

Thailand in 7 Days: The Food-Lover's Itinerary

Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket, planned hour by hour, with the best street food, photo spots and booking tips.

By George | travelthailands.com

Welcome

Thailand is easy to love and easy to waste time in. This guide gives you a tested, no-stress route that covers temples, markets, mountains and beaches in exactly one week, with food at the centre of every day.

How to use it: follow it day by day, or cherry-pick the days you like. Every day has a morning, afternoon and evening plan, a food stop you should not skip, and a simple backup if it rains.

Prices and rules change. All costs in this guide are approximate and in USD or Thai baht (THB). Always confirm current prices, opening hours and entry rules before you go.

Trip at a Glance

- **Route:** Bangkok (2 nights), Chiang Mai (2 nights), Phuket (3 nights)
- **Internal flights:** Bangkok to Chiang Mai, then Chiang Mai to Phuket (about 1.5 to 2 hours each; book early for the best fares)
- **Best time to go:** November to February is the coolest and driest for most of the country. March to May is very hot. June to October is rainy season, with fewer crowds and lower prices, but expect afternoon downpours and rougher seas on the Andaman coast (Phuket).
- **Best for:** First-timers, couples, friends, solo travellers and food lovers
- **Pace:** Active but not exhausting. Each day has one big highlight and room to breathe.

Before You Go: Checklist

- Passport valid for at least 6 months from your arrival date

- Check current visa-exemption rules for your nationality on the official Thai government website
- Check whether you need to complete Thailand's digital arrival card before landing (rules have changed in recent years, so verify)
- Travel insurance that covers motorbikes if you plan to ride one (many policies do not)
- An eSIM or local SIM so you have maps and translation from the moment you land
- Some cash in Thai baht for street food, markets and small shops (cards are widely accepted in malls and hotels, not at stalls)
- Download Grab (taxi and food delivery), Google Maps (offline map of each city), Google Translate (with Thai downloaded) and a flight tracker app
- Modest clothing for temples (shoulders and knees covered)

Day 1: Bangkok, Old City and River

Theme: Temples, river views and your first great Thai meal.

Morning

- Arrive, drop your bags, and head out early. Aim to be at the Grand Palace area around opening time to beat the heat and the tour groups.
- Visit the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaew. Dress code is strict (no bare shoulders or knees, no sleeveless tops). Expect to spend 2 to 3 hours.
- Walk to Wat Pho next door to see the huge Reclining Buddha and the massage school behind the temple.

Lunch

- Eat in the Old City or Tha Tien area. Look for a busy local shop serving boat noodles, pad thai or a simple rice-and-curry plate. Busy means fresh.

Afternoon

- Cross the Chao Phraya River by the cheap cross-river ferry to Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn). Climb the central tower for river views.
- Rest at your hotel during the hottest hours if you can.

Evening

- Head to Yaowarat (Chinatown) as the sun goes down. The street transforms into one of the best street food zones in Asia.

- Try: grilled seafood, crispy pork, roast duck, fresh mango with sticky rice, and Thai-Chinese desserts. Go hungry and share plates so you can try more.

Photo tip: Shoot Wat Arun at golden hour from across the river. Chinatown's neon signs and steam are best photographed after dark.

Rainy day backup: Visit the Jim Thompson House and a mall food court (Thai malls have excellent, cheap food courts) and book a traditional Thai massage.

Day 2: Bangkok, Markets, Canals and Rooftops

Theme: Local life, flavour and the city skyline.

Morning

- Book a canal (khlong) long-tail boat tour or visit a floating or railway market. Go early; these get crowded and hot by mid-morning.
- Weekend only: Chatuchak Weekend Market is a huge maze of clothes, crafts, plants and food. Arrive early, wear light clothes, and bring cash.

Lunch

- Try a Michelin Bib Gourmand-style local favourite or a street-side noodle shop. Order a plate of crab omelette or a bowl of tom yum noodles.

Afternoon

- Explore Lumpini Park (you may see giant monitor lizards) or the modern art and cafe scene around Ari or Thonglor.
- Take a Thai cooking class if you want a hands-on experience (many include a market visit and a recipe booklet).

