

HARPER Traveler

THE QUARTERLY VOICE OF THE ANDREW HARPER ALLIANCE

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010

A wooden boat with a Thai flag on the water in front of limestone cliffs.

ON TOUR IN
Thailand
THE LAND OF SMILES

SMALL TOWNS, USA
SOUTHEASTERN HIGHLIGHTS

SIGHTS OF SEATTLE

BIRD-WATCHING
FOR BEGINNERS

**LOOK FOR
SPECIAL TRAVEL PROMOTIONS**
THROUGHOUT THIS ISSUE
FOR GREAT DEALS ON
YOUR NEXT TRIP.



Fresh fish on Phuket



The Emerald Buddha,
Wat Phra Kaew, Bangkok



A rice offering



The floating market, Ampawa



A golden pagoda at Wat Phra Kaew



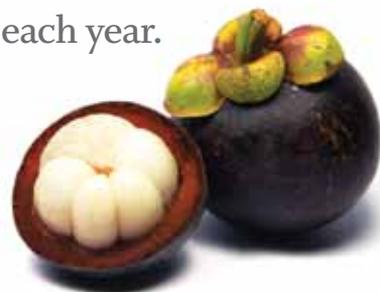
Thai girl in
traditional dress

touring THAILAND

From wilderness adventures in the north to beachside excursions in the south, Thailand offers travelers an endless array of delights.

By Amy Carniol

Although recently topping headlines with news of political unrest, Thailand, ever resilient, is back to business as usual. And here in the Land of Smiles, that means spectacular shopping, sumptuous restaurants, breathtaking beaches, and a gracious culture that welcomes roughly 12 million visitors from around the globe each year.



Spanning more than 198,000 square miles in Southeast Asia, Thailand nurtures a culture distinct from any other in the world. The monarchy maintains strong influence over the people and, as more than 90 percent of Thais practice Theravada Buddhism, the religious tenets of morality, meditation and wisdom permeate society. Visitors of all ages and interests can always find new and spectacular sights, sounds and scents. Start the morning with an elephant ride, spend the afternoon indulging in a two-hour Thai massage, and return to the familiar comfort of your five-star hotel at the end of the day.

Nestled among northern Thailand's untamed wilderness lies ancient **Chiang Rai**. First established in 1262, it is currently one of the fastest growing towns in the nation. Accessible via train, car and Chiang Rai International Airport, this town is an ideal starting point for travelers looking to explore the **Golden Triangle**, an area that covers 75,000 square miles and includes parts of Thailand,



Laos and Myanmar (Burma). Known historically for its once-thriving opium production, the Golden Triangle now showcases fields of new cash crops like coffee, tea and cabbage. While in Chiang Rai, make sure to spend time with the indigenous hill tribes that still populate the area, a highlight for most visitors, according to Marilyn Downing-Staff, founder and president of **Asia Transpacific Journeys**.

Each tribe retains a distinct heritage, culture and even language. "On our tours," explains Downing-Staff, "we always like to include a visit to a school or to a local family's home."

In recent years, Chiang Rai has become a haven for endangered elephants, once vital to Thailand's logging industry. In cooperation with the Thai government and like-minded conservationist organizations, the Elephant Camp at **Anantara Golden Triangle Resort & Spa** rescues these injured and abused animals and rehabilitates them in a controlled, safe environment. While staying at the resort, guests can interact with the majestic creatures through a variety of organized activities, including learning from trained mahouts (elephant drivers) how to verbally and physically command the elephants, viewing the animals' unique natural habitats and learning forest survival skills. The camp offers everything from a one-hour "taster" experience to a three-day course, the latter of which is preferred if travel time allows.

THAILAND | PHUKET

A Place of Peace

AMANPURI
Phuket, Thailand

Nine out of 10 – a marvelous place! Amanpuri, which means “place of peace,” could not describe it more perfectly. The beautiful, crescent-shaped beach on the Andaman Sea was the highlight for us. The Amanpuri staff was extremely gracious and service was outstanding. We thoroughly enjoyed our spacious Ocean Pavilion with sea view; the perfect choice for us!

