

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY ADVENTURE

PRE-TRIP DOSSIER 2009/2010

ANCIENT KINGDOMS

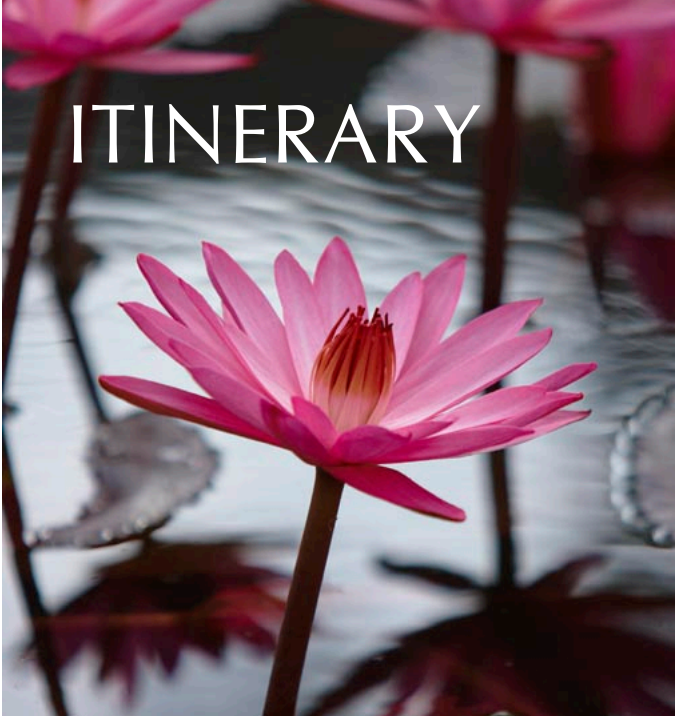
Photographic adventure designed by photographers, for photographers. Advance your skills while travelling through Thailand, Laos and Cambodia on a 14 day adventure. We have designed an integrated programme of travel and photographic themes to create the most wonderful opportunities you could ever imagine - for beginners and advanced photographers alike. You get 2 leaders, a guaranteed maximum group size of 8 and the experience of a lifetime.



GRASSHOPPER
ADVENTURES

PHOTOGRAPHY
by Ewen Bell

ITINERARY



Days 1-3 | Bangkok

We meet at our hotel by 6pm and after a tour briefing we head out for our first delicious Thai meal. Our orientation of the city the next morning will show you the rivers, canals, laneways and temples of the ancient city.

Our hotel is located along the river, close to the ancient temples and Royal Palace – so with your free time there is plenty around to see. On the evening of day 3 we board an overnight sleeper train to the north.

Days 4-5 | Chiang Mai

Chiang Mai was once the centre of the Lanna Kingdom, now it is the modern northern capital of Thailand, a city that still holds onto its ancient heritage. We will head up in the hills to Wat Doi Suthep, an ancient golden stupa that looked out over the city.

We also take a day-trip to Lampang, home of Thai Elephant Conservation Center. After watching the entertaining show we take a ride on these gentle giants and visit the elephant hospital.

Days 6-9 | Luang Prabang

A short flight takes up into the centre of northern Laos, a world away from modern Asia, to the former royal capital of Luang Prabang. The UNESCO World Heritage town sits in a valley surrounded by mountains and flanked by the Mekong River. Arguably the most picturesque town

in South East Asia, Luang Prabang is home to golden temples, French colonial architecture, great food and ancient rituals.

We will rise early in the morning to see the traditional giving of alms to the hundreds of Buddhist monks who parade the town in the morning light. We will also travel further up the Mekong River to see the Pak Ou Caves where thousands of Buddha images have been places over the centuries.

You will spend a morning learning to cook delicious Lao cuisine, and have enough spare time to discover ethnic minority textiles, cycle the countryside or indulge in freshly made fruit shakes and just relax.

Days 10-14 | Angkor

After another short flight we arrive in Siem Reap, the town that sits on the edge of the ruins of the Angkor Kingdom. We will visit Angkor Wat for both sunrise and sunset as well as exploring this iconic temple. The Angkor Kingdom built thousands of temples and we will take our time to explore a selection of favourites and also travel out to the distant Beng Mealea, a temple that was only recently cleared of the jungle that once strangled it.

On the last day of the tour we will fly back to Bangkok and end the tour at the airport where you can connect with your homeward flights.





TAKE BETTER PHOTOS

The photographic themes designed into this trip are aimed at people with a fundamental knowledge of their camera, but who want to learn more. A basic knowledge of aperture, focal length, depth of field and exposure is useful, but not essential. We will even help you learn the technical use of your camera, if that's what you need. For more experienced photographers the itinerary alone will be an inspiration for your artistic output, plus the chance to share stories with an award winning travel journalist.

People of many different skill levels and ambition will be gathered for the journey, so expect to be in the company of diversity. This tour will appeal to anyone who wants to immerse themselves in the process of cultivating skills and exploring cultures. You will have a chance to discuss techniques and principles, then immediately go out and practice. This will not give you a qualification, but hopefully will give you confidence and direction to take better photos.

