

FMC Travel Club

economy tramping and travel overseas

A subsidiary of Federated Mountain Clubs of New Zealand (Inc.)

Club Convenor : John Dobbs

Travel Smart Napier

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*****Thailand and Laos*****

**6th January to 1st February 2011. 27 days ex. Auckland
\$6250 Leader : John Gray**

Any or all payments by visa or mastercard increases the final trip price by \$100 pp

Thailand and Laos are complementary countries so joining them together makes for a great trip. There are interesting ethnic tribal people to encounter on the tramping sections in the hills and mountains of the north. Amazing architecture revealed in beautiful palaces, temples and monuments are widely seen. From the World Heritage listed town of Luang Prabang, to the war history of Kanchanaburi, to the thrill of fast boating down the mighty Mekong River to riding elephants and trying local dishes – there are marvelous experiences all the time! The Buddhist influences are very strong in both countries and these imbue a certain style and attitude in the Thai and Lao people. You will be richly rewarded if you come with an open mind!

PRICE INCLUDES :

- *Flights from Auckland to Bangkok return and 3 internal flights, plus all applicable flight taxes*
- *All accommodation in Thailand and Laos*
- *All land transport in Thailand and Laos*
- *All meals from Breakfast on Day 2 to Breakfast on Day 26*
- *Park fees, permits, entry fees and inclusions as stated in the dossier, Laos entry visa*
- *All airport transfers in Thailand and Laos, departure taxes from NZ, Thailand and Laos*
- *The services of a NZ leader throughout plus local leaders as required*

PRICE EXCLUDES :

- *Personal spending outside the itinerary e.g. alcohol, internet, laundry, souvenirs, phone calls, etc*
- *Travel insurance (mandatory)*
- *Travel from your home to/from Auckland Airport*

Trip Leader :

John is a long standing member of Napier Tramping Club and has done a turn as club president. His association with the Thai people goes back many years and involves the education of young people and teaching English. He has travelled extensively in Thailand as well as the surrounding countries and is very familiar with the Thai language and culture. As well, he has led a number of trips to Thailand plus Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam for the Travel Club. John's knowledge and enthusiasm for these places is infectious and he is the ideal person to lead our programmes in the part of the world. John bides his time between Napier and Thailand. I'm delighted he is available to lead our 2011 programme, and like me, he welcomes any enquiries. He can be reached by email : ajgnz@xtra.co.nz

Trip Organisation :

The **tramping programme** is based in two mountainous areas in the north of Thailand. Here the tramping links to various ethnic hilltribe communities where we overnight in the village and get to learn about their way of life. Although hilly and still quite hot, these areas do not experience the heat and humidity of Bangkok, for example. Fit trampers of all ages will have no problem with the terrain. Most other walks involve exploration of cultural sights or shorter visits to waterfalls or some other feature.

Land transport includes minibus, long-tailed boats, cyclos, ferries and train rides. You will also get to ride an elephant!

Accommodation includes a wide variety of hotels and lodges, plus village houses. Authenticity and location are important. Twin use rooms in the main although there are occasions when multiple use will apply. Please be flexible.

Gear. This is not a camping trip. A gear list will be supplied and luggage should be kept to a minimum. A moderate travel pack and a day pack would be ideal.

Meals. All included! Dining out is reasonable by NZ cost standards, and intrinsic art of the trip experience and a must do, especially the lively markets. You will be well fed on this trip.

Weather. January is more often dry, but a little rain is inevitable. Expect high temps and some high humidity with cooler nights while tramping in the north.

Trip Programme :

We start and end in **Bangkok**, a sometimes overwhelming city for the first time visitor. John will reveal the fantastic sights, food, culture, nightlife and shopping of this Asian crossroads city.

Chiang Mai is Thailand's second city, with great night markets, excellent food, craft villages & night markets.

Mae Hong Son to the north of Chiang Mai, is a beautiful town and the start of some great tramping close to the Burmese border region. Experience remote hilltribes and stay in their villages.

Crossing the mighty **Mekong River** into Laos will be like stepping back in time to slower, more gentle ways. Timeless

Luang Prabang has stunning architecture and temples. **Ponsavan** is nearby the mysterious Plain of Jars which will leave you wondering. **Vang Vieng** is a riverside outdoors mecca with caving, tubing and cycling on offer. Then into **Vientiane**, the quietest and most laid back capital city in Asia.

Returning to Bangkok, we head out west to **Kanchanaburi**, a scenically beautiful area with significant war heritage. A final fling and last minute shopping in Bangkok to finish.

