, the cultural heart of Vietnam. Our Laotian Kip become Vietnamese Dong and we'll have the chance to try another new language and take part in local life at streetside restaurants and markets. Tonight we board our sleeper train for an overnight journey into the north, disembarking in Lao Cai, on the Chinese border.

Day 24. Amazing ethnic groups. From Lao Cai we travel up, up and up into the hills to the beautiful town of Sapa. Once a resort for French colonialists escaping Hanoi's summer heat, and now a center for hill tribe people to trade their goods...nowhere else can you see so many different ethnic groups in one area. Spend the afternoon catching up on sleep or make friends with some of the local Hmong girls...they are delightful and will have you singing and playing with them in no time!

Day 25-26. Villages and trekking. You have the choice of: Trekking through minority villages and lush mountainous terrain, home staying with indigenous people; or a Fan Si Pan expedition, trekking through forest to climb Vietnam's highest mountain (11,000ft), camping on the way; or a 25mile mountain bike ride over Vietnam's highest road pass with a swooping descent; or soak up the tranquility of Sapa and its fascinating market. We all meet up in Sapa before returning on the night train to Hanoi.

Day 27-29. Boating and sea kayaking. Travel out to Cat Ba island and embark on our comfortable house boat to explore Halong Bay. Adjectives can't adequately describe this place! It's studded with 1500 limestone islands rising sheer from the sea. Our skipper guides us through the maze of twisting passages. We find caves, hidden lagoons and uninhabited beaches, swim, sea kayak from the boat and observe the local boat people going about their daily lives. We'll stay two nights aboard the boat. Bid farewell to Halong Bay on our final afternoon as we return to Hanoi for dinner.

Day 30-31. Hanoi's culture. We base ourselves in the Old Quarter of the city, where daily life spills out onto the street. Enjoy some free time to explore the colorful streets of the Old Quarter, where streets are named for the products they sell...see artisans creating a myriad of products, gravestones being carved, silk merchants haggling, temple finery, flower markets and everything imaginable being bought and sold on the streets. One evening we enjoy the centuries old tradition of water puppetry. We'll have an insightful behind-the-scenes look at an organization, which trains and looks after street children, giving them skills to pursue careers in the hospitality and tourism industries and spend time relaxing in the tranquil Temple of Literature, Vietnam's first university. Then "all aboard" the Reunification Express for our overnight train journey to the old imperial capital, Hue.

Day 32. Hue moto-tour. Today will be a magical mystery tour of Hue and its environs. Our 'posse' of motos joins the melee of bicycle traffic as it surges along tree-lined boulevards. School girls wearing traditional silk ao-dai glide past stalls laden with red dragon fruit as Buddhist monks and produce-laden women jostle by. From Emperors' tombs to Buddhist pagodas, you'll really get a feel for this city. Don't leave home without your sunglasses, camera and a ready smile for your personal 'motodop' driver.

Day 33-35. Hoi An – silk and sand. Today we travel to our favorite Vietnamese town, Hoi An. We'll stop enroute at Marble Mountain, where we explore caves and temples in the mountain - one cave was used as a Viet Cong field hospital. We arrive in Hoi An in time for a late lunch at one of the town's excellent restaurants - a great way to begin sampling the town's rich history and culture. Hoi An is the place to have clothes made to order. Choose and be measured one day - pick up the finished garment the next! How about a Vogue dress or the three-piece tailored suit for \$60? There's a gorgeous beach nearby for sunrise dips and centuries old buildings to check out. Alternatively, people watching on the riverfront, cool drink in hand, is hard to beat!

Day 36-37. Saigon and Cu Chi tunnels. A flight south takes us to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). A city of stunning contrasts, bursting with energy and a 24-hour go-go-go attitude. Our guesthouse is renowned for its welcoming hospitality. We hail taxis and venture out into the maelstrom of people, cyclo's, motos, carts, trucks and taxis to zigzag our way to the War Remnants Museum, a chilling memorial to the atrocities of the Vietnam War. In Saigon you can lighten up with a stroll around the unusual Presidential Palace and Ben Thanh, Saigon's central market - a great place to stock up on fresh-baked croissants and fine roasted coffee from the highlands. A dawn start to visit the legendary Cu Chi Tunnels - over 250kms of tunnels, in some places several floors deep, where Viet Cong forces built pseudo-cities underground, enabling them to infiltrate and control large areas around Saigon virtually undetected. You'll be able to experience, first hand, the claustrophobic existence.

Day 38. Mekong Delta journey and homestay. The Mekong Delta, Vietnam's rice bowl, is one of the largest deltas in the world. You'll experience its fertile abundance and beauty as we explore by bicycle and boat visiting small farms and workshops on islands among its branching water ways and tributaries. Homestay with a rural family tonight.

Day 39-43. Cambodia homestay and service projects. Farewell our homestay hosts and travel through the delta to a little used border crossing into Cambodia, where we get a taste of culture and an understanding of life for the majority of Cambodians in the countryside by home staying for 5 nights with a wonderful Khmer family. We will visit an elementary and high school in the area to donate books and speak English with the students, and will spend 3 days volunteering with organizations that assist with housing and sanitation/health education for the rural poor. Our time in the Cambodian countryside is the program highlight for many participants.

Day 44-46. Phnom Penh. Uncover the tragic history of the Khmer Rouge regime with a visit to Tuol Sleng Museum. Dine at a Khmer café providing vocational training for some of Phnom Penh's 20,000 street kids. Free time to immerse yourself in the wonderfully chaotic Russian Market, an assault on the senses and one of the more interesting markets you'll ever visit. One day is spent working with orphaned and disadvantaged kids from a community of people that live off the Phnom Penh rubbish dump. This is a difficult but rewarding day and an amazing opportunity to get a behind the scenes look at the challenges confronting smaller grassroots organizations – also a great chance for you to give something back to our host countries.

