

CHIANG RAI

Doi Pha Tang

Doi Pha Tang, about 160 kilometres from the provincial town, is a viewing point on top of a high cliff over the Thai-Laotian border affording a delightful scene for the river and the sea of mist throughout the year. During December-January, blooming Sakuras provide a picturesque scenery. It is home to the Chinese Haw, the Hmong and Yao minorities. The Haws are the remnants of the 93rd Chinese Division who moved in to settle on Doi Pha Tang. There are a lots of bungalows & tents serve tourists.

Wat Phra That Doi Chom Thong

It is located on Doi Chom Thong on the bank of the Kok River within town area, contains what is believed to be the oldest Holy Relic even before King Mengrai built Chiang Rai. The Chedi containing the Holy Relic was probably renovated at the same time the town was being built. A major religious site in Chiang Rai was from here that King Mengrai spotted the strategic location on which to establish the town. Tel: 0 5371 6055

Wat Phra Sing

Wat Phra Sing is located near the townhall used to house a major Buddha statue, the Phra Buddha Sihing which is now enshrined in Chiang Mai. A special feature is the Lanna-style Ubosot and the wooden door panels carved by Chiang Rai contemporary craftsmen. Tel: 0 5374 5038

The King Mengrai the Great Memorial

It is located in the town on the intersection leading to Mae Chan. Originally, King Mengrai was the ruler of Nakhon Hiran Ngoen Yang (an ancient town on the bank of the Mae Khong around Chiang Saen) before Chiang Rai was established as the administrative centre in 1262. He consolidated his power by merging the different city in the North and founded the Lanna Thai Kingdom in 1296 with Chiang Mai as the capital.

Khun Chae National Park

Khun Chae National Park is located at Tambon Mae Chedi Mai of Wiang Pa Pao District. It can be reached by taking the Chiang Mai - Chiang Rai Route (Highway No. 118). The park headquarters is right next to the highway at kilometers 55-56. Visitors wishing to take a jungle trek and camp within the park need to procure the services of a guide and prepare their own camping equipment. The trek through the Khun Chae jungle is for adventure travel enthusiasts as the route passes through steep terrain and several hilltops and cliffs over 1,400 meters high. There are good scenic lookout points and trekkers can enjoy waterfalls, flowing streams and virgin jungle areas covered with various plants.

Phu Chi Fa

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.

Doi Luang National Park

Doi Luang National Park is 65 kilometers south of Chiang Rai town and covers an area of 1,170 square kilometers in Phan District. Apart from hiking trails, the forested park features a few waterfalls of which the largest is Pu Kaeng Waterfall. This impressive fall has nine leaps and flows all year round. To reach Pu Kaeng Waterfall drive along the Chiang Rai-Phayao route for 58 kilometers to arrive at Ban Pu Kaeng. At kilometer 77, take a right turn and proceed on for another 9 kilometers. It is a large waterfall amid virgin jungle with water cascading down limestone brooks. Camping areas and jungle trekking services are available.

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.

Wat Rong Khun

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.

Wat Phra Kaeo

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's 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.

Wat Phra That Doi Tung

Wat Phra That Doi Tung is situated on top of Doi Tung Mountain, the highest mountain in Chiang Rai Province with an elevation of approximately 2,000 meters, about 50 kilometers south of Mae Sai town which is near the Myanmar border. The temple can be reached via a 40-kilometer mountain road which meanders along the mountainside. The journey is worthwhile as the panoramic views into Laos and Myanmar at the peak are spectacular.

Wat Phra That Doi Tung was constructed in the 10th century and was renovated by Chiang Rai's most famous ruler King Mengrai during the 13th century and by the famous Chiang Mai monk, Khru Ba Siwichai, at the turn of the 20th century.

The temple complex is comprised of twin Lanna style chedis, one of which is said to contain the

left collarbone of the Lord Buddha. Throughout the year, the holy relic draws devout Buddhists from all over Thailand, Laos and Myanmar.

