This journey goes off the beaten path—encompassing remote hill tribe villages, rural life, traditional ceremonies and performances, river border crossings, jungle-covered ruins, and temples and pagodas. Recently built dirt roads take you deep into the countryside, and footpaths lead you to outlying villages, lost temples, and the remnants of ancient civilizations. Ten years from now, many of these remote areas will be forever changed by the rapid encroachment of global modernity, so this program offers perhaps the best chance to visit secluded hill tribes that still practice traditional ways of life that have endured for thousands of years in the farthest reaches of Southeast Asia.

**STUDY LEADER:** Peter K. Bol is the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning and the Charles H. Carswell Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations. As Vice Provost, he is responsible for HarvardX, the Harvard Initiative in Learning and Teaching, and research that connects online and residential learning. Together with William Kirby he teaches ChinaX (SW12x) course, one of the HarvardX courses. His research is centered on the history of China's cultural elites at the national and local levels from the 7th to the 17th century. He is the author of "This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transitions in Tang and Sung China, Neo-Confucianism in History, coauthor of Sung Dynasty Uses of the I-ching, co-editor of Ways with Words, and various journal articles in Chinese, Japanese, and English. He led Harvard's university-wide effort to establish support for geospatial analysis in teaching and research; in 2005 he was named the first director of the Center for Geographic Analysis. He also directs the China Historical Geographic Information Systems project, collaboration between Harvard and Fudan University in Shanghai to create a GIS for 2000 years of Chinese history. In collaboration between Harvard, Academia Sinica, and Peking University he directs the China Biographical Database project, an online relational database currently of 360,000 historical figures that is being expanded to include all biographical data in China's historical record over the last 2000 years.

**GROUP SIZE:** 10 to 18 guests

**PRICING:** $11,695 per person double / $14,055 single arrangements (Includes all internal flights.)
SCHEDULE BY DAY
_B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner_

FRIDAY, OCT. 7, 2016
DEPART FROM U.S.
Independent departure from your home city to Bangkok, Thailand.

SATURDAY, OCT. 8, 2016
BANGKOK
Welcome to Thailand. After you complete immigration and custom formalities and collect your luggage, you will be met and transferred to your luxury, riverfront hotel for a much deserved night’s rest.

Overnight at The Peninsula Hotel, Bangkok

SUNDAY, OCT. 9, 2016
BANGKOK
After an early breakfast, depart on a full day exploration of Bangkok. Travel by public river-taxi on the River of Kings to the Pak Klong Dalat Flower Market. Then continue to the Grand Palace, where an English governess once tutored a young prince and may have influenced his powerful father. (The Thai people have enormous reverence for their royal family, thus both versions of The King and I are banned as an insult to one of their great rulers.) The highlight of this mind-and-eye boggling palace is the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Pra Kaew), the most revered shrine in the Kingdom. Next to the Grand Palace is Wat Po, one of Bangkok’s oldest and largest temples. The temple houses the gigantic, gold-plated Reclining Buddha and is the headquarters for the Traditional Medicine Practitioners of Bangkok.

After lunch at Riva Surya, depart for Sampran Riverside, formerly a small rose plantation in Nakhon Pathom, which has grown over the years into a 70-acre riverside garden. Spend the afternoon and evening hours exploring the gardens, concluding with a private reception and dinner.

Overnight at The Peninsula Hotel, Bangkok (B, L, D)

MONDAY, OCT. 10, 2016
BANGKOK TO CHIANG MAI
Following breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight to Chiang Mai, the ‘Rose of the North.’ Upon arrival, immediately embark on a half day exploration of this ancient city.

Founded in the 13th century, Chiang Mai has long played a role in Thai history. Currently a flourishing cultural and economic center, this is a city in transition. Historically influenced by Thai, Burmese, Lao, and hill tribe forces, its culture reflects an exotic blend of styles.

Following lunch, visit several of Chiang Mai’s more important temples—Wat Chiang Man, Wat Phra Singh, and Wat Chedi Luang, where you will have the chance to visit with a local monk about Buddhism and his experiences in the monastery.
You can stop briefly at each of these temples to learn about their importance to the local people and historical significance. The next stop is at Wat Umong, a forest monastery.

End the day with a visit to Wat Prathat Doi Suthep, the iconic temple located on the 1,676-foot high Doi Suthep Mountain. It can be seen from any vantage point in the city and dominates the landscape. Climb the 300-step staircase, flanked by naga, or take the cable-car up. With clear weather, the views are incredible.

