

TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY ADVENTURE

PRE-TRIP DOSSIER 2007/2008

THAILAND

Advance your photographic skills while travelling through Thailand on a 12 day adventure. We have designed an integrated programme of travel and workshop 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 IN BRIEF

Days 1-4 : Bangkok

We meet at our hotel by 6pm and we go somewhere very local for an included dinner. Our orientation of the city will show you the Royal Palace, a selection of Wats along the Chao Phraya River and of course allocate some time for one-on-one photography tuition. On our final day in Bangkok we take private transport to the rural village of Damnoen Saduak and experience one of last remaining floating markets that still sell local produce to local shoppers. That afternoon we head north of the city to spend the night and the next day in Ayutthaya, one of Siam's ancient capitals.

Days 5-7 : Chiang Mai

The northern capital of Thailand is Chiang Mai, a much smaller city than Bangkok but one surrounded by unique hill-tribes people and is the centre of Lanna culture. We will spend two nights in the foothills north of Chiang Mai in a remote residence, taking trips further into the mountains to meet ethnic minorities. We also spend a night in Chiang Mai itself and experience the famous night market and stunningly beautiful Doi Su Thep temple that overlooks the city.

Days 9-11 : Krabi

A complete change of scenery follows as we catch internal flights (included in the trip) to the southern beaches at Krabi. We have a chance to explore the white sands of Ao Nang and Raileh Beach. Activities here include the incredible Krabi cooking school, a snorkelling trip to nearby pristine islands and catching the sunset with long-tail boats anchored off the beach. On our last day in Krabi we catch a flight back to Bangkok.

Day 12 : Bangkok

Checkout time for our hotel in Bangkok is 12 noon, but we recommend you extend your stay for a day or two to return to your favourite places and take more photos. We can help you arrange day-trips and offer assistance with getting around Bangkok and getting to the Sunday Market at Mochit. Grasshopper Adventures also runs a single-day bicycle tour which offers a unique perspective on Bangkok, winding through the narrow back-streets and visiting temples and places that most tourists never hear about.



THE TRIP AT A GLANCE

Experience a unique and challenging journey through some of Thailand's most beautiful regions. You will be more than a traveller however, you will be learning new photographic techniques along the way and getting the chance to put these skills into practice. This trip will immerse you in the cultural, scenic and human richness of Thailand while giving you an unparalleled opportunity to develop your own style and techniques as a photographer.

HOW WE TRAVEL

The travel style for this journey will bring you right up close to Thailand. You will meet the real people and experience a little of their lives. Key attractions are included on this itinerary, such as the ancient capital of Ayuthaya and the stunning beaches of Krabi, but we have also included out of the way destinations and the time to enjoy them. Our time in the rural areas near Chiang Mai will no doubt remain a favourite memory for a lifetime. You will never be rushed from one place to another, instead you will have time to delve a little deeper and make your own connection. This is a vital ingredient to successful travel photography and the process of cultivating your skills.

WHAT YOU WILL LEARN

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 reviews of your work and a chance to discuss your experiences for that day. The skills covered in this course are aimed at travel photography particularly, but will benefit all areas of your work.

No matter what your level of skill or experience you will learn invaluable techniques on our course. For 12 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

WORKSHOP HIGHLIGHTS



- Understanding your subject
- Getting closer to your subject
- 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 unique to digital photography
- Responsible travel with a camera
- Safety issues when travelling as a foreigner

thinking about their photography and gain structured themes to help them take great photos in challenging conditions. Advanced photographers will also gain insight into the world of publishing travel photos and high level concepts that determine which images will be more likely to gain selection by an editor.

ACCOMMODATION

The standard of accommodation in Thailand is excellent and our hotel selections are better than 3-star. Expect hot water, clean rooms, and climate control when staying in the city. Rural areas may offer more rustic charms where accommodation is concerned, but is always comfortable and clean. This trip operates on a twin share basis, hence single travellers will be allocated a same-sex room mate. Please ask for an elective single-supplement if you do not wish to share your accommodation for the duration of the trip.



THE PHOTOGRAPHY

The photographic workshops included with this trip are aimed at people with a fundamental knowledge of their camera. 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. People of many different skill levels and ambition will be gathered for the journey, so expect to be in the company of diversity.

This course will appeal to anyone who wants to immerse themselves in the process of cultivating skills and exploring cultures. Material is presented at key stages during our journey. You will have a chance to discuss the techniques and principles behind the material, and then immediately go out and put the material into practice. This will not give you a qualification, but hopefully will give you confidence and direction to take better photos.

TAKE BETTER PHOTOS

The course offers two things. Firstly it provides an unparalleled opportunity to practice photography in an exotic land. We help you to get the right sunset, to access the most idyllic wilderness, to meet the real people of Thailand and to make sure you have the time to explore your craft in the process. You won't be worried about travel and accommodation - it's taken care of for you. And you won't be rushed from hotel to hotel; you will have time to take photographs and to review them at the end of each day.

