

# TOP 10 THINGS TO DO IN CHIANG MAI

By **YAHOO!** TRAVEL

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## 1. **Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep** Rated #1 for all Chiang Mai things to do



This famous and important temple dating from 1383 enjoys a prominent position in Chiang Mai, overlooking the city from its mountainside perch. It sits about 3,520 feet above sea level and is accessible via a steep *naga* staircase comprising around 300 steps. The temple has a huge golden *chedi* (spire), within which lie some holy Buddha relics that attract devotees from the world over. A walk around the grounds reveals a variety of colorful and fragrant flowers, and murals that depict Buddha's previous lives. Any visit to the city is incomplete without stopping by this temple.

## 2. **Queen Sirikit Botanical Gardens** Rated #2 for all Mae rim things to do



In the 1930s, Englishman Dr. Kerr started a small botanical garden in this location 12 kilometers along the Mae Sa Valley. The current garden was opened in 1992 and covers a large area that incorporates many vegetation types, including some rare species. It also houses research facilities, student accommodation and an information center. The mountain location makes it an enjoyable escape for everyone, particularly nature enthusiasts. The best time to see the flowers in bloom is during the cool season. Visitors can take a leisurely walk along the many winding nature trails and generally get away from it all.

## 3. **Chiang Mai Trekking** Rated #3 for all Chiang Mai things to do



Need some adventure? What better than trekking in the mountains of Chiang Dao and Chiang Mai? During your trek, you will encounter caves, waterfalls, elephant centres, two huge national parks, hill tribes, bamboo rafting and much more. Chiang Dao Nest Tours and Trekking offers different packages - from half day to three day treks ... you get to choose what you want. So, pack your bags and get your knapsack to conquer the mountains!

## 4. **Chiang Dao Cave** Rated #4 for all Chiang Mai things to do



Unless you have your own transportation, it is best to book a trip at a travel agent to visit these beautiful caves. This area is very popular with Thais who, at present, outnumber foreigners by ten to one. Chiang Dao mountain and cave provides some of Thailand's most beautiful scenery. The mountain is the third highest in the country, but probably the most dramatic of all to look at. The sacred caves are filled with Buddha images belonging to Wat Tham Chiang Dao. The upper parts of the caves are the most easy to explore because lighting is installed there. If you wish to venture deeper, you should be accompanied by a guide and an oil lantern.

## 5. Doi Inthanon National Park Rated #5 for all Doi Inthanon things to do



This 1,005 square-kilometer Park located south of Chiang Mai City is, in parts, mountainous and wild. Species not found elsewhere in Thailand can be found here. Perhaps its biggest draw is Doi Inthanon, Thailand's tallest mountain. Standing at 2,565 meters, it offers one of the best places in Thailand for bird watching. Other attractions include Wachiratrarn Waterfall, twin stupas dedicated to the king and queen and hill-tribe villages. On higher ground, one can see wild orchids growing. Trekking tours can be arranged through many agencies in Chiang Mai. This is a great trip by motorcycle.

## 6. Chiang Mai Zoo Rated #6 for all Chiang Mai things to do



This zoo houses more than 6,000 animals in an environment comprising two waterfalls, reservoirs, an open park, camping spots and animal breeding areas. It also offers some spectacular views of the city. It is best to hire a vehicle as it is too big to walk and bicycles and motorbikes are not allowed. Among its recent arrivals are 10 penguins, the first ever in Thailand; gibbons, which are bred successfully; and Chayo, the baby elephant, born at the time of the Leonid meteor shower, who became the symbol of the Bangkok Asian Games.

## 7. Mae Sa Elephant Training Center Rated #7 for all Chiang dow things to do



Come and watch the majestic elephants in one of Thailand's best elephant camps along the Mae Sa Valley. With shows every day, you can watch these mammoth creatures play football, among other tricks. There are also opportunities to ride an elephant through the local countryside, feed them with bananas and sugarcane, and take plenty of photographs. Also within the camp you will find an elephant nursery and a rafting center.

## 8. **Wat Chedi Luang** Rated #8 for all Chiang Mai things to do



This is a beautiful temple with an interesting history. In the 16th century, an earthquake partially destroyed the *chedi* (spire) at the top. It was partially reconstructed in 1992, but ever since only the 60-meter-high foundation remains. For 84 years, it housed the famous Emerald Buddha that now stands in Wat Prakaew in Bangkok. Rumors say it was here that King Mengrai, a former ruler of the north, was struck by lightning. Although the *wat* was recently cleaned and preserving agents were added to maintain its appearance, some parts are still in ruins.

## 9. **Mae Ping River Cruise** Rated #9 for all Chiang Mai things to do



To feel the essence of Chiang Mai, take a cruise along the Mae Ping River. An exotic boat takes you to a traditional farmhouse where kitchen herbs, fruit and vegetables are grown in the garden. The trip takes around two hours, with fruit and drinks provided. You may also opt for an enticing evening dinner cruise where you can relish your meal as you relish the setting sun. Boats leave from the pier at Wat Chai Mongkol on Charoenprathet Road or from The Riverside Restaurant.

## 10. **Thai Buffalo Training Camp** Rated #10 for all Mae rim things to do



To experience and feel the atmosphere of a typical northern farm, one may take a day trip to this camp. Only a 30-minute drive from Chiang Mai, it can be accessed by local taxis. Organized shows give you an overview of the ancient farming techniques, including water wheel irrigation, plowing and sugar processing. The farm area also houses an exotic folk museum and a farmhouse built in the traditional way.

## TOP 10 By Trip Advisor

### No.1 Flight of the Gibbon Treetop Adventure



Flight of the Gibbon is a must do if you are looking for a fun day trip. We were looking for something exciting to do on our vacation and zipping through the trees was just the thing! Our tour guides Champ and Nui were so friendly. The hike up to the waterfall had a gorgeous view. It is a must see!

### No.2 Kaohom Thai Culinary Cooking School:



We booked a private class for our group of 7 (ranging from ages 22-65) people. Although the class is pricier than others, it is totally worth it. They pick you up from your hotel. Tim (the teacher) and her husband (who drove us there) are great people. Everything is beautifully done, the table settings, plates, drinks, the grounds... its all great. We all enjoyed it so much we decided to book a second class while we were there. When we came back, all the flowers, table cloths, glasses, EVERYTHING was decorated differently... the food was easy to make and DELICIOUS.

### No. 3 A lot of Thai



Home cooking class Welcome to our home and enjoy your memorable day with our family. If you prefer a small class size cookery school in Chiangmai, we are your answer. You will get more intimate experience of Thai cooking class with our own unique style. Don't hesitate to be our guest

## No.4 Elephant Nature Park



Elephant Nature Park is a unique project set in Northern Thailand. Established in the 1990's the aim has always been to provide a sanctuary and rescue center for elephants in Thailand. The park is set in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand and has rescued over 30 distressed elephants throughout the country. The park has received numerous awards from institutions including the Smithsonian. The founder was named Asian Hero of the Year by Time magazine in 2005 and the park has been featured in many international publications including National Geographic magazine as well as feature documentaries from respected film production companies.

Visit their website [www.elephantnaturefoundation.org](http://www.elephantnaturefoundation.org) for information on elephant conservation projects, general elephant knowledge, traditional local lifestyles, jungle herbs, photographs and multi-media. Find out more about Elephant Nature Park and how it is helping the highly endangered creatures of the area. The site covers the efforts of Lek's conservation projects.

## No.5 Baan Thai Cookery School



Last year in April, my friend and I took the night cooking class at Baan Thai. We didn't have the time to do a full day class although I would have loved to. The night class was approximately 3 hours and included a trip to the market where they explained the different Thai ingredients as well as transportation to and from our guest house. The group decided between themselves to make 4 dishes. We made a red curry, papaya salad, chicken with coconut milk and chicken cashew. Each person prepared their own dishes and then cooked it on their own wok. It ended up being a lot of food and left extremely full. Water is provided to you and they have beer and soda you can purchase to have with your meal. It was an excellent experience and I highly recommend it to anyone who has an extra 3 hours in Chiang Mai.

For more information please see [www.cookinthai.com](http://www.cookinthai.com)

## No. 6 Wat Phra That Doi Suthep



Located high in the hills above Chiang Mai, this magnificent temple was commissioned by King Kuena, ruler of the region from 1367-1388.

Doi Suthep is perched on a hill alike many temples in the Chiang Mai region. Then again they make the most beautiful ones don't they? Doi Suthep is no exception.

As you drive up, you will hit a Hmong tribe village where the car park is. Many tour buses wait around here too. There are two ways to get up the temple, climb up the stairs or take the cable car. We took the car up and walked down.

The temple itself is rather touristy but there were lots of locals worshipping there as well. There are commanding views from the top of the temple on a clear day overlooking Chaing Mai. The temple is filled with numerous intricate wooden carvings and buddhas.

This temple is a MUST SEE and really should be the No 1 attraction when visiting Chiang Mai.

## No. 7 Treetop Adventure Ecotours



I just experienced the Flight of the Gibbon in Chiang Mai - it's a ziplining adventure through the high jungle canopy. It was my first time ziplining and I had a great time. The 2 Western owners are very experienced and helpful. I found the Thai staff to be well trained and friendly.

I booked through a travel agent and regretted it because I ended up having lunch and going to a waterfall (neither of which interested me). So if you just want to do the ziplining, I suggest you contact this outfit directly instead of going through a travel agent in Chiang Mai.

## No. 8 Night Bazaar



Be sure to visit the Night Bazaar. Stallholders line both sides of the street and prices are really competitive. I bought a very cheap bikini and some lovely saa paper cards and writing sets. Inside the main market building, on the bottom floor, there are a lot of local handicrafts and artists' works, also at great prices. One of the best things about the market is the super-cheap food court on the opposite side of the road. You can enjoy your food in a fairylight garden setting, and there's free entertainment such as traditional Thai dancing on a large stage.

## No. 9 Siam River Adventures



Such a fun experience!!!

The Thai river guides were superb and they definitely knew how to have fun and made the whole experience a blast! Safety was top priority, with an indepth briefing before rafting, including plenty of instruction and then practice when in the water. There were 3 kayaks following us just in case anything happened, (nothing did).

We got an excellent DVD of photos at the end and there was the option of a T-shirt. All in all it was fabulous and I'll definitely be back to sample it again, maybe in the rainy season if I'm brave enough!

## No. 10 Wat Phra Singh



This temple was built in the period of Phra Chao Maha Proma (1345-1400), which is home to Phra Buddha Sihing, Chiang Mai's most important and sacred Buddha image.

### Featured recommendation tourist attraction from Chiang Mai Tourism Business Association

## Chiang Mai Walking Streets



#### Wualai Walking Street (Saturday Market)

The Wualai has been so far known for good quality of silver and lacquer wares. On Saturday evenings, the open-air market will be set up for the famous handicraft area. Do not miss a chance to shop for authentic northern silver, lacquer wares and unique handicrafts. Tourists are enjoy the local foods and Thai traditional performances. The market start from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m.