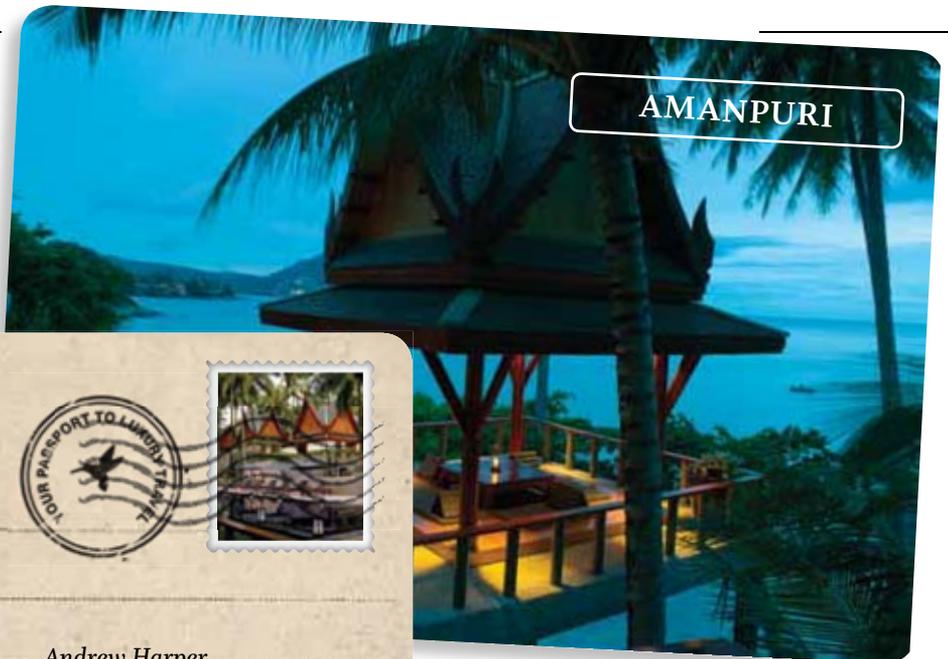
—D.L., An Andrew Harper Member



Andrew Harper

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MEMBER PRIVILEGES
AMANPURI

Andrew Harper members receive their choice of three of the following benefits: upgrade, when available upon arrival; daily continental breakfast; late checkout, when available; a royal Thai dinner for two people; a one-hour massage for two people for stays of three nights or longer.

Just under 500 miles to the south, **Bangkok** presents a much more metropolitan atmosphere, blending old-world charm with modern sophistication. Thais refer to Bangkok as Krung Thep, which translates roughly to “City of Angels,” a moniker befitting such a divine place. Visitors can fly into Suvarnabhumi Airport or easily access the nation’s capital by boat, car or train.

After a refreshing night at one of the city’s many chic hotels, wake up early to make your way to the **Grand Palace**, a must-see on any trip to Bangkok. This magnificent compound, dating back to 1782, astounds visitors with its impeccably carved statues, frescoed panels and dazzling temples inset with glass and mirrors. More than simply impressive, the Grand Palace holds deep religious and political significance. An Andrew Harper travel consultant stresses that visitors must dress appropriately to enter the premises. Shorts, short skirts and bare shoulders are prohibited. Stop at **Wat Phra Kaew**, home to the Emerald Buddha, the

country’s most sacred image. Next, at nearby **Wat Pho** (the city’s oldest and largest temple) marvel at the enormous reclining Buddha. Unlike traditional Buddha statues, this figure lies on its side and measures an impressive 151 feet long by 49 feet high. To bring good luck, drop one coin in each of the 108 bowls that line the temple walls.

Sometimes called the Venice of the East, Bangkok is interlaced with channels that offer an uncommon glimpse into the stilt-house communities that have remained a way of life in this city for centuries. Spend an afternoon riding a *khlong* (long-tail boat) through the canals for exceptional sightseeing. Later, before getting in some shopping at the **Night Bazaar**, sit down for a mouthwatering meal. Camilla Russell, public relations manager at the **Mandarin Oriental Hotel**, recommends sampling a classic dish like *Pad Thai* (stir-fried noodles) or *Tom Yum* (hot and sour soup). Whether served at a gourmet restaurant or from a street cart, Thai food always delivers