We also present a series of photographic themes which introduce key concepts and techniques which will help you improve your photography. Each session will discuss a topic and outline associated techniques. A set of course notes are provided to accompany these sessions. Your travel itinerary has been developed in conjunction with the course sessions, so you can immediately practice the skills you learn.

We will also encourage people to share their work during the trip. Review is very important and can greatly assist the development of your own personal style. Throughout the trip you will be free to consult with your instructor as well. You are not confined to course sessions to talk about your work and ideas! This will be a 15 day immersion that will accelerate your learning and development.



VISITING HILL TRIBES

Our travel to northern Thailand includes an opportunity to visit a couple of the many Hill Tribe ethnic groups. We stay in a private lodge north of Chiang Mai in order to be closer to the mountain villages and make comfortable day trips. A few details from the Karen and Akha people have been included here, courtesy of our local guides in Chiang Mai.

There is soulfulness in the eyes of many Karen, rooted perhaps in their legend that their culture was once great, but is now (temporarily) in decline. They believe they once had a written language which somehow disappeared, however, through neglect on their part. Some small groups of Karen also believe in a Messiah figure that will one day lead them back to greatness.

The Karen, (called Kaling, or Yang in Thai) are found along most of the length of the Thai-Burmese border. Their population is at least 300,000 in Thailand, making them much the most populous hilltribe here. They have also lived in this area for far longer than the other hilltribes. Over 200 years is probable, and perhaps much longer than that.

The Karen costume for women is very attractive and distinctive. Unmarried girls wear loose white V-necked blouses, decorated with Jobs tear seeds at the seams. Married women wear blouses and skirts in bold colours, predominantly red or blue. Men wear blue baggy trousers with red or blue shirts, a simplified version

of the women's blouses. Black Karen men wear black shirts with a red cummerbund or head scarf.

The Karen have a matrilineal society so that two married women cannot live in the same house. In some villages, the punishment for adultery is death. The village chief has great power over his community, and is regarded as the spiritual as well as the administrative leader.

The Akha people are rightly famous for their very exotic and beautiful costumes, and can be seen in many towns in northern Thailand selling their unique handicrafts. They are not known for their shyness, and one can easily find oneself engaged in an animated bargaining session with these gregarious salespeople.

Akha people are usually of small stature, dark skin and fine, delicate features. Despite their often difficult lifestyle, they have bright, twinkling eyes and a great sense of humor. Quick to laugh and quick to joke, they are a delightful people to stay with or visit, and are very generous with whatever little they have.

The Akha originate from Tibet, and have only recently entered Thailand, the first immigrants arriving in 1911. They are found only in the far north of Thailand, mainly in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces.

The women's costume consists of broad horizontal-striped leggings, a short black skirt with a white beaded sporran, a loose fitting black jacket with heavily embroidered cuffs and lapels. The headgear is of two sections. The base is rarely removed, even for sleeping. The top is a conical wedge of solid silver or white beads interspersed with silver coins and topped with plumes of red taffeta.



WHY SHOOT DIGITAL

For the purpose of this course 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.

The major challenge facing digital photography is how to store your images while you're on the road. You can expect to keep at least 250 shots for every week of travel. If you are shooting at your camera's full resolution and highest quality then this adds up to a lot of data. The average 6MP camera can fill a 1Gig memory card on a good day!

The solution is to carry a small storage device to copy photos from your camera - a digital data-bank or "personal storage device". Please consult your local camera store for advice on which device will be best for you to backup your digital cards while you travel.

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.

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.



ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

We recommend the use of Digital SLR cameras for this workshop, 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 course. A minimum of 1Gig memory card should accompany your camera, plus an additional 10Gig or greater of external storage.

We also recommend that you carry a wide angle lens in preference to telephoto. Most of our course 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 24mm to 70mm 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 comfortable 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.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1 : Bangkok

Theme : Get Closer

On the first day we are scheduled to meet in the hotel lobby at 6pm. We start our first night getting to know our group. Your dinner is included at a local restaurant where we will be introduced to some of the specialities that make Thai cooking the best in the world. We also discuss the fundamentals and philosophy of the photographic journey ahead.

Day 2 : Bangkok

Theme : Follow the light

We begin the photographic work with a photo-walk and orientation through some of Bangkok's khlongs and streets, plus make visits to Wats, the Buddhist temples that are such a part of life in Thailand. This will provide an in-depth opportunity to meet locals and become more familiar with their culture. The walk will also provide one-on-one time with the photographic instructor in order to assist you with any basic skills relating to SLR photography. We finish the walk near the Royal Palace and allow free time that afternoon to explore. That evening we provide options for dining with or without the group, at your preference.

