Travel in Chiang Rai

Tourism
Chiang Rai is rich in tourism resources in terms of natural attractions and antiquities, evidence of its past civilization. It is also home to various hill tribes who follow fascinating ways of life. Chiang Rai is also a tourism gateway into Myanmar and Laos.

Attractions

Doi Tung (ดอยตุง)
A revered mountain which includes the Doi Tung Palace and the Mae Fa Luang Flower Garden. The Wat Phra That Doi Tung Holy Relic, an old religious site on top of the mountain, is about 2,000 meters above sea level.

Wat Rong Khun (วัดร่องขุน)
Wat Rong Khun is also known as the White Temple. Whereas most temples visited by tourists have a history going back many centuries, this magnificent place of worship was built only recently. It is the realization of a dream for Thailand's noted artist, Mr Chalermchai Kositpipat, who designed and is supervising the construction of this beautiful white temple and its many statues of figures based on religious beliefs. The construction started in 1998 and is expected to be completed in 2008. In addition, there is a gallery nearby exhibiting his paintings. To get there from the city of Chiang Rai, drive north along Asia Highway.

Golden Triangle (สามเหลี่ยมทองคำ):
A trip to Chiang Rai province would not be complete without seeing the notorious Golden Triangle first hand! This famed border location where Thailand, Laos and Myanmar meet on the Mekong River was once supposed to be the center of all the poppy cultivation in Thailand.

Travel approximately 9 kilometers north of old town Chiang Saen, along the road parallel to the Mekong River to the area where the
The borders of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos converge. This area where the Mekong River meets the Ruak River is locally referred to as "Sop Ruak". Within this area are remains of many ancient places and structures attesting to the fact that the area had been settled by people in the past. It is also the area where various legends concerning the Lanna ancestors originate.

Boats can be hired in order to view the upstream scenery of the Golden Triangle and to travel downstream to Chiang Khong. The trip to the Golden Triangle and Chiang Khong would take approximately 40 minutes and 1 hour respectively, depending on river currents and water levels.

**Doi Mae Salong (ดอยแม่สลอง)**

Doi Mae Salong is the site of Santi Khiri village, a community settled by the former Chinese 93rd Division who moved from Myanmar to reside on Thai territory in 1961. The village became well known for its enchanting scenery and tranquil atmosphere. Today it is a major tourist attraction with its small-town ambience, delicious native Chinese dishes, small hotels and guesthouses catering to visitors and tea, coffee and fruit tree plantations. The scenery is especially picturesque in December and January when sakuras are in full bloom. Scattered with many hill tribe villages, Doi Mae Salong is ideal for trekking.

To reach Doi Mae Salong, take the Chiang Rai-Mae Chan route for 29 kilometers, then turn left and proceed for another 41 kilometers (passing a hot spring). The return trip can be taken on routes nos. 1234 and 1130 which wind through Yao and Akha hill tribe villages. From Doi Mae Salong a road leads to Tha Thon, the starting point for the Kok River cruise, a distance of 45 kilometers. There are hotels and guesthouses to accommodate tourists and a paved road leading to the village.

**Wat Phra Kaeo (วัดพระแก้ว)**

Wat Phra Kaeo, which is located on Trairat Road on the northwest side of town, is the best known of the northern temples. It once housed the Emerald Buddha, Thailand most important Buddha statue which was discovered in 1444. The statue had been moved by various state rulers to be placed in their capitals including Lampang, Chiang Rai and Vientiane before finally being enshrined in Bangkok's royal Wat Phra Kaeo. There is now a green jade replica of the image on display. The temple also houses a 700-year bronze statue of Phra Chao Lan Thong, which is housed in the Chiang Saen style ubosot.
**Kok River (แม่น้ำกา)**

Flows through the town of Chiang Rai and is 130 kilometers long. Long-tailed boats and cruises can be made from town to travel. Hill tribe villages in the area are popular with travelers.

**Amphoe Mae Sai: Mae Sai (แม่สาย)**

Borders on Burma's Tha Khi Lek (ทางขี้เหล็ก) marked by the Mae Sai River with a bridge spanning both sides. The area has a market selling lots of different goods.

**The Hall of Opium, Golden Triangle Park (หอฝันลุมพcatidสามเหลี่ยมทองคำ)**

The Hall of Opium at the Golden Triangle Park houses several sections to be explored and various exhibitions to be contemplated. For example, the 5,600 square-meter Hall of Opium presents An Invitation to the Mysterious World of Opium from Darkness to Light, the history of opium as of 5,000 years ago from its natural properties to its uses. It traces opium's global journey through trade routes in the age of imperialism, culminating in the Opium Wars—an event that disgraced both winners and losers that led to the fall of the Manchu Dynasty. It also features Siamese wisdom in confronting the West and the eventual control of opium problems.