AREA ALLIANCE PARTNERS

HOTELS

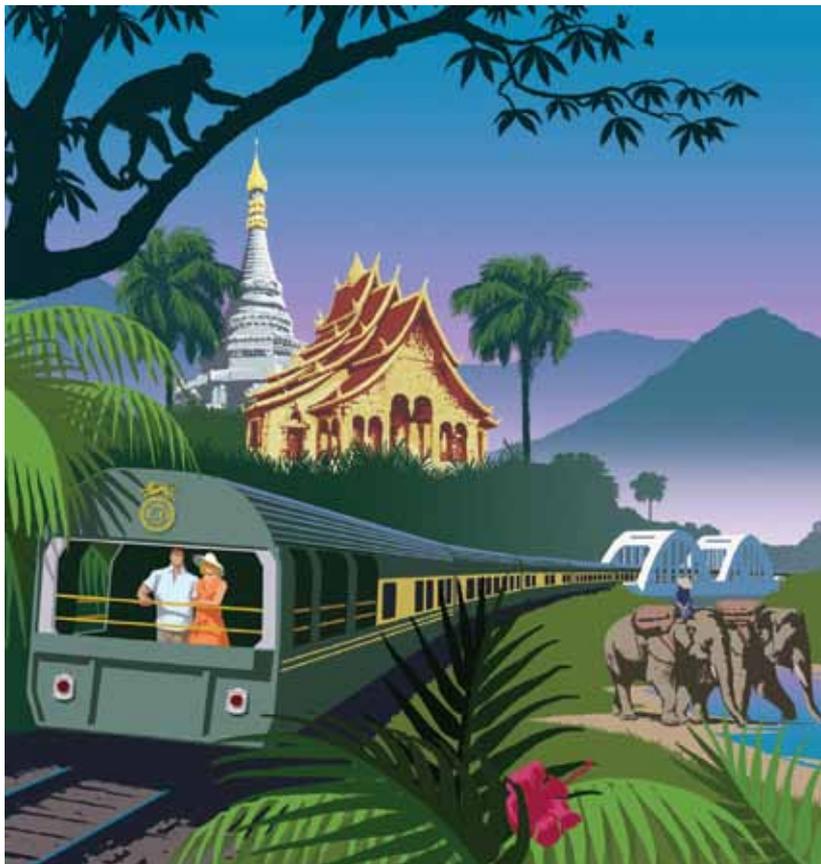
- Mandarin Oriental; Bangkok
- The Peninsula; Bangkok
- The Sukhothai; Bangkok
- Anantara Golden Triangle Resort; Chiang Rai
- Amanpuri; Phuket Island
- Six Senses Hideaway Yao Noi; Phang Nga Bay
- Rayavadee, Krabi
- Six Senses Hideaway Samui; Koh Samui
- Trisara; Phuket Island

DESTINATION SPECIALISTS

- Asia Transpacific Journeys
- Orient-Express

bold flavors. Just make sure to give yourself ample travel time; heavy traffic can severely slow down movement within the city.

Farther south, urban development gives way to beachside tranquility. For sheer relaxation and bliss, head to scenic **Koh Samui**, a true



Eastern & Oriental Express

Introducing the Chronicles of Southeast Asia, a quartet of train journeys that will enrich your experience of travelling through the heart of Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore on the Eastern & Oriental Express. Moving gently away from great cities to paddy fields and faraway mountains, each land voyage takes passengers in luxury to places that will intrigue those keen to explore the off-the-beaten-track.

To celebrate the launch of Chronicles of Southeast Asia, receive a **complimentary one night stay** at Raffles Hotel, Singapore, and the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Bangkok, including breakfast and transfers to and from hotel/station.

For more information on the Eastern & Oriental Express journeys, call your Andrew Harper specialist on **(800) 375-4685** or **(630) 734-4610**.

Reservations@AndrewHarper.com



THREE-DAY DISCOVERY

ANANTARA GOLDEN TRIANGLE RESORT & SPA

From this 160-acre hilltop retreat overlooking Laos, Myanmar and the Mekong River, explore lush jungle and ancient cultural gems.

DAY 1 Experience a traditional mahout village at the onsite elephant camp. Climb atop an elephant and trek through acres of bamboo jungle and riverine trails. Learn the basics of elephant driving and enjoy the playful antics of the animals during bath time.

