

TOUR NEWSLETTER

Thailand

March 20-April 4, 2015



ORCHID CONSERVATION ALLIANCE

Orchids in the Wild Ecotours

In this newsletter I am providing information about the hotels and resorts we will be staying at and photographs of some of the many orchids you should see on the trip.

Seeing orchids in the wild will give you an entire new perspective on growing these species. On this trip you will obtain a better feel for what is meant by a “dry rest” and the differences in the lighting, humidity, and temperatures that occur in the different habitats we will visit.

Hotels and Resorts

March 20-22 Royal Lanna Hotel , Chiang Mai

www.royallannahotelchiangmai.com

March 23-26. Marisa Resort, Chiang Dao

www.marisaresort.com

March 27. Royal Lanna Hotel, Chiang Mai

March 28-29. Rain Forest Resort, Phitsanulok

www.rainforestthailand.com

March 30-April 1 Royal King Hotel, Loei

April 2-3. Royal Lanna Hotel, Chiang Mai

ITINERARY: PART I. CHIANG MAI AND ENVIRONS

March 20th

Members arrive for trip. Short informative meeting in early evening, stroll around night market, introduction to the area around the hotel (where the banks, atms, restaurants etc are)

March 21st

Easy going day to recover from flights

Visit temple in morning, afternoon at orchid farm in Mae Rim area

Surprise tour in Chiang Mai

OCA meeting at hotel to introduce tour etc. free time

March 22nd

Doi Inthanon, Conservation House (if open), Chedis



PART 2. THE NORTH

March 23

Visit to Joe's Nursery, opportunity to purchase plants
Drive to Chiang Dao

March 24

Orchid trek all day in mountains. Dry forest. Reasonable fitness required. Alternative activity can be planned if needed

March 25

Visit temples, caves, local orchid farms
Possible visit to water fall, hot spring, another national park.
No trek today

March 26

Orchid trek all day in mountains (most difficult trek on trip, reasonable fitness required). Dry forest. Alternative activity can be planned if needed

March 27th

Visit to Maejo University to view orchid conservation
Return to Chiang Mai
Free time for shopping, possible visit to plant market, silk factory etc.

March 28th

Leave Chiang Mai and drive east
Visit temples, horse cart rides
Arrive at Rain Forest Resort

March 29th

All day at a national park
Hike in highland evergreen forest, terrestrial orchids
Lunch at park HQ
Afternoon trek

March 30th

Drive to Loei, Short trek in National Park en route
Evening in Loei



Paphiopedilum concolor



Dendrobium unicum

March 31st

Trek in nature preserve, Wet evergreen forest

April 1st

Trek in nature preserve, Wet evergreen forest

April 2nd

Return to Chiang Mai
Stop at various temples en route

April 3rd

Mae Tang Elephant Park
Goodbye River Cruise

April 4th

Departures

MAEJO UNIVERSITY

Maejo University is one of 26 state universities in Thailand. It is located in Chiang Mai. It was established in 1934, and is one of the oldest degree granting agricultural universities in Thailand, and is now one of the most prominent institutions. One of the projects at this university is the Royal Project for the Return of Native Orchids to the Forest.



THE HILL PEOPLE

The Hill People, or Hill Tribes comprise several different groups of people who mostly inhabit the hills and mountains of northern and western Thailand, including the border areas with Myanmar and Laos. The six major hill tribes within Thailand are the Akha, Lahu, Karen, Hmong/Miao, Mien/Yao and Lisu, each with a distinct language and culture. The hill tribes have traditionally been primarily subsistence farmers who use slash and burn agricultural techniques to farm their heavily forested communities. Popular perceptions that slash and burn practices are environmentally destructive, government concerns over borderland security, and

population pressure has caused the government to forcibly relocate many hill tribe peoples. Traditionally, hill tribes were also a migratory people, leaving land as it became depleted of natural resources or when trouble arose. These people's often are treated as criminals, and are often viewed as national security threats. Hundreds of thousands of them have been refused citizenship although many are natives to the land. Many hill tribe people are "stateless," holding no formal citizenship (or any of the rights – voting, healthcare, education— that are granted to Thai citizens).

We may stop at some markets that are run by Hill people. In the night markets in Chiang Mai you will probably see numerous Hill people, most often women with their children, selling various toys and crafts.



