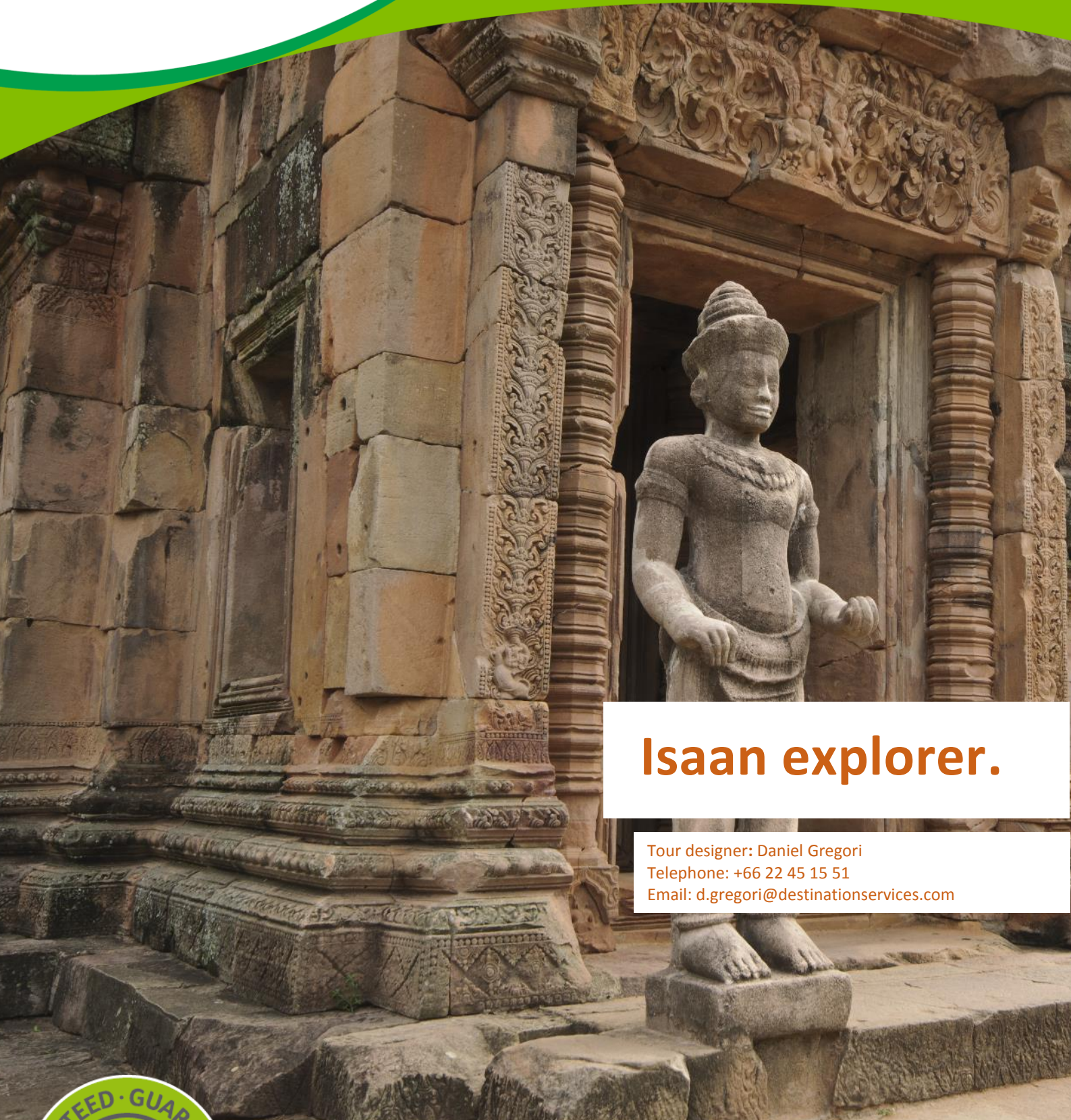




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Tour designer: Daniel Gregori
Telephone: +66 22 45 15 51
Email: d.gregori@destinationsservices.com



THAILAND | 3DAYS / 2NIGHTS

Route: Bangkok to Ubon Ratchatani

Type of tour: Culture


Departure days: Two Wednesdays per month

TOUR OVERVIEW

Head off the beaten track with this three-day adventure in Thailand's northeastern region of Isaan. Explore tropical national parks, discover ancient Khmer cities clawed back from the jungle, visit beguiling Buddhist temples, meet local artisans and cruise the mighty Mekong River at the confluence of the Thai and Laotian borders. This programme packs a lot into a brief space of time in Thailand's last genuine hidden gem.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

DURATION: 3 days / 2 nights



Start & finish destination
1. Bangkok 3. Ubon Ratchathani

Destinations
2. Nakhon Ratchasima (Korat)

Khao Yai National Park: Trek through the rainforest to admire the stunning Heu Narok waterfalls and learn all about the conservation efforts to help endangered wildlife

Khmer heritage: Isaan boasts an unrivalled collection of ancient Khmer architecture as you'll discover during visits to archaeological sites such as Prasat Hin Phimai, Phanom Rung, Prasat Muang Tam and Sikhoraphum

Rural retreat: Visit the remote village of Ban Sai Khawn and watch as local craftsmen make bronze Buddhist gongs

River Mekong: Enjoy a boat tour at the confluence of the Mekong and Mun rivers, and observe villagers on the Laotian side go about their daily lives

Pha Taem National Park: This magical reserve by the border with Laos features famous 'mushroom rocks', prehistoric rock art and stunning panoramic views from its elevated positions