DAY 2 Take in three countries in a single day with a unique cultural tour: stroll into a bustling border market in Myanmar; shop in Laos; and lunch in Thailand's historic Lanna Kingdom.

DAY 3 Learn the art of Thai cuisine at the Lanna Cooking School. Select produce at the local market, picnic in ancient temple grounds, and recreate authentic cuisine during a master cooking class.

SPECIAL OFFER

Stay four nights, pay for only three. **ALSO INCLUDES** Harper member privileges and daily full American breakfast. **DATES** Offer is valid on stays from Oct. 1, 2010 through March 31, 2011, is subject to availability and valid on new bookings only. Blackout dates apply from Dec. 19, 2010 through Jan. 7, 2011.

MEMBER PRIVILEGES ANANTARA GOLDEN TRIANGLE RESORT & SPA

Andrew Harper members receive a preferred rate along with their choice of three of the following benefits: upgrade, when available upon check-in; early check-in, when available; tickets to Opium Hall Museum; 15 percent savings on spa treatments; complimentary parking for duration of stay.



island oasis and part of an exquisite 80-island archipelago. Fly into Samui Airport—or take a ferry—and it's just a short drive to crystal-clear water, salty sea air and stretches of cool sand. Abundant palm trees not only enhance the scenery, they provide Samui's main export: coconuts.

Koh Samui supplies the perfect atmosphere in which to kindle a new romance or inspire reconnection. Here, stress seems to dissolve away as sleepy smiles seep onto the faces of the island's guests. Ride out to **Namuang Waterfalls**, uniquely accessible by car, or spend time at a local spa. Mr. Harper recommends indulging in at least one of the many indoor and outdoor treatments offered at **Six Senses Hideaway Samui**.

Although Samui's beaches rival the best in the world, perhaps the island's most picturesque scenery lies below the surface. The area is renowned for excellent snorkeling and favorable scuba conditions for beginners. Experienced divers also flock here to swim with whale sharks, the planet's largest fish. Although these huge sea creatures can grow to be 40 feet long, they are known to be friendly to (read: not attack) divers.

Nearby, **Phuket**, the country's largest island, sits on the west coast of the **Andaman Sea**. Known as the Pearl of Thailand, Phuket was a busy trading post for centuries and remains one of the country's most popular destinations today. In fact, tourism has taken over as its most lucrative industry, not surprising given the sweeping beach landscapes, vibrant nightlife and world-class resorts. Guests can fly into Phuket International Airport, arrive by boat, or drive in via a causeway that connects the northern tip of the island to the mainland.

Phuket caters to all types of travelers. Visitors can spend lazy days snoozing on beach chairs or sampling the island's spas. For those vacationers interested in a bit more activity, check out the **Marine Research Center** in the south or the **Gibbon Rehabilitation Center** in the north. If time allows, stop by **Nai Yang National Park**, located near the airport.

Though Phuket is a superb destination all its own, its proximity to smaller, less-developed islands makes it an ideal home base for travelers looking to explore the region. Neighboring islands, including **Yao Noi**, are easily accessible via boat, either for a day trip or an overnight stay.

Less than 40 miles east of Phuket, **Krabi**, a popular stop for island-hoppers, is home to some of the planet's most stunning rock formations. Here, azure waters give rise to dramatic limestone cliffs that attract the world's most experienced climbers and inspire awe in novices. But don't be intimidated; anyone can enjoy these massive natural wonders. Local climbing schools teach the basics, and personalized instruction is available at resorts like **Rayavadee**, located on the **Phra Nang Peninsula**. For guests who'd rather remain at sea level, kayaking provides another method to view the formations. Visitors can either self-paddle or sit back, relax, and let a professional take the reins to guide the boat through spectacular caves and tunnels.

Though just as beach-laden and tropical as any of Thailand's islands, Krabi is actually part of the mainland and thus easy to reach via boat, bus or plane. Not far from Krabi Airport, **Wat Tham Sua**, known as Tiger Cave, houses a temple complex carved into the stone cliffs that rise almost 1,000 feet high. For those travelers willing and able to climb the 1,250 steps to the top, the views are unsurpassed. ■