

Cycle with a smile

Smiling Albino believe that travel should be fun, intimate and highly original. To that end, they invite their guests to step outside of their comfort zones and to delve into the culture and adventure of exploring a country – in their case, Thailand.

They offer various ways to do this on their site, but one that will grab many bikers is the Thailand Cycling Epic. This is a 10-day option

visiting some of the country's most important historical sites, as well as plenty spending plenty of time on backroads to see the quieter, simpler side of life there.

Ayutthaya, a World Heritage site and the old Thai capital, is the first stop and is explored on period bikes to add a special touch.

Then it is up north to Chiang Rai province for a two-night stay at a riverside resort to get you well rested for what is to come.

The next week is a long ramble through the hills of the Golden Triangle, biking on dirt tracks and mountain roads, calling in on remote villages close to the Myanmar and Laos borders. You'll encounter Karen, Ahka and Lisu minorities as you traverse the region, at times staying way out among the villages.

The total distance covered is 250-300km, with days ranging from 35-80km. Support is provided throughout, with a vehicle following behind equipped with a mechanic and spares. Cost is US\$2,500 and the planned dates are December 2 this year, and January 27 and March 17, 2007. Find out more at www.smilingalbino.com