Doi Mae Salong

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.

The Golden Triangle

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 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.

Phra That Pha Ngao

Located about 4 kilometres along the Chiang Saen - Chiang Khong Road is Phra That Pha Ngao which has a bell-shaped chedi situated on large boulders. Nearby is a vihan where several old Chiang Saen-style Buddha statues are enshrined. This hilltop temple offers a unique and spectacular view of the Mekong River, Laos and of Chiang Saen itself.

Hall of Opium, Golden Triangle Park

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.

The Hall of Opium is situated in Chiang Saen District, opposite the Anantara Golden Triangle Resort and Spa: Tel: 0 5378 4444 Fax: 0 5365 2133,

E-mail: hallofopium@doitung.org, Website: www.goldentrianglepark.com

The Sirindhorn Chinese Language and Culture Center

The center was built as a memorial to honor Her Royal Highness Princess grandmother's 100th birthday as a symbol of friendship between the two nations. The center's design was drawn to adhere as depicted in China.

Wiang Kalong

Wiang Kalong, a newly-developed tourist attraction, is a community about 16 kilometers from the district office of Wiang Pa Pao. Ancient furnaces which were used to make terra cotta utensils called Kalong have been found in this area. The furnaces are shaped like turtle shells of various sizes with a width of 2 to 5 meters. To get there from the city, drive south along the Divided Highway No. 1 for 8 kilometers then take a right turn onto Highway No. 118 to Wiang Pa Pao (approximately 75-80 kilometers). For those wishing to travel from Chiang Rai to Chiang Mai via the Doi Saket Highway No. 1014, it is highly recommended to stop over at Wiang Kalong as it is on the way to Chiang Mai.

Doi Pha Mon Agricultural Center

Doi Pha Mon is located at Amphoe Thoeng. During the winter months visitors are treated to splendid flower beds of tulips, lilies, red salvia, poinsettias, etc. To get to Doi Pha Mon from the city, go along Highway No. 1020, then take Highway No. 1155. The journey takes approximately 2.5 hours.

Wat Phra Chao Lan Thong

Wat Phra Chao Lan Thong is located within the city walls. This temple was built by Prince Thong Ngua, a son of King Tilokkarat, the 12th Lanna ruler in 1489. A 1,200-kilogram Buddha statue

with a lap width of 2 meters and height of over three meters was cast and named Phra Chao Lan Thong. Another statue called Phra Chao Thong Thip which is made of brass in the Sukhothai style was also cast.

Wat Doi Thong

Wat Doi Thong (Phra That Chomthong) sits atop a hill above the northwest side of town, up a steep staircase off Kaisornrasit Road. This location where King Mengrai is believed to have chosen the site for his new Lanna Capital offers an overview of the town and a panorama of the Mae Kok Valley. The chedi of Wat Doi Tong containing what is believed to be the oldest Holy Relic was probably renovated at the same time that the town as being built. The circle of columns at the top of the hill surrounds the city's new lak muang (city pillar), built to commemorate the 725th anniversary of the city and King Bhumibhol's 60th birthday.

Rai Mae Fah Luang

Rai Mae Fah Luang is a cultural centre and centre of Lanna Studies dedicated to the conservation and promotion of Lanna heritage. There are 5 exhibit areas namely

- a. The Botanical Gardens and Nature Park
- b. The Haw Khumm (Golden Pavilion)
- c. The Haw Khum Noi (Small Golden Pavilion)
- d. Sala Kaew-A ceremonial space for rituals
- e. Haw Kaew-Gallery of Lanna Culture Arts.

Rai Mae Fah Luang opens daily from 10.00-18.00 hrs. except Monday.