DON'T MISS

Som tam: Thailand's national dish is made everywhere but the Isaan version of this spicy salad of green papaya, tomatoes, cashews and chilli is considered the most authentic and flavoursome

River Mekong: Keep an eye out for sightings of some of the biggest freshwater fish in the world – the Mekong giant catfish can weigh more than 200kg and be up to 2.5 metres long

Sarong: Check out the fine local fabrics used for making sarongs and maybe even bring home a souvenir that will allow you to remember the colour and exoticism of Isaan and its friendly people

DAY BY DAY

DAY 1 | BANGKOK – NAKHON RATCHASIMA [KORAT] (375km – 3.5 hrs)

Morning pick-up from 07:00 from hotels in Bangkok (collection from outer Bangkok hotels or the airport will be subject to supplement charges). Soon you will enter the rural province of Prachinburi until you reach the southern entrance of the **Khao Yai National Park**, the country's best-known nature reserve and among the most important in southeast Asia. Enter the park and head for the beautiful **Heu Narok waterfall** following an exhilarating 3km trek along a special track in the forest. Visit the park's headquarters, where you can observe the results of scientific studies conducted on various rare species of animals in the park and now in danger of extinction. Exit the park in the north, along the way admiring the magnificent mountainous landscapes. Continue to Isaan's biggest city, **Korat** (the popular name for Nakhon Ratchasima). Late afternoon arrival in Korat.

▪ **Overnight in hotel in Korat. Dinner included.**

DAY 2 | NAKHON RATCHASIMA [KORAT] – UBON RATCHATHANI (475km – 5 hrs)

After breakfast at the hotel, discover the wonders of the Khmer Empire at **Prasat Hin Phimai**. Nowadays it is a small town but in the era of the Khmer Empire, it was an important principality directly connected through the ancient **Dharmasala route** to the legendary Angkor in Cambodia. Continue on the Dharmasala route, descending towards the southeast to the magnificent **temple of Phanom Rung** in Buriram Province. Phanom Rung has bequeathed us with some of the finest carvings in bas-relief thus making it one of the best examples of Khmer artisanship in southeast Asia. Next, visit the ruins of the **temple of Prasat Muang Tam**, another splendid jewel of Khmer art. Lunch stop en-route, continuing to **Ubon Ratchathani**, in the heart of Isaan, with a number of stops along the route of high historical and architectural interest. Just beyond the city of Surin are the **ruins of Sikhoraphum**, one of the most ancient Khmer temples dating back to the 10th century AD. Near the provincial capital of Sisaket, we find **Wat Kamphaeng Yai**. In modern Thai, it means 'great wall', which denotes the majesty of this place of worship built between the 11th and 12th centuries (the visit to Wat Kamphaeng Yai is subject to the verification of the times during the day). Late afternoon arrival in Ubon Ratchathani.

▪ **Overnight in hotel in Ubon Ratchathani. Breakfast, lunch and dinner included.**



DAY 3 | UBON RATCHATHANI

Breakfast at the hotel is followed by morning departure along a route that will culminate at the Mekong, one of the great Asian rivers, which divides Thailand from Laos. There is a brief stop along the way at the **village of Ban Sai Mun**, where local artisans produce bronze gongs, which are used in Buddhist temples throughout country. Admire the artisans at work as they make moulds and decorate the bronze discs in makeshift and rudimentary laboratories. Continue to **Khongjiam**, the confluence of Mekong with the Mun, the main river of the Isaan plateau. Enjoy an **exciting river cruise** sailing to the meeting point of its two sources. Crossing unspoiled natural landscapes, reach the opposite bank of the river where you can see a Laotian village and admire the flow of life along the river (the Laotian village has no customs post, which means you cannot alight from the boat). Stop for lunch en route and continue in the afternoon to visit the **Pha Taem National Park**, where the bizarre rock formations of **Sao Chaliang** are located. Hike to the top of **Lan Hin Taek**, which ends in a cliff overlooking the forest below. Proceed to the visitor centre and stop for a panoramic view of Laos. Explore further the of Pha Taem National Park before transferring back to Ubon Ratchani (arrival about 18:00 hrs). Drop off at hotel or airport.

▪ **Breakfast and lunch included.**

END OF SERVICES

INCLUDED

TOUR GUIDE:

- Operated with English, Italian and Spanish-speaking guide

ACCOMMODATION:

- Two nights as indicated on a full board basis

MEALS:

- Two breakfasts, three lunches and two dinners

TRANSPORT:

- Air-conditioned transportation, transfers as stated in the programme

ENTRANCE FEES AND ACTIVITIES:

- All entrance fees as indicated: Khao Yai National park, Prasat Hin Phimai, Phanom Rung, Prasat Muang Tam, Sikhoraphum, Wat Kamphaeng Yai, Ban Sai Khawn village, Mekong cruise and Pha Taem National Park

NOT INCLUDED

- Expenditures of a personal nature, drinks and meals if not stated explicitly in the programme
- Gratuity for driver and guide
- Optional tours
- Compulsory Christmas/ New Year/ peak season surcharges if stated separately
- International or domestic flight tickets and airport taxes or visa fees
- Supplement charge for pick-up from outer Bangkok hotels of 460 baht per person per way, applied both SIC and private

RECOMMENDATIONS

Comfortable and light clothing is the most suitable for travelling in Thailand. Visitors should not wear sleeveless shirts, shorts, short skirts or skimpy clothing when visiting temples, religious or official buildings. Shoes should be removed before entering a temple or private house. Sun protection, sunglasses, a hat and mosquito repellent can be very useful during your stay.