

Chiang Rai Information

Introduction

Chiang Rai province covers some 11,678 square kilometres with a population of 1.23 million at an average elevation of 580 metres above sea level, is bordered by Myanmar to the north, and Laos to the north and northeast. The provincial capital is 785 kilometres north of Bangkok.

Chiang Rai was founded in 1262 by King Mengrai and was the first capital of Lanna Thai (Kingdom of a Million Ricefields). The province contains Thailand's northernmost point at Mae Sai, is well known for its crisp mountain scenery, and hilltribes, and falls within the region known as the Golden Triangle, the area where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos converge.

Attractions

CITY ATTRACTIONS

King Mengrai the Great Monument This is located on the city outskirts, beside the northern road to Mae Chan, and honours the monarch who founded Chiang Rai in 1262.

Ku Phra Chao Meng Rai Situated in Wat Ngam Muang, on Ngam Muang Hillock, this stupa contains King Mengrai's ashes and relics.

Wat Phra That Doi Chom Thong This ancient hilltop pagoda overlooks the Mae Kok River and predates the founding of Chiang Rai as the capital of Lanna Thai.

Wat Phra Sing This temple, on Singhakhlai Road, is a fine example of Lanna Thai religious architecture. The Phra Buddha Sihing image now housed in Chiang Mai's Wat Phra Sing was formerly enshrined here.

Wat Phra Kaeo Located behind Wat Phra Sing, this temple is said to have been the original place where the Emerald Buddha now enshrined in Bangkok's Wat Phra Kaeo (Chapel of the Emerald Buddha) was enshrined.

Hat Chiang Rai Located 5 kilometres from the city, this scenic riverside area and promenade is a recreation area for local inhabitants.

Mae Kok River Known in Thai as Maenam Kok, this scenic 130-kilometre long waterway runs through the heart of Chiang Rai. The river is a major transportation artery from neighbouring Chiang Mai province, especially the town of Tha Ton (180 kilometres north of Chiang Mai provincial capital), from whence long-tailed boats make the 3-4 hour journey every day at 12.30 PM (Chiang Rai-Tha Ton: 10.30 AM). The river passes several hilltribe settlements and elephant camps from where jungle treks originate.

Khun Kon Forest Park Waterfall Located 30 kilometres south of Chiang Rai provincial capital, along Routes 1211 & 1208, the 70-metre high Khun Kon Waterfall is the highest in the province.

OUT-OF-CITY ATTRACTIONS

Amphoe Mae Chan

Hot Spring Located 8 kilometres from Mae Chan, along Route 1089, this complex has hot mineral water and bath-house facilities. Accommodation is also available.

Hilltribe Development & Welfare Centre 15 kilometres along the route to Doi Mae Salong, the centre aids and administers local hilltribe settlements. Hilltribe handicrafts, including woven cloth and silverware, are on sale.

Doi Saen Chai 5 kilometres beyond the Welfare Centre, this Akha hilltribe village can be reached solely by 4-wheel drive vehicles.

Amphoe Mae Fa Luang

Doi Mae Salong Located some 40 kilometres from Mae Chan, along Route 1089, a mountaintop settlement known as Santi Khiri is home to descendants of Chinese nationalist soldiers who fled to, and settled in Thailand, in 1940. Mountainside plantations of coffee, and fruit orchards, provide scenic variety. The area is particularly picturesque in December and January when Thai cherry trees are in blossom. Accommodation, restaurants and opportunities for horse riding and trekking number among major attractions.

60 kilometres beyond Doi Mae Salong via Ban Thoethai is Doi Hua Mae Kham where a large Lisu hilltribe village is located. During December, the area is dotted with yellow wild sunflower called Bua Tong.

Doi Tung This northernmost Thai mountain contains several scenic spots, including the Doi Tung Royal Villa, the Mae Fa Luang Garden, the mountaintop Wat Phrathat Doi Tung which affords a spectacular view of the surrounding area, and contains Buddha relics, and various hilltribe villages in natural settings.

Pha Mi Akha Village This picturesque village is one of the most accessible Akha settlements in Chiang Rai province, and is located on the way to the

summit of Doi Tung.

Amphoe Mae Sai

Mae Sai This border town faces Myanmar across the Mae Sai River, and is located 62 kilometres north of Chiang Rai on Highway No. 110. Numerous shopping opportunities exist for popular Thai, Burmese and Chinese goods.

Khun Nam - Nang Non or Lagoon of the Seeping Lady Located 12 kilometres before reaching Mae Sai Community Centre along a 2-kilometre spur Road, natural rock formations resemble a reclining female to give the tree shaded area its name.

Amphoe Chiang Saen

Chiang Saen This riverside town facing the Mekong River is 30 kilometres from Mae Chan via Highway No. 1016, predates Chiang Rai and is famous for a special style of Buddha image.

Chiang Saen National Museum This petite museum exhibits local objects d'art, including Chiang Saen-style Buddha images and Lanna Thai artefacts. The museum is open on Wednesdays - Sundays from 9.00 AM until 4.00 PM, except national holidays.

Wat Phra That Chedi Luang This ancient 88-metre high brick pagoda, next to the museum, is the tallest religious monument in Chiang Rai.

Wat Pa Sak Located outside the city walls, some 200 metres from the Tourist Service Centre, this deserted temple, with ornamental stucco motifs, is regarded as being one of the most beautiful examples of Lanna architecture in northern Thailand.

Wat Phra That Chom Kitti This hilltop temple has a pagoda containing a Buddha relic.