Overnight at the Anantara Chiang Mai Resort, Chiang Mai (B, L, D)

TUESDAY, OCT. 11, 2016
CHIANG MAI

Following breakfast, transfer to the Buddhist University of Chiang Mai to experience a private group discussion with some of the Chiang Mai's more experienced monks. Learn about life in the monastery, Thai culture, and the traditions of Buddhism in general. Afterwards, take part in a meditation workshop focusing on Vipassana Meditation, a part of modern Theravada Buddhism in which the focus is the understanding of the true nature of reality through breathing, thoughts, feeling and actions.

After lunch, spend the afternoon at the Patara Elephant Camp, one of the best elephant conservation programs in the country. At the camp you will be briefed on the history of the domestic elephant in Thailand. Begin the training session by hiking into the jungle to find elephants in the bush followed by feeding and caring for these magnificent animals.

After learning different techniques for getting on the elephant along with basic riding skills and spoken commands for elephants, ride to a waterfall and have a chance to cool off in the falls. In the evening, ride back to the camp for the elephants’ evening feeding before transferring back to the resort with the evening free to explore and have dinner at leisure.

Overnight at the Anantara Chiang Mai Resort, Chiang Mai (B, L)

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 12, 2016

CHIANG RAI

Following an early breakfast, depart Chiang Mai on the morning drive to Chiang Rai. The first stop will be Wat Rong Khun or ‘The White Temple.’

Wat Rong Khun is unique from other temples in Thailand as it has been constructed entirely in white plaster and embedded in beautiful mirrored glass mosaics. The temple was designed by Chalermchai Kositpipat, one of Thailand's most renowned artists, who wanted to build a temple all in white to signify the purity of Lord Buddha.

From Wat Rong Khun, continue to Baan Dam or ‘The Black Temple Chiang Rai.’ Created by local artist/curator Thawan Duchanee, Baan Dam is an estate of more than 40 black structures each uniquely designed and loaded with a variety of paintings, sculptures, drums, animal bones, skins and horns collected from around Southeast Asia.

After lunch at Krua Silapin, have a visit to Doy Din Dang Pottery. Somluk Pantiboon is a ceramic artist and has been showing his art works internationally, but he also has trained the nearby villagers to become skillful potters over the years. Under his
leadership, Doy Din Dang has become well-known for high quality craftsmanship and the use of natural, non-chemical ingredients to create beautiful works of art.

The last visit is to Mae Fah Luang Art and Museum which houses a permanent collection of mostly teak-based artifacts and art from across the former Lanna region. Haw Kham, a temple-like tower built in 1984 from the remains of 32 wooden houses, is arguably the park's centerpiece. The immense size of the structure – allegedly influenced by Lanna-era Wat Pongsanuk in Lampang – with its Buddha image seemingly hovering over white sand and sacred, candle-lit aura creating one of Northern Thailand's most memorable and unique spiritual experience.

Late in the day, transfer to the riverside resort, enjoy dinner and a relaxing evening.

Overnight at The Legend Boutique River Resort & Spa, Chiang Rai (B, L, D)

THURSDAY, OCT. 13, 2016
MEKONG RIVER BOAT RIDE / PAKBENG
Early this morning transfer to the Thai/Laos border at Houei Say. Once at the new Thai/Laos Friendship bridge, clear Thai Immigration and take the shuttle bus across the bridge to clear Laos Immigration.

Board our privately chartered Mekong River boat for full cruise down the Mekong to Pakbeng. En route, cruise through stunning mountain scenery with a couple of stops at ethnic minority villages. Arrive at Pakbeng before sunset, and settle into a rustic but charming, traditional villa-style lodge perched on a rise overlooking the Mekong and surrounding hills and jungle. Dinner will be on the terrace, overlooking the mighty Mekong.

Overnight at the Pakbeng Lodge, Pakbeng (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, OCT. 14, 2016
MUANG LA
After breakfast, drive into the mountains of Northern Laos, one of the most traditional and unspoiled areas remaining in Southeast Asia. Our destination is the Muang La Resort, a drive of approximately three hours.

Arriving in the small village of Muang La this afternoon there will be an opportunity to relax, and explore on your own before gathering for dinner.

Overnight at Muang La Resort, Muang La (B, L, D)

SATURDAY, OCT. 15, 2016
MUANG LA
Today explore the villages and countryside around Muang La by car and on foot. First travel to a Iko (Akha) village atop a mountain, a little more than three thousand meters. The Iko are one of the most traditional minorities in Southeast Asia. The women wear beautiful, colorful headdresses decorated with silver coins. The views from this village are fantastic.

