

Dream Destinations – Photography in Paradise:

‘The Very Best of Thailand’

An expedition led by award-winning photographer Cameron Hansen

Introduction

With over one thousand kilometres of coastline the western seaboard of Thailand offers the discerning traveller the ideal destination for exploring the wonderful Marine National Parks that glitter like strings of emeralds in the turquoise Andaman Sea. With thousands of pristine islands, countless stunning white beaches, bountiful mangrove fringed creeks and imposing craggy headlands, combined with an ancient cultural heritage, this area is a visual feast for all.

Join Cameron Hansen aboard the gorgeous luxury yacht, *The Siam Junk*, for an adventure holiday and the photographic opportunity of a lifetime – an invitation to experience an unforgettable and mystical journey touring some of the most picturesque and interesting sites in the world.

Dream Destinations

Cameron has created the following itinerary around his personal favourite destinations combined with the most popular locations other clients have enjoyed: ‘The Very Best of Thailand’ expedition includes the internationally renowned Marine National Parks of the Similan and Surin archipelagos, along with some of the most scenic islands in the highly photogenic Phang Nga Bay.

The Similan Islands

This group of islands can be found some 90km north west of Phuket and, despite its proximity to the mass tourism there, the archipelago has benefited greatly from its protected status as a Marine National Park since official designation in 1982. The waters surrounding the Similan are crystal clear and teeming with vividly coloured tropical fish grazing on beautiful kaleidoscopic coral. The area offers some of the best diving in the world for those who like to explore deeper waters, although snorkelling with turtles and swimming with dolphins can be experienced even by the least adventurous guests.

There are stunning palm fringed powder white beaches to explore, often experienced with no other travellers in sight, and steep winding mountain tracks to trek for those willing to exert themselves to experience the most spectacular views. Guests can also enjoy water sports and fishing when the yacht is moored just a few kilometres out from the islands.

The Surin Islands

This marine national park is the northernmost Thai archipelago and is adjacent to Burmese waters (Myanmar). The Surin Marine National Park is uninhabited apart from a handful of park rangers and a small community of **Chao Lay (Moken) Sea Gypsies**. These nomadic sea people continue their relatively primitive way of life as, in many ways, time has stood still for them, allowing Cameron’s guests a unique insight into ancient Thai culture, glimpsing a slice of ‘living history.’

In fact *Time* itself is a vague notion to the Chao Lay people as none of them wear watches, they don't know their own ages as such a concept is of no use to them, and living their simple life means they have no need (nor ability) to count beyond the fingers on their hands.

Yet they are at the same time a highly advanced civilization and truly skilled in the areas that are essential for their survival: they fashion and build extremely sturdy ocean going boats using the simplest of tools, they catch fish by hand – literally – and they are famous throughout the world for their amazing ability to dive for pearl oysters, remaining underwater for several minutes at a time without the use of scuba tanks. They are a unique and highly interesting people who deserve and receive our respect.

The Surin Islands themselves consist of two main islands with numerous off-lying islets and rocks. The incredible coral formations and crystal clear waters are of world class standard. Between the two main islands there are coral reefs that are simply amazing, offering an unforgettable experience for snorkellers and divers alike. Dazzling white beaches shimmer and sparkle in the sun, while lush jungle vegetation awaits those who want to experience more than merely fabulous diving or snorkelling...

Krabi & the Phi Phi Islands

The amazing beaches and limestone formations of the Phang Nga Bay and Krabi region are iconic images recognisable from the many movies and advertisements filmed here and broadcast throughout the world, and many visitors agree that the level of natural beauty here is unsurpassed. Koh Phi Phi and the Krabi area constitute a geographic extension of the karst sea mountains of Phang Nga bay, yet being further south offer deeper, clearer water than the mangrove swamp fringed northern islands.

