



Koh Phi Phi



Meet the Specialist

Simon Fransham

Tales from the Kingdom

Simon Fransham shares his passion for Thailand.

I had wanted to travel to Asia since I was 16, listening to tales of faraway lands recounted by my two older brothers. After graduation, in 2004, I threw myself head-first into Asia; a solo traveller in a world that pleasantly assaulted my senses like nothing in the leafy Cheshire suburbs where I grew up. I first travelled for two months in India, where I could have had a career change; I acted in a mainstream Bollywood movie alongside a Blue Peter presenter! I decided however, that the Thai film industry needed someone like me, so I jetted off to Bangkok.

I immediately fell in love with Thailand. The food is sumptuous, and the streets are bursting with life, laughter, and pungent aromas firing up the senses like a Bird's Eye chilli. I've experienced the essence of paradise in southern Thailand, been calmed by the serenity of Thai Buddhist temples, and charmed by mountainous northern Thailand, but even more charming are the Thai people. Everywhere you go, you are greeted with a smile and a traditional 'wai' prayer-like gesture - which you naturally return - and a display of pride and generosity. Similarly, Laos has a special place in my heart; certainly a place to go if you want to relax, with warm-hearted locals, dramatic mountainous scenery, and lazy days by the Mekong River.

I spent many months in Thailand involved in post-tsunami relief work, from volunteering in a temple in the immediate aftermath, to beach and reef clean up, and volunteer teaching in Khao Lak and Koh Phi Phi. Whilst volunteering I was incredibly moved and touched by the resilience of the local people in the face of such catastrophe.

With a strong desire to experience more of Thailand, I moved to Bangkok, living next to the famous Chatuchak Weekend Market and working for a language school in downtown Bangkok. I lived in an area where English is not widely understood, so I took the opportunity to improve my Thai language, and really indulge myself in Thai culture. Bangkok has so much to offer once you get past the initial façade of a busy congested city. Moving back to the UK just last year, I have a strong connection with Thailand and feel driven to promote travel to this fascinating country.

Indeed, Thailand is too often sold in many mainstream brochures solely on its stunning tropical scenery, lush national parks, and dramatic mountainous scenery. It certainly has all this, but the main draw for me are the wonderful people of this beautiful nation. If you have visited you will know exactly what I mean, and if you have not yet travelled to the Kingdom, now is the time to go.