Entrance fee: Baht 200

Oub Kham Museum

Oub Kham Museum is located near Den Ha market, one kilometer from the town center. The collection includes objects from the areas once belonging to or affiliated with the Lanna kingdoms encompassing northern Thailand and some parts of northeast Myanmar, southwest China and Vietnam. Apart from objects used in rituals the collection mainly consists of objects used at the royal courts including lacquer ware, silver jewelry and clothing. Most notable is a golden bowl, a masterpiece, used by royals. It is open daily from 9 am. to 6 pm. Admission fee is 100 bahts per person. For more information call 0-5371-3349.

Nam Tok Khun Kon Forest Park

Nam Tok Khun Kon Forest Park can be reached by taking Highway No.1211 from Chiangrais town. After traveling 18 kilometers turn right and proceed for another 12 kilometers. Alternatively, you can drive along Highway No. 1 (Chiang Rai-Phayao) for about 15 kilometers, turn right and proceed for another 17 kilometers, then take a 30-minute walk to the waterfall. The 70-metre high Khun Kon or Tat Mok Waterfall is the highest and most beautiful in the province. Surrounded with dense woods, the area is also good for hiking.

Kok River

The Kok River is one of the most scenic attractions in Chiang Rai. It runs from Thathon in

northern Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai City and then flows on to meet the Maekhong River at Chiang Khong. From Baan Thathon boats, rafts and treks leave daily venturing into the surrounding mountains where the jungle dips into the river's cool waters. A long-tailed boat can be hired to ferry visitors up and down the river. Stops can be made at Akha or Iko, Lisu and Karen hill tribe villages. Alternatively stops can be made at the Buddha cave, a temple within a cavern; an elephant camp, for trekking; a hot spring; and a riverside Lahu village. Trips range from 300 bahts to 700 bahts (\$7-\$16), depending on the number of stops made. The ferry pier is beyond the bridge across from the Dusit Island Resort.

Mae Sai

Mae Sai which is about 62 kilometers from the provincial seat on Highway No. 110 is Thailand's northern-most district. Mae Sai borders on Myanmar's Tha Khi Lek marked by the Mae Sai River with a bridge spanning both sides. Foreign visitors are allowed to cross over to Tha Khi Lek market by presenting their passports and paying a fee at the Mae Sai immigration checkpoint. In addition, there are tour services to Chiang Tung in Myanmar, which is approximately 160 kilometers north by road.

Doi Hua Mae Kham

Doi Hua Mae Kham is the domicile of the hill tribes near the Thai-Burmese border, about three hours by road along the Mae Chan-Ban Thoet Thai-Ban Huai In route which winds along the steep mountain edges. The inhabitants are predominantly of the Lisu tribe, with a smattering of the Akha, Hmong and Muser tribes. Doi Hua Mae Kham is most spectacular in November when the yellow wild sunflowers are in full bloom.

Doi Tung

Doi Tung is located in Mae Fa Luang District and can be reached by taking Highway No.110 for about 48 kilometers and turning left onto Highway No. 1149, an asphalt road leading directly to Doi Tung. The route winds through beautiful scenery with many interesting sites including the Doi Tung Palace (Pra Tamnak Doi tung), the Mae Fa Luang Garden and Akha and Muser tribal villages. IN addition to scenic lookouts, the most notable attraction is the Phra That Doi Tung Holy Relic, an old religious site atop the mountain.

Also located on Doi Tung Mountain is a beautiful royal residence known as Phra Tamnak Doi Tung. The royal villa, situated on the slopes of the adjacent Pa Kluay Reservoir, was to serve as a royal winter retreat for the Princess Mother, who passed away in 1995 and was originally built on the theory that the local hill tribes would be honored by the royal presence and thereby cease their opium cultivation.

The main attraction for visitors to Phra Tamnak Doi Tung is 'Suan Mae Fa Luang', the beautiful landscaped gardens filled with hundreds of different kinds of plants and flowers, named in honor of the Princess Mother and the Doi Tung Development Project established by the late Princess Mother in 1987.