Wat Phra That Pha Ngao Located 4 kilometres along the Chiang Saen - Chiang Khong Road, this temple's hilltop pagoda offers a spectacular view of the Mekong River and Laos.

Chiang Saen Lake South of Chiang Saen, along Highway No. 1016 (a 2-kilometre trip from the Km. 27 marker), this one square kilometre lake hosts migratory waterfowl during the winter months. Birds are seen at their best and most plentiful from November through February.

The Golden Triangle 8 kilometres north of Chiang Saen, this riverside area marks the spot where the borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos converge.

Wat Phra That Doi Pu Khao This riverside temple near the Sop Ruak Market, offers a spectacular view of the Golden Triangle's riverine and mountain areas.

Mekong River Trips Boats can be hired from Chiang Saen to travel upstream to, the Golden Triangle, and downstream to Chiang Khong. The trip to the Golden Triangle takes some 30 minutes, the trip to Chiang Khong about 1 hour and 30 minutes depending on river currents and water levels.

Amphoe Chiang Khong

Chiang Khong Located 55 kilometres east of Chiang Saen, (and 114 kilometres northeast of Chiang Rai provincial capital), this settlement faces Laos across the Mekong River. Local tour operators can arrange for tourists to visit Laos.

Ban Hat Khlai Marks the Chiang Khong area where the freshwater pla buk catfish, which can attain lengths of 2.5 metres and weights of 300 kilogrammes, are caught between April 18 and early June each year.

Ban Hat Bai 2.5 kilometres along the Chiang Saen - Chiang Khong Road, this Thai Lue community is best known for its hand-woven cotton.

Amphoe Wiang Kaen

Doi Pha Tang Some 32 kilometres from Amphoe Wiang Kaen (127 kilometres from Chiang Rai provincial capital), this scenic mountain location hosts Chinese, Hmong and Yao ethnic minorities. During January and February, the area is rendered even more picturesque thanks to cherry blossom and mountain mists.

Amphoe Thoeng

Phu Chi Fa This mountain, 25 kilometres south of Doi Pha Tang, provides scenic views over misty valleys of Laos at sunrise. During February, it is dotted with white wild flowers known as Dok Sieo. Accommodation is available at Rom Fa Thong and Rom Fa Thai villages at the foot of the hill.

Amphoe Phan

Doi Luang Naitonal Park This forested park, some 65 kilometres south of the provincial capital, covers an area of 1,170 square kilometres, and extends into areas of Chiang Mai, Lampang and Phayao provinces. A major attraction is the Pu Kaeng Waterfall which is composed of 9 beautiful cascades.

A great many of the tourists visiting Chiang Rai make enquiries about hilltribe trekking. They come looking for adventure and a learning experience that will last a life time. The experience of a trek around the northern area usually includes beautiful mountain terrain, wild and steamy jungles, clean rivers, photogenic waterfalls and unusually shaped caves. Visitors can journey to these places by foot, by horseback or on the back of an elephant. Travelling by longtail boats, motorbikes, and jeeps are becoming more and more popular as tour agencies expand their approach to tours and trekking.

There are abundant routes for trekking in Chiang Rai. Each route has its own characteristic. Thus, this makes the activities and cost of each trips different from one another. Please contact TAT local office for more information.

Some useful advice

1. Trekking alone is not recommended. It is much safer to go with the guide of trekking agents.
2. Respect hilltribes' beliefs and religious symbols and structures. Be careful about what you touch. It is better to ask your guide about some do's and don'ts before entering a hilltribe village.
3. Avoid trading western medicines and articles of clothing. Many of the hilltribe people are not familiar with the use western medicines. And by trading clothing you may be adding a new element of dressing and grooming contrary to their own. If you want to give something it should be something to contribute to their welfare, (pens, paper, needles, thread, cloth and material used for various hilltribe handicrafts.)
4. Photographs should be taken in specified areas. Ask before you take a photograph of someone. Some villages do not even permit being photographed.
5. Protect yourself against the nasty little mosquitoes of Northern Thailand. Don't rely only on the use of prophylactic drugs. In Thailand the many different strains of malaria parasites are resistant to many of the drugs on the market. You should also protect yourself by wearing long pants, long-sleeved shirts and thick socks. Also use a strong brand of mosquito repellent when trekking. At night you should sleep under a mosquito net and avoid outdoor activities between dusk and dawn when the little pests are a nuisance.
6. Do not approach the elephants during hot season, and/or when feeding without their handlers (mahouts) present.

How to get there

By Bus - The 11-hour journey from Bangkok can be made on airconditioned coaches and non-airconditioned buses originating from the Northern Bus Terminal on Bangkok's Kamphaeng Phet 2 Road (Tel: 936-3666, 936-2852) for further details).

By Air - Thai Airways operates daily flights between Bangkok and Chiang Rai.

[Pls click here to preview flight timetable or to book a flight](#)

Festivals

King Mengrai Festival

This festival is held from January 26 - February 1 every year. The festival features parades, cultural performances and competitions celebrating the founder of Chiang Rai and the Lanna Thai Kingdom.

Songkran Festival Traditional Thai New year celebrations are best seen at Chiang Saen where 4 nations (Thailand, Laos, China and Myanmar) compete in boat races on the Mekong River. Beauty contests and cultural shows are added attractions. The festival is annually held from April 16-18.

Lychee Fair This is held annually in May. Celebrating the province's tastiest fruit, this fair features agricultural displays and exhibitions, local handicrafts, folk entertainment and beauty contests.

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