#### Tha Pae Walking Street (Sunday Market)

Starts from Tha Phae Gate through Ratchadamnoen Road every Sunday from 7.00 p.m. until midnight. There are variety kinds of local products on a reasonable price along both side of the street where Thai and foreign tourists are enjoy walking & shopping without exhaustion.

Walking streets are now become highlights of numerous ancient cities all over Thailand, the one that is located in Chiang Mai is believed to be the most popular one. It is a kind of market which offers more authentic local shopping experiences.

Chiang Mai Walking Street project is not only to promote the city as inviting tourists, but also the ideas to make a better economy by the qualities of city people. Chiang Mai has been prosperous in arts, antiques and very long century of the Lanna cultures, which the government considers that they should continue and improve the project by filled up with the potential activities to attract more tourists. There are two places of walking street on weekend.

The first one is located on Wualai Road which call Wualai Walking Street or Saturday Market. This road is very famous for fine quality of lacquer wares and silver. In this market you can find and purchase authentic northern silver, lacquer wares and unique handicrafts. Moreover the tourists have a chance to try the local foods, enjoy wood and silver carving and many kinds of traditional performances. The market is on Saturday evenings start from 4 p.m.

Another one is The Tha Pae Walking Street which opens on Sunday. It has been the first Walking Street in Chiang Mai, it was the first economy street of the city since the last two hundreds years. The Sunday Walking Street Market, the latter sets up every Sunday on Rachadamnoen Road from late afternoon to around midnight. Here you can find various that are unique to Chiang Mai or the surrounding area such as handicrafts, clothing and furniture. It is also a good place to go for a cheap meal or even just for people to watch. The great thing that highly recommended is those comfortable chairs with a gentle massage when you are feeling exhausted. You can sometimes be seen street theatre such as displays of traditional singing or dancing too.

If you have chance to visit Chiang Mai ,Walking Street is another interesting place which all local people would recommend the visitors to visit.

## Chiang Mai Night Safari



([www.chiangmainightsafari.com](http://www.chiangmainightsafari.com))

Chiang Mai Night Safari (CnS) is a government nature theme park which is built to promote Chiang Mai tourism regarding to the government's policy apart from arts, cultures, traditions, and the beauty of nature which are the main fascinating tourist attractions. The government also works for the promotion of Chiang Mai Airport in order to make it an international airport which will allow Chiang Mai to be the tourist center in Indo-China and Southeast Asia. Therefore, if you are looking for a place to visit, a place to hang out at night amidst the real natural environment where you can relax and learn ecosystem, wildlife and natural resources not only in terms of quantity but also quality, Chiang Mai Night Safari is the best answer for you.

Chiang Mai Night Safari is located at Doi Suthep-Pui National Park which covers Tambon Nhong Kway, Hang Dong District, and Tambon Mae Hia, Muang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai Province. It's about 324 acres consisted of Mixed Deciduous Forest and Dry Dipterocarp forest. Chiang Mai Night Safari is 12 km away from downtown Chiang Mai. By car, it takes only 15-20 minutes from the Chiang Mai Airport, the train station or the bus terminal to Chiang Mai Night Safari. Therefore, Chiang Mai Night Safari is the only nearest natural forest from downtown where the environment still perfectly stays in beauty and in peace of nature.

Chiang Mai Night Safari is constructed to be a world class nature theme park consisted of many projects to be done. Today, the first project including wildlife area, musical fountain and water screen, has already been completed. To accomplish the whole objectives, other projects will be gradually established.

Chiang Mai Night Safari was established after Singapore Night Safari and China Night Safari Guangzhou. Chiang Mai Night Safari is 2 times larger than Singapore Night Safari and it is considered to be the most beautiful night safari in the world.

Chiang Mai Night Safari is aimed to support outdoor activities for family members as well as to promote Chiang Mai's tourism since we have found out that most visitors like to come with their family. Therefore we provide opportunities for them to get together and enjoy the activities.



## Wiang Kum Kam, the Underground Ancient City



In 1984, just outside the modern Chiang Mai metropolitan area, archaeologists uncovered the remains of an ancient city. Research concluded that this was the city of Wiang Kum Kam, one of many fortified cities built by King Mengrai as he consolidated his hold on the north. In fact, it appears that Mengrai may have lived at Wiang Kum Kam for a few years before Chiang Mai was founded in 1297 a.d.

Nearly 20 temple sites have been uncovered in the area, which lies between the Ping river and the Lamphun highway. The buildings were buried underground by years of flooding, which apparently is the reason Mengrai eventually moved



his capital to Chiang Mai. In fact, the Ping river originally flowed along the north side of the town, but at some point during the Burmese occupation from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the river changed course and now flows along the west side of the site. The change of course was apparently the final straw which caused the city to be largely abandoned for 300 years. The site is too large to cover on foot. The best way to see it is to start at the still working temple of Wat Chedi Liam, and tour the site by bicycle, tram or pony carriage. The nine main sites taken in on a typical tour are not greatly interesting compared to many of Thailand's ancient sites. What does make the trip worthwhile is the gentle pace and scenery of the countryside viewed from the back of a carriage or on a bicycle.

Although most of the sites are not much more than platforms and ruined chedis, there are two working temples in the area that date from the city's heyday at the end of the thirteenth century. One is your logical starting point, Wat Chedi Liam. The other, more vibrant temple is Wat Khan Tom (also known as Wat Chang Kum), where in fact the spirit of King Mengrai is said to still reside.

Wiang Kum Kam is situated in Tha Wang Tan, Sarapee District, outside Chiang Mai city about the 3-4 km on Chiang Mai - Lamphun Rd.

Open everyday 08.00-17.00

For more information: 053-321523 / 053-283981

## Enjoy a Traditional Khantoke Dinner



For an excellent Thai dining experience, a traditional Lanna Khantoke dinner is a must. Many believe this north Thailand dinner with music and dance was invented for tourists, but the Khantoke dinner dates back many centuries. Locals celebrate festivals and holidays in their homes with the Khantoke dinner today.

Sitting down to a well-presented meal of good and delicious food is something to enjoy. Then there are those stand-up occasions where mixing and mingling with other guests and enjoy cocktails and finger foods. Finger foods? Eating with one's fingers? Considered as neither polite nor hygienic in some circles, eating with the fingers is as old as the human race. There is absolutely nothing wrong with it, as all do it perhaps without thinking.

## ADVENTURE TOUR



Adventure is about having fun. It is about pumping adrenaline, enjoying the outdoors, viewing space beneath our feet sharing adventures with our friends, ascending impossibly vertical, crossing rapid water.

White water rafting at Mae Tang & Mae Wang Rivers. Rock climbing at Crazy Horse Buttress and Kewlom, Lampang. Off road through Chiang Mai – Pai – Maehongson. Trekking, caving discovery and rappelling down 530 feet at The Spirit Well Cave in Pai. Canyoning down the Wachiratarn Waterfall at the highest peak of Thailand. Rock climbing courses at the largest climbing wall in Thailand.

## The Chiang Mai City Arts and Culture Centre



This place is located in an old building of elegant architectural design built in 1924. Standing on the location of a former royal hall, the building was used as the central administrative unit of Siam, and later as the Provincial Hall of Chiang Mai. This place was received an award in 1999 for preservation of a public building from the Royal Society of Siamese Architects (Society of Siamese Architects under Royal Parsonage).

The museum has been divided into two sections. The front (eastern) part of the square-shape building contains permanent exhibits, while the rear section of the building has been dedicated to cultural activities, temporary exhibits, a souvenir shop, lecture theatre and exhibition hall for Lanna arts and an archive.

Opening hours: Tuesdays to Sundays including public holidays (closed on Mondays) from 8.30a.m.-5p.m. Admission fee is B90 for adult, B40 for children. For more information call 053-217793, 053-219833.

## Hot Springs



### Fang Hot Springs

Hot springs shooting up to the sky in this large national park on the outskirts of Chiang Mai

This large park is situated at the northern limit of Chiang Mai Province and has a long border with Myanmar (Burma). It is one of the least spoiled areas of Thailand. Doi Pa Hom Bok Clum, 2285 meters high, is the second tallest mountain in Thailand, strong winds blow all round and have caused the mountain to have a flat top from where there is a magnificent view. There are several spectacular waterfalls and caves. The splendid virgin forest contains a wide range of unusual and rare flora and fauna.

Ten kilometres from the town of Fang, are the headquarters of the park where maps and information can be obtained. Here, too, are the famous hot springs. Covering an area of fourteen rai, a number of boiling geysers shoot from the ground - this is a lovely place for a picnic and the whole area is beautifully kept.

In 1989 in cooperation with a French company, an Israeli geothermal power plant was installed using the pressure of hot water from a hundred meter deep well. Electricity generated is supplied to the national grid. This project has been carefully planned so as not to spoil the environment. The staff are always proud to show visitors around the plant. To the south of Fang are non-commercial oil wells exploited by the army.

Songteaw taxis from Chiang Mai to Fang are perhaps a rather uncomfortable mode of travel but leave regularly and are inexpensive. Due to its remoteness there are not many tours to the Fang area but for the adventurous, treks to the region will take you into the heart of the wild.

### Sankampaeng Hot Springs

Finish a day's shopping in Sankampaeng and wind down at the hot springs with hot tubs and a pool.

The drive to the small weaving village of Sankampaeng passes a large number of handicraft shops and the famous umbrella village of Bo Sang. Some three kilometres beyond the village, is a pleasant forty-acre park containing hot springs. The park has been well landscaped and in the cool season the flowers are very lovely. Huts with mineral baths have been constructed; there is a restaurant, a camping area and good places for picnics.

This is a very active geological area. The water, at a temperature of a hundred degrees centigrade, comes from a deep source. Attempts have been made to harness this energy and there is a research station nearby with information on display.

### Muang On Cave

This cave is situated at Sankampaeng near the Hot Springs. A long staircase leads up to the mouth of the cave. A steep climb down again gives access to a number of caverns filled with impressive stalagmites and stalactites. There is a strange limestone formation that was once mistaken for the skeleton of a dinosaur. In one cavern is a large Buddha image.

## Waterfalls



### Mae Pan Waterfall

About 16 kilometres from Mae Chaem town, on the road leading to Doi Inthanon, the awesome **Mae Pan Waterfall** can be found. There is a sign at the roadside directing travellers to these falls, the highest in Chiang Mai. Take the sign-posted road and follow it for 9 kilometres, then a 10 minute walk will bring you to the falls. Surging over a 100 metre high cliff, the white of the racing water stands out dramatically against the deep green of the surrounding forest. As the water hits the rocks below, a million tiny drops split the sunlight into rainbow colours and soak the vegetation nearby. Downstream from the falls are a series of pools where the traveller can swim in the chilly mountain waters. The sala on a mound close by the falls, affords a shady place to sit and enjoy a panoramic view of the waterfall.

### Huay Sai Lueng Waterfall

Quite close to the Mae Pan waterfalls can be found the powerful, year-round **Huay Sai Lueng Waterfall**. The parking area is close by and shelters for visitors are plentiful. Although it is a multi-stepped cascade, lacking the drama of a single drop through space, this waterfall looks very beautiful as it dances through the rocks and trees.

