



Tamarind and Spice
Food Adventure in Thailand
Special set departure (2-week small group tour)

Introduction:

What better way to discover a country than through its food?

This 2-week food adventure is a mixture of culture, food experiences, cooking (novices welcome!), sightseeing and relaxation. Escape to Thailand and you'll return not just refreshed, but with skills and recipes to entertain effortlessly or knock up a mouth-watering meal in minutes.

Tamarind & Spice is a special itinerary for those who'd like to take a Tell Tale trip but would like to join with other people (rather than take a private tour).

Overview:

This is a journey around Thailand taking in 4 areas. You will start your trip in Bangkok with some sightseeing, exploring and a kick-off lesson in Thai cooking. Then you'll head to the Central Plains, its vibrant green ricefields are a backdrop for experiencing traditional Thai life. Then you'll take an overnight sleeper train to the north of Thailand where you will pick your own at an organic farm and explore the city of Chiang Mai and try the 'Lanna' cuisine of the north. Then you will fly to the south of Thailand for the final part of your trip to enjoy the spicy food of the Andaman Coast.

Trip Style:

As all Tell Tale trips, Tamarind & Spice is a soft adventure. This means it is different from mainstream tourism, but not as physically demanding as a typical adventure holiday (no days of trekking here).

Accommodation is also more intimate than massmarket hotels but more comfortable than a typical adventure holiday (boutique inns and a small resorts, rather than say guesthouses). There is **no single supplement** and on this trip, private rooms with private bathrooms are included in the advertised price. Exceptions are 1 night village stay on Day 5 and 1 night on an overnight sleeper train on Day 6.

As this is a group trip, it is clearly not possible to have the sorts of insider experiences or one-on-one activities you can on a Tell Tale private tour and individual cooking needs to be run more at schools than in local homes. We do the best to provide the best experiences we can within the constraints!

Who this trip is for:

This trip is ideal for those who are interested in local culture and people. As well as food and cooking of course! If you are looking for a trip with luxury hotels and cocktails, it's not the right fit (unless you combine with your own beach extension, either arranged with us or independently). The trip is ideal for those who go with the flow, 'serendipity' is a word to bear in mind. In terms of cooking, it is suitable for all levels of cooks from novice (whether in Thai food or generally!) to professionals who'd like to expand their repertoire. Vegetarians and vegans are welcome, we will cater for you. However, please note others will be cooking with meat and visits to local markets are not for the squeamish.

Tell Tale Travel
10 Bloomsbury Way
London
WC1A 2SL



Telephone us:
0800 011 2571 or 0207 060 4571
International + 44 207 060 4571
9am – 9pm, 7 days a week

Tour size:

The maximum group size is 12. However, due to our preference of using smaller accommodation, we often have to set a smaller group size/ close the departure in advance.

Early booking is advised. It is possible to book with a deposit and we have a no surcharges guarantee.

Please also note if you are travelling with a friend, our Bangkok accommodation only has 1 room which can accommodate sharers requiring separate beds.



Day 1 – Saturday

Approx 6pm Please be at London Heathrow for check in 3 hours before the group flight.
Fly from London Heathrow on a direct scheduled flight to Bangkok with either Eva Air or Thai Airways.

If you don't live in the UK and are arranging your own flights, you are welcome to join the group transfer from Bangkok airport or make your own way. We are also able to arrange private transfers and extra night/s' accommodation (at supplement).

Day 2 – Sunday D (meals included today = dinner)

Welcome to Thailand!

The group flight from the UK will be met at Bangkok airport and whisked away in a private air-conditioned minibus to a centrally-located boutique inn. Baan Pra Nond is a converted old family mansion, tastefully designed by Tasma, who runs it with her husband Jason, supported by their staff. It has just 9 guest rooms for guests. You will have a little time to unpack and get settled in and have a quick dip in the small pool. Later on, you'll take a stroll with your tour escort through the local area for a welcome dinner at a traditional Thai restaurant which is popular with middle class Thai people. This will give you a good introduction to Thai food, and will be a contrast to other meals you will have throughout your trip, some of which will be very local indeed.



Day 3 – Monday B L

A beautiful breakfast before you head off for your lesson to introduce you to Thai cooking.



You'll walk to the river where you will take a boat trip along the Chao Praya. When you arrive at our charming waterside cooking school, you'll have a welcome drink and snack on edible flowers, before a walk in the herb garden. Then you'll have a cooking demonstration before trying your hand at classic Thai dishes at your individual work station, examples are *Kang Keaw Wan Gai* green chicken curry in coconut milk and *Khao Niew Ma Muang*, sticky rice made with ripe mango.

After you've feasted on your efforts, you'll have the rest of the afternoon free. In the evening, you'll be taken to Bangkok's Chinatown to wander around and sample the street food.

Day 4 – Tuesday B

Today, you'll visit Bangkok's main sights. You'll head to the Chao Praya river which winds through this sprawling city. You'll take a public boat and see Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), which is covered in pieces of porcelain from the river, before crossing the river and having a tour of the Grand Palace with its grand ceremonial gardens as well as the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Then a private boat trip. The river is a hive of activity and the klongs (side canals) give a glimpse into people's lives in this area.