Itinerary :

Day 1. Thu 06 Jan. Bangkok

Fly Auckland to Bangkok

Day 2. Fri 07 Jan. Bangkok

Enjoy your first taste of the sights and sounds of this vibrant and exciting city. Travel by skytrain and ferry to the Grand Palace, Wat Phra Kaeo, Vimanmek Palace, Wat Arun and a canal trip.

Day 3. Sat 08 Jan. Train

Continue your appreciation of Bangkok seeing Baiyoke Tower, Suan Pakhard Palace Museum, Jim Thompson's house (renowned silk trader of the past) and the Marble Temple; before the evening overnight train up to Chiang Mai.

Day 4. Sun 09 Jan. Chiang Mai

Sightseeing in and around this northern city. Doi Suthep Temple, local handicraft villages and the foodcourt and night bazaar.

Day 5. Mon 10 Jan. Mae Hong Son

Explore the old city and its walls and Wat Phra Sing before the afternoon flight up to Mae Hong Son in the northwest mountains.

Day 6. Tue 11 Jan. Trekking

Begin trekking programme to ethnic villages in the hills beyond Mae Hong Son.

Day 7. Wed 12 Jan. Trekking

Day 8. Thu 13 Jan. Mae Hong Son

Complete trekking and return to Mae Hong Son.

Day 9. Fri 14 Jan. Chiang Mai

Enjoy the local morning market before the return flight to Chiang Mai and some free time.

Day 10. Sat 15 Jan. Chiang Rai

Travel by minibus to this far north town, visiting a temple and hot springs enroute.

Day 11. Sun 16 Jan. Trekking

Ride an elephant, visit Lamnamkok National Park and a tea plantation before overnighing in a Lahu village homestay.

Day 12. Mon 17 Jan. Chiang Rai

Via an impressive waterfall, a Red Lahu village, a Black Lahu village, an Akha village and hot springs before returning to Chiang Rai.

Day 13. Tue 18 Jan. Chiang Khong

Travel by minibus via Chiang Saen and the Golden Triangle Museum to this small old town on the banks of the mighty Mekong River.

Day 14. Wed 19 Jan. Houei Xai

By boat to the other or Laotian side of the Mekong where we meet our Laotian guide and complete entry visa formalities. Visit a Lu minority village and learn about their lifestyle. Afternoon of freetime to explore Houei Xai, an interesting town that specializes in the sapphire and precious stones trade.

Day 15. Thu 20 Jan. Luang Prabang

An exciting day zipping down the Mekong River in a longtail boat! Lunch at Pakbeng enroute, along with a visit to a rice wine village and the Pak Ou Caves. Luang Prabang is an ancient royal capital and a very fascinating place full of wonderful architecture and temples, markets and has many Buddhist Monks. It is listed as a World Heritage cultural treasure.

Day 16. Fri 21 Jan. Luang Prabang

An early start this morning as we partake in offering alms to the local Buddhist Monks. Visit the former royal temples and other local sights and the viewpoint of Mt Phousi. Explore the night market tonight.

Day 17. Sat 22 Jan. Xieng Khuang and the Plain of Jars

By minibus to the fascinating Plain of Jars region. An air of mystery hangs over the Plain of Jars with the history dating back to the 6th century. The history of this strange place will be interpreted by your local guide.

Day 18. Sun 23 Jan. Xieng Khuang and the Plain of Jars

A morning visit and exploration of the Plain of Jars is followed by some free time in Xieng Khuang.

Day 19. Mon 24 Jan. Vang Vieng

By minibus to the outdoor adventure capital of Laos, Vang Vieng is a small town sitting prettily on the banks of a river.

Day 20. Tue 25 Jan. Vientiane

Morning sightseeing and activities includes tubing the river and visiting a huge cave nearby. Then by minibus to Vientiane, the dreamy and laidback capital of Laos.

Day 21. Wed 26 Jan. Vientiane

An interesting combination of the Buddha Park, watching locals make bamboo rice, lunch in a river boat hut and markets. Evening at leisure.

Day 22. Thu 27 Jan. Vientiane

Visit the sights of the city – Wat Sisaket, Wat Ho Prakeo, Pratumai “Victory Gate” and Pra That Luang. After lunch visit Ban Thong Buathong and enjoy sunset over the Mekong. Dinner tonight is an authentic Lao dinner and dance performance.

Day 23. Fri 28 Jan. Bangkok

Fly back to Bangkok then free time.

Day 24. Sat 29 Jan. Kanchanaburi

By minivan west to Kanchanaburi to discover the “Bridge over the River Kwai” and war history, visit the war museum and Hellfire Pass, then overnight on a riverside raft.

Day 25. Sun 30 Jan. Bangkok

By minivan back to Bangkok picking up the floating markets and other sights along the way. Farewell dinner tonight and a possible visit to the Patpong Road.