This is a stunning area, again offering exceptional snorkelling, diving, trekking and photographic opportunities. In these final days of the expedition guests can explore the wonders of Koh Phi Phi Lay, the famous Maya beach (the location of the 1999 movie 'The Beach'), and Koh Phi Phi Don with its beautiful hilltop view points. *The Siam Junk* will cruise north to Railay beach – which can only be reached by boat – and the beautiful Koh Hong.

Let the mystical journey begin...

Photography in Paradise: 'The Very Best of Thailand'

A Five Night / Six Day Itinerary

Day 1 - Departure

At around 18:00pm our crew will welcome you aboard the beautiful yacht, *The Siam Junk* at our mooring Chalong Bay, Phuket. Complimentary drinks will be served in the salon during a short safety briefing and then a welcome talk by our special host, award winning professional photographer Cameron Hansen.

When everyone is settled in we will get underway for our overnight cruise to the **Similan Islands Marine National Park**, serving dinner and cocktails as the sun sets on the horizon.

Day 2 - The Similan Islands Marine Park

5:30am - Koh Similan

Keen photographers will want to be up shortly after 5am to be in time for a tropical sunrise session from *The Siam Junk* aft deck. Cameron will be available to offer assistance and advice with fstop / shutter and ISO speeds for these hand held shots – tripods are not required for this shoot. Cameron will help you learn to react quickly to the changing light conditions with the objective of capturing sharp images from a moving vessel in low light conditions.

8:00am

A delicious breakfast of fresh fruits, cereals, fried to order English breakfasts, tea, freshly ground coffee and fruit juices will be available.

9:30am

The guests can choose to be led ashore and guided by Cameron who will be on hand to offer tips on composition and use of available light whilst capturing beautiful images of a deserted palm fringed beach.

12:30pm

A light lunch aboard *The Siam Junk* will be followed by a leisurely afternoon. The yacht's powerful tender will be available to everyone, allowing guests to step ashore to explore the island, snorkel and swim from the fabulous beaches, and enjoy the stunning scenery.

The crew will be on hand to offer training on snorkelling techniques for those who need assistance and life jackets are available at all times.

18:00pm

A sunset photo shoot will be organised before dinner. The exact location will be decided on the day to ensure the best vantage points for both composition and colour, given the prevailing light conditions. Cameron will be on hand for those willing to learn how to maximise the use of a tripod and how to utilize slow exposures. A tripod and camera bag will be required for this shoot, as well as sturdy footwear as some rock scrambling may be involved.

19:00pm

Dinner: freshly caught seafood will be served after sundown, followed by a seminar style discussion about the techniques and methods Cameron uses and a slide show of his favourite images from the past 10 years. The session will include a DVD about Moken culture while the yacht begins her overnight journey to their home in the Surin National Marine Park

Day 3 - Koh Surin Tai Island and the Moken People

7:30am

Breakfast aboard *The Siam Junk*.

9:00am

Photographers will be able to choose which one of two groups they wish to join for a shore expedition to the Moken village with Cameron. The second group will arrive ashore some 30 minutes behind the first to ensure small numbers and a variation of images. A Thai English speaking guide will be on hand to answer questions and to offer local interaction with the photographers.

12:00pm

Light lunch followed by a relaxation period before snorkelling and an underwater photography session exploring the fabulous coral fields.

13:30pm

Cameron has three underwater digital cameras and housings available for those who would like to try their hand at underwater photography but lack the necessary equipment. Guests can snorkel amidst the stunning coral with its teeming shoals of multi-coloured fish and a tender will be on hand to ferry those back to *The Siam Junk* at any time.

16:00pm

The afternoon will be spent resting on *The Siam Junk* or at Surin island bay area. Photographers are given the opportunity to capture images of their choice, laze on the pristine beaches or explore the national park area. Some beautiful sunset shots can usually be taken from this location too.

19:00pm

The fragrant scent of exotic spices and a sumptuous dinner of freshly caught seafood will welcome our guests back on board as the tropical twilight finally fades.