Evening

- Have sunset drinks at a rooftop bar. Many have dress codes (no flip-flops or sleeveless tops for men), so check ahead.
- Finish with a night market snack run: grilled skewers, fried chicken, coconut ice cream.

Photo tip: City skyline shots work best 20 minutes before and after sunset, when the sky is still blue and the lights are on.

Day 3: Fly to Chiang Mai, Old City and Night Market

Theme: Slow down and enjoy northern Thailand.

Morning

- Take an early flight from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. Taxi or Grab from the airport to the Old City takes about 15 to 20 minutes.

Lunch

- Your first khao soi: a creamy coconut curry noodle soup topped with crispy noodles. This is northern Thailand's signature dish. Squeeze lime, add pickled mustard greens and chilli oil.

Afternoon

- Walk the Old City. Visit Wat Phra Singh, Wat Chedi Luang and Wat Chiang Man.
- Stop at a cafe for northern Thai coffee. The region grows some of the country's best beans.

Evening

- Visit the Saturday or Sunday Walking Street market (weekends only) or the daily Night Bazaar area. Try sai oua (northern herb sausage), nam prik ong (tomato-pork dip) and fresh fruit shakes.

Photo tip: Temple courtyards in soft afternoon light are beautiful. Ask permission before photographing monks, and never touch them (women especially).

Rainy day backup: Visit a Thai massage studio, a museum or take a cooking class.

Day 4: Chiang Mai, Mountains and Culture

Theme: Nature, views and ethical wildlife.

Morning

- Drive up to Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, the mountain temple overlooking the city. Go early for cooler weather and clearer views. You can take a shared red songthaew truck up the mountain.

Lunch

- Eat at a local restaurant near the mountain base or back in the city. Try gaeng hang lay (northern pork curry) or a plate of laab with sticky rice.

Afternoon

- Visit an **ethical** elephant sanctuary. This means no riding, no chains, no performances or tricks. Look for places that focus on observation, feeding and rescue, and read recent reviews carefully before booking. Book ahead because good sanctuaries sell out.
- Alternative: visit a hill-tribe village and coffee farm, or take a Doi Inthanon national park day trip (Thailand's highest peak, with waterfalls and viewpoints).

Evening

- Relax with a foot massage, then enjoy a final northern Thai dinner at a riverside restaurant.

Photo tip: Mountain mist and rice terraces are best in the early morning in the cooler months.

Day 5: Fly to Phuket, Old Town and Sunset

Theme: Beach arrival with local flavour.

Morning

- Fly from Chiang Mai to Phuket (usually via Bangkok, unless a direct flight is available on your dates, so check schedules). Allow extra time and book your arrival transfer in advance.

Afternoon

- Check in near Kata, Karon or Kamala beach for a quieter feel, or Patong for nightlife and convenience.
- Swim, nap and recover from the travel day.

Evening

- Watch sunset at Promthep Cape, the island's classic sunset viewpoint, or at a beachfront bar.
- Have a seafood dinner. Choose a restaurant where you pick your own fresh fish and agree the price per weight before cooking.

Photo tip: Arrive at the cape at least 45 minutes before sunset for a good viewing spot.

Day 6: Phuket, Island Hopping Day

Theme: Turquoise water and limestone cliffs.

Full day

- Take a full-day speedboat or big-boat tour to Phang Nga Bay (limestone karsts and James Bond Island) or to the Phi Phi Islands. Compare itineraries, group sizes and what is included (lunch, snorkel gear, park entry fees).
- Smaller groups and early departures usually mean fewer crowds. Check the weather and sea conditions the day before. Some days in rainy season, tours are cancelled or rough.

Lunch

- Usually included on tour. Bring snacks and water just in case.

Evening

- Treat yourself to a Thai massage or a rooftop beachside dinner.

Safety tip: Wear reef-safe sunscreen, listen to the crew's safety briefing and keep valuables in a waterproof pouch.

Day 7: Phuket, Old Town, Slow Morning and Departure

Theme: Soak up the last flavours of Thailand.

Morning

- Explore Phuket Old Town: colourful Sino-Portuguese shophouses, street art, small cafes and the Sunday Walking Street market (Sundays only).
- Try local Phuket dishes: mee hokkien (stir-fried noodles), oh-aew (local dessert) and fresh pineapple.