Day 26. Mon 31 Jan. Bangkok and flight home

Free time until the evening flight to Auckland. The giant Chatuchak Market is the best place to go for final shopping and bargains before transferring back to Bangkok Airport. Evening departure.

Day 27. Tue 01 Feb. Arrive home

Morning arrival into Auckland Airport and the end of your trip. Tired, but happy!

Terms and Conditions :

1. FMC Travel Club (FMC) offers this small group trip in conjunction with Travel Smart Napier (TSN). All travel arrangements are made through TSN. All participants must agree to all terms and conditions by signing the Registration Form.
2. FMC and TSN are not liable or responsible for any injury, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity which may arise from weather or defect in any vehicle, vessel or aircraft, or through the acts or default of any persons or company engaged in conveying passengers or in carrying out the trip arrangements.
3. FMC and TSN reserve the right to cancel the trip should minimum numbers required to operate not eventuate. Should this occur, then all monies paid by participants will be fully refunded. All efforts to ensure the trip will operate even with reduced numbers will be undertaken, before advising any decision to cancel. Any changes this caused to the itinerary, dates or price, will be conveyed to all participants for their prior acceptance.
4. Minor amendments to the itinerary may be necessary and the leader has the authority to make changes "on ground" for the benefit of participants.
5. The trip price includes a payment to FMC and the apportioned cost of the leader's travel.
6. Registrations are accepted on a first comers basis in good faith upon receipt of the Registration Form and payment of \$1000 per person – due by 31st August 2010. The balance is due by 31st October 2010. All payments may be made by cash, cheque, EFTPOS, direct credit or mastercard to the office of Travel Smart Napier. **Any or all payments by visa or mastercard increase the final trip price by \$100 per person.**
**Direct credit internet payments must go into the office account of TSN :
Heerlen Ltd T/A Travel Smart Napier 010685 0151601 00 (ANZ Napier). Identify transactions with last name.**
7. The trip is expressed in NZ Dollars and there is no solo supplement charged. Events beyond our control in relation to currency exchange and the imposition of extra local taxes for example, may result in a variation to the trip price until such time as full payment has been received. Upon full payment, the trip price is guaranteed.
8. Cancellations. If you need to cancel a registration for any reason, you must advise TSN in writing as soon as possible. An email is accepted but a phone call is not. Cancellation fees apply as follows :
 - Cancellations received up to 31st August 2010 will be refunded in full
 - Cancellations received from 1st September 2010 to 31st October 2010 incur a fee of \$1000
 - Cancellations received from 1st November 2010 onwards incur a fee of 100% of trip costs
 - Please note that if you find someone to replace you, cancellation fees might possibly be negated
9. TRAVEL INSURANCE IS MANDATORY. We recommend QBE Travel Insurance and a paper or email brochure and application are available to everyone. TSN offers a discount to participants of this trip. Alternative policies are acceptable with evidence provided. We strongly recommend that you ensure you have full travel insurance cover by the closing date of 31st August 2010, or prior if the trip can be confirmed before then.
10. PLEASE SUPPLY A PHOTOCOPY OR SCAN OF YOUR PASSPORT WHEN COMPLETING REGISTRATION. You must have 3 months available on your expiry date after your return to NZ or you will need to replace your passport. NZ passport holders do not require a visa to enter Thailand but a visa is required for Laos. Details for this will be supplied to all participants and the cost is included in the trip. For any questions relating to passports and visas please discuss with John Dobbs at TSN.

Registration Form :

Register for **THAILAND and LAOS 2011** by completing all sections of this form and send to John Dobbs at TSN before the closing date of 31st August 2010. The minimum group size is 7. **Please register early so we can ascertain group viability early and be fair to others who do register early. Thank you.**

Full name(s) as shown in passport(s), please identify your preferred first name.....

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Mailing address.....

Email.....Day ph.....Night ph.....

Mob.....Date(s) of birth.....

Dietary requirements, allergies, medical conditions etc?.....

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If you are affiliated to FMC through a tramping club, please advise which club.....

If, not, are you a private member of FMC?.....YES.....NO

(direct or affiliated membership of FMC is not a pre-requisite of joining this trip, however)

If neither, we encourage you to join FMC as a private or club member. See www.fmc.org.nz

A contact person in NZ in any emergency (name, address, ALL means of contact and that person's relationship to you

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I / We have read the full trip dossier and I / We accept fully the booking conditions of this trip. I / We enclose My/Our registration payment of \$1000 per person. I / We agree to pay the remainder of trips costs by due dates As advised by invoice. I / We understand the final trip price cannot be guaranteed until full payment has been made.

.....signed and dated by each person registering

Checklist :

Registration form, payment, passport scan or photocopy – send everything to :

John Dobbs, FMC Travel Club Convenor

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