### Mae Sa Waterfall

**Mae Sa Waterfall**, an eight-tiered tumbling cascade, is 26 kilometres from town and occupies a natural setting among gigantic towering trees. Travel on the Mae Rim - Samoeng road, turn left directly at KM. 7 and enter the area of the National Park. This waterfall is one of the most famous in Mae Rim district. The **Mae Sa waterfall** is divided into levels, rising in eight stages up the slope of the foothills. The entire area is forested with large trees that provide cool shade year-round. The fall is a favourite recreation spot for the people of Chiang Mai and visitors alike.

### Mae Ya Waterfall

Take the Chiang Mai-Jomthong route, turn right at the kilometre 56-57 marker, after about 1 kilometre, turn left and keep going for about 7 kilometres. Here visitors can picnic at the area's tallest waterfall, some 250 metres high. The fresh water splashes down over 30 tiers of rocks and boulders into a small pond.

## National Parks



### Doi Suthep-Pui National Park

This park used to be known as **Doi Oi Chang**. Its new name comes from the name of a hermit. **Doi Suthep, Doi Buakha and Doi Pui** are the three main peaks in the park. The highest peak, Doi Pui, rises to 1,685 metres above sea level. Because of the high altitude, the weather on the upper slopes of the mountains is cool and pleasant all year even in the hot season, average temperature is about 20c. In the cool season, the air is cold and clear. Temperature can drop as low as 6 degrees celsius in February. August and September are the wettest months with rain falling daily. More than 300 species of birds can be seen in this National Park. A rare species of amphibian, the crocodile salamander, that can be found in only four localities in **Thailand**, one of which is **Doi Suthep**.

For more information Tel. 0 5329 51178

### Doi Inthanon National Park

**Doi Inthanon is the highest mountain in Thailand**, 2,565 m. from sea level. The geography is bountiful with forest and the atmosphere is cool and fresh all year. The weather is cold with high humidity throughout the year, particularly at the top of the National Park. In winter, the temperature at the National Park is below zero celcius and the mountain is covered with fog all day. In summer, despite hot weather in central Chiang Mai and nearby districts, it is still freezing.

Visitors to the peak of Doi Inthanon should be prepared with thick clothes.

In the park are many attractive waterfalls and caves such as: Mae Ya Waterfall (the most beautiful waterfall in Chiang Mai), Mae Klang Waterfall, Wachiratan Waterfall, Sririphum Waterfall, Huay Sai Luang Waterfall, Mae Pan Waterfall, etc.

In the **Ang-ga Inthanon mountain range**, close to the Mae Klang Waterfall, is the huge Borijinda Cave. To reach the cave, turn right off the Chiang Mai - Hod route at km. 58, on the road to the waterfall. After 8 kilometres turn right and keep going for one kilometre toward Doi Inthanon where a sign points to the cave. The cave has many beautiful stalactites and stalagmites, appropriately called Nom Pha, or milk of the cliff in the northern Thai language.

The **Doi Inthanon Park** Headquarters is located at km. 31, where visitors can find more information about what to do and see in the park. This is the area for camping, and tents are available on a pre-booked basis. The cabins and tents can be reserved in Bangkok at Tel. 02 5614292-6 ext. 724, 725 or in Chiang Mai at 053 311608, 053 355728.

Beside the main road over Doi Inthanon is **The Royal Project Station** in Baan Khun Klang, quite close to the National Park Office. This project was initiated in 1979 as part of His Majesty the King's efforts to help the hilltribes cultivate cash crops other than opium, to introduce them to modern agricultural practices and to help them protect forest and river catchments. This particular station has responsibility for research into temperate zone plant species as well as providing agricultural advice and support for 510 neighbourhood Karen and Hmong families.

Between km. 41 and 42 are two fine opportunities to experience nature which is spectacular all along the whole of the road over Doi Inthanon. At about 41 km. is one of the finest views to be had from Thailand's highest peak. A short walk of about 30 metres from the left side of the road gives the viewer a chance to see a sea of mist filling the valley below. A little further on, at about km. 42, is the nature trail called Giew Mae Paan. This short trail, winding through tall pristine forest for about 2.5 kilometres, a 3 hours walk, allows the hiker to experience the natural beauty of the forest at first hand.

This is the place to see warblers and kingfishers as they feed on insects in the bushes. Travellers wishing to use this path should seek permission from the National Park Office at km. 31, not only for their own safety, but also to ensure that no damage is caused to the precious environment. NOTE: every year from June 1 to October 31 the area is closed to the public.

### **Ob Khan National Park**

This park is located on the left side of the Khan River at Namprae. This scenic route hugs the irrigation canal to Hang Dong road for about 15 kms. Then turns right on the Namprae, Ob Khan road for about 11 kms. The outstanding sights to see are **Takataen Cave, Ob Khan, Pha Ou Mha, Ob Hai, Huay Yha Sai, Pha Toob and Huay Pong**. The geographical features of the National Park mostly consist of high mountains. Yod Khun Tien is the highest mountain of the National Park, with an altitude of 1,550 metres.

Camping facilities with food and beverage available from 08.00 to 18.00. From two paths, visitors can take in all the natural beauty of this area. The National Park has beautiful natural tourist attractions and a great variety of interesting plants and wild animals. A sightseeing information centre with 24 hour guard is provided.

For more information Tel. 0 5324 2478.

### **Mae Tho National Park**

Covering the areas of Mae Line forest reserve in Hod district and Pha Mae Chaem forest reserve in Mae Chaem district of Chiang Mai province. The mountain extending northwards is in the same mountain range as Doi Inthanon. The park covers 990 square kilometres of forested mountains. The average altitude of the area is 1,000 metres above sea level. Doi Kew Rai-mong is the highest mountaintop (1,699 metres above sea level). Evergreen forests are found in the north. In addition, dry dipterocarp and pine forests are found in Hod district and elsewhere. Mixed deciduous and hill evergreen forests also exist in the park. A great variety of wild animals can be seen in the park. Activities include; mountain climbing, view points and rafting on the Mae Chaem river. A camp site is available, however, tourists have to bring their own equipment.

For more information please call 0 5381 8348.

### **Chiang Dao National Park**

In the same area as Chiang Dao Wild Animal Protection Area and Sri Lanna National Park, this forest is the source of two rivers in Chiang Mai; the Ping and Mae Tang rivers. The area is a complex of mountains and fertile forests. The natural highlights of this National Park are Sri Sangwan waterfall, Pang Tong waterfall, Nivet Hole of Water, Krab cave, Tab Tao cave, Doi Pha Tang and Doi Bha Dang where you can have a magnificent view from the top of the mountain. Additionally, this area has several interesting historical sites. This park is the habitat of rare animals such as goral, wild boar, barking deer, banteng, guar, porcupine, langur, palm civet, squirrel, chipmunk, many kinds of bird and reptile. Many kinds of frogs and toads are found near the rivers.

For more information Tel. 0 5381 8348.

### **Doi Wiang Pha National Park**

This park covers the areas of Mae Fang National Conserved Forest in Chaiprakarn, Fang District, Chiang Mai Province, and the left side of Mae Lao National Conserved Forest in Chiang Rai Province. The park has an approximate area of

583 square kilometres or 364,375 rai. The geographical features of the National Park consist of high mountains, extending northwards, which are regarded as the boundary between Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. The highest point is Doi Wiang Pha. Most of the areas are water-source forests with major gullies, particularly Fang River and branches of Lao River. The weather at the National Park can be divided into three seasons - rainy season (May-October), winter (November-February), when the weather is cool and ideal for trekking, and summer (March-April), when the weather is rather hot. Due to its abundance of forests, variety of plants, and different altitudes (300-1,834 meters), this National Park has become the source of food and a dwelling place for different kinds of wild animals.

For more information tel. 0 5381 8348.

### **Mae Fang National Park**

This is one of the finest National Parks in Chiang Mai covering an area of about 378,125 rai or 605 square kilometres. The north and the west borders adjoin with Burma. To the south the park extends as far as Doi Chiang Dao National Park Chaiyaparakarn district in Chiang Mai. The east end covers five sub-districts. (Mai Ai, Mae Sao, Weang, Ta Ton, Pong Namron).

Mae Faang National Park is rich with lush vegetation, home to various species of wild animals like jungle fowls, wild pigs, pythons, and a colourful variety of birds. Besides its fresh and cool weather, Mae Faang National Park has spectacular waterfalls, caves, and hot springs. The great attractions of this National Park are Tard Mork Waterfall, Ponk Nam Daing Noi Waterfall, Mae Teap Waterfall, Doi Ang Klang, Doi Pa Hom Pok, Houy Pon Cave, Mae Jai Brook, and Ponk Hot Spring. Things to do include; mountain climbing, picnicking, forest trekking, cave exploring, bird watching and nature sightseeing.

For more information tel. 0 5345 1441 # 302, 303.

### **Khun Khan National Park**

Situated in an approximate area of 240 square kilometres or 150,000 rai, covering the areas of Pa Samoeng National Conserved Forest and Mae-Chaem Forest in Chiang Mai Province, there are various kinds of forests within the National Park, including virgin forests, which can be found on mountains at an altitude of at least 1,000 metres above sea level. There are many good viewpoints on the way to Samoeng district. Pha Samoeng viewpoint is located between km. 24 and 25, on Samoeng - Mae Rim road. Pha Samoeng and Pha Mae Chaem viewpoints are located between 35th and 55th km markers on Samoeng - Wat Chan road. Pha Sam Nah is a plateau on a high mountain. It is 1,253 metres high and encircled by cliff walls on three sides. Wild animals are also found here.

For more information tel. 05381 8348.

### **Huai Nam Dang National Park**

This park was formerly know as an area of Doi Samoeng highland development project, which was initiated by His Majesty the King to solve the problem of forest encroachment and poaching, as well as to enhance the lives of the local hill tribe people. As this area is filled with attractive nature and virginal forests which provide vital watersheds, **Huai Nam Dang** was declared the 81st National Park of Thailand by the Royal Forest Department on 14 August 1995. Later on it was designated as the National Park to commemorate hundredth year establishment of the Royal Forest Department and also for the celebration of His Majesty the King's 50th year on the throne. Huai Nam Dang National Park covers four districts: Mae Taeng, Chiang Dao, and Wiang Haeng in Chiang Mai province and Pai district in Mae Hong Son province, an area of approximately 1,247 square kilometres. The healthy natural condition of Huai Nam Dang National Park provides highly diverse habitat types. Wild animals dwelling in this rich forest, include elephants and some rare animals such as salamanders.

For more information Tel. 05324 8491.