Day 47-49. Battambang and Tonle Sap Lake. Leaving Phnom Penh, we drive to Battambang, a bustling riverside town in Eastern Cambodia with some of the best preserved French-era architecture. We have a full-day in Battambang to explore the city, and beautiful countryside, and take a ride on the historic, fun and scary bamboo train. From Battambang we embark on a full day traverse of Tonle Sap Lake to arrive in Siem Reap. The lake is an amazingly productive but fragile environment and is one of the most important nesting sites for wading birds in the world.

Day 50-51. Angkor temples. The Angkor Wat temples are the largest temple ruins on earth. You'll be blown away by this wonder of the world. Through mammoth carved stone panels, stories unfold of historical events, tales of gods, and legends. See the restoration of some temples and the disintegration of others as the jungle reclaims them. Explore elaborate twisting passageways, stone causeways and moats. Wonder at the civilization that created them - at its peak, with a population of one million people, it exceeded the size and complexity of any other city in the world. You'll also visit a local children's hospital to learn about the work they do and have the option of doing volunteer work with other organizations.

Day 52-53. Full circle. Travel overland to Thailand via the 'Wild West' Cambodian border town of Poipet. You'll be amazed how welcoming Bangkok feels compared with your first day in Thailand, almost two months earlier. You'll have free time to travel the city and enjoy its fantastic street food. The options are endless...you choose: Visit the royal palace; night markets; fantastic Thai cuisine; overwhelming Chinatown...and more.

Day 54-56. Beach paradise and underwater encounters. A short flight south from Bangkok lands us in Krabi, where we leap aboard a longtail boat for the fun trip to Railae's Sunset Beach, a peninsula on the mainland only accessible by boat, surrounded by stunning limestone cliffs, dense jungle and the clear emerald waters of the Andaman Sea. This is a world-class area for both rock climbing and diving. Check into our private, stylish beach houses to finish with a few days luxury. One day we go diving, where you can see colorful soft and hard corals and an astounding diversity of fish. For those who have never dived before, prepare to have your eyes opened to the amazing world beneath the surface of the ocean. Our professional dive company takes you through a morning class, teaching all the skills necessary to safely enjoy your two afternoon dives. There's also plenty of time for relaxing on the beach swimming, snorkeling and reminiscing over our adventures of the last two months.

Day 57-58. Farewell. A short boat ride back to Krabi and flight to Bangkok. Some will conclude with the flight home for Thanksgiving. Others may continue on to new destinations or stay in Thailand's tropical beaches. All of us will carry a lifetime of memories, experiences and bonds formed during this trip.

Program Route Map



Country Information

Thailand

Known as the 'land of smiles', we have found Thailand's 54 million people (the ones we've met) live up to their reputation. People are well educated with a literacy rate comparable to the USA. The country is moving rapidly into the 21st century and embracing modernization without discarding their own rich traditions. Thais are deeply religious and it is expected that all men will spend some time as a Buddhist monk during their lives. Thailand was the only country in South East Asia not to be colonized by Europeans during the 16th - 18th centuries. The monarchy is strong and the King is revered for his social reforms. He recently became the longest reigning Thai Monarch. The country is geographically diverse: Tropical islands and beaches in the south, with some of the world's best diving; and a mountainous jungle clad north, populated by numerous minority tribal groups.

Laos

The Lao are ethnically close to the Thai peoples and speak a very similar language. Laos was, along with Cambodia and Vietnam, a French colony, forming French Indochina. In the aftermath of the Second World War, Laos fought for and gained independence from the French. Twenty years of political unrest and civil war followed until 1975 when the communist Pathet Lao gained power and closed the country to visitors. Only in the last 10 years have foreigners been allowed to travel freely in Laos. Landlocked Laos is the poorest South East Asian country and most sparsely inhabited, with a population of just 5.5 million people. Most of the country is rugged and mountainous with few natural resources. It has several beautiful national parks, home to a fantastic array of flora and fauna. The Lao people have retained their hospitality, centuries old traditions and way of life.

Vietnam

Vietnam is an exciting, vibrant country of some 90 million people from 54 different ethnicities with a tumultuous past. Possibly more than in any other South East Asian country, due to the government limiting western influence, the people have held onto traditions. Like Laos, the country was closed to tourists until the last decade. Although a communist country, with the painful scars of war in its recent past, the Vietnamese harbor Westerners no ill feelings. Vietnam is, for some, the most interesting of the four countries we visit, with stunning natural landscapes, bustling cities and a fascinating society and culture. Remnants of French colonialism are still observed through architecture, food, tree lined boulevards and a thriving cafe culture.

Cambodia

The tourism industry has been up and running for the last ten years in Cambodia, and with the ousting of the last of the Khmer Rouge in 1998, the country is now safe to visit. Cambodia's spirit is embodied in the stunning temple ruins of the Angkor Empire, a civilization which once presided over most of present day Vietnam, Thailand and parts of Burma, Laos and China. Cambodia gained full independence from France one year before Vietnam, in 1953. King Sihanouk ruled for a peaceful 10 years until the country became embroiled in the Vietnam conflict and a coup overthrew the monarchy. Massive corruption and the B52 carpet-bombing of eastern Cambodia enabled the renegade Khmer Rouge to gain support. They took control of the country in 1975 and began one of the worst episodes of genocide in recent world history, until they were, in turn, overthrown by the Vietnamese in 1979. After UN assisted elections in 1993 and 1998, Cambodia is now a stable democracy. The Cambodian people, for all that they've endured, are among the friendliest you'll find anywhere, with a remarkable ability to put the past behind them and enjoy life.

Climate

The climate of Southeast Asia is governed by two seasons. Put simply - 'the wet' season from approximately May - October is characterized by rain and high humidity, whilst 'the dry' season from November - March brings cooler, dryer weather. Between the two is 'the hot' season from April - June when temperatures rise. The Fall Program begins at the tail end of the wet season, when all vegetation is lush and green, and rivers and lakes are full – it is a warm and spectacular time to travel. The Winter/Spring program runs during the cooler, dryer season and offers very settled weather. Both are ideal times to visit the region, and the only reason for choosing one over the other would be your personal schedule and when it best suits you to join the program.