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WHO TRAVELS WITH US

Our photographic journeys appeal to both the young and old, the experienced and novice. Most tours are made up of people aged 25-65, and occasionally older or younger still. It doesn't matter what your skills and interest in photography is, you will enjoy sharing a creative and immersive experience in China.

You can read feedback from our past travellers by visiting www.ewenbell.com



CAMERA GEAR

We recommend the use of Digital SLR cameras for this journey, but you are not restricted from using any type of camera you may have, including conventional film SLRs and compact cameras. Digital SLR cameras offer excellent manual controls and plus us the ability to review our work at the end of each day - a valuable part of this experience. A minimum of 4Gig of memory cards should accompany your camera, plus an additional 20Gig or greater of external storage (hard drive or laptop).

We also recommend that you carry a wide angle lens in preference to telephoto. Most of our shooting involves being close up with the subject. We strongly advise that if you own a Digital SLR camera that you purchase an equivalent 18mm lens or even wider for the purpose of this journey. (Remember that most Digital SLRs multiply a standard lens by roughly 1.5, so factor this in when determining your wide-angle). The range of 18mm to 80mm will cover almost every need, be it a single wide-angle zoom lens or two of fixed focal length.

A good quality day pack will be an essential part of the packing list. Crumpler and Lowe make excellent packs that are designed for camera equipment. Ideally your pack should be comfortable, spacious, and practical. The traditional type of 'over-the-shoulder' camera bag is not very suitable for travel photography, a day-pack is better. Remember that you will be carrying your gear for days on end, so it's worth buying something with good shoulder straps and a little extra room to fit both your camera gear and your daily necessities.

Flash equipment and tripods are not recommended. Our study themes will not address the use of advanced flash photography and the additional weight and bulk must be considered against the rare occasions of use - if used at all. Similarly for tripods, they are cumbersome and difficult to travel with. Practise and experience with using your digital equipment and fundamental skills will negate the need for tripod or monopod.

Finally, full travel insurance and coverage for your 'additional items' is absolutely necessary. Standard travel insurance is generally inadequate to cover the value of your equipment unless you stipulate your equipment when buying insurance. It costs very little, so don't be caught short. Please check very carefully that you are fully covered and have completed all necessary details to qualify for suitable coverage.



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HOW WE TRAVEL

Experience a colourful and rich array of inspiration as we venture along the trail of Asia's ancient cultures. This is one of our most comfortable journeys, combining short flights across the border, boutique hotels and private bus services. We'll get onto the Mekong River by boat, travel on elephants back in the jungle and rummage through some of the lesser known treasures of Angkor Wat.

You don't have to worry about visas and flights into Laos and Cambodia, that's covered in the tour cost already.

Just sit back and let Grasshopper Adventures do the hard work with the itinerary and concentrate on your photography. Explore new techniques along the way and put these skills into practice in the most photogenic destinations Asia has to offer. This is an unparalleled opportunity to develop your own expressive style and techniques as a photographer, with one-on-one professional assistance throughout the tour.






LEARN A LITTLE

This is a special way to learn about photography. Time is set aside during the trip for theme sessions which introduce techniques and concepts. After each session you will have a chance to put them into practice. There will be frequent opportunities to review your work and discuss your experiences for that day. The skills covered in this journey are aimed at travel photography particularly, but will benefit all areas of your photographic pursuit.

No matter what your level of skill or experience you will learn invaluable techniques on our travels. For 14 days we will be at your disposal to explore the high level concepts and fine detail practicalities of travel photography. Beginners can expect to learn basic skills, new ways of thinking about their photography and gain structured themes to help them take great photos in challenging conditions. Advanced photographers are also invited to discuss the world of publishing, travel journalism and finding the line where photography becomes art.

A large, close-up photograph of a woven basket filled with green limes and lemons. The basket is made of light-colored, curved strips of material. The fruit is vibrant green, with some showing signs of ripening. The background is filled with lush green foliage, including some broad leaves and some more delicate, fern-like plants.

Understanding your subject
Getting closer
Capturing intimacy and expressions
Portrait photography on the run
How to make use of your wide angle lens
Landscape Photography
Using available light for dramatic effect
Capturing a sense of motion
Shooting for context
Using pattern repetition
Colour and form
Patience and predictability makes perfect
Techniques just for digital photography
Responsible travel with a camera
Safety issues when travelling as a foreigner

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ACCOMMODATION

The standard of accommodation for our tour across the Ancient Kingdoms will be much better than your ordinary small group tour, and our hotel selections offer character and charm that reflect the unique cultures of each country. Expect hot water, clean rooms, and climate control throughout the tour.

This trip operates on a twin share basis, hence single travellers will be allocated a same-sex room mate. Please ask for a single-room rate if you do not wish to share your accommodation for the duration of the trip. Please ask for an elective single-supplement if you do not wish to share your accommodation for the duration of the trip.



RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

At all times during our journey we need to be mindful of how our presence can impact on the cultures we wish to observe. Travel photography carries an even greater burden to ensure that you respect cultural beliefs and personal privacy. We never take photos of people without their express consent; instead we will learn techniques to enable you to overcome language barriers and actually take better photos that reflect a sense of connection with the people we meet.