TEMPLE TRADITIONS

We will be visiting numerous temples and religious sites throughout the trip. Thai temples, known as *wats*, are everywhere, and many are beautiful and of great historic significance. Monks are often friendly and may try to speak English with you. A few tips about visiting the temples:



- Remove your shoes before entering the temples
- Don't get in the way of local people who are there to worship
- Back away from the Buddha statue, don't show your back
- Do not touch sacred objects in the worship area
- Do not raise yourself higher than the buddha (e.g. sit on a raised platform to take a photo)
- While sitting, avoid pointing your feet at the image of Buddha or other people. If monks come into the Bot to worship, stand up until they finish their prostrations.

DOI INTHANON AND THE CHEDIS



One of the most interesting places we will visit during the first few days of our tour is Doi Inthanon, the highest mountain in Thailand. Once known as Doi Luang (“big mountain”) or Doi Ang Ka (“the crow’s pond top”). It was renamed Doi Inthanon in honor of King Inthawichayanon, one of the last kings of Chiang Mai who respected the forests in the north and tried to preserve them. The elevation at the very

top is 2565 m. In 1954, [Doi Inthanon National Park](#), was created, permanently preserving the forests. This park now covers 482.4 km² and spreads from the lowlands at 800 m elevation up to the peak at 2,565 m. The summit experiences average year-round temperatures in the low- to mid-teens (Celsius) and high humidity. It is not uncommon for the temperature to drop below zero during the winter months.

As we make our way down the mountain, we will visit another tourist site, known as the “chedis”. A Chedi is a type of buddhist “mound” or stupa, which is defined as a mound or heap, usually containing some Buddhist relics. We will visit two adjacent [chedis](#), one called

Naphamethinidon, meaning "by the strength of the land and air", and the other, Naphaphonphumisiri , meaning "being the strength of the air and the grace of the land". These temples were built to honor the 60th birthday anniversary of King Bhumibol Adulyadej in 1987, and the 60th birthday anniversary of Queen Sirikit in 1992, respectively. Surrounding the cheddies are “exotic” gardens, with petunias, marigolds and many other annuals grown in more temperate climates.



Doi Inthanon is protected from plunderers by forestry checkpoints and its natural inaccessibility. This has helped to preserve its orchid flora, which can be seen in abundance.

Wildlife still present in the park area includes four species of monkey, barking deer, the Asiatic Black Bear, flying squirrels and several native wild cats. The park is also famous for its bird fauna and over 300 different species have been recorded here. This park has some of the best preserved broadleaved evergreen forest to be found anywhere in the country and large areas of undisturbed natural forest can be found within easy walking distance of the road. The forest from 2000 metres and up altitude is the only forest in Thailand that resembles a true upper montane habitat. The trees here are of smaller stature than in the lower zones, but absolutely covered with epiphytes such as mosses, ferns and orchids.



ORCHIDS AND OTHER FLOWERS IN THE BROADLEAF EVERGREEN FOREST



Coelogyne nitida



Coelogyne nitida



Oberonia sp.



Epiphytic *Rhododendron* sp.



Otochilus fuscus



Otochilus fuscus

A FEW ORCHIDS WE MIGHT SPOT ON THE WAY DOWN FROM DOI INTHANON



Dendrobium infundibulum



Diploprora truncata



Sunipia rimanii

ORCHIDS AS TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

During the tour we will probably stop at at least one restaurant/orchid garden. If you love vandaceous orchids, you are going to love these. Vandas are very popular, and very easy to grow in the lowland habitats, and the diversity and beauty of the flowers are breath taking. For those of us from cooler climates (NY, northern California) who rarely see vandas in bloom, this can be a real treat. Below are just a few of the orchids I photographed last year at one of the restaurant stops.



DRY FOREST

Many of the forests in the northern part of Thailand are seasonal dry forests. Much of the original deciduous dipterocarp forest has been cleared, and the places we will visit are in protected parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Ground fires burning through the herbaceous understory of deciduous dipterocarp forests are a regular aspect of this environment, and we will likely see several fires on the trip. The trees have thick, corky bark and generally are not harmed by the low burning fires. The ground will be littered with large dry leaves, and it is often this litter, as well small low growing shrubs that will be burning. During the dry season, the trees lose their leaves, and the orchids on the tree trunks, branches, rocks and ground receive much more light than they do in the wet season. The dry season typically lasts from December to March.

Did you know that tropical dry forests are the most endangered tropical ecosystem? Its estimated that today less than 2% of the original neotropical dry forests remain sufficiently intact to maintain the organisms that occur in them. The story is the same for the dry tropical forests of South East Asia. Dry forests are easily cleared with fires, and regeneration of forests in fields or pastures is also suppressed by fires. During the dry season most plants cease their vegetative activities, but as you will see, many species of woody plants flower, as do many of the orchids and vines such as hoya and dischidia.