Leadership

Our programs succeed because we put a lot of thought into choosing our program leaders. We've selected a dynamic team of supportive, resourceful, experienced and highly organized people to lead our trips. Our program leaders are people in whom you can trust and confide, who remain objective whatever the circumstances and who take a genuine interest in your welfare and safety. They implicitly understand the importance of balancing the needs of individuals with group objectives, facilitating a high level of group cohesion, inspiring a genuine appreciation for the areas visited and an awareness of minimum impact travel ethics. All our leaders are trained in wilderness or remote travel first aid, group leadership and risk assessment/management.

Peace of Mind

Since its inception, in 2001, Pacific Discovery has taken over 1000 students, graduates, faculty, family and special interest groups, on experiential travel and volunteer tours, utilizing a staff of experienced and qualified program leaders. We have an excellent safety record, comprehensive Risk Management Systems and a database of alumni who are happy to be contacted for feedback. The program carries public liability insurance, and participant payments are held in a trust account until disbursement. Bank, accountant and faculty contacts are available on request.

“Traveling with Pacific Discovery is far more than trip into new lands and cultures - it is a journey into oneself. With Pacific Discovery, you go beyond observing a new and mysterious world - you participate in it. Each day in Southeast Asia revealed a new, valuable piece of insight that I could not have obtained in a classroom. By the end of the two months, I had developed an entirely transformed understanding of myself, the world, and my relationship to the world.” Richard Ellis

“What an amazing adventure this program was for Marissa. She has definitely come back a changed person - having seen the other side of the world. The personal challenges she met not only strengthened and stretched her as a human being, but also enriched her life in ways that she would have never had the opportunity to experience had it not been for Pacific Discovery.”

Mrs Alkemade (mother of Marissa)

Registration Information & Checklist

- ☑ Register online for the program and pay \$400 deposit (www.pacificdiscovery.org)
- ☑ Review the pre-departure information for this program in this booklet
- ☑ Obtain a passport, or check your existing passport is valid 6 months beyond program end
- ☑ Arrange your travel insurance (page 16) and flights or travel to/from Bangkok (page 23)
- ☑ **Before 15 June (Fall Program) or 15 October (Spring Program):**
 - Complete the online medical and passport form:
www.pacificdiscovery.org/bookings/medical-form.aspx
 - Submit your final payment. An invoice will be emailed to you one month before. If you register after this date, your final payment is due within 14 days of registering.
- ☑ Decide if you will take credit on the program and register for this:
www.pacificdiscovery.org/credit-information.aspx
- ☑ Start a fitness program – you'll want to be doing at least ½ - 1 hour of exercise, 3 times a week. Anything is good...swimming, running, walking, biking, hiking, sport, dancing. The fitter you feel the more you'll get out of the program.
- ☑ Review the gear list, gear tips in this booklet and start packing
- ☑ To make the most of your time in Thailand, read/watch some of the books or movies recommended in this booklet

Any Questions?

Please don't hesitate to contact us.

Pacific Discovery

Program Directors: Scott Burnett, Rachel Sanson

Tel. 1 800 655 3415

eFax. 1 206 984 3763

Email. info@pacificdiscovery.org

Web. www.pacificdiscovery.org

"Pacific Discovery is a young traveler's dream. You get to travel with like-minded people who end up becoming some of the best friends you'll ever have. You get to do exotic things that most people only dream about like riding elephants, trekking to remote villages and homestaying in floating ones, snorkelling tropical reefs, swimming in phosphorescence, the list goes on. You'll have a fantastic experienced, knowledgeable, and fun leader. But what really makes Pacific Discovery different is that you get the chance to give back, from speaking with Burmese refugees and Cambodian high school students to improve their English to building bio-sand water filters so people can have safe drinking water to taking impoverished kids in Phnom Penh to a water park for a day of fun. This trip has made me change the way I see the world, and has made me very thankful for everything I have in life."

Kerry Gaiz

Pre-departure Information for Registered Participants

Travel Insurance

Pacific Discovery requires all participants to have a comprehensive travel insurance policy for the duration of the program. Details of your policy must be supplied to Pacific Discovery when you complete your online medical form. It is recommended that you purchase this within 14 days of registering for your program, to be eligible for maximum benefits.

What's the difference between health/medical insurance and travel insurance?

A travel insurance policy will cover you for more than just medical treatment. Most travel insurance policies should cover you for loss/damage of baggage; trip cancellation/curtailment; personal liability.

When selecting a travel insurance policy, ensure you are covered for medical expenses including emergency repatriation, loss or theft of your personal belongings, personal liability and default of an airline.

Please be aware that most insurance policies do not cover expenses resulting from pre-existing medical conditions of which the insurance company has not been informed. If you have a pre-existing condition, it is essential that you inform both the insurance company and Pacific Discovery before traveling, for the safety of the group and yourself, and to avoid the possibility of having to meet emergency evacuation costs which can amount to tens of thousands of dollars.

The cost should be around \$250 for 2 months and the majority of program participants purchase travel insurance online from either:

STA - Student Travel (www.statravel.com > insurance)

Travel Guard International (www.travelguard.com/travelinsurance/)

Passports and Visas

Travel abroad requires a passport. If you don't have one, you need to apply for one as soon as possible. Passport application forms are available at either your central post office or county courthouse. Link to the US Government Passport website:
http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html

If you already have a passport, make sure it is not within 6 months of expiring at program end.

If it will expire within 6 months of program end you will need to get a new one issued at least 3 months prior to joining this program, so please do this as soon as possible.

If travelling on a US, Canadian or UK passport, you are not required to obtain any visas prior to program start. These will be organized for you by your program leader in Southeast Asia. Visas are required to enter Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia. Visa processing fees are included in the program cost. In Thailand, we receive a free 30-day 'visa on arrival' each time we enter the country. At the end of the program you will have approximately 20 days remaining on your Thai visa.

If travelling on another nationality passport, you may need to arrange your visa before arrival. Please contact us to discuss this.