WHY SHOOT DIGITAL

For the purpose of this journey a digital camera is the most suitable equipment to carry. We will save the debate about film vs digital for the journey, there will be plenty of time to discuss opinions! Our trip is a chance to develop new skills and the immediate feedback offered by digital cameras is hence valuable. The quality, manual control and practicality offered by Digital SLR's make them perfect for travel photography. Your instructor will also be carrying a laptop computer for the journey, so there will be ample opportunity to review your photographs and study your image in detail.



ABOUT YOUR LEADERS

You will enjoy the company of two leaders for this journey. One is there to help you travel, the other to help you learn about travel photography.

Jason Williams have been operating small group adventure tours for over 7 years. He lives in Asia and operates about 15 trips each year, including this photography adventure. Jason operates many trips for other, more well known, travel companies. By dealing directly with his company, Grasshopper Adventures, you get the best price, exceptional service and the most customised itinerary possible. You wont find a better tour operator.

Ewen Bell has been a commercial photographer since 1990 and has experience in many aspects of photography – wildlife, travel, commercial and portraiture. Ewen’s work is published in brochures for numerous travel companies and appears in regular travel publications including the Escape Weekend editions across Australia, Melbourne’s Herald Sun and national magazines including Vacations & Travel and Holidays for Couples.

Ewen was also chosen by their ASTW as the 2007 Australian Travel Photographer of the Year, and awarded best Australian image in 2008.

PRE-TRIP ESSENTIALS

Additional Accommodation

Should you require extra accommodation in Bangkok or Krabi we can offer you competitive rates at our hotel. Please book extra nights when you book your trip. Rooms cost will be advised upon request and may vary according to season and proximity to date of travel.

Visas

Most western nations do not require a visa before arrival in Thailand, as tourists are granted a 30 day stay. Please check with the Thai Consulate in your country before you travel. Passport holders from Australia, the USA and UK do not require a visa.

Money

The official currency of Thailand is the Thai Baht, which should be used for all local transactions, while the US Dollar is commonly used in conjunction with Laos and Cambodian currencies. All three countries have access to modern banking systems with ATMs and money changers. It is possible to use Visa/Mastercard and Cirrus/Maestro cards, however, we do advise that you carry some cash currency from home as a backup. Travellers Cheques are not always as easy to change by comparison. Most international currencies can be exchanged in larger cities but US Dollars are the most easily traded.

Costs

We recommend that you allow approximately US\$15 for food and general living costs per day. Shopping money should be considered extra to this amount. Some meals are included with travel days and discussion sessions, but you will have the opportunity to choose between dining with the group or alone on most occasions.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of participating in a Grasshopper Adventure that you hold travel insurance for the duration of the trip. Insurance must include comprehensive medical and emergency evacuation. Your travel insurance details will be checked by your group leader on arrival at the starting point hotel.

Health

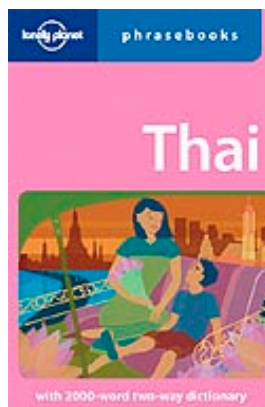
There are no specific health requirements for travelling in Thailand, however, we recommend that you visit a travel medicine doctor before travelling. Please advise your doctor that you plan to travel to northern and southern Thailand and they may recommend anti-malaria tablets to guard against infection. You should carry a well stocked first aid kit with you when you travel. All Grasshopper Adventures Group Leaders are first aid trained, however, they are not permitted to distribute any medications.

Group Size

8 maximum. Each group will have the services of a tour leader, photographic instructor and various local guides.

Phrase Book

A highly memorable part of your travels will be the local people that you meet. In the tourist areas some people will speak English but away from these areas you should learn a few words of Thai. We will teach you some of the basics but if you want to really interact we recommend bringing a phrase book (unless you are really good at charades). We can recommend the Lonely Planet Thailand Phrase Book.



Packing

You will be required to carry your own luggage at times and bags will need to be loaded on and off trains and up and down stairs at stations. For this reason we recommend that you pack as lightly as possible in a backpack. This trip covers rural and northern areas during the cooler seasons so temperatures can plummet at night. Please remember to bring warm clothes for cold nights and chilly mornings.

You should consider bringing the following items:

- Backpack
- Long trousers
- Shorts
- Shirts
- Hat (sun & woolly)
- Thermals
- Fleece Jacket
- Sandals/Light Shoes
- Sunglasses
- Light Rain Coat
- Toiletries
- Small Towel
- Sunscreen
- First Aid Kit
- Mosquito Repellent
- Alarm Clock
- Passport (with 6 months validity and spare pages)
- Passport photo
- Travel Insurance details
- Flight Tickets
- Money - Travellers Checks/Cash/Credit Card
- Phrase Book

Important

All information in this Profile is researched with care and provided in good faith. The information subject to change, and does not form part of the contract between the client and Grasshopper Adventures.