Afternoon

- Pick up souvenirs: dried mango, Thai spices, local coffee, handmade soaps.
- Transfer to the airport at least 3 hours before an international flight.

If you have a late flight: Visit the Big Buddha viewpoint or relax at a beach club.

Approximate Daily Budget (Per Person)

Budget traveller: about 40 to 60 USD per day

- Hostel or simple guesthouse, street food, public transport, a few paid activities

Mid-range traveller: about 80 to 130 USD per day

- Comfortable hotel, mix of street food and restaurants, Grab rides, tours and massages

Comfort traveller: about 150 USD and up per day

- Boutique or resort hotels, nicer restaurants, private transfers and private tours

These figures exclude international flights. Internal flights typically add a modest amount to the trip total depending on how early you book.

Street Food Survival Guide

- Eat where locals eat. A queue of Thais is the best review you can get.
- Pick stalls where food is cooked fresh in front of you and ingredients turn over quickly.
- Start with cooked, hot food rather than pre-cut raw items left in the sun.
- Carry hand sanitiser and tissues.
- Drink bottled or filtered water, and avoid ice if you are unsure about the source (ice in restaurants and drink shops is usually made from filtered water).
- Say "mai phet" (not spicy) if you want a mild dish. "Phet nit noi" means a little spicy.
- Dishes you must try: pad thai, tom yum goong, green curry, som tam (papaya salad), mango sticky rice, khao soi, moo ping (grilled pork skewers), boat noodles and Thai iced tea.

Money-Saving and Safety Tips

- Use Grab or metered taxis instead of unmetered ones. If a driver refuses the meter, get out and find another.
- Book popular tours and flights ahead of time, especially in high season.
- Compare booking platforms for the same tour. Prices and cancellation policies vary.
- Be wary of anyone who says a temple is "closed today" and offers you a cheap tuk-tuk tour instead. It is a common scam. Check opening hours yourself.
- Respect the monarchy and Buddhism. Do not step on money, point your feet at Buddha images or climb on statues.

- Keep copies of your passport and insurance on your phone.
- Rent a motorbike only if you are experienced and properly insured. Thai roads can be dangerous.

Packing List

- Light, breathable clothes (linen and cotton)
- One temple-appropriate outfit (long trousers or skirt, top covering shoulders)
- Swimwear and quick-dry towel
- Comfortable walking sandals and one pair of closed shoes
- Reef-safe sunscreen, insect repellent, hat and sunglasses
- Universal travel adapter and power bank
- Small day bag with a zip
- Light rain jacket or poncho (especially May to October)
- Basic medicine kit: pain relief, stomach tablets, rehydration salts, plasters

Photo Spots Cheat Sheet

- **Bangkok:** Wat Arun at golden hour, Yaowarat at night, rooftop skyline at blue hour
- **Chiang Mai:** Doi Suthep viewpoint at sunrise, Old City temples in soft light, Sunday Walking Street at dusk
- **Phuket:** Promthep Cape sunset, Phuket Old Town colour streets, Phang Nga Bay from the water

Golden rules: shoot early or late, ask before photographing people, and never block temple doorways or paths for a shot.

Useful Thai Phrases

- Hello (male speaker): sawasdee khrap
- Hello (female speaker): sawasdee kha
- Thank you: khop khun khrap / kha
- How much?: tao rai?
- Delicious: aroi
- Not spicy: mai phet

- No plastic bag, please: mai ao thung
- Where is the toilet?: hong nam yu tee nai?

Booking Cheat Sheet

Use these links to book the key parts of your trip.

- **Flights and transport:** [ADD YOUR LINK: flight or transport partner]
- **Hotels in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket:** [ADD YOUR LINK: hotel partner]
- **Tours and activities (islands, elephant sanctuary, cooking classes):** [ADD YOUR LINK: tours partner]
- **eSIM for Thailand:** [ADD YOUR LINK: eSIM partner]
- **Travel insurance:** [ADD YOUR LINK: insurance partner]

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Final Words

Thailand rewards curiosity, patience and a good appetite. Smile often, eat well and leave room in your plan for the unexpected detour. That is usually where the best memories happen.

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Safe travels, George