Prior to program start we send out comprehensive pre-departure information that clearly explains the arrival and rendezvous procedure.

Health

There are no specific health or fitness requirements to participate in the Southeast Asia Program or to enter any of the countries we visit. We urge you to consult your physician regarding recommended vaccinations, anti-malarial requirements and any foreseeable illnesses while traveling. This consultation needs to take place at least 2 months prior to departure. Ask your physician about vaccinations for Hepatitis A and Typhoid (a single vaccine for both is available), anti-malarials, and check that your Tetanus and Polio boosters are up to date.

We recommend that you carry a personal first-aid kit as well as any personal medication. Please be aware that for legal reasons, our program leaders are prohibited from administering any type of drug. Please ensure that you are adequately prepared.

If you have any queries regarding health recommendations for travel, please contact your doctor to discuss this.

Spending Money

Spending money usually goes towards meals not included with the program, personal shopping, email and entertainment. We recommend you budget approximately \$500 for meals not provided, drinking water and snacks. You need to bring this money yourself, for meals. As shopping in Southeast Asia is relatively inexpensive we think you could easily get by on another \$500 – so in addition to your meal money of \$500, this is approximately \$1000 total. The amount of spending money you bring really depends on your budget and shopping habits.

We recommend bringing some US dollars cash, \$200-300, and the rest of your spending money on two Debit/Credit cards (essential to have a back-up in case your first card gets lost or damaged). Visa or MasterCard with the star or cirrus symbol on the back can be used most places to withdraw currency from an ATM. If you are not sure about your bank card, then contact your bank to find out if their cards are accepted in other countries.

You don't need to buy any foreign currency before you leave home.

Keeping In Touch

The easiest way to keep in touch with family and friends while in Southeast Asia is by email and travel blog. There will also be two mail drops and details of these will be emailed to you prior to departure.

Pacific Discovery travel blog - www.pacificdiscovery.org/blog.aspx

This is available for everyone in the group to post to, and for friends and family to read. Details of how to post to the blog will be outlined at the program orientation in Bangkok. You are welcome to give this blog address to anyone who might be interested in reading about your adventures!

Make sure you can access you email account from any computer in the world - if you can't, a free Yahoo or Gmail account works well. Phone calls can be made easily from internet cafes. Call charges are about USD\$0.50-\$1.00 per minute. Don't bother bringing a phone card from the US – they often don't work. By all means bring your cell phone (contact your provider to set it up for use in the four countries) but be aware that call costs can be very expensive.

Gear List

Traveling light is the 'ideal' in Asia. Everything you bring should fit into a medium sized backpack. Bring only what is on the list below and remember, the more space you have, the more you can take home. When selecting clothing to bring, keep in mind that Asia has high humidity, and choose clothing that is comfortable and versatile in all situations.

Clothing

- Comfortable hiking or running shoes (NOT smooth-soled street shoes or heavy boots)
- Comfortable sandals (will wear these most)
- Comfortable light weight trousers x 2
- Light weight quick-dry hiking shorts x 1 (knee length preferable)
- Swimsuit
- Cotton shorts or skirt x 2 (knee length or below is best)
- Warm light weight top x 1 (light fleece best)
- Light weight raincoat
- Light weight socks x 2
- Light weight long sleeve shirt
- Cotton T-shirt/shirt/tank tops x 4 (make sure one is a short sleeve cotton shirt)
- Underwear
- Sarong to use as a towel - you can buy these cheaply during first day in Asia.

January-March group only, also bring

- Thermal underwear – top and long pants (Capilene or similar)
- Medium weight fleece (instead of lightweight)
- Wool/warm socks x 2
- Wool hat/beanie

Equipment

- Backpack for travelling (no suitcases or duffel bags – you need to be able to carry it on your back)
- Small daypack for hiking daytrips
- Sleeping sheet
- Sleeping pad - cheap foam (not inflatable)

Accessories

- Sunglasses
- Sunhat
- Pocket knife
- Flashlight/headlamp (compact)
- Watch with an alarm/ travel alarm clock
- Camera/video camera
- A small pocket calculator (essential)
- Ear plugs (optional)
- Eye shade for overnight travel

- Light cord clothesline (approx 20ft)(optional)
- One good book to share
- Discman/iPod (optional)
- Something simple & fun for interacting with kids (small & light weight is key) - not something to give to kids, but to play with them eg. frisbee, bubbles etc.
- Small flip photo album of friends, family, your home life, to show your trip mates and local people you meet

Paperwork etc

- Passport & photocopy of same
- Air tickets & photocopy of same
- Travel Insurance policy & card
- Money belt
- Debit/credit cards and USD cash
- Travel journal (optional)
- Texts, syllabi, etc if taking credit

Toiletries

- General toiletries (toothbrush, tooth paste, soap, shampoo, sanitary needs etc.)
- Disposable contact lenses and solution
- Sunscreen and lip balm
- Effective insect repellent
- Hand sanitizer/sanitizing wipes

Your personal first aid kit (should contain)

- Any prescribed medications
- Blister tape/moleskin for feet
- Pain relief (Tylenol, Ibuprofen etc)
- Antihistamine (for hay fever, bites, allergies)
- Eye drops
- Sting/bite relief spray or cream (for insect bites)
- Tweezers & scissors
- Band-aids
- Antiseptic solution (not cream)
- Non-adhesive dressing
- Motion sickness pills (non-drowsy)

Do not bring: Hairdryers; electric razors; laptops; expensive, irreplaceable jewellery.

Gear Tips

Please refer to the gear list and gear tips when you are packing for the program. There's quite a lot of information here, so take your time and read through this carefully.

First of all, you don't need to go out and spend lots of money on the latest gear. In fact it's best to bring clothing and footwear that is comfortable and well worn in. Over the course of the trip, your pack and everything inside will take a beating.

Travel light: When you begin packing, you'll be tempted to bring more clothing than is on the clothing list because you still have room in your backpack – this is a fatal mistake! If we get one piece of advice from past participants it's consistently, "tell them to bring the absolute minimum".