Day 3 : Floating Markets

Theme : Telling a Story

We board our private bus early in the morning to head south of the city and visit Damnoen Saduak. Here we find one of the last floating markets in Thailand that still trade as a market, selling local produce to local people. The market has been impacted by tourism, but the essence of the scene is still a worthy subject for the camera, and a great chance to employ wide-angle lens techniques to reveal stories within our photos.

By visiting on a weekday the level of tourism is greatly minimised, along with the advantage of our own transport.

After the floating market we visit the largest Chedi in Thailand at Phra Pathom where our wide-angle lens will truly be tested. That night we finish our journey in the ancient capital of Ayutthaya (pronounced a bit like 'i-you-tie-ah')



Day 4 : Ayutthaya

Theme : Landscapes

We have the whole day to explore this ancient capital, and we select a range of different temples, ruins and Buddha images to photograph. Expect to take a lot of photos on this day with so many inspiring subjects in such abundance. Landscapes will be our theme for Ayutthaya, and constructing layers to our composition.

That night we take an overnight train to Chiang Mai

Day 5 : Hill-Tribes

Theme : Portraits

We arrive in Chiang Mai early morning and head directly out of town to the foothills between Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. We stay in an exclusive lodge from where we make trips further into the mountains and meet some of the ethnic groups who live there. This is a chance to learn in detail about cultures very different to our own, or that of the Thai people. Most hill-tribe minorities are more closely related to other tribes across South-East Asia than they are the people of Thailand.

Day 6 : Hill-Tribes

This is a free day to enjoy the sanctuary of the hills or select some optional activities. The more active of our group will take the opportunity to visit other hill-tribes while some may choose to rest and revitalize for the journey ahead.

We spend a second night at our private lodge and will enjoy a cultural show that evening to farewell the most northern part of our journey together.

Day 7 : Chiang Mai

Theme : Colour and Repetition

Leaving the hill-tribes we head back towards the city of Chiang Mai, but stop en-route to visit the remarkable temple of Doi Su Thep. Located high on a mountain top, overlooking the city and lowlands, the air is cool and clear. On a sunny day, of which Chiang Mai has many, the brilliant gold leafed Buddha images make stunning photographic subjects.

Optional activities in Chiang Mai also include a visit to the Elephant Hospital, rafting down the Mae Taeng and handicraft factories for traditional parasols.

The theme for Chiang Mai will be colour and repetition, which will be further explored that night when we visit the night markets that Chiang Mai is famous for.



Day 8: Krabi

This will be a travel day. Included in the cost of the tour are flights between Chiang Mai and Krabi Town. We expect to arrive at our hotel along Ao Nang Beach in the afternoon, with plenty of time to have a swim in the sea and watch the sunset with a few cocktails. That night we will explore the creative side of low-light photography with some hands-on experiments before dinner.

Day 9 : Krabi

The itinerary today is purely for enjoyment, with the added bonus of some unique photographic opportunities. The reef-fish and remote beaches of the Andaman Sea await us on a private snorkelling adventure. The colours of the water, sand and palms trees will give us something to photograph, but the best shots will be at sunset when we stay until twilight on a secluded beach with just the long-tail boats to feature in our composition.

Day 10 : Krabi

Theme : Still Life

A special treat is included today with a morning session at the Krabi Cooking School. The morning market in Krabi Town is our starting point and we can make a still life study of the fresh produce on offer. Once we have all learned to become master chefs we can feast for lunch and continue our experiments with photographing food.

The afternoon is also free and everyone is invited to join the leaders for a trip to Krabi Town and explore the night markets. The local speciality is Thai Fish Cakes, and they're delicious.

Day 11 : Krabi

The morning is free to enjoy the beaches and catch the early light, then we fly back to Bangkok that afternoon. Our final evening together will be spent enjoying yet another sumptuous Thai meal. Both the flight back to Bangkok and the group dinner are included.

Day 12 : Bangkok

Checkout time for our hotel in Bangkok is 12 noon, but we recommend you extend your stay for a day or two to return to your favourite places and take more photos.

We can help you arrange day-trips and offer assistance with getting around Bangkok and getting to the Sunday Market at Morchit. Grasshopper Adventures also runs a single-day bicycle tour which offers a unique perspective on Bangkok, winding through the narrow back-streets and visiting temples and places that most tourists never hear about.



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 course. 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 - scientific, commercial, travel and personal. 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 travel section and the national magazine Vacations & Travel.

He has journeyed to over 30 countries on photographic assignment and works freelance in photography and publishing. He understands the full end-to-end process for travel photography because he has worked at every level himself.



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 transactions. Thailand has a modern banking systems with ATMs and money changers in most larger or tourist towns. In Thailand it 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 so it is not necessary to bring only US Dollars - AUD, EUR, CAD, NZD are all accepted at banks.

The current exchange rate is: US\$1 = 37Baht

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 course 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.

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.

Group Size

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

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.