### **Sri Lanna National Park**

This is the sixth largest National Park in the Kingdom and has spectacular evergreen forests, a variety of wild animals, also caves and lovely waterfalls like Tardhin Waterfall and Mon Hin Lai. It is 1406 square kilometre or 878750 rai in area and it borders Chiang Dao district, Pao district and Mae Tang district in Chiang Mai Province. Importantly, on 5th December 1987, the park was chosen to commemorate the King's 60th birthday. This ruggedly mountainous park encompasses mixed deciduous, moist evergreen, hill evergreen and many other kinds of forest. At Mon Hin Lai nature trail, you may hike through a magical landscape of rushing streams, ferns, stands of bamboos and evergreen forest until you reach the strikingly picturesque and spectacular 6-storey cascade, Mon Hin Lai Waterfall. In Sri Lanna National Park, wildlife is abundant in this largely undisturbed wilderness of rolling mountains. Tigers, barking deer, mountain goats, bears, wild pigs, monkeys, hares, fowls and a variety of bird species. Teals, cattle egrets, and seagulls are often found at Mae Ngud Reservoir.

For more information tel . 0 53-818348.

### **Mae Takrai National Park**

This park covers the areas of Sankampaeng and Doi Saket in Chiang Mai province with an approximate area of 1,114

square kilometers or 696,250 rai. The National Park consists of high mountains and having valuable plants and many wild animals. The natural tourist attractions of this National Park include waterfalls, cliffs, artesian springs, reservoirs etc.

The National Park has class one rain forests and limestone mountains situated in the area of the Ping Basin. The National Park has mixed forests, rain forests and virgin forests which grow thickly along the riversides. Teak grows in the forests and other plants include bamboo and two-leaf/three-leaf pines growing sparsely along the mountain ridges. Many kinds of wildlife can be found in the National Park, including wild boars, monkeys, gibbons, deer, goral, tigers, rabbits, wild fowl and different kinds of birds such as parrots, black bitterns, owls etc.

For more information Tel. 0 5381 8348

### Ob Luang National Park

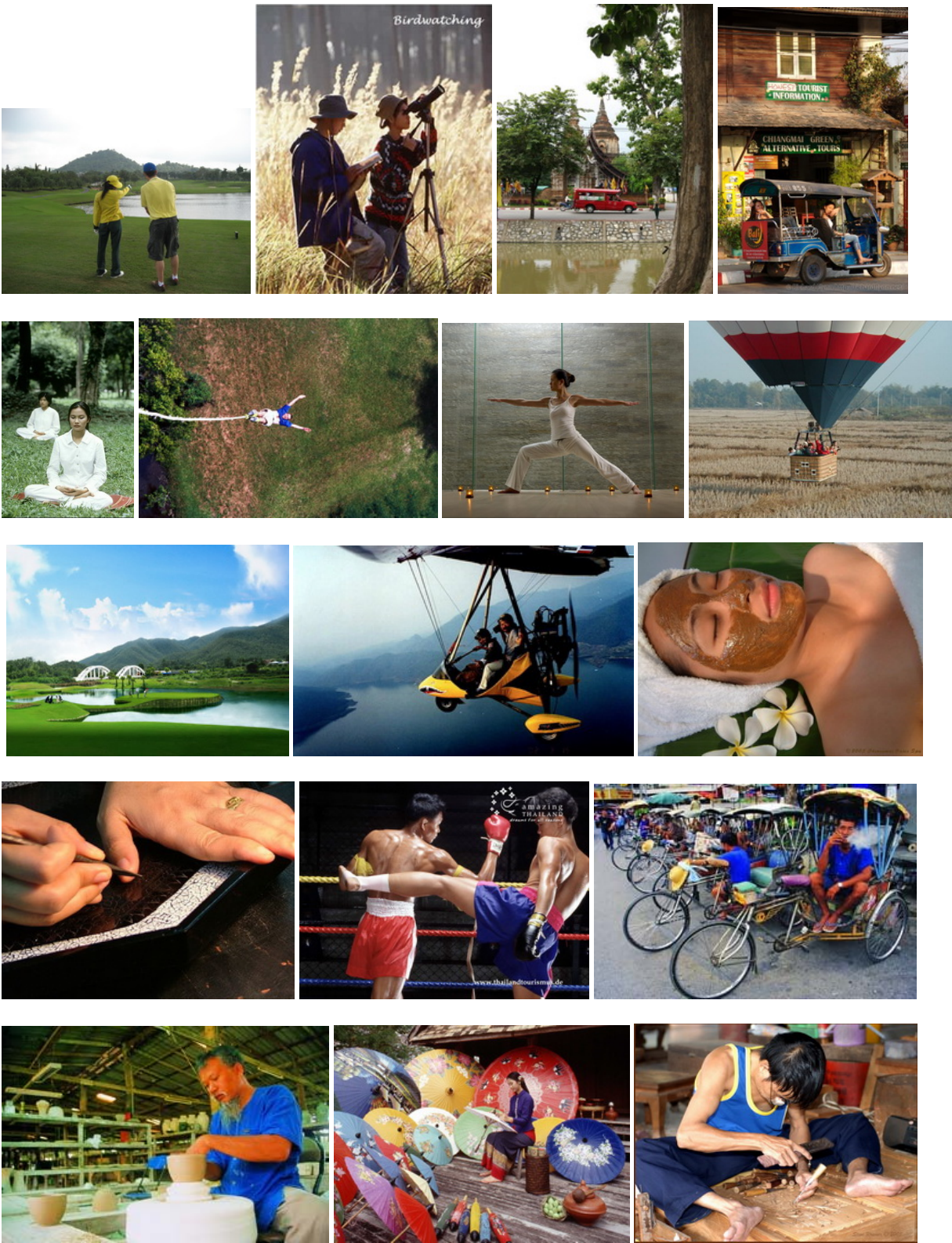
A great area for trekking, hiking, bird watching and whitewater (usually muddy brown) rafting.

This park is on the road to Mae Hong Son just beyond the town of Hod and is a good place to stop for a picnic. The attraction of Ob Luang is the deep and very narrow gorge through which rushes the river Mae Chaem. In the rainy season it is an impressive sight best viewed from a little bridge that spans the river at the narrowest point. A short walk leads to an historical site where Neolithic remains have been found.

The road from Hod to Mae Sariang is very lovely. At first you follow the course of the River Ping - a wide, dry, sandy bed for most of the year. Here are several cotton weaving villages. The road then starts to wind up the course of the river Mae Cham and in due time passes Ob Luang. The area is rich in ancient forests and there are many teak trees. Glimpses of the river far below and views of distant mountains make this a very pleasant route to take. You have the option of going on to Mae Hong Son, a six-hour drive from Chiang Mai, or returning via Mae Cham and Doi Inthanon.

## Other Colors of Chiang Mai





For more information about Chiang Mai & Northern Thailand please visit the below links:  
[www.tat.or.th](http://www.tat.or.th) [www.chiangmainews.com](http://www.chiangmainews.com) [www.openchiangmai.com](http://www.openchiangmai.com)

**ABOUT CHIANG MAI**  
 City of Life & Prosperity



Chiang Mai, a city surrounded by a ring of mountains, has weathered seven hundred years of fascinating history. Chiang Mai has its own very distinctive culture, arts, festivals, and traditions as well as an exciting mix of local, ethnic as well as expatriate communities from all over the world. It has been voted one of the top destinations to live in Asia and is a modern and cosmopolitan city, while not having lost its traditional old charm.

## **Culture & Society**

### **The Royal Family**

The Royal Family is highly revered. No lack of respect or criticism is accepted. The law of lese majesty is alive and well. In many country areas the Royal Anthem is played at eight o'clock in the morning, and at six in the evening when everything grinds to a halt. Be mindful even of offending images of HM the King such as stepping on bank notes, coins, etc.

### **Etiquette**

Thai people are remarkably friendly, but learning a little about the culture will hold you in even greater esteem. Note the foot taboos, feet are considered both vulgar and low, so don't point your feet at anyone or anything. Another important point to remember is not to touch people on the head, try not to even pat young children on the head as President Johnson should have been warned. Thais will be pleased if you wait them on meeting, (join your fingers together and with palms touching, bend your head slightly and touch your nose with the tips of your fingers), but you may well find that the reply is an outstretched hand waiting to be shaken. When offered something such as a glass of water, try and receive it with both hands. Try not to pass between two people who are talking, if you have to, make the gesture of ducking slightly. None of these mistakes would cause you any trouble, but do it right and you will earn respect.

### **Thai Culture**

Don't be embarrassed when you see Thai people kneeling or even crawling before their elders and betters - it is for them perfectly acceptable and in no way humiliating. You do not need to follow suit.

Thai humor is splendid and often very bawdy, however it is sometimes difficult to translate foreign humor, so don't be offended if no one laughs at your jokes.

The class system flourishes here in Thailand. Things you can do and say with one person may not go down at all well with another. If you learn a little Thai from a friend who may use lots of slang, another friend will know exactly where you have been - so be careful! Accent has little place in Thai so by changing the words you use you can easily alter your social position.

It is better not to ask negative questions as Thais do not know whether to say yes or no in reply. Yes in Thai can mean many things. "Yes, I heard you but I haven't a clue what you mean". "Yes, I heard you, I understand what you want but I don't agree with you and I won't do it". Yes, I heard you, I agree with you and I will try and do it".

Try to keep calm and relaxed whatever the provocation or however frustrated you may be. Be polite, smile, try and make a joke, don't rush things and try to speak softly. Thais are adept at working things out in their own way and they do not



like confrontation.

Don't show too much naked flesh in the cities or even at lakes or waterfalls although on the beach it is acceptable.

### **Dress**

In the north of Thailand, especially if you go up into the mountains, it can be very cold. Between November and February the temperature can fall to 4 degrees Celsius, so bring a sweater.

During the rest of the year, except in the mountains, the temperature is between 25 and 40 degrees. Unless you have formal engagements, you are most unlikely ever to be required to wear anything other than a t-shirt and trousers or a simple dress.

### **Tourist Tips**

Always take out full insurance in case the worst happens.

Do not overstay your visa. The current fine is 500 baht per day - and with no maximum this will add up very quickly. If you are in trouble immediately contact your embassy - they may grumble but they are paid to be there for you and help you in any way they can.

The legal system is highly complicated and very slow, so never consider going to law unless absolutely necessary. If you have a problem take advice from your embassy or if you can, from someone you trust and know the country well. Lawyers and the police are a last resort. Sad but true.

Stick to well-known brands of bottled water. Tap water is not recommended although it is said to be safe for brushing your teeth with. Remember that ice, except in first class outlets, is almost certainly not made from bottled water.

Tipping is, as almost everywhere, a difficult subject. Large hotels and restaurants usually add 10% to the bill so you only need to add a tip if you have received exceptional service or if you are rich and famous. At the other end noodle shops and food stalls do not expect a tip. In between it is up to you, but leaves the odd coin or small note if you can afford it or feel that it is deserved.

If you are sensible you will find Thailand one of the safest and most friendly countries in the world.

### **What are Thais Doing?**

Ever wondered what Thai people are doing when they....

There are many things Thais do that confound and confuse foreigners. Here are some examples and explanations of them.

#### **Spirit House Offerings**

In spite of being a Buddhist country, traces of animism and non-Buddhist spiritual beliefs still abound in Thailand. Most of these would be found outside the city, but one such superstition found everywhere from the heart of Bangkok's business district to a southern island is a spirit house. It is believed that there are spirits who live in the land and by building a house or utilizing the land the spirit is disturbed and can sometimes be disgruntled. To appease the homeless spirit as well as ensure its happiness and patronage, small houses are usually erected following a small religious ceremony whereby the spirits can reside in peace. Food and drink offerings are often placed in these houses and sometimes little effigies of people or animals can also be seen residing in them. Man and spirit can therefore live in close harmony.