Quick dry: Look at all the clothing you are planning to bring and think to yourself, "How long is that going to take to dry". This goes hand in hand with traveling light. As a general rule of thumb, clothing made from synthetic fibers like nylon, fleece, capilene, cool-max etc dries much quicker than woolen or cotton clothing.

Cultural sensitivity: Throughout Asia, people dress conservatively. In larger towns and cities people are used to international travelers, but whenever we are in rural areas and villages we expect you to wear pants, or knee length shorts/skirt, and have your shoulders covered.

Buying clothing in Asia: If you find you need another pair of pants, skirt, shorts, top or flip flops and are of average build, then you will be able to get them in easily in Asia. Good shoes, comfortable sports sandals, bras, women's swimsuits and clothing for larger builds can be almost impossible to buy.

Your documents and how to keep them safe: You will want to bring a money belt or neck pouch. It's a matter of individual preference which you use. Into it (inside small zip lock bags to keep everything dry) will go your passport, air tickets, travel insurance card and the bulk of your cash. For day to day purchases bring a small pocket size purse or wallet. *Additionally* have photocopies of your passport, air tickets and travel insurance policy in a zip lock bag down the back of your pack. Make sure you also leave a copy these items in the loving care of folks back home – if you lose anything, having a copy will speed up replacement.

Backpack

For the Southeast program you don't need an enormous pig that buckles your knees every time you attempt to lift it. In fact you only need a medium sized pack eg. 4000 - 5000cu.in. You will want to buy/borrow a pack with an internal frame. Not only are internal frame packs more comfortable to carry, but they survive airlines much, much better than external.

Here's an example of a great backpack...

REI Venus 75 Pack (women's backpack)

Volume 4,577 cu in

Weight 5 lbs 11 oz

\$199 (but last year's model may be available cheaper)



Great value backpack with excellent harness and a great zip under the flap on front which makes the pack very easy to load/unload. Internal sleeping bag compartment with removable divider. An excellent pack. Good pack manufacturers with packs readily available in the USA are: Arcteryx, Osprey, North Face, Lowe Alpine, Gregory, REI.

The most important thing when selecting a pack is the **harness**. It should fit comfortably and be sized and adjusted to your body. Most manufacturers make each pack model with small, medium and large harnesses. The only way to check whether the pack fits properly is have someone in the store help you fit the pack with weight in it. **Shoulder straps** should sit comfortably on the shoulders. This is especially important if you have narrow shoulders as you will have to look for a pack that fits your shoulder width. **Hip belt** should sit comfortably on your hips - not on your waist or thighs! The **sternum strap** should be adjustable up or down and is important as it helps keep your shoulder straps sitting snugly on your shoulders and not riding out towards the edges.

Simple is good. The more bells and whistles a pack has, the more things there are that can break and the more the pack will weigh before you put anything into it. Weight is also something to consider when choosing a pack. Why carry 2lbs more weight because of extra features, when you don't need to.

The pack you choose, should cinch down well when it's only half full. Look for side and top compression straps.

Some packs have a single compartment while others have a zipped sleeping bag compartment at the bottom. If you are looking at a pack with a separate sleeping bag compartment, check that the divider between the compartments is removable. If it is not removable the pack will sag in that area and be less comfortable to carry, unless totally full.

Daypack/small backpack: Similar to a backpacking pack but smaller – usually. Must have 2 shoulder straps and have plenty of room for rain jacket, camera, sunscreen, sunglasses, water bottle, diary etc.



Footwear: We recommend trail runners or hiking shoes (pictured) for the trip. These are a happy medium between hiking boots, which are heavy and bulky to carry around and (at the other end of the spectrum) smooth soled running or street shoes, which will not give you enough traction on muddy, slippery trails. Break them in before leaving for Asia, blisters can get infected easily in the tropics.

Comfortable sandals are vital. These are what you'll wear all the time except when trekking. The most important thing is that your sandals are comfortable for walking long distances. Try walking in them for an hour...any blisters?



Pants: Comfortable light weight trousers = light cotton or synthetic, not jeans or cords

Shorts: You need to bring a pair of shorts for hiking in. Considerations here are again 'light weight' and not too short because of cultural sensitivities. Knee length hiking shorts are ideal. No heavy cargo shorts or 'shorty short daisy dukes'.



Sarongs: The hitch hiker's guide to the galaxy will tell you that the only essential piece of equipment for travel is a towel. Douglas Adams can't have traveled in Asia because in fact it's a sarong that you want for drying yourself, as a skirt, picnic rug, pillow case, sun shade, tow rope....the uses are endless and they dry fast. It's best to buy one on your first day in Bangkok for a couple of bucks, rather than bringing anything from home.

Raincoat: This won't get a whole lot of use on the trip but is essential for our trekking trips. Think compact and lightweight.

Shirts: Anything goes but it's good to have at least one or two collared cotton shirts like below. We've found these to be the most comfortable things to wear in the heat. You stay cooler than in a t-shirt. Girls can wear one unbuttoned over a tank-top as an easy option for covering shoulders. A long sleeve shirt is essential for sun protection on long boat/pick-up truck/motorbike rides where we're out in the sun for long periods. Men's cotton business shirts from Goodwill are an inexpensive way to go.



Sleeping sheet: Like a roomy sleeping bag made out of light weight cotton or silk. If you don't already own one, you can just get an old single summer sheet, fold it in half and sew it into a sleeping bag.

Sleeping pad or mat: Cheap, foam, and something you're happy to give away. Don't bring an inflatable 'thermarest' type pad – it's likely to get punctured.



Other things to think about...

iPod/mp3 player: Good escapism.

Electrical outlets and power adaptors: Electrical outlets in Southeast Asia are the same shape as at home, so you do not need an adapter plug. Asia uses 220v electricity. This means that iPod and digital camera rechargers can plug straight in but other electrical appliances like hairdryers etc that only take 110v will blow up. To check if your electrical item can be used in Asia, check the voltage –if it says 110v, it will blow up, if it says 100-240v, it will work fine. But don't bring a hairdryer!