A bit of free time before an evening out. You'll visit the Asiatique night market on the river where you can browse at your leisure or bargain at the bazaar to pick up lightweight clothes for your trip. There are also plenty of eateries for you to choose from.

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Day 5 – Wednesday B D

Time to pack up and leave Bangkok. You're heading off to the Central Plains, the 'rice bowl of Thailand'.

First, you will make a stop at Bangkok's largest farmer's market where you can browse the stalls and choose from regional delicacies for a snack/lunch. Then you'll have a 1-1.5 hour drive to the Central Plains, the rich and fertile agricultural heartland of Thailand. Rice is the staple food here, but you will also enjoy fresh vegetables like bok choy, snow peas and straw mushrooms, along with fish caught in the waters of the Chao Praya river which heads north through this area. On your way, you'll stop at a community handicraft centre, originally set up by the Queen of Thailand.



You will arrive at a sleepy, canal-side village, surrounded by paddyfields where the way of life has been relatively unspoilt by modern ways. You will meet some stalwarts of the community, including the village headman, Prachim and his wife Pao, who is an expert cook. Time to enjoy the quieter pace of life by the canal. Later on, you'll be taken out on a traditional wooden boat. As you drift down the canal, you will see everyone from fishermen to housewives and visit the local temple.

After a traditional Thai rural dinner, Pao will show you how to make Thai desserts. These are extremely sweet and the perfect end to a spicy meal. Real Thai desserts contain only three main ingredients, flour, sugar and coconut which are mixed, cooked and decorated in different ways. It would be a lifetime's journey to learn the thousands of mouth-watering combinations but tonight Pao will show you some of her secret family recipes.

Then it's time to bed down for the night, the headman's house is beautiful, spacious and lined with teak, airy from being by the canal. *Please note this is one night you won't have a room to yourselves. The group will share the top floor of the house and you will sleep on Thai-style mattresses and share a bathroom. This will be the most basic of your accommodation of your trip though this village would be considered prosperous for rural Thailand (particularly compared to say hilltribe villages). Please have an open mind, be respectful and make the most of your time to have a unique experience of countryside living in Thailand.*

Day 6 – Thursday B L

An early start this morning, you will visit Pao's local market to pick up some fresh ingredients. The market is just a short distance away but if you want the best of the seasonal produce, you have to get there early and jostle with the locals. When you get back to the village, Pao will give you a cooking demonstration. Do take notes. It isn't possible for a group to cook in a home kitchen but you're welcome to help chop!



This afternoon, you'll be heading to nearby Ayutthaya, the main city in this area. You'll explore the beautiful remains of the UNESCO world heritage site in Ayutthaya by bicycle. In its heyday in the seventeenth century after the fall of the Khmer Empire, it must have been a spectacular sight. Around one million people lived here, many on canal boats, and the city was full of ornate temples. *If you are not a confident cyclist or have any health issues, there is support by local vehicle.*

You will have the opportunity to shower and change in Ayutthaya before you get on the overnight sleeper train to Chiang Mai in the north. Travelling by train is not just environmentally friendly, but a great way to see local life and admire the lush landscape rolling past the window. It's a bit of an adventure though (we recommend wearing ear plugs and an eye mask) and as we reserve berths in the air-conditioned carriage, have some extra clothes handy to wrap up in.

Day 7 – Friday B D

This morning, you'll arrive in Chiang Mai, the 'Rose of the North'.

Lanna is the name for the ancient kingdom of 'a million ricefields' which is now northern Thailand and the food has Burmese, Lao and Chinese influences in its modern-day Thai cooking. As well as the rice, herbs and vegetables grown by Thai people who are traditionally lowland farmers, Chiang Mai is surrounded by hills inhabited by tribes from other countries who now grow crops as exotic as asparagus and strawberries.

You will be met at the train station and taken to a lovely inn in the older part of Chiang Mai, designed combining Chinese and Lanna architecture. You'll have the day to relax by the small pool, although you could take a tuk tuk to the centre to go shopping, or visit a local 'spa' for a traditional Thai massage (not for the fainthearted!).

Day 8 – Saturday B L



You've had a flavour of both central and northern food, now you will get hands-on with Lanna cuisine. This morning, you will visit an organic farm where you can pick your own before being taught how to make northern Thai dishes, you'll all have your own workspaces. From lemons to Kaffir lime leaves, you will find plenty of ingredients on the farm for traditional Lanna dishes like *Pad Ka Prao* a type of stir fried dish made with holy basil, *Nam Prik Ong* a chilli-based sauce/dip, or tasty Thai fried vegetables.

You'll have a bit of free time mid to late afternoon and this evening, we recommend heading to the special market held on Saturdays on Wao Lai street which is pedestrianised for the evening (this is much less touristy than Chiang Mai's famous night bazaar).

Day 9 – Sunday B L

Sightseeing. Today, you'll tick off the main sights of Chiang Mai such as the famous temples Wiang Kum Kam and Wat Chedi. You'll also get a couple of other experiences and have a local lunch

Later, you can explore the vast Sunday market, this is full of handicrafts made by both the local Thai and hilltribe people who live in and around Chiang Mai.