Some particularly impressive spirit houses are Brahmin and contain images of Vishnu or Shiva. Many of these shrines, such as the one in Bangkok near the Erawan Hotel, are highly revered. Brahmanism is intimately entwined with Buddhism, particularly in such Royal ceremonies as the annual Pouching.

#### **Taking off Shoes**

For hygiene purposes, houses in Thailand are shoe-free. It is considered most rude to drag dirty shoes into Thai houses. This certainly extends to all temple buildings as well as some businesses and restaurants. A safe way to make sure that you are doing the right thing would be to look around at any building entrance for signs of shoes and take yours off if you see that everyone else has.

#### **Releasing Birds and Fish**

Much merit is obtained by freeing captive animals. This can be done on any special day such as a birthday or anniversary but is most often seen during the Songkran Festival (The Thai New Year celebrated in April). Little birds can be bought to set free at many temples and shrines. Fish are released in temple ponds, where they will breed in safety or in the rivers and lakes. Sometimes even turtles, shell fish and eels are bought from markets and set free to save them from the wok.

#### **Wai at Objects**

The wai is a form of greeting in Thailand used for young and old, rich and poor, monks and Royalty. The wai is an essential part of every Thai's daily life. However, sometimes foreigners get confused when they see a Thai wai a tree or a shrine or even a curve on the road.

This is very normal as sometimes certain trees or areas are said to have powerful spirits and it is as a mark of respect for the spirit that some Thais will lift two hands together in front of their chests and bow their heads - this can be dangerous when driving.

### Giggling at Accidents

Most foreigners are completely bemused when they find themselves in a near collision with someone Thai and all they will get is giggles and a smile. This is because Thais would rather make light of something than lose face. It would be a loss of face to admit that ones bad driving could have nearly caused an accident so the best thing to do is to laugh about it.

## Chiang Mai Facts

### History



There has been continuous habitation in what is now Thailand for over 10,000 years. Thailand lies between the two great civilizations of India and China and it has been much influenced by the both. Coastal trade came up the river to Siam, as the old capital now known as Ayutthaya, was called. Elephants or ox carts also carried goods across the narrow isthmus to avoid the long and pirate infested route through the Malacca Strait.

Over the centuries great Empires rose and fell in South East Asia - most of them being maritime states feeding off the merchants who traded along the coast. Such was Srivijaya based, some say, in Sumatra, the Khmer Empire of Angkor and the powerful kingdoms of Burma. Far to the north lay China, which sometimes stretched its tentacles down to the south.

Lanna, as the kingdom whose capital was called Chiang Mai, sits right in the middle of all these powers - a land-locked country surrounded and divided by forests and great mountain ranges straggling down from the Himalayas.

By 1300 A.D. the Thai people, moving out from the peripheral areas of China, had established themselves in the northern parts of Thailand. The two most important Thai kingdoms were Lanna and Sukothai, which was, a hundred years later, absorbed into Siam based at Ayutthaya. By the middle of the fifteenth century Lanna was firmly established, it fought successful wars against Siam over disputed territory and it became a major centre of Buddhist studies, hosting the Seventh World Buddhist Conference in 1477. Chiang Mai was also the key market on the trade routes from Yunnan to the Burmese ports where goods arrived from, and were sent to, India and beyond.

In 1557 the Burmese attacked the Thai world, utterly destroying Siam and turning Chiang Mai into a vassal state. For the next two hundred years Chiang Mai was an impoverished backwater cut off from the rest of the world and neglected by its rulers - it disappeared from the pages of history.

In 1767 Burma struck at Siam again and reduced the great city of Ayutthaya to a pile of rubble and it never recovered, the capital was recreated at Bangkok. Slowly the kingdom of Siam recovered under the new Chakri Dynasty.

A city and a region steeped in tradition and **history**, **Chiang Mai** has weathered seven hundred years of fascinating history.

Chiang Mai, after being deserted for twenty years following the Burmese onslaught, was gradually repopulated and willingly gave its allegiance to the king of Siam. But the journey up the river to Chiang Mai was slow and difficult so that the Prince of Chiang Mai was virtually an independent ruler. The first American Presbyterian missionary to reach the north from Bangkok in 1867 records that the journey took him exactly three months. McGilvary's mission brought in the modern age - as well as, largely unsuccessfully, spreading the gospel, he also introduced modern medicine and education.

Towards the end of the century British teak companies in Burma began to seek concessions in the north of Thailand. There were frequent conflicts with the Prince who saw nothing wrong with leasing the same concession to two different people. Problems with the missionaries and the teak companies together with fears of British and French intentions along

the borders finally forced the Bangkok Government to take firm control of Chiang Mai and the rest of the north in the 1890's. All real power was removed from the Prince and the last hereditary ruler died in 1939. In 1921 the railway blasted its way through the encircling mountains and Chiang Mai became an integral and loyal part of Siam, or Thailand as it came to be called in 1949.

The inhabitants of Chiang Mai are, as one would expect in a city situated at the crossroads of mainland South East Asia, a very mixed lot. The people living in the valleys think of themselves as Thais with a difference - they have their own distinct language and are in fact a mixture of Mon, Lawa, Lao and Thai Lue amongst others. To the west live many Shan and Karen while in the mountains, over the past hundred years, tens of thousands of hill tribe people have settled after fleeing from troubles in Burma, Laos and China - Hmong, Akha, Lisu, Musser, Yao and the long necked Padaung. There are also many overseas Chinese, Chin Haw Muslim traders from Yunnan and increasing numbers of Europeans and Americans who have come to live in the beautiful and gentle valley of Chiang Mai.

## Location



Chiang Mai valley averages 310 meters (1,027 feet) above sea level, and the province covers 20,107 square kilometers (12,566,910 rai). The widest point of the province measures 136 kilometers (85 miles), and the longest 320 kilometers (200 miles).

To the north, a 227 kilometer (141.88 miles) stretch of mountains divides Chiang Mai's northern districts of Fang and Mae Ai from the region around Kenton in the Shan State of Myanmar (Burma). On the east, Chiang Mai is bordered by Chiang Rai, Lampang and Lamphun provinces. The Mae Tuen River, Ream Mountains and Luang Mountains separate Chiang Mai's south from the province of Tak. Some stretches of Chiang Mai's south also border Lamphun province. To the west, Chiang Mai is bordered by Mae Hong Son province.

## Topography

A large part (>82%) of Chiang Mai's land is covered by mountains and forests. The mountain ranges generally run in a north-south alignment through the province and give birth to several streams and tributaries (such as the Mae Chaem, Mae Ngat and Mae Klang) which in turn feed important rivers and irrigation canals (such as the Muand and Faay) which provide the water necessary to Chiang Mai's agriculture.

Chiang Mai's largest and most important river is the Ping, which originates in the mountains north of Chiang Dao and flows southwards for 540 kilometers (337.5 miles). It is along the banks of this river that Chiang Mai's flat valley area lies.

Chiang Mai is also home to Thailand's highest mountain, Inthanon Mountain, which stands 2,565 metres (8,498 feet) above sea level.

## Weather

In relation to the rest of Thailand, Chiang Mai is considered to be quite cool with an average yearly temperature of 25.4°C. The highest temperatures are in the low 40s and the lowest 5-10°C. There are three seasons in Northern Thailand: summer (hot and humid), rainy (wet - monsoon) and winter (cool and dry).

Come to Chiang Mai in summer (March-June) and you will at times find the weather quite uncomfortably hot, though the skies are clear. However, because of the lack of rain, vegetation and the countryside can appear to be quite barren and dry. In the rainy season (July-October) you will be lucky to get a week of clear skies, but monsoon rains can be beautiful and the mountains are lush and green. The favorite time for many visitors is therefore in winter (November-February) when temperatures drop to a pleasant cool with bright sunshine and clear blue skies. There is also an abundance of flowers, making this a time when Chiang Mai is at her prettiest.

## Religion

For centuries past, Chiang Mai has been the centre of religious activity in Northern Thailand. During the Lanna era, Buddhism was the main religion that flourished and grew. Evidence of this is seen in the many ancient temples in Chiang

Mai.

Currently, approximately 85% of the people in Chiang Mai are Buddhist. There are 1,253 temples in the province. Important religious functions and ceremonies are held at the Chiang Mai Buddhist Association, which also serves as an office for the Buddhist Youth Club. This club holds religious discussions and sermons on wan phra (Buddhist holidays).

Other religions are also present. Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam and Hinduism are all represented with 92 Protestant churches, 53 Catholic churches, 14 mosques, 1 Hindu temple, 1 Bahai temple and 1 Jewish synagogue.

### **People and Culture**

Chiang Mai Province has a population of some 1,600,000 of whom 172,000 live in Chiang Mai city. 80% of the people are locals by birth and speak kam muang, which is a language close to Siamese but which has its own distinctive script. The other 20% is made up of southern Thais, Chinese, Indians and an increasing number of farang (foreigners).

The term khon muang refers to all the people living in Lanna or upper northern Thailand which is made up of the provinces of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Lampang, Lamphun, Phrae, Nan, Phayao and Mae Hong Son.

The original inhabitants were the Lawa (as it were the Celts of Europe) and the Mons with their Kingdom of Hariphunchai base on present day Lampang and Lamphun. By the thirteenth century various Thai tribes had moved into and taken control of the fertile river valleys, defeated the Mon and pushed the Lawa into the hills.

Lanna was over-run by Burma in 1558 and they were not finally driven out until 1775. The legacy of those sad years is still to be seen in some architecture and customs. For twenty years after the withdrawal of the Burmese the city of Chiang Mai was deserted and much of the rest of Lanna depopulated.

Gradually the new ruler of Chiang Mai, Kavila, took control. He brought in Thai tribes from the north, Ngieo, Khoen, Thai Yai, Thai Lu, Yuan and Lao to till the land and populate the towns. It is this mix of people who are today proud to call themselves khon muang.

## **Artifacts & Crafts**

The tropical climate has left Chiang Mai very little in the way of a cultural heritage. Some brick or literate religious buildings remain from the fifteenth century and earlier, but most structures were made from teak and have been lost, so that now there are very few that are more than a hundred years old.

Written records do not go back further than the seventeenth century, although some chronicles from that period quote much older sources, historians find them difficult to work from and the task of sifting fact from myth is fraught with difficulty. There are also stone inscriptions and beautiful Buddha images in bronze and stone that date from the fourteenth century. However there is little knowledge of the people and their history, their art and crafts. There is a sort of barrier around the year 1300 AD except for a glimpse of the earlier Mon Kingdom of Hariphunchai, which was situated where Lamphun stands today.