Camera: You will want to bring a camera to Southeast Asia. If photography is not your consuming passion a compact digital camera is much easier to travel with, fits in a pocket and is easier to look after than a big SLR with interchangeable lenses. Make sure you bring more than one memory card. We've had problems with people's cards getting damaged by heat and moisture. Some people make their digital file sizes smaller so they can fit lots of images onto a card but we don't think there's any point taking photos unless you have big enough files that they're of good enough quality to make prints once you return home.

Video camera: People who've taken a video camera on our trips have said on the positive side that they've taken awesome footage but on the negative that it's another thing to worry about and to try and get a waterproof case if you can.

Toiletries: You may not be able to get the same brand of contact lens solution, toothpaste or shampoo. If you are particular about which brands you use, bring enough to last till you return home.

Washing/Laundry: You will be able to get clothes laundered frequently when we are in cities. You will get sick of wearing the same clothes all the time but don't worry because everyone else will be doing the same and it is much better if all your gear fits easily into one backpack!

Once you've made a pile of everything you might bring, double check to see if you can leave anything behind...but make sure you DO bring the required gear. Honestly...everyone on our trips thinks they bring too much clothing.

Your International Flights to and from Bangkok

Once you have registered for this program, please go ahead and arrange your international flights to Bangkok and return. You can contact our travel agent, Sue Lai at Avia Travel, who arranges group flights for our programs. Our agent will work with you to find the best routing and fare for you. You may choose to fly from your nearest regional airport, or to depart from a major hub such as Los Angeles or New York. You will confirm your flight arrangements with the agent and pay the travel agent directly for your flights. Once you have confirmed and paid for your flights, please email your flight itinerary to us, so we can meet you on arrival in Bangkok.

September – November 2011 Program Participants:

Arrive Bangkok on Friday 23 September, anytime (usual departure from US, 2 days prior)*

Depart Bangkok on Saturday 19 November, anytime (usual arrival to the US, same day)

**Arrival in time for program start is mandatory, to participate in a comprehensive program briefing.*

Arrival before program start: You may arrive in Bangkok earlier than program start if you wish, or depart later than program finish. You will need to cover your own accommodation costs and transfers until program start/after finish. We can assist with accommodation and transfer bookings. Please contact us about this once you have confirmed your flights.

Pacific Discovery travel agent for flight bookings

Sue Lai
Avia Travel
760-A Gilman St
Berkeley, CA 94710
Tel: (800) 950 2842, Tel: (510) 558 2150
Fax: (510) 558 2158
Email: sue@aviatravel.com

Alternatively, you are welcome to make your own flight arrangements to and from Bangkok through your own travel agent or online. However, if doing so, your program leader may not be able to meet you on arrival in Bangkok (if timing of your arrival does not coincide with the group flight), and you may need to cover your own transfer costs to the group hotel. We can assist with transfer information and arrangements. If you do make your own flight bookings, please ensure you book flights to arrive and depart as shown above. If you have any questions about your itinerary, please contact us to discuss this before you book your flights.

“Traveling with Pacific Discovery has been one of the most personally rewarding things I have ever done. The program's small group size and focus on responsible travel allows you to interact with a country's local culture, customs, and environment on a much deeper level. I had the time of my life on the trip!” Mauri Lowrey

“Deciding to come on this trip was one of the best decisions I've ever made. I look back now and I realize how much has changed over the past two months. Maybe not so much on the outside but on the inside there are new thoughts, ideas, new wisdoms and new attitudes towards life. I cannot place value on the things I have learned on this trip. The patience and compassion I have found when dealing with people of different cultures and all the respect I have for the people I have met along the way. Memories of landscapes more beautiful than anything I've ever imagined have been etched into my mind.” Emily Hanley

Extensions and changing your return dates

If you decide to stay on in Asia at program conclusion and travel independently or with others in the group, you can usually change your return date for a low fee after commencing travel, at airline offices in all major Southeast Asian cities, or by emailing the travel agent who arranged your ticket.

At the conclusion of the program, you have 3 days left on your Thai visa. However, this can be renewed with a short trip across the Malaysian border for a new visa.

Many past participants have travelled to other destinations in Thailand, and other Asian destinations. Cheap flights (\$300 - \$400) are available from Bangkok to Bali, India, and Nepal. If you're planning on visiting countries other than Thailand, it's a good idea to do some background reading and research. Lonely Planet guidebooks are always a great source of information. To check on the safety/security situation in a country, please review the State Department Travel Warnings, http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html

Southern Thailand

The most popular extension is to spend more time in Southern Thailand. We spend the last few days of the program in Southern Thailand, near Krabi, flying back to Bangkok for one night before traveling home. It is possible to extend your time in Southern Thailand. This is an inexpensive option and after two months of travel many participants are ready to put their feet up.

The main attractions of Southern Thailand are islands and beaches, snorkeling, diving and relaxing. From Railae where we stay, it is possible to travel to the nearby Ko Phi Phi Islands (where 'The Beach' was filmed), or laid-back Ko Lanta. Both are short ferry rides away.

Further south is the pristine Ko Turatao Marine Park and the Island of Ko Lipe. This is harder to get to but is really beautiful and not very touristy. North of Railae is the resort island city of Phuket. A 3-hour bus ride across the peninsula is Surat Thani, the jumping off point to the popular islands of Ko Samui and Ko Pha Ngan.

In the middle of the peninsula is Khao Sok National Park home to a staggering array of wildlife and rainforest. There are hiking trails and a large lake in the national park where it is possible to homestay in floating houses.

Obviously without a guidebook most of these names are meaningless and we recommend picking up the Lonely Planet Thailand guidebook or the Lonely Planet Thailand: Islands and Beaches guidebook.

Northern Thailand

If you'd like to put your feet up for a few days, the Southern Islands can't be beat, but if the beach is not your scene, Pai in Northern Thailand might be just what you are after. Pai is a small town 3 hours by bus from Chiang Mai. It is becoming a travellers mecca and is popular with artists, musicians and foodies. Pai is in the middle of a gorgeous green valley with hot springs and a river lazily flowing through. There are lots of accommodation and eating options in the small village and plenty of activities to keep you occupied, from live music to hiking, rafting, cycling etc.

