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3 Thailand Trips Guaranteeing Incredible Photos



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Photo: Getty Images



Bangkok Skyline (Credit: iStock/Nikada)



During a recent visit to Thailand, [Forbes Travel Guide](#)'s editors befriended a European family on holiday. The linchpin of the group was a precocious pre-teen named Danny. He told us that he liked drawing dragons and playing UNO. Everyone who

encountered the lad seemed to adore him, which made it so painful to watch the family camera, with two weeks' worth of Thai vacation pictures on it, slip out of Danny's grip into a lake.

Thailand, a colorful nation of roughly 70 million that takes pride in its cultural heritage, culinary ingenuity and natural wonders, offers a wealth of magical photo opportunities. [Bangkok](#), in the central region of the country, hums along at an incredible pace. The southern portion, which is highlighted by [Phuket](#), harmonizes effortlessly with nature. [Chiang Mai](#)'s northern sector toes the line between both extremes. And while little consolation to Danny's family, each place has an enticing story to tell and a great side to capture with a camera.



Anantara Chiang Mai's Pool (Credit: Anantara Hotels Resorts & Spas)

THE NORTHERN REGION

Picturesque Spot: Chiang Mai

Where To Snap Photos: When the Lanna kings fortified Chiang Mai in the 1200s, they were not only ensuring their own protection from enemies but also preserving their wats, or houses of worship. And it's the lure of the dramatic roofs of Wat Phra That Doi Suthep or the wooded grounds surrounding Wat Umong that draws so many to the city. You could spend days in awe of the 200-plus structures around town, but you'll want to save the most space on your camera phone for Wat Suan Dok, a temple that's covered in whitewashed chedi and shimmering gold that probably glistens to the heavens.

Where To Stay: Anantara Chiang Mai Resort & Spa was once the home of the British consulate of Chiang Mai. Though it's been converted to a sleek urban oasis today, the site still carries a bit of mystery to it. How the pool area can remain so amazingly tranquil, even with the buzz of cars mere feet away, is beyond our comprehension. Adding to the mystique, The Service 1921 Restaurant & Bar has secret passageways, hanging spy gadgets and a roasted duck fit for a queen.

Where To Eat And Drink: Even beyond The Service 1921, Chiang Mai is filled with smart dining options. Khun Churn is a vegetarian restaurant with an overflowing lunch buffet that carnivores can't even deny. Baan Kang Wat is a cool mixed-use "village" that showcases locals' architectural ingenuity and expert tea preparation at The Old Chiang Mai Café & Espresso Bar.



The Peninsula Bangkok's Riverfront View (Credit: The Peninsula Hotels)

THE CENTRAL REGION

Picturesque Spot: Bangkok

Where To Snap Photos: When it comes to Asian destinations with bright lights, places like [Macau](#) and [Singapore](#) tend to overshadow Bangkok. But just a few minutes in downtown traffic will reveal all you need to know about the city's feisty nature. Detour from the parade of scooters by walking around Pak Klong Talad (Bangkok Flower Market). With the ubiquitous aroma of jasmine in the air, interact with vendors peddling garland arrangements, rose bouquets and crafted wares. Yes, it's busy 24 hours a day, but the fusion of smell and color is worth it.

Where To Stay: To further illustrate how on par Bangkok is with other Far Eastern metropolises, just gander over the roster of luxury hotels dotted around the city. [The Peninsula Bangkok](#) finds a way to lift its head above the fabulous fray by offering amenity-stuffed rooms, a three-tier outdoor pool and four stylish shuttle boats.

Where To Eat And Drink: Stunning plate presentations at The Peninsula Bangkok's [Mei Jiang](#) are the sort of things Instagram was created for. However, if the smell of grilled prawns and tamarind sauce puts you in the mood to do some cooking on your own, register for a session at Amita Thai Cooking Class. Tam Piyawadi Jantrupon is the patient, English-speaking lead instructor who somehow refrains from laughing when your green curry chicken doesn't turn out quite right.



Elephant Hills (Credit: Chris Kaiser)

THE SOUTHERN REGION

Picturesque Spot: Khao Sok National Park

Where To Snap Photos: The number of wild Asian elephants once reached more than 300,000 across Thailand. Today, sadly, that figure has dropped under 4,000. Khao Sok National Park's Elephant Hills, which is roughly a two-hour drive from Phuket [International](#) Airport, has made it its mission to protect the trunked mammal population and raise awareness of its importance in the wild. With amicable guides and mahouts (elephant trainers) by your side, you watch the animals play, give them baths and prepare meals of pineapples and bamboo.

Where To Stay: [Elephant Hills](#) provides lavish tents, buffet meals and superb service, so roughing it in the wild is out of the question. When you reserve the Jungle Lake Safari package, your overnight experience is only heightened with a stay at sister site, Rainforest Camp. Essentially a floating hotel on Cheow Larn Lake, the camp experience comes with a guided jungle trek, a tour on a traditional longtail boat and, if you're lucky, a gibbon sighting or two.

What To Eat And Drink: Before and after your Elephant Hills excursion, your airport shuttle will pass a few small markets along the side of the road. All of them will have spreads of nearby-picked fruit and locally caught seafood. Between the photo snapping you'll be doing, make sure to grab a Thai iced coffee so you can taste just how close the restaurant around the corner from your house gets it. Ruan Mai Kaen has fine pastries (cake bai toey nar ma-prao, an unusual-looking green coconut cake, tastes fabulous) that speak to Thailand's underrated expertise with sweets.

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