Mae Chan

Mae Chan, which is about 29 kilometers to the north of Chiang Rai, serves as a trading post

where the Akha and Yao hill people sell their goods and buy manufactured items. Silver and other tribal handicrafts are available at local shops.

Wat Sangkha Kaeo Don Han

Situated not far away from Wat Phra That Chom Kitti is Wat Sangkha Kaeo Don Han where sketches on brick slabs tell stories about the various reincarnations of the Lord Buddha.

Wat Phra That Chom Kitti

Located approximately 1.7 kilometres from town, this hilltop temple has a pagoda containing a Buddha relic.

Wat Phra That Chedi Luang

Next to Chiang Saen National museum is an ancient 88-meter high, bell-shaped, Lanna style principal chedi which has a 24 meter circumference base. Constructed in 1290 by King Saen Phu, the 3rd ruler of the Lanna kingdom, it is the tallest religious Lanna monument in Chiang Rai. In addition, there are also remains of ancient vihans and chedis.

Wat Pa Sak

Located outside the city walls, approximately one kilometer to the west of Chiang Saen in Tambon Wiang is Wat Pa Sak, which used to be the residence of the patriarch. When King Saen Phu built the temple in 1295, three hundred teak trees were planted hence the name Pa Sak (Teak Forest). With ornamental stucco motifs, the temple's chedi, which is 12.5 meters tall with a base of 8 meters wide, is regarded as being one of the most beautiful examples of Lanna architecture in northern Thailand.

Phra That Doi Pu Khao

Just two kilometers away from Chiang Saen Lake is Phra That Doi Pu Khao which is believed to have been built by a king of Wiang Hirannakhon Ngoen Yang in the middle of the 8th century. This riverside temple near Sop Ruak Market is located on a hill just before the Golden Triangle and offers a spectacular view of the Golden Triangles riverine and mountain areas. The vihan and crumbled chedis are the only visible remains of antiquities today.

Chiang Saen National Museum

Located in old town Chiang Saen, this museum exhibits artifacts excavated locally including a well-known Chiang Saen-style bronze Buddha image and Lanna Thai artifacts. Inscription stones from Phayao and Chiang Saen itself can be found in the museum. In addition, there are exhibitions of indigenous art objects of the Thai Yai, Thai Lu and other hill tribes. These items include musical instruments, ornaments and opium-smoking accessories. The museum is open on Wednesdays through Sundays from 9.00a.m. to 4.00p.m., except on national holidays.

Chiang Saen Lake

Drive five kilometers south of Chiang Saen, along Highway No. 1016 (Chiang Saen-Mae Chan route), take a left turn and you will find Chiang Saen Lake: a large natural reservoir with scenic surroundings. The lake is home to large flocks of migratory waterfowls which are most plentiful

and can be seen at their best from November through February. In addition to the scenery, accommodations and water sports facilities are available.

Chiang Saen

History of Chiang Saen, Chiang Rai

It is recorded that an ancient community was founded in the north of Chiang Rai Province more than 2000 years ago. This ancient town was named Yonok Nak Phan. According to legend, King Singhanawat founded the town, and the Nagas (mythical serpents) helped dig the town's moat. Later, Yonok Nak Phan faced its unfortunate destiny; it collapsed and turned into a swamp. According to the geological evidence, it is believed that the town's destruction was caused by an earthquake which turned it into present-day Chiang Saen Lake.

The above story is just a historical tale. However, it is clear that Chiang Saen existed during in the reign of King Meng Rai of the Lanna Kingdom, because it known that he truly existed. In the ancient Tai language of Burma and Northern Thailand, the word 'chiang' means 'a big town', while the word 'saen' presumably comes from King Saen Phu, King Meng Rai's nephew. After King Meng Rai passed away, King Saen Phu came back, renovated Chiang Saen, and was its third king. He also resided and worked there; therefore, Chiang Saen was a capital city from 1327 – 1341, spanning the reigns of King Saen Phu and his son, King Kham Fu. After that, Chiang Saen declined in importance from the capital city to simply a leading town. Nevertheless, Chiang Saen Town was well developed, and Buddhism was dearly cherished by its governors. Ruins of 75 temples have been found within the town walls, and 66 were situated outside. This large number of temples attests to the thriving civilization of Chiang Saen.