Meditation courses

The following website offers information on many different mediation course options in Thailand. www.dhammathai.org/e/meditation/page1.php

Extensions further afield...

Malaysia and Singapore

A popular extension option is to travel south into Malaysia and down to Singapore where it is possible to catch a cheap flight or take the train back to Bangkok. Malaysia is Muslim but past participants have found it to be very welcoming and friendly. Highlights are the cities of Penang and Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia was a British colony and Penang, an important port under colonial rule, is laid back and friendly, while Kuala Lumpur and Singapore are both modern Asian mega-cities.

Burma/Myanmar

Burma, or Myanmar as it is now called, is an amazing off-the-beaten-track destination that some past participants have been to. Getting there involves a short return flight from Bangkok. The Burmese are very warm and the country is safe to travel to. However, each person needs to make an informed decision about travel to Burma. The elected government has called for a boycott on tourism due to the ruling military junta not allowing the democratically elected government to stand, and massive human rights violations committed by the military rulers. There are pros and cons for visiting. For more information, please refer to the following websites:

Against: <http://www.responsibletravel.com/Copy/Copy901093.htm>

For: <http://www.freeburmacoalition.org/>.

Bali

We've had participants fly to Bali to go surfing. This is not a cheap option but sounded fantastic. They were experienced surfers and bought surf boards on arrival in Bali but it is possible to hire boards.

"Before I came on this trip, I'd travelled quite a bit in Asia on my own. I wasn't sure if it was worth joining a group trip rather than doing a similar trip independently. But I got so much more out of the trip than I would have otherwise. All the hassles of finding accommodation, transportation, and activity arrangements were taken care of. In the past I'd spent countless hours lugging a heavy backpack in the heat looking for a place to stay, which would frequently turn out ugly or filthy or overpriced. Instead we stayed in amazing guesthouses that were much nicer than anything I ever found on my own. All the treks we did seemed less touristy and more authentic than some of the other ones available. Our leader knew all the areas really well and could suggest things to see or do, great places to eat, and worthwhile places to go out. Finally it was really wonderful to have a group of people to share everything with. I would recommend this trip to anybody interested in Southeast Asia. I would recommend this trip to anyone who has never thought about Southeast Asia. It was a totally unforgettable experience and I had the time of my life." Ellie Laird

Recommended Books

Following is our list of top Southeast Asia reads. For a full reading and movie list, refer to the 'resources' page on our website. An excellent starting point are the Lonely Planet guide books for each country which give a concise background to history, society, culture and environment.

From the Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey by Pascal Khoo Thwe (2003, Harper)

Autobiographical story from a young Burmese minority student who fled persecution in Burma and ended up graduating from Cambridge University . Beautifully written. Gets really engrossing from about halfway through. Not only is it incredibly descriptive and evocative of the region, but will give you some valuable insight into the history of many of the hilltribe people we meet in northern Thailand and Laos .

Bamboo Palace by Christopher Kremmer (2005, Harper Collins)

December 1975, the Communist Pathet Lao deposed the last king of Laos , the stoic, gentle Savang Vatthana. In March 1977, the king, his wife, and sons were suddenly spirited away from their palace, never to be seen by the world again. Christopher Kremmer describes his determined search to find out what happened to the country's last royal family.

Catfish and Mandala by Andrew X Pham (2000, Picador)

Fantastic piece of travel writing and childhood reminiscence by a young Vietnamese American about his return to Vietnam for the first time since his family fled when he was a young boy. Awesome!

When Heaven and Earth Changed Places by Le Ly Hayslip (1993, Plume)

An autobiography of a young Vietnamese girl during the Vietnam War. Experience what life was like for the general populace during the war. Story made into an Oliver Stone film named Heaven and Earth.

The Cat from Hue: A Vietnam War Story by John Laurence (2002, Public Affairs)

With over half a decade of service as a war correspondent in Vietnam, John Laurence earned deserved accolades for his reportage. In this superb book, *The Cat from Hue* , he returns to that time, drawing on long-buried memories to capture the confusion, deceit, and terror of the era.

A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam by Neil Sheehan (1989, Vintage)

A favorite book on the war. The definitive expose on why America lost the war, won the Pulitzer Prize for nonfiction in 1989.

First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers by Loung Ung (2001, Harper Collins)

A young girl living in Phnom Penh during the 1975 Khmer Rouge takeover. A gripping, can't put down account of her life during this turbulent time.

When the War Was over: Cambodia and the Khmer Rouge Revolution by Elizabeth Becker (1998, Public Affairs)

Up to date, readable and by far the best overview of Cambodia's history and politics covering the last 50 years that I've read.

One Crowded Hour by Tim Bowden (1987, Collins Publishing)

Excellent page-turner biography of Australian combat cameraman Neil Davis' dramatic life in Southeast Asia from 1964-1985. Covering the Vietnam and Cambodian conflicts.

Booking Conditions and Liability Release for Pacific Discovery Programs

Payment Schedule & Booking Conditions

Prices in brochures and on website are correct at the time of publishing.

Pacific Discovery reserves the right to alter these prices at any time. The price of your program is guaranteed when you have paid in full.

All program participants must acknowledge reading and agreement with Booking Conditions and Liability Release, at the time of registration. A Medical Form must be completed once final payment is made. By advancing deposit to Pacific Discovery, the depositor thereby agrees to be bound by the booking conditions and payment schedule.

Upon receiving your forms and confirming space on the program of your choice, we will contact you with pre-travel information covering gear to bring, health & vaccinations, travel insurance, climate, spending money, cultural tips, and a list of recommended books and films.

If the program date you request is already full we will not process your deposit, but will contact you and add you to the waiting list.

The final payment covering balance of program cost and optional group flights is due 90 days before program departure, unless late booking. Master Card or Visa accepted.