ORCHIDS WE MAY SEE IN THE SEASONAL DRY FOREST



Dendrobium polyanthum (primulinum)



Dendrobium lituiflorum



Vanda coerulescens



Cheirostylis yunnanensis



Dendrobium parcum



Bulbophyllum muscarirubrum



Dendrobium secundum



Dendrobium lindleyi



Cymbidium aloifolium

ORCHIDS WE MAY SEE IN THE SEASONAL DRY FORESTS



Oberonia sp. (possibly prainiana)



Dendrobium gratiosissimum



Dendrobium pulchellum



Dendrobium findlayanum



Hygrochilus parishii



Dendrobium fimbriatum var. oculatum



Dendrobium signatum



Dendrobium capillipes



Bulbophyllum sp.



Acriopsis indica



Polystachya concreta



Phalaenopsis cornu-cervi

ORCHIDS ON ROCKS



Luisia curtisii



Phalaenopsis (Doritis) pulcherrima



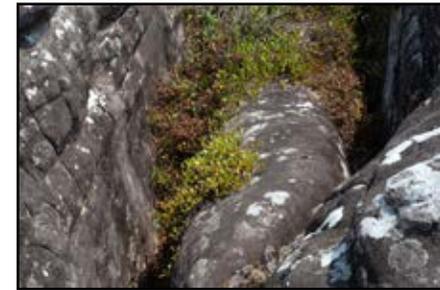
Coelogyne and Otochilus



Bulbophyllum rugosisepalum



Rocky habitat



Orchid species in the crevices



Mycaranthes (Eria) pannea

ROCKY EXPOSED PLATEAU

One of the areas we will visit is a remote highland national park. Here there is a very unusual environment, known locally as “Broken Rock Field”. The rocks are literally encrusted with orchids, with many different species represented, including *Phalaenopsis (Doritis) pulcherrima*, various *Bulbophyllum*, *Coelogyne*, *Otochilus*, *Eria*, *Luisia* and *Spathoglottis* species.



WET EVERGREEN (RHODODENDRON) FOREST



Bulbophyllum wallichii



Dendrobium unicum



Eria truncata



Dendrobium thrysiflorum



Coelogyne lactea



Bulbophyllum dayanum



Bulbophyllum siamensis

COOL WET FOREST

We will visit a high elevation wildlife sanctuary near Loei. This very special place is cool year round, and has many rare orchid species. This area is still home to wild elephants and even tigers! We will be hiking through an area known as the orchid garden, and it is well worth taking your time to explore.



Vanda denisoniana

SOME OTHER INTERESTING PLANTS WE WILL SEE



The modified "pitcher" leaves of *Dischidia major*

Dischidia major

Known locally as the "ant plant" this odd looking epiphyte has highly modified leaves ("pitchers") that are home to various ant species, in particular those in the genus *Philidris* (Dolichoderinae), but also *Cataulacus* and *Crematogaster* (Myrmicinae). This symbiotic relationship provides home and protection for the ants, and extra nutrients to the plant as organic debris that is carried in by the ants. Last year we saw many *Dischidia* plants growing on the trunks of trees in the dry forests above Chiang Dao.

Hoya

You probably know this plant- various species and hybrids are popular house plants. We should see several different species in bloom-look for the vines twining



The vining portion of *Dischidia major*



Hoya sp. seen in the dry forests above Chiang Dao

through tree branches in the dry forest, and also amongst the plants growing on rocky surfaces.

All photos taken in situ, 2014 and were taken by Mary Gerritsen

Don't forget

Check your passport-make sure the expiration date is AT LEAST 6 months after your ARRIVAL DATE. Otherwise you may not be permitted to enter Thailand.

Also make sure you have at least one BLANK visa page in your passport. There is still time to renew your passport if you need to.

Be sure to make xerox copies of your passport, airline reservations and medical insurance forms and keep them separate from your originals.

Planning on purchasing plants to bring home? Bring **plastic plant labels** clearly labeled with your name, address and phone number on them. The labels should have a hole punched in one end. One of these will be tied onto each plant you purchase for shipment home. Please bring as many plant labels as plants you plan to purchase (and some extras, just in case you get carried away). You will need to pay for the cost of the plants in Thailand. However, there will be additional shipping/importation costs that will be incurred and you will also be responsible for. Note that the OCA has made arrangements for importation of all the plants as a group. The plants will be shipped to your home address after you get back to the USA; you will be billed for this extra cost once we know what it will be.