Other exhibits are presented in a manner that encourages visitors learn how drugs become a part of everyday life and understand the impact of opium on society in terms of crime, conflict and illegal drugs. Additionally, the Hall of Opium presents efforts to curb drugs through actual case studies that offer alternatives and opportunities in fighting against the temptation of drugs.

The Hall of Opium also displays paraphernalia associated with opium smoking and trading, along with many photographs, films, and videos about opium and other illegal drugs from countries around the world.
**Phu Chi Fa (ภูชี้ฟ้า)**
Phu Chi Fa is approximately 25 kilometers to the south of Doi Pha Tang in Thoeng District. The cool climate produces colorful flowering shrubs and the large meadow on the top provides breathtaking views of Laos. In addition, spectacular scenery can be seen from the sheer cliff of Phu Chi Fa, especially the sea of mist at sunrise. Visitors can stay overnight at Ban Rom Fa Thong and Ban Rom Fa Thai.

**Activities**

**Trekking**
The trekking area in Chiang Rai covers Amphoe Mueang, Amphoe Mae Suai, and the banks along the Mae Kok River. Prices include guide, basic meals, transportation, accommodation, boat, and elephant. Different prices depend on the condition of accommodation, food, vehicle, insurance etc.

**Trekking Advices**
1. Trekking alone or with unauthorized tour guide/operator is not recommended.
2. Trekker is advised to contact an authorized tour operator who provides: brochure with detailed information on trekking program, prices, accommodation, transportation; well-trained guide and licensed by TAT; and advice on how to get ready for trekking including necessary trekking accessories.
3. Some trekking guides may encourage customers to try a sample of opium, or make a side trip into Myanmar. These sound very exciting but any of these can be very dangerous. Taking narcotics is illegal (may lead to imprisonment) and smoking opium may lead to death. Tour operators, guides, as well as tourists are all requested to cooperate in this regard and notify the Tourist Police of such blameworthy behavior.
4. Malaria exists only in hill and forest areas. During the trip protect yourself with mosquito repellent, sleep under mosquito net. If having a fever within 15 days following, one must have a blood check at the nearest hospital.

**Golf**
There are plenty of golf courses around Chiang Rai province.

**1. Mae Kok Golf Club**
- **Address**: Mengrai Maharaj Camp, Roiwiang, Muang District, Chiang Rai 57000
- **Telephone**: (053)711-200, (053) 713-672
- **Holes**: 9
- **Par**: 36

**2. Santiburi Country Club**
The golf course with 18 holes developed outside Chiang Rai town and it takes about 20 minutes to reach the course from the city of Chiang Rai by car. The 18 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Jr. spread out vast fields in a good placement of holes with water hazards and bunkers. Players can enjoy the exciting holes with undulating fairways and greens in a quiet condition and they are satisfied with a good maintenance of the golf course.
- **Address**: 12 Moo 3 Huadoi-Sobpao Rd. Tambol Wiang-Chai Amphur Wiang-Chai Chiang Rai 57210
- **Telephone**: (053) 662821-6
- **Holes**: 18
- **Par**: 72
3. **Waterford Valley Chiang Rai**
   The golf course with 18 holes located outside of Chiang Rai town. It takes about 45 minutes to reach the course from the city of Chiang Rai by car. The 18 holes are laid out on a hilly country and players have a good view of the surroundings from club house in the suburbs of Chiang Rai. Players can enjoy hitting long shots on wide fairways and holes with undulating fairways and greens.
   
   Address: 333 Moo 5 Tambon Pasang, Wiangchiangrung Subdistrict, Chiangrai 57210
   
   Telephone: (053) 953425-7, (053) 953-440
   
   Holes: 18
   
   Par: 72

**Mountain Biking**
Since Chiang Rai has scenic mountain landscape and fresh air, it is a nice place for mountain biking.

**Rafting**
One of the oldest rafting destinations in the country, Chiang Rai continues to draw adventure seekers from all over the globe. In Chiang Rai, bamboo rafts and inflatable boats are available for the journey down the Mae Kok, the province’s major artery.

**Elephants Riding**
Elephants riding are possible throughout at Chiang rai.

**Local Products**
Chiang Rai is rich in handicraft items such as hand-woven cotton materials, dresses and hill tribe silver ornaments, as well as wood-carving products. Certain food items are quite popular such as Naem and Mu Yo (preserved and fermented pork sausages). Agricultural products include litchi (April-May), pineapples, tea, and other products from the royal projects.

**Nightlife**
The provincial town (amphoe muang) has a few live music pubs and discotheques. Aimed at foreign tourists, there is traditional music in the Night Bazaar. There are also plenty of beer bars, some with hostesses, around town.