Bookings accepted less than 90 days prior to departure can be secured with the deposit; full payment must then reach us within a further 14 days.

If the balance is not received by the specified date, we reserve the right to cancel your booking and your deposit may be forfeited.

Cancellations

If you decide to cancel your program, the following fees apply at the time (prior to departure) we receive written notice of your cancellation: More than 91 days before departure - loss of deposit; 31 to 90 days before departure - 50% of program cost; 0 to 30 days before departure - 100% of program cost.

If you fail to join the program, join after its departure or leave prior to its completion, Pacific Discovery reserves the right to set the amount of refund (if any). Such terms are adopted in a similar form throughout the travel industry. They are usually covered by your trip cancellation/travel insurance, provided the reason for cancellation falls within the terms of the policy.

If we cancel a program

Pacific Discovery reserves the right to cancel any program if sign-up is inadequate to make the program economically feasible for us to operate. If this happens, we give a full refund of program cost paid. However, Pacific Discovery is not responsible for additional expenses incurred by you in preparing for the trip (e.g. non-refundable air tickets, gear or medical expenses). If a program is under-booked we will inform you before final payment is due.

Liability Release

Pacific Discovery Limited is a private New Zealand NGO formed to promote experiential education and sustainable tourism. Our incorporation number is WN/1148326.

Medical Considerations

Pacific Discovery is not a medical facility and therefore is unable to accept any responsibility regarding medical advice, medications or inoculations that you or your doctor deem necessary for your safe participation. Pacific Discovery assumes no liability regarding provision of medical care.

Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory for all program participants. Your travel insurance must provide cover against personal accident, medical expenses, emergency repatriation and personal liability. We also recommend it covers cancellation, curtailment and loss of luggage and personal effects.

Responsibility

By participating in a Pacific Discovery program, you assume certain obligations to Pacific Discovery and the other program members. It is your responsibility to:

- Understand the conditions implied in the Pacific Discovery itinerary and trip suitability description.
- Select a program (with the help of the Pacific Discovery staff) that is appropriate to your interests and abilities.
- Prepare for the program by familiarizing yourself with the itinerary and program dossier sent by Pacific Discovery.
- Bring appropriate gear and clothing as advised by Pacific Discovery.
- Follow considerate standards of personal hygiene in order to reduce risk of contracting diseases.
- Follow considerate social behavior with other program participants and respect their habits.
- Act in an appropriate and courteous manner befitting the customs of countries you visit.
- Complete the program itinerary as scheduled (or as adjusted by your program leader as necessary).
- Respect the countries we visit by using environmentally safe products, staying on established routes of travel and not littering.

You are aware that travel within a group may involve compromise to accommodate the diverse desires and physical abilities of group members. Your program leader will do their utmost to ensure that any problems are solved for the benefit of the group as a whole. Signing this Liability Release Form signifies your acceptance of the leader's authority to make decisions affecting the group or individuals. For instance, he/she may require an individual to leave the group if he/she believes that a person's health is at risk, if an illegal act is committed, or their behavior becomes detrimental to the safety, enjoyment and well-being of the group. Should the leader take such action, that person would not be entitled to any refund. Similarly, a participant leaving a program en-route will not be entitled to any refund. Under these circumstances Pacific Discovery reserves the right to set the amount of refund (if any).

Pacific Discovery will not accept responsibility or liability for any program participant who contravenes any law or regulation of any country visited.

You acknowledge that travel on a Pacific Discovery program requires a degree of flexibility, and understand that the route, accommodation and modes of transport are subject to change without prior notice due to local circumstances. We reserve the right to make reasonable changes in the itinerary where deemed advisable for the comfort and well-being of program members. These changes are

binding and additional expenses will be charged to you if the reason for any alteration is outside the control of Pacific Discovery.

You acknowledge that Pacific Discovery contracts with a network of companies, government agencies and individuals to assist in the running of its programs. To the best of Pacific Discovery's knowledge, these third parties are qualified to perform the duties they are contracted to perform. However Pacific Discovery will not be held liable for any injury, damage, loss, delay or irregularity that may occur due to the behavior of these third parties.

Any air travel that is part of any program is subject to the conditions as stipulated by the airline concerned and liability is limited in accordance with International Convention.

No employee, servant or agent of Pacific Discovery has authority to vary these conditions.

The terms and conditions of all agreements made with Pacific Discovery shall be subject to, and governed by, New Zealand law. You agree New Zealand will be the forum for resolution of any dispute related to your participation in this program.

If a dispute arises, you will try to resolve it directly with Pacific Discovery. If you cannot resolve the dispute you agree to go to mediation first. You will agree the mediator with Pacific Discovery within 10 days of notification of the dispute. If a mediator is not agreed or appointed, you and Pacific Discovery agree to participate in arbitration under the Arbitration Act 1996 (NZ).

The terms of this agreement shall serve as a release and assumption of risk binding on your heirs, executor, administrator and all members of your family.

You understand that traveling with Pacific Discovery may involve risks (and rewards) above and beyond those encountered on a more conventional holiday, and that you are undertaking an adventure program with inherent dangers. You understand that you are traveling to geographical areas where, amongst other things, the standard of accommodation, transport, safety, hygiene, cleanliness, medical facilities, telecommunications and infrastructure development may not be of the standard you are used to at home or would find on a conventional holiday. You have read and understood the itinerary and suitability for this program you are undertaking and have provided details of any pre-existing medical conditions. You accept these risks and obligations and you fully assume the risks of travel. You release Pacific Discovery from any liabilities connected to these risks to the maximum extent permitted by law.

I understand that this is a release of liability and a contract between me and Pacific Discovery Limited and/or its contracted tour operators or affiliated organizations, and I sign this agreement of my own free will. If any part of this agreement is deemed unenforceable, all other parts shall remain in full force and effect.

Please contact us with any questions.
Pacific Discovery Ltd
PO Box 899
Nelson 7040
New Zealand
Freecall from the US 1 800 655 3415
info@pacificdiscovery.org