After a picnic lunch, enjoy an easy walk of about an hour to a Hmong village. In this village learn first-hand about the unique traditional culture of the Hmong before returning to our resort late this afternoon. Then return to Muang La resort where the natural thermal baths and sauna await.

Overnight at Muang La Resort, Muang La (B, L, D)
SUNDAY, OCT. 16, 2016
LUANG PRABANG
Depart on the long, but rewarding full day of travel from Muang La to Luang Prabang.

After breakfast depart the resort on a two-hour drive to village of Muang Khua. From Muang Khua board our privately chartered riverboat for the five hour journey down the Nam Ou River to the town of Nong Khiow. Cruise through some of the most spectacular river scenery in Northern Laos and enjoy a specially prepared picnic lunch along the way.

Arriving in Nong Khiow late this continue on the two hour journey to Luang Prabang and check into our charming, boutique hotel on the outskirts of this historic city with the evening at leisure to explore and have dinner.

Overnight at the Satri House, Luang Prabang (B,L)

MONDAY, OCT. 17, 2016
LUANG PRABANG
The bells of the town’s monasteries toll at dawn when golden lines of monks emerge to receive their morning rice from the townspeople. If you rise early, have the opportunity to respectfully witness this sacred ritual typical of old Laos-long lines of barefoot monks weaving through the streets on their alms rounds.

In keeping with our respectful stance regarding local cultures, please observe this sacred ritual from a respectful distance. We also encourage that if you must take photographs that it does not interfere with this highly revered ritual.

After visit the Morning Market and see an array of meats, vegetables and spices the locals use for cooking and then explore this historic and charming World Heritage Town including many of the city’s most important temples beginning with Wat Xieng Thong. This 500 year old temple is exquisite and is the best example of the classic Luang Prabang style. From here, explore small side streets and along back alleys – a city that could have been designed with slow travel in mind, a morning walking tour allows us to soak up the ambiance and appreciate the hidden charms of Luang Prabang.

Continue wandering up the peninsula, stop at temples and other sites as we wish. Visit the National Museum, which is the former Royal Palace which houses relics from Laos’ royalist past. Overlooking the palace is Phousi Mountain. It is said that those who do not climb the 328 steps up have not really made it to the city. Venture up the hill and be rewarded with remarkable views of the area.

This trip is planned to coincide with the Boun Ok Pansa - celebrating the end of Buddhist Lent in Laos as well as throughout the Buddhist countries of Southeast Asia and one of the best places to witness and enjoy this festival is in Luang Prabang.

Thousands of people assemble to float the banana-leaf krathong onto the waterways of the city, honoring the Goddess of Water. A multitude of Lanna-style sky lanterns (khom fai) are also launched into the air where they resemble large flocks of giant fluorescent jellyfish gracefully floating by through the skies. These are believed to help rid the locals of troubles and are also taken to decorate houses and streets.

Overnight at the Satri House, Luang Prabang (B, L, D)
TUESDAY, OCT. 18, 2016
LUANG PRABANG

After breakfast start the day with a visit to the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre, a museum dedicated to the ethnic minorities of Laos.

Then drive into the peaceful countryside, stopping to explore several villages along the way. See a Hmong, a Khmu, and a Lowland Lao village and can compare their different life styles, traditions and religions. The Lowland Lao of Ban Sa-aat live on the banks of the Mekong and its tributaries and in the cities. They speak Lao, which is closely related to the Thai spoken in Thailand.

Ban Pano is home to Khmu people, who were the original inhabitants of Northern Laos. They are animists and speak a language belonging to the Austro-Asiatic group of languages. In Ban Long Lao, you will see Hmong and Khmu people live peaceful side by side. The Hmong settlers were the most recent to come to Laos. They built their villages on the mountain tops and practice shifting cultivation of corn and other crops. In Ban Pano and Ban Long Lao, local guides from these villages will show you around. You will have the chance to get to see houses from inside, traditional dresses and explanations about different craft productions or other common work routines. The villagers are grateful for this additional income and they are proud to welcome visitors from far away!

Continue on to the Kuang Si Waterfall. At the falls, crystal water cascades into idyllic turquoise pools. Also there will be time to visit the nearby Sunbear Refuge to learn more about the poaching of these endangered creatures before returning to Luang Prabang this afternoon.