The greatest body of knowledge is ceramics, superb glazed stoneware celadon and brown glazed wares as well as some decorated with black under the glaze which was made at a number of kiln sites in the north of Thailand in the Lanna period. These pieces show that the craftsmen and artists of Lanna had reached a very high level of technical and artistic excellence and that they were supplying a local market sufficiently sophisticated to appreciate things of great beauty. The ceramic tradition died after the fall of Lanna in the middle of the sixteenth century, but was revived some hundred years ago. Chiang Mai now has over twenty ceramic factories producing superb natural celadon and other glazed, decorated wares that are exported all over the world.

The nearby city of Lampang is a major centre of ceramic production. Fine porcelain, stoneware, earthenware and building materials are made: that pair of miniature blue and white clogs you bought in Amsterdam were most likely made in Lampang.

Silverware has long been produced both by the Thai people of the north and by the various hill tribes who melted down Indian rupees to make decorative items for their womenfolk and as a bank and indication of their wealth. Some old pieces can be found and beautiful modern reproductions are being made. The descendants of the old northern royal families have preserved some superb examples of the silversmith's art.

A wealth of textile heritage can be found and studied by the many that are captivated by the beauty of this art. The hill tribe people all wove their own distinctive fabric and it is this that distinguishes the different groups - the Hmong, Akha, Lisu, Musser, etc. The lowlanders, the various Thai groups, the Lao and the Mon, Burmese and Cambodians all produced their own distinctive patterns woven with loving care in cotton or silk some with threads of gold or silver. Beautiful and intricate pieces can still be found kept in cupboards for over a century by the descendants of old families and if you go to a festival or an important function you will see them gracefully worn. Textiles are still hand-woven today and made into fashionable designer clothes.

Lacquer ware has been found in fifteenth century gravesites and it was a common household product until some fifty years ago. The beautiful red lacquer ware with delicate black decoration is now a collector's item and modern factories only make a rather simple black lacquer ware with gold or colored decoration.

Woodcarving, bronze wares, silk, cotton, hand-made sa (mulberry) paper products and umbrellas are among the many handicrafts that are still made today in Chiang Mai and exported the world over.

There are some beautiful temple murals dating from the nineteenth century. Also illuminated folding books on religious, astrological or medical subjects. In recent years there has been a great upsurge in highly creative painting, some modern, others based on traditional Lanna styles.

Music and dancing have always had been at the center of royal, as well as village temple, festivals and celebrations. The traditions have been improved and expanded and are now featured on a wide variety of occasions such as weddings, birthdays, and religious festivals.

## Festivals & traditions

### The Chiang Mai Flower Festival (February)



Once a year the streets of Chiang Mai explode in a kaleidoscopic array of color as the Flower Festival commences.

Towards the end of the cool season, in early February, Chiang Mai is looking its best. Everywhere there is a riot of color as temperate flowers such as asters, salvias and marigolds come into full bloom to join the tropical orchids and bougainvilleas.

This is the time when the glorious Flower Festival takes place. Some fifty villages as well as other private and government organizations compete to create the most spectacular floral floats. These are covered overall with flower heads in intricate designs and made in the shape of dragons, castles, mountains and so on. Atop each float sits a beautiful girl dressed in sumptuous northern Thai costume.

The procession wends its way slowly through the streets of the city, which is lined with throngs of people cheering their favorite competitor. When the procession finally reaches Suan Buak Had Park, the flowers and the girls by now somewhat limp from the heat, the winners are announced.

At the Park there are competitions for various categories of flowers, fruit and vegetables, for flower arrangements and miniature gardens as well as hundreds of stalls selling everything you can imagine. The festival is very popular and hotels are generally rather full so be warned to book in advance.

### Songkran Festival (April)



The history and traditions of the famous **Songkran festival**:

The ancient Kingdom of Lanna came into existence with the founding of Chiang Mai by King Mengrai in 1296. There is, however, strong evidence from old chronicles that the site had been inhabited for many years by Lawa people who lived in the area long before the coming of the Thai. By the time of King Mengrai, Thai people had spread across the heartland of mainland Southeast Asia, from Assam through Yunnan, Laos, Siam and Lanna, to Vietnam and Hainan - it is highly probable that many of their shared traditions and beliefs date back some two thousand years.

Over the centuries these original beliefs have been overlaid by influences from China and India, in particular, Hinduism and Buddhism. Songkran or Paveni Pi Mai, the New Year Festival, is, together with the worship of the Rice Goddess and a wide range of ancestral, ground and water spirits, a remembrance from those most ancient days.

New Year in Thailand is highly complicated. The first month of the year in Lanna starts on the full moon in October, which marks the end of the Buddhist three month lent. The Siamese and Shan people consider the first month to start two moons later. In 1889 the Siamese government decreed that the New Year should start on April 1st. In 1940, to comply with western practice January 1st became the official New Year. However, the citizens of Chiang Mai know that the real Pi Mai must be celebrated in the middle of April and in 1990 the Thai government made April 13th, 14th and 15th national holidays for the whole country. This is the time when the sun shifts from the sign of Pisces to the sign of Aries. This is one of the great Rites of Passage. The blessing of rain soon to come can be looked forward to and prayed for. The days are getting longer, light is once again overcoming darkness, the slow, hot and tedious days will soon be forgotten and rejuvenation, renewed hope and fertility are in the air. Soon the life giving rains will enable rice to be planted.

Onto these primitive ideas have been grafted Hindu, Buddhist and Shaman beliefs and, today, the whole mix has become one long, joyous celebration - the greatest watertight in the world - much of the original meaning of the Songkran celebrations has been lost. And this is scarcely surprising given the sad history of Lanna. Following the years of its greatness in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Lanna was occupied by the Burmese for two hundred years and became a neglected backwater. After the Burmese had destroyed the Thai world for the second time in 1767, the city of Chiang Mai was deserted for twenty years, it was reoccupied by a motley assortment of people, and finally was absorbed as a province of Siam, as Thailand was then called, at the end of the nineteenth century. Most local traditions were lost or suppressed.

The first day of the festival is the last day of the old year. Houses are spring-cleaned, clothes washed and Buddha statues and amulets blessed with lustral water. Up until the 1930's the Jao or Prince of Chiang Mai would go down to the River Ping and ceremoniously pour out sacred water to wash away all the sorrows and problems incurred by his people in the old year. He would then go in procession to pay his respects to the most important Buddha statues in the city.

The second day was an in-between sort of day when people prepared for the New Year which would start on the 14th. It was a day of fun and relaxation and the throwing of water intensified. Girls were allowed and encouraged to become physically and sexually aggressive, bawdy singing competitions were held between groups of boys and girls. Many a village romance started at this time.

New Year's Day is a time for making merit in the local wat or temple, merit made this day will go to the ancestors - your own and also those of the village and the King. It is also the day when respect is paid to parents, elders, teachers and those who have helped you in the past year. Their forgiveness is asked for whatever you may have done wrong in the past year whether unintentionally or deliberately. Many think that this Dam Hua ceremony is the origin of the orgy of water throwing but in fact the recipient takes a few drops of water from the bowl offered and touches them to his own head, he will then sprinkle some on the hands of those who came to ask for his blessing.

It is only in very recent years that an effort has been made to revive, or recreate, a Lanna heritage. Much of the pageantry associated with the Songkran Festival - the Beauty Competition, the parade of girls on bicycles, the dances and drumming displays, etc.- have been newly created for the benefit of tourists.

Whatever is old, whatever is new, for a week in the middle of the dry heat of April, Chiang Mai is awash with joyous fun and boisterous young people taking part in the greatest water fight in the world.

### **Inthakin Ceremony (May or June)**



A unique ceremony held in Chiang Mai every year, visitors is welcome to join in and observe.

The annual rites connected with the sao inthakhin or pillar of Chiang Mai City, begin on the 13th day of the waning moon in the eighth Northern lunar moon and continue until the second day of the waxing moon of the ninth month (It is difficult to find anyone who can tell you the exact dates but it is usually sometime in June). What is this famous Chiang Mai ceremony all about and what are its origins?

Old chronicles and modern experts have differing views. Some maintain that the lak muang or city pillar is a form of lingam and that the ceremony is a rite of fertility and rejuvenation as the rainy season begins. Others deny any phallic

connotation and say that the lak muang - and many other regional Thai cities also have them - represents the centre of power of the local ruler.

The suwan kham daeng legend relates the story of the original city of Chiang Mai, which was founded by Lawa people before the birth of the Lord Buddha. At that time the city was in dead trouble, beset by demons. A certain hermit asked for help from the god Indra who gave them a protecting stone pillar and also much wealth for he knew that Chiang Mai was to become a great centre of Buddhist learning.

In the course of time, however, the people came to break the taboos and the guardian kumphan demons took the pillar away whereupon disaster struck. Again Indra was asked to help and he agreed to replace the pillar. This was the one that King Mengrai found amongst the ruins when he came to build his capital in 1296.

He found out from the Lawa prince what the pillar was and how it should be propitiated. This, much altered no doubt, is the ceremony that we see today. The inthakhin is kept in a pavilion which no women are allowed to enter, in the grounds of wat chedi luang although it was not always there. If, and only if, the pillar is treated with due respect, Chiang Mai and all who live in her, will be prosperous, happy and safe.

Today the ceremony is organized by the Municipal Council together with many other groups and the Buddhist elements are stressed together with respect for authority, but nor are ancestors and the spirits of the city forgotten. An associated ceremony, pithee suab jata muang, is performed at the four city corners, the five city gates and at the Three Kings Monument, to ensure the continued long life of Chiang Mai.

### **Pu Sae - Ya Sae Ceremony (June)**



A particularly gruesome animist ceremony still performed by some in Chiang Mai.

According to tradition, Pu Sae and Ya Sae are the guardian spirits of Chiang Mai, who now roam the slopes of Doi Suthep. The original inhabitants of this area were the Lawa who in early days are thought to have been cannibals and this is closely bound up with the Pu Sae - Ya Sae ritual as it is practised today. Legend has it that the Lord Buddha visited Chiang Mai. These two, brother and sister, followed him with the intention of killing and eating him. The Buddha stopped and spoke to them and managed to persuade them to give up their cannibalistic ways. They pleaded with him to be allowed to eat buffalo flesh instead, even if only once a year.

So it is that once a year at the beginning of the rainy season, usually in May, a buffalo is ritually sacrificed. Formerly the Prince of Chiang Mai presided over the ceremony, which was also attended by Buddhist monks. This very ancient occasion now seems to be an attempt to bring together Shamanism and Buddhism and also to unite the Lawa people, some of whom still live in the area, and the Thais who replaced them.

In the words of the Pu Sae - Ya Sae invocation, 'Let not the rice of the Lawa die in their swiddens; let not the rice of the Thai wither and die in their paddies.' Clearly the association between Lawa and Northern Thai is both long and close.

### **Loy Krathong (October or November)**



One of the most beautiful festivals in Thailand, Loy Krathong, is held on the night of the full moon of the 12th month of the Thai calendar every year - around November.

The people of Thailand have had a close relationship with water since ancient times. As a farming people, the Thais always used to build their homes and villages near rivers, for they depended on their waters for their crops as well as for a means to travel from one part of the country to the next. Generation after generation of Thais has been sustained by these waters, so water is held in deep respect. From this respect comes one of the most important festivals of the year.