Day 10 – Monday B L

Now we know you can stand the heat in the kitchen, but would you be able to survive in a jungle? Don't worry, you're staying where you are, not off to survive in an actual jungle! You'll be taught how to cook in the open – you will learn how to put together rudimentary cooking equipment from what you can find in the wild such as bamboo and banana leaves and how to cook over an open fire. Even your 'dining table' will be made from banana leaves.



Day 11 – Tuesday B

Time to start the next part of your holiday! You're flying from north to south.

This morning, you will be taken to Chiang Mai airport where you will take a short flight to Bangkok then connect to another short flight to Krabi in Southern Thailand. You'll be picked up and on your drive from Krabi airport, you will see the famous rock formations of the Andaman Coast, rising like cliffs and covered with tropical jungle plants. This breathtaking landscape has served as backdrops in Hollywood films ranging from Star Wars to James Bond's *The Man with the Golden Gun*.

You will soon arrive at a laid back rustic resort, Phu Pha Ao Nang. It is just a 10-15 minute tuk tuk ride from the main tourist area of Ao Nang itself, but feels far away enough from the hustle and bustle in a charming location with tropical trees. Settle into your wood-panelled room and have a dip in the pool.

Krabi is a province (not just a town) which despite the attraction to tourists is a place where the people mainly make their living from smallscale farming. You will get a glimpse into this and life in Southern Thailand during your stay. Unlike most of Thailand, the people are mainly Muslim in this area, and as well as the abundance of tropical fresh fruit, you'll be able to savour regional specialties like curry and roti as well as arguably the most well-known regional dish, *Pad Thai*, flat rice noodles and prawns combined with tofu, egg and peanuts. **Tell Tale Tip** see the article in the Focus section of our website called ['Destination Krabi'](#).



Day 12 – Wednesday B L

Time for some relaxation! You will go on a private boat trip to explore the uninhabited islands that dot the Andaman sea.



Drifting along on a long-tail boat is a great way to experience the stunning scenery and is extremely relaxing, although you will stop to snorkel in coral reefs full of colourful fish and have a picnic lunch. You will discover the Hong archipelago, considered by some to be the most beautiful place in the region - it is home to islands with pristine white beaches and a hidden emerald lagoon.

Day 13 – Thursday B L

This morning, you'll learn to cook the food of Southern Thailand. Influenced by neighbouring Malaysia and blended with the tastes of people originally from China and Thai-style cooking, it has delicious and distinctive tastes. As you are a group, this is at a local cooking school (rather than a home) in order for you all to have adequate facilities. The lady who owns this school is a friend of ours and as you'd have learnt so much already, she will focus your lesson on southern-style food (rather than the dishes from all around Thailand she would do for other visitors).

Mid afternoon onwards, you'll have time to relax by the pool. This evening, you'll be taken to Krabi town to graze from the food stalls at the night market. *Krabi town is more of a place for locals than touristy Ao Nang and you should dress modestly.*

Day 14 Friday B D

Today is your last day. You'll be driven to Tubkaak beach (30-40 mins) away which we think is the

niciest on the mainland to relax and have a swim and sunbathe. On your way, you'll stop at a local village's community shop to buy some souvenirs, choices range from pineapple pulp stationery to batik and coconut shells handcrafted into items that are useful around the home. *You're welcome to stay behind and relax by the pool if you prefer.*



In the late afternoon/early evening, you will visit a local village where our friend, Eh is the deputy headman. Eh will take you for a walk around the village, stopping to show you his own rubber plantation as well as various smallholdings producing crops common in southern-style cooking, such as cashewnuts. Then, either Eh's wife Cha or his sister Pah, known as a legendary cook for miles around, will give you a demonstration on how she makes *Kaeng Massaman* (Massaman curry) before your delicious dinner.

Day 15 Saturday B

This morning, you will be driven to Krabi airport to take a short internal flight to Bangkok to connect to your international flight. You will get back to Heathrow at approximately 7pm UK time (same day).

Inclusions:

Direct flights between London Heathrow and Bangkok with Eva Air or Thai Airways, with connection from Krabi on return

Transport in private air-conditioned minibuses, sleeper train and internal flights

Accommodation

Meals as referenced by a B L D

Activities including cooking lessons and excursions

Exclusions:

Entrance fees for sites and national parks

Expenses of a personal nature such as laundry, internet access and drinks

Meals not referenced by a B L D

Tips for guides and drivers (discretionary)

Costs:

This trip costs £2,225 per person including direct scheduled flights from the UK. There is **no single supplement** and you get your own room. Please allow approximately £50 for entrance fees payable as you go, in local currency.

If you do not live in the UK, you can book this trip for £1,575 excluding international flights. You will need to join the group in Bangkok and your tour ends in Krabi; this price excludes the flight from Krabi to Bangkok as we recommend you book this as part of your international ticket for a through connection. We are happy to advise.

If you are travelling with another person and will share a room, please contact us.

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