This evening enjoy a command performance of the Luang Prabang Royal Ballet in the Theatre Hall beside the National Palace. In 1975, after 15 centuries of annual performances, the Theatre was banned, and the master artists and teachers had to look for other work. In 1993, after an absence of more than 15 years, the Institution of Cultural Research and the Provincial Government Office in Luang Prabang established a committee to revive limited performances of Phra-Lak Phra-Lam for festivals. In 2002, the Theatre was re-established, and has been performing at home and abroad since. The show consists of 5 different plays and involves 41 artists.

Overnight at the Satri House, Luang Prabang (B, L, D)

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 19, 2016
LUANG PRABANG / SIEM REAP

This morning is free to explore and enjoy Luang Prabang before transferring to the airport for the midday flight to Siem Reap, home to the incomparable temples of Angkor.

On arrival in Siem Reap this afternoon we first clear Immigration and Custom formalities and then transfer to our historic hotel for check-in followed by dinner.

Overnight at the Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor, Siem Reap (B, D)

THURSDAY, OCT. 20, 2016
SIEM REAP

Early this morning (before sunrise) visit Angkor Wat, the largest and most breathtaking monument at Angkor. Built as the funerary temple for Suryavarman II, who ruled from 1112 to 1152, Angkor never fails to reward the first-time or repeat visitor with its grand scale, surreal bas-reliefs and unbelievable attention to detail. Here, spend the
morning exploring one of mankind’s most magnificent creations before returning to the hotel for a late breakfast.

Later this morning, visit the Bayon Information Center, which serves to enhance visitors’ understanding and appreciation of the Angkor monuments. The Bayon Information Center is an interpretative collection of historical information and artifacts of the Khmer Empire, and its staff also documents, catalogues and encourages the conservation of the Angkor Archeological Park.

Upon arrival, you will be welcomed by the Center’s expert archeologist in charge of rebuilding and restoring the Bayon Temple’s Southern Library, who will present various videos, images and artifacts related to Khmer history and will also discuss current restoration projects. Afterwards, visit the Bayon Southern Library site, where you will witness reconstruction firsthand, as well as learn about ancient construction methods used and the difficulties encountered in such an endeavor. You will also tour the entire Bayon site with the archeologist before this special, behind-the-scenes tour ends mid-afternoon.

Then, continue focusing on the fortified city of Angkor Thom, by exploring Baphuon, Phimeanakas and the Terraces of the Elephants and Leper King with your private vehicle and guide.

Return to the hotel for a chance to relax and freshen up before we enjoy a farewell dinner at Cuisine Wat Damnak celebrating our journey through Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Overnight at the Raffles Grand Hotel d’Angkor, Siem Reap (B, L, D)

FRIDAY, OCT. 21, 2016
SIEM REAP

This morning, venture into the countryside to visit the mid-10th century Banteay Srei, which is regarded by many as the jewel in the crown of classical Khmer art. This site is well-preserved and its relief carvings are among the most accomplished Angkor has to offer. An outstanding example of its deep relief is the east pediment of the southern library, which shows Ravana trying to shake Mount Kailasa.

Back in Siem Reap, if interested, enjoy an optional visit to Les Artisans D’ Angkor, a network of Cambodian craftsmen and women sponsored by the Cambodian government and "REPLIC," a European program. The purpose is to educate young Cambodians in traditional skills (woodcarving, stone carving, lacquerware and silk weaving) and provide them with a livelihood by marketing their products.

Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before departing on an excursion to Mechrey Village with a drive of approximately an hour. En route, stop at Ampil Peam to stroll through this traditional village, where locals live much as they have for centuries. Perhaps opt to explore by oxcart to sample the transportation mode favored for about the last 9,000 years. Continue to Mechrey, a small community on Tonle Sap Lake. Board a local-style boat and explore the area. This interesting excursion includes a foray into the nearby flooded forest. Your guide will explain the biodiversity in this area and will discuss the importance of the lake for the livelihood of thousands of locals. Tonle Sap, meaning “Great Lake,” is in fact a combined lake and river system. Learn how its flow changes direction twice a year, depending on the season. It has been declared a UNESCO biosphere,
recognizing its great importance to the surrounding ecosystem.

For those departing this evening from Siem Reap, rooms will be available until transferring to the airport while those departing tomorrow will enjoy one last evening at the Grand Hotel. Many airlines have flights that depart Siem Reap in the late evening while others have flights departing in the morning and afternoon.

Overnight at the Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor, Siem Reap (B, L)

SATURDAY, OCT. 22, 2016

DEPART

This morning bid farewell to your other travelers and Asia as we are transferred to the airport for our international departures.