During the festival the rivers become full of floats, known as krathong, which are of different shapes and sizes. They are beautifully decorated with both fresh and dry flowers. With candles lit, they become like stars drifting through the heavens made bright by the light of the full moon reflected on the surface of the waters. The beauty of this scene and the atmosphere of celebration have made the festival famous for Thais and foreigners alike.

Though the manner of celebration and the conduct of rituals vary in each part of Thailand, the underlying purpose of showing respect and gratitude towards water is the same.

One of the most interesting objects is the colorful khom loy, or hot air balloon. Built in a variety of shapes and sizes, they are released into the sky during the day and night. Burning wicks are placed in those that are released at night. The lanterns in the sky and the lamps on the ground adorn the sky and the city with a myriad of lights, while all around firecrackers blaze and explode like thunder. This is an atmosphere you can enjoy only in the Yi Peng festival of Chiang Mai.

The festival is made even livelier by the activities of the municipality and private enterprise, which co-operate to put on dazzling shows.

## **Education**

Some cities seem to have been created to be seats of learning - ideal places both for teachers and students. Chiang Mai is such a city.

Chiang Mai is home to six universities, Buddhist and Christian seminaries, technical colleges, six international schools and one German one, a large university teaching hospital and several private ones, some with nursing schools. There are also many private language schools as well as the AUA, the British Council, Australian and New Zealand centers and the Alliance Française.

All this means that there are many opportunities for native English language teachers, especially if they have a university degree and teaching qualifications. The many Thai schools are hungry to employ English teachers.

The international schools cater for the children of expatriates living in Thailand and are increasingly attracting Thai children and those from neighboring countries, whose parents want them to be educated in English. Universities are offering more and more courses in English and are anxious to establish exchange programmes for overseas students and lecturers.

All this activity results in a stimulating environment - students exchanging ideas at the food stalls around the university or picnicking beside the lake at the foot of the mountain; English teachers relaxing after a hard day's work in the quiet bars and restaurants along the banks of the River Ping.

In the age of cyberspace and satellite dishes, Chiang Mai, only one hour's flight from Bangkok, is no longer an isolated outpost. It is, in fact, a regional centre of communications, the gateway to Burma, Laos and southern China.

Chiang Mai is a safe, healthy and stimulating place for students and a low cost, convenient and idyllic heaven for teachers.

Six years of primary education are compulsory and free for all Thai children, although there are certain small expenses for uniforms, books and writing materials. Some children fall through the net either because their parents can not afford even these expenses, because they live far from any school or because they do not have Thai citizenship.

There is government and private charity scholarships that help poorer children complete their secondary education.

Many of the schools in Chiang Mai are excellent - four of the best were founded by Christian missionaries, although there is no religious pressure on the children. Universities, technical colleges and vocational schools offer a wide range of subjects for those who wish or are able to go on to further education. Fees are not high but are still out of the reach of many, but again there are government and private charity scholarships.

## **Chiang Mai a city of good health**

Chiang Mai, the largest city in the north of Thailand, was founded by King Mengrai as the capital of the Kingdom of Lanna on Thursday, 12th April 1296 AD.

Today Chiang Mai is the tourist, business, educational and health centre for the region.

Chiang Mai has retained many of its ancient traditions and its unique culture. It is blessed with a healthy climate and outstanding natural beauty, surrounded as it is by forests and mountains.

Chiang Mai attracts visitors from such neighboring countries as Bangladesh, Burma, China, India and Laos and, indeed, from all over the world. Although most visitors come for pleasure, more and more are also taking the opportunity to sample the excellent health facilities that are so speedily available at such reasonable cost.

The Chiang Mai Health Service Promotion Association consisting of both government and private sectors ensures standards and quality in the fields of Medical and Dental Care, Traditional Thai Massage, Spas and Herbal Medicine.

We look forward to being of service to you.

## **Dental Care**





In 1935 the Minutes of the Chiangmai Gymkhana Club recorded, **it was decided that the club should take the initiative in inviting a dentist from Bangkok to visit Chiang Mai at Christmas.**

Today there are sixty-five dental practices in Chiang Mai, there are specialist dental hospitals, all major hospitals have a dental clinic and the University Teaching Hospital has a dental faculty that provides undergraduate and postgraduate education and is also a source of knowledge and research for the profession. Contact is maintained with overseas establishments and frequent seminars are held thus ensuring that all dentists in Chiang Mai are kept up-to-date with the latest technology.

Overseas visitors are guaranteed prompt treatment using the very latest equipment at remarkably reasonable prices.

*I cancelled my holiday when I found that I needed extensive dental surgery that would cost US\$10,000. A friend advised me not to cancel but to come to Chiang Mai for treatment. I was met at the airport by the dentist, all my problems were solved and I then had a marvelous two week holiday all for less than US\$5,000  
Hannah from Israel.*

## Spas



Until very recently a spa (called after a small town of that name in Belgium - a very popular resort in the early nineteenth century) was a health resort at which natural waters or baths could be taken by people suffering from rheumatism and kindred complaints.

Today spas have changed out of all recognition and nowhere more so than in Chiang Mai. The Lanna tradition of massage and of herbal remedies for the treatment of physical and mental conditions reaches far back in northern people's memories; methods and recipes have been handed down through matriarchal lineage from generation to generation.

Thai Lanna spas have grafted this ancient knowledge onto the new wave of international spas to create something very special.

Whether you wish to sooth your senses after a period of stress or a long flight. Or perhaps get a jump start to a more healthy life style, or simply to indulge yourself with a little pampering spas are increasingly popular destinations whether for a vacation or a one day getaway.

Thai Lanna spas base their treatments on a variety of ancient and modern practices from water, aromatic and Ayurvedic systems to hot stone and Swedish massage, to achieve good health, healing, complete relaxation and soul rejuvenation. The atmosphere at the spas, the gentle grace and skill of the masseuses make this an experience of a lifetime.

## Medical Care



**Dr. McGilvary** of the American Presbyterian Mission arrived in Chiang Mai in 1867 with his wife and two children. The journey up the river from Bangkok took them three months. He was the first to introduce modern medicine to the people of Lanna quinine for malaria and vaccination for the prevention of smallpox.

Today there is an internationally renowned teaching hospital at the heart of Chiang Mai University which provides support and up-to-date knowledge to the sixteen private hospitals in the province.

Many of the doctors who graduated from the university have obtained further qualifications overseas in various fields of expertise. The very latest state-of-the-art equipment is installed in all the leading hospitals.

Emergency care, accident trauma, cosmetic surgery, long-term residential care of the elderly; all aspects of medical care, supported by the famed attention of Thai nurses, are all immediately at your service and the cost is surprisingly reasonable.

Please visit the directory page for contact details of hospitals and clinics in Chiang Mai.

### **Herbal Medicines**



For centuries herbal medicines have been used in conjunction with incantations and massage to treat physical and spiritual malaise. Herbs, algae and mushrooms were gathered in the forests and dispensed by monks and village elders.

Today there is a strong movement back to these simple medicines long despised by western science.

Herbal healing traditions have deep roots in Lanna. Herbal heat compresses, steam treatment and Thai massage are derived from folk lore and ancient midwifery techniques. Today, natural products and aromatherapy are respected and widely practiced as one of the most popular complementary medicine therapies.

Many Thai herbs are used in cooking or as drinks green algae found in fresh water ponds is used as a substitute for meat in larb; it is rich in vitamin A and calcium.

Essential oils from plants and flowers are used by spas as a natural adjunct to massage, inhalation and steam baths sweet basil is refreshing, lemon oil is stimulating, lemongrass eases indigestion, and the scent of jasmine relaxes the central nervous system.

The herbs found in the mountains and forests of Chiang Mai are good for just about any ailment as well as simply making you feel good.

### **Traditional Thai Massage**



The ancient practice of relaxing massage was passed on from generation to generation in the farming families of Lanna.

In the 1830s King Rama III set up a massage and herbal medicine school at Wat Pho in Bangkok. Today it is still the premier school for students and most of the best northern masseuses have graduated from there.

**The various types of traditional Thai massage can be categorized as follows:-**

- 1) For general relaxation, the relief of fatigue and nervous tension, to stimulate the blood and improve physical fitness.
- 2) To cure simple ailments such as muscle pain, stiffness, cramp, low back pain and to help the elderly or paralyzed who are unable to exercise.
- 3) Foot massage which is adapted from Chinese foot reflexology and which helps to stimulate and improve activities of the internal organs.
- 4) Even though the science of oil massage originated in the west, the people of Lanna have from ancient times used fragrances and herbs to enhance the health giving benefits of massage.
- 5) Some masseuses are specially trained to massage young babies, giving a warm and loving touch.

Thai traditional massage is often combined with a full spa experience, but there are also many traditional massage parlors and schools where you can yourself learn the art.

Please check out our directory section for contact details.

**Transportation**

If you hire a car or motorbike make sure it is insured. A motorbike can be hired for as little as 150 baht per day and a car for 800. If you do not have an international driving license, check that your country's license is valid in Thailand. Remember that in Thailand people (usually) drive on the left side of the road. Road signs are surprisingly well posted and you will find Chiang Mai (province, not city) a pleasure to drive around. The city can be rather hectic with its mass of one-way systems.

Only in Bangkok do most taxis have meters - Chiang Mai has fewer than 20 - and these are sometimes not used, so always negotiate your fare or insist the meter is turned on. Also always negotiate your fare before you get into a tuk tuk or a Chiang Mai red mini-taxi (songtaew), the two most common vehicles plying the city's streets. Songtaew should cost a standard fee of 12 baht per journey anywhere in the city in the day time, though, once again, make sure you are both on the same page before embarking. Also make certain that the driver really knows where you want to go. Remember that most Thais can not read a map and are hopelessly bad at giving accurate directions.

If you are sensible you will find Chiang Mai one of the safest and most friendly places in the world.

**Getting in and Out**

**By Car**

Take Highway No. 1 (Phahonyothin Road) and turn to Highway No. 32 (Asia Highway) passing Ayutthaya, Angthong, Nakhon Sawan, then by Highway No. 11, from Tak, Lampang, Lamphun to Chiang Mai: a distance of 696 kilometers or 9 - 10 hours.

**By Rail**

Express and rapid trains leave for Chiang Mai from Hualamphong Station several times daily and the trip takes about 12 - 15 hours depending on the class. It is recommended to reserve seats in advance, especially for sleepers. For further information please contact Tel. 0 2220 4334 or call 1690 or visit [www.railway.co.th](http://www.railway.co.th) Chiang Mai Railway Station Tel. 0 5324 2094

**By Air**

Domestic airlines. Thai Airways International Tel. 0 2280 0060, 0 2628 2000 or call 1566 or visit [www.thaiairways.com](http://www.thaiairways.com) Chiang Mai Office Tel. 0 5392 0999 and 0 5392 0920 Bangkok Airways Tel. 0 265 5555 or call 1771 or visit [www.bangkokair.com](http://www.bangkokair.com) Chiang Mai Office Tel. 0 5327 6176, 0 5328 1519 Air Asia Tel. 0 2515 9999 [www.airasia.com](http://www.airasia.com) Chiang Mai Office Tel. 0 5390 4800-3, 0 5392 2170 Orient Thai Airlines Tel. 0 2267 3210-5 or call 1126 or visit [www.fly12go.com](http://www.fly12go.com) or email to [reservationcenter@orient-thai.com](mailto:reservationcenter@orient-thai.com) Chiang Mai Office Tel. 0 5390 4606-9 Nok Air Tel. 0 2900 9955 or call 1318 or visit [www.nokair.co.th](http://www.nokair.co.th) Chiang Mai Office Tel. 0 5392 2183). All operate several daily flights between Bangkok and Chiang Mai. A one-way flight takes about one hour. There are also regular domestic flights between Chiang Mai and other major cities in Thailand and international flights to and from some major Asian

destinations, e.g. Singapore, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur, run by Thai Airways International and other foreign airlines.