**Local Culture**
The north of Thailand’s culture is Lanna in origin and the people are very proud of their northern roots. The region is home to distinctly different food, music, arts, way of life and even language. Chiang Rai is also a melting pot of hill tribes and their own unique cultures.

**Lifestyle**
**Khon Muang** are the city folk who originally came from Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang and Phrae. Culturally, they design their houses having only one floor with wooden gable-
decorations called Ka-Lae. They are known for their craftsmanship in wood carving, weaving, lacquer ware and musical instruments.

**Tai Yai** Burmese in origin, harvest rice, farm, raise cattle and trade. Their craftsmanship lies in weaving, pottery, wood carving and bronze ware.

**Akha** have the largest population of any hill tribe in the region. Originating from Tibet and Southern China, they dwell on high grounds around 1,200 meters above sea-level. Within their villages they build a Spirit Gateway to protect them from evil spirits.

**Lahu** are also from the Yunnese area and live in high areas. They are known as hunters and planters. Karen lives in various areas of the region which have valleys and riverbanks.

**Chin Hor,** these are the former Kuomintang who took refuge in the area, mainly Doi Mae Salong Hmong from southern China are located on high land. They raise livestock and grow rice, corn, cabbage. They are also known for their embroidery and silver.

**Tai Lue** live in dwellings of usually only a single room wooden house built on high poles. They are skilled in weaving.

**Lisaw** from southern China and Tibet are renowned for their colorful dress and also build their dwellings on high poles. They harvest rice and corn and their men are skilled in hunting.

**Yao** reside along mountain sides and grow corn and other crops. They are skilled blacksmiths, silversmiths and embroider.

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**Events & Festivals**

**Wai Sa Phaya Mengrai or Phokhun Mengrai Maharat Festival**
(งานไหวสาพญาเม็งราย หรือ งานพอขุนเม็งรายมหาราช)
is held during 23 January – 1 February. The Buang Suang worshipping ceremony is to commemorate Phokhun Mengrai Maharat.

**Dok Siao Ban or Blooming Siao Flower Festival at Phu Chi Fa**
(งานดอกเสี้ยวบานที่ภูชี้ฟา)
is held during 13-15 February. There are sports competitions and cultural performances from hill tribes at Ban Rom Fa Thai in Amphoe Thoeng.

**Songkran Festival and Boat Races of Mueang Chiang Saen**
(งานประเพณีสงกรานตและแขงเรือเมืองเชียงแสน)
is held during 13-18 April of each year. In this festival, there is a parade, water bathing ceremony of the Phrachao Lanthong Buddha image, boat races and folk performances.

**Litchi Fair**
(งานเทศกาลลิ้นจี่และของดีเมืองเชียงราย)
is held around the middle of May every year. There is a float competition, Litchi beauty contest and booths of many products at the provincial stadium of Chiang Rai. Buatong Ban or Blooming Mexican Sunflower Festival
(งานเทศกาลดอกบัวตองบาน)
is held in November, affording people the opportunity to see the sunflower fields, waterfalls and mist at Ban Hua Mae Kham, Amphoe Mae Fa Luang. There are also hill tribe performances.

**Chiang Rai Flower Festival**
(งานเทศกาลเชียงรายดอกไมบาน)
is held during the end of December to January every year. There are flower processions, flower gardens, Miss Thinn Thai Ngarm Contest and also the fair of agricultural products and the variety of flowers.
Chiang Saen, Mae Chan, and Doi Mae Salong are three substantially different places. Chiang Saen’s culture has been influenced by its collection of Buddhist scriptures and temples. It was once the provincial capital. Mae Chan’s name lies in its silver and tribal handicrafts. Once officially unrecognized by the Thai government, Doi Mae Salong is a Chinese KMT (Kuomintang) area renowned for its natural beauty and unique Yunnanese culture. Besides the Chinese 93rd Infantry of the Kuomintang, several other ethnic minorities have settled down in the region including the Tai Yai, Tai Lue, Tai Khoen and Tai Yuan.

Art
- The area is known for its traditional Lanna music with instruments such as the sau (fiddle) and kaen (panpipe).
- The north of Thailand has its own distinctive art and crafts including bronze casting, carving, mulberry paper, Buddha Images and sign painting.
- Local handmade items popular with tourists are clay charcoal stoves, tea sets, brooms and dust-pans, and umbrellas for shade and decoration.
- Some of the craftwork is made for spiritual purposes.

Local Food

The staple diet of local people consists of sticky rice (glutinous rice) which is rolled into balls and served in small hand-made bamboo containers. Typical dishes in the area are khan khanoon (spicy jackfruit curry), khaeng yuak (banana palm leaves), sai oo-a (pork sausages) and Yunnese and Burmese rice noodles.