Day 4 - Surin Islands Marine National Park

7:30am

Breakfast aboard *The Siam Junk*

9:00am

Cameron will lead a walking tour through the Surin Island Bay – sandals and a decent camera bag are necessary as the route entails walking on rocks through knee deep water. Photographers will learn to step outside of their comfort zones and sharpen their composition skills in order to create better landscape images.

12:00pm

Lunch aboard *The Siam Junk*.

13:30pm

Depart Surin Island to return via the Similan Islands, pausing at islands along the way to take advantage of any photographic opportunities..

16:30pm

Cameron will organise a sunset shoot from one of the west facing beaches in the Similan Islands. A tripod and camera bag will be required for this shoot as well as sturdy footwear as some rock hopping may be involved.

19:00pm

Dinner” A spectacular seafood barbeque banquet will served.

An overnight crossing to Koh Phi Phi (leaving the Similan Islands at around 7:00pm to arrive Phi Phi at about 8:00am).

Day 5 – Koh Phi Phi Lay (Maya Bay) and Krabi (Railay Beach)

5:30am

Cameron is invariably up early to take advantage of the amazing sunrise photo

opportunities of Koh Phi Phi and Southern Phang Nga bay. Guests are once again invited to join him.

7:00am

Breakfast aboard *The Siam Junk*.

8:30am

Maya Bay (made world famous by the film 'The Beach') is hugely popular as a tourist destination but, by arriving early, guests can take shots of the deserted beach and spectacular bay before the hordes of speedboats arrive. As soon as they hove into view *The Siam Junk* heads off to Krabi.

12:00pm

Arriving in the Krabi region by midday you will enjoy another Lunch aboard *The Siam Junk* whilst surrounded by what Cameron calls - Heaven on Earth

13:30pm

Guests can be transferred by tender to Railay Beach for some stunning landscape shots. This area is home to some of Cameron's favourite locations in the whole of Thailand and several of his most popular pieces have been shot here.

16:30pm

A short cruise to Koh Dam Hok (Chicken Head Island) will be followed by a brief Q&A session with Cameron in preparation for stunning sunset opportunities provided by the pristine tidal spit which separates the two islands at low tide.

17:30pm

Sunset shots.

19:00pm

A final dinner aboard *The Siam Junk* will be followed by a presentation from Cameron including a slideshow of images taken during the trip. Each guest is encouraged to submit up to twenty images of their own for inclusion in this seminar style discussion: the photographer who is judged to have presented the best image will be awarded a unique prize:

Cameron has created a signed limited edition print of one of his favourite images, exclusively available only to those who have experienced *The Siam Junk* photographic expedition as his guest. Limited edition value exceeds \$2000US

Day 6 – Koh Dam Hok (Chicken Head Island) and Koh Mai Thon

7:30pm

Breakfast aboard *The Siam Junk*.

10:30am

Depart for Koh Mai Thon.

12:30pm

Lunch is served en-route to Mai Thon.

14:30pm

Arrive at Koh Mai Thon for swimming, snorkelling and photo opportunities.

16:00pm Depart for Chalong Bay.

Disembarkation from *The Siam Junk* at Phuket:

Arrival at Chalong Pier is usually around 18:30pm. Onward VIP transportation can be provided by arrangement with *The Siam Junk* team.

Notes:

All meals, snacks, some soft drinks, tea and coffee are included. Alcoholic drinks will be available from the bar at our standard prices – please see our menu. Please notify us of any special dietary restrictions at the time of booking to ensure we can fulfil your requirements.

Diving, waterskiing, wakeboarding and other motorised water sports are all undertaken at the clients' risk. Water sports will be charged by the hour.

This special Dream Destination Photographic Expedition includes fuel, although we reserve the right to impose a surcharge if the local price of diesel rises above 25 Thai Baht per litre on or before the date of departure (currently 20 Baht during May 2009).

Please treat this itinerary as a guide only: all times, destinations and departure points need to be flexible to account for tides and prevailing weather conditions.

Onward connections and transfers are by arrangement with, and the responsibility of, the booking agent.

More details can be found at www.siamjunk.com.