### **By Bus**

Several ordinary and air-conditioned buses leave daily from Bangkok Bus Terminal (Jatujak) and it takes about 10 hours  
Tel. 0 2936 2841 -48 and 0 2936 2852- 66 ext. 442 or 311 There are also private buses which can be booked at the Bangkok Bus Terminal, the Bus Company or any licensed travel agent. For a reservation please contact Transport Co. Ltd. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 www.transport.co.th Chiang Mai Office Tel. 0 5324 1449 Tanjit Tour Tel. 0 2936 3210 Nakornchai Air Tel. 0 2936 3355 www.nca.co.th New Wiriayanyontra Tour Tel. 0 2936 2207 Sombat Tour Tel. 0 2936 2495-99 Sahacharn Tour Tel. 0 2936 2762 Siam First Tel. 0 2954 3601-7 Chiang Mai Arcade Bus station Tel. 0 5324 2664.

### **Once Here**

Once you are in Chiang Mai you have three options for transportation: do it yourself, public transportation or taxi services. Do it yourself is great if you are a confident driver. An international drivers' license should see you on the road either on a bicycle, motorbike or rented car, all of which are easily found throughout the city. Hiring a car and going on a road trip up country is the best way to go - good sign posting, great scenery, resorts and hotels dotted throughout the north. Public transportation is sketchy at this point, but **CLICK HERE** to see the bus route, which is constantly being improved upon, but still leaves a lot to be desired as there are limited routes and numbers of buses. Still, this is a cheap, cheerful, air-conditioned and safe way of getting around the city.

Chiang Mai has metered taxis which are probably the most expensive (but safe and air-conditioned) form of transportation, though there are limited numbers and are easier to find in the city centre. The famous Thai tuk tuk are everywhere and you must bargain hard and get your fare settled before hopping in. Then there are the ubiquitous songtaew - converted pickup-trucks with seating and a roof - which should cost a flat fee of 12 baht per inner-city trip, though once again, make sure that you and the driver are in agreement before jumping in.

### **Kam Muang**

The Northern Thai language is spoken in the northernmost provinces of Thailand - the old Kingdom of Lanna - by some five million people, who refer to their language as **Kam Muang** or Yuan.

As central Siamese has been imposed as the national script in all schools, the Kam Muang script is being forgotten, except in some temples, although the language is still universally spoken.

Those familiar with the Siamese script will be baffled by Kam Muang, although the both are based on the Sanskrit alphabet.

**Kam Muang**, therefore, is not a debased dialect of Bangkok Thai, but is a distinct - and endangered - language.

### **Hill Tribes**



### **The Akha**

**The Akha** is arguably the most colorful and everyone's idea of what a hill tribe should look like. They are therefore the most well known minority by both the casual visitor and by academics looking for a PhD subject. The Akhazan-the way of life-is the guiding code to all Akha activities, from allocating land to how to conduct the ancestor ceremonies to building a house; it has the answer to how to do it the correct way. It is handed down by word of mouth from one generation to the next because there is no written language. A fun loving but hard working minority distributed from southern Yunnan, through Burma and Laos, to northern Thailand about 100 years ago, they are trying to adapt to modernization. There are numerous tours to **Akha villages surrounding Chiang Mai**.

### **The Hmong**

The most independent and aggressive of tribes.

**The Hmong** are characterized by a desire to be left alone, to be independent. They will fight for space, for their future if

they think it is threatened. In Thailand they sided with the communists because they were promised freedom; in Laos they sided with the anti-communist forces because communism threatened their culture. They are the most nomadic of the tribes, villages splitting and migrating to new areas to gain independence. Migrants to the USA have continued this mobility constantly moving to seek out new opportunities. Wherever they are they keep their traditions and as with all the other groups the most important is the New Year ceremony held at the end of the agricultural cycle, which usually coincides with the Christian Christmas or the new calendar year

### **The Karen**

**The Karen are the longest established tribal group in Thailand.**

The Karen is the longest established tribal group in Thailand, excepting the Lua. They crossed the Salween River at least three hundred years ago and established themselves in the border areas. There are two main subgroups, the majority Skaw, and the Pwo in Thailand but many other affiliated groups in Burma. They speak a Tibeto-Burman language which linguists find very difficult to categorize. They tend to live in permanent settlements in the lower valleys cultivating wet or paddy rice. They are probably the best forest conservers of all the minorities. They are skilled weavers and make some of the finest baskets. They probably number about 400,000 but there have been recent large influxes from Burma as the authorities there have tried to suppress a long running independence movement.

### **The Lahu / Muser**

The Lahu are probably the most Christianized of the hill tribes with the possible exception of the Karen. Sir George Scott in his 'Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States' describes them as splendid men and good fighters. The tribal title of 'great hunter' recognizes their prowess with gun and crossbow. Today they are having problems integrating into mainstream society, as the substitute crops, in place of the traditional opium, do not provide enough for the daily necessities. Many wait for the arrival of a 'Messiah' to lead them into plenty and happiness.

### **The Lisu**

**The Lisu migrated into Thailand from Yunnan.**

The Lisu migrated into Thailand from the area of the upper Salween River in Yunnan, they belong to the Lolo speaking linguistic group, together with the Lahu and the Akha, but unlike these tribes they do not have distinct sub groups. Physically they have the most beautiful women and the most handsome men and dancing at their New Year ceremony in their ceremonial costumes adorned with silver, they are a unique and moving spectacle. Marrying outside the tribe is fairly common because the man must pay a high bride price for a wife. They take life very seriously and the frustrations of dealing with bureaucracy, or in settling disputes, can easily lead to suicide or escape into the world of drugs.

### **The long necked Karen**

**The Padaung or long necked Karen** are very recent immigrants into Thailand. There are three villagers near Mae Hong Son, in the far north west of Chiang Mai province, who were brought into Thailand by Thai entrepreneurs for the tourism market. These Padaung have no legal status in Thailand and are exploited as curiosities by camera toting tourists.

Ethnically they are Karen, they have taken ornamentation to an extreme where the women wear brass rings around their necks, which depress the collar bones, and the neck appears to be stretched. This is done from early childhood, adding a few rings at a time, until at adulthood their necks are remarkably long. The rings are not removed for bathing or sleeping and it is supported without the rings.

Do not visit them as they are kept in a human zoo with no freedom. They are not allowed to leave camp because their 'owners' can not exploit them if they do. Monies made from entrance fees and souvenirs go to the pockets of very nasty people indeed.

### **The Lawa or Lua**

**The original inhabitants of northern Thailand.**

Probably the least known of the northern Thailand mountain minorities **the Lawa** are probably the most interesting. Books on the hill tribes tend to overlook them, and most anthropologists choose the more colorful groups for their PhD dissertations. The Lawa were the first people to inhabit the Chiang Mai valley in historic times and referred to in myth and legend. The Phu Sae Ya Sae or grandfather, grandmother spirits ceremony in which the good represented by Buddha, overcomes evil represented by a medium in a cannibalistic trance, is still performed annually every June near Chiang Mai city and has its origins in ancient Lawa ritual. Ancient grave sites and remnants of old settlements indicate a sophisticated people inhabited the area before the Thai arrived seven hundred years ago.

Today the Lawa have either fully assimilated into Thai society as in some villages in the Chiang Mai city area and only retain some of their language, or they have been marginalized into hill tribe villages in the Mae La Noi and Mae Chaem areas. They might sometimes be seen in the market at Mae Sariang. This hill tribe Lawa are mixing and intermarrying with the neighboring Karen. They are not migratory, like many of the hill tribes, but live in settled villages that have been there for sometimes hundreds of years. They cultivate wet padi rice and sell vegetables and forest products to the local markets. In dress they are similar to the Karen except the women wear a short sarong with a lightening pattern, wear a lot of brightly colored beads around their necks, and can occasionally be seen with black lacquered leg bands made of cane. Their language is of the Mon-Khmer group and they have many rituals and spirits of which the Karen is very afraid. According to some they may have been affiliated to the Wa at some time in the past, and although the Lawa and the Lua are usually assumed to be the same, there is evidence that they were quite separate ethnic groups.

### **The Yao or Mien is the most 'Chinese' of the minorities.**

**The Mien, or Yao** as they are commonly known probably migrated from southern coastal China in South East Asia about six hundred years ago. Legend says they arrived by sea first to Hainan, then to Vietnam and Laos and more recently into Thailand. Many fled the communists in Laos in the 1970's and, together with the Hmong, they were interred in refugee

camps and a large number were accepted as immigrants into U.S.A.

The Mien are a homogenous minority living mostly in the Mae Chan area of Chiangrai province in northern Thailand. They are the only minority that has a tradition of writing, using Chinese script to record rituals, family records and contracts. Nowadays it is only the old men who can still read Chinese but the new generation is literate in Thai. They are good farmers and traders growing tea, coffee, fruit and vegetables for market. They have never been opium poppy growers. The Mien or Yao can be instantly identified by their costume. The women wear loose fitting, ankle length, pants heavily embroidered with cross stitch; their tunic is bordered with a red ruff and fastened with rectangular silver buckles. They also wear a large turban the ends of which are also embroidered. Like the Lisu and the Hmong they celebrate Chinese New Year with three days of feasting and merriment. Their religion is ancient Chinese Taoism and the ceremonies are performed by a priest assisted by a shaman, the gods are displayed in a pantheon of paintings, which are displayed during the most important rituals.

A desire for order guides the Miens life. Politeness to ones fellows, adjust to local customs and laws, conduct all rituals and ceremonies properly and in accordance with the traditions, and balance the spiritual and the real worlds. Harmony, within whichever society they are living, will ensure a good life.

### **Other minorities**

Minorities groups who can be found in the north of Thailand but not necessarily in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces.

**The Kaya.** Recent immigrants into the Mae Hong Son area. They are from the Karen group of minorities fleeing persecution in Burma.

**The Kareni.** Another Karen group with the same problem as the Kaya.

**The Mabri.** A remnant population of a hunter/gather group found in Nan province and being moved into permanent mission settlements.

**The Htin.** A settled minority living in the lowlands of Nan province.

**The Khmu or Kamu** are a Mon-Khmer speaking minority who live mostly in Laos but also in the Laos border provinces of Thailand.

### **Special thanks to**



[www.chiangmainews.com](http://www.chiangmainews.com)