In 1557, Chiang Saen, Chiang Mai and several towns of the Lanna Kingdom were captured by Burma. Later, Ayutthaya won them back, and eventually they came under the control of Bangkok.

The many ancient ruins make Chiang Saen a peaceful tourist attraction, with lots to explore. The Town offers a charming and serene atmosphere on the banks of the Khong River, at the three-country border between Laos, Burma and Thailand. Chiang Saen has both scenic natural attractions and an impressive cultural heritage. In particular its impressive Buddha images showcase Lanka, Sukhothai and Ayutthaya art and techniques. Besides, the graceful stuccos and splendid craftwork found in the area are Thailand's great heritage for its younger generations.

Travelling to Chiang Saen

By car: This riverside town facing the Mekong River is 30 kilometers from Mae Chan District via Highway No. 1016. Alternatively, it can be reached by taking Highway No. 110 from Chiang Rai (the city), then take a right turn into Highway No. 1016 and proceed for another thirty kilometers.

Rental car: It may probably be easier rent a car in Chiang Rai and then drive to Chiang Saen,

but renting a motorbike may be a better bet as the roads one will probably explore in the area are easier to negotiate by two wheeled transport.

Buses: There are numerous buses traveling from Chiang Rai to Chiang Saen for around 20 baht one way. The trip can take from 45 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the traffic and the number of stops it makes en-route. If you travel from Chiang Mai, it is advisable to ask for the 'new route' (sai mai) as this only takes 4 to 5 hours and makes only a few stops en-route. The old route can take over 9 hours to complete with many stops along the way.

An ancient town located on the bank of the Mekong River, Chiang Saen was originally called Wiang Hiran Nakhon Ngoen Yang. It served as the capital of the Lanna Thai Kingdom until King Mengrai established Chiang Rai as the capital in 1262. Ruins of the old double city walls and many other antiquities remain both inside and outside the district town. Most notable is the distinctive style of Buddhist sculpture which evolved in Chiang Saen during the late thirteenth century providing proof of the city's historical importance. Rich cultural heritage, coupled with natural tourist attractions, has made Chiang Saen a unique tourist destination. Travelling to Chiang Saen

By car: This riverside town facing the Mekong River is 30 kilometers from Mae Chan District via Highway No. 1016. Alternatively, it can be reached by taking Highway No. 110 from Chiang Rai (the city), then take a right turn into Highway No. 1016 and proceed for another thirty kilometers.

Rental car: It may probably be easier rent a car in Chiang Rai and then drive to Chiang Saen, but renting a motorbike may be a better bet as the roads one will probably explore in the area are easier to negotiate by two wheeled transport. **Buses:** There are numerous buses traveling from Chiang Rai to Chiang Saen for around 20 baht one way. The trip can take from 45 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the traffic and the number of stops it makes en-route. If you travel from Chiang Mai, it is advisable to ask for the 'new route' (sai mai) as this only takes 4 to 5 hours and makes only a few stops en-route. The old route can take over 9 hours to complete with many stops along the way.

Chiang Khong

Chiang Khong is a small, peaceful district on the bank of the Mekong River opposite Huaixai, Lao PDR. It is about 115 kilometers from the provincial seat, or approximately 55 kilometers to the east of Chiang Saen on Highway No. 1129. Chiang Khong is noted as the place where Pla Buk, giant catfish, is cultivated. The Chiang Khong Fishery Station is able to inseminate and breed Pla Buk, the largest fresh water fish in the world and fingerlings bred here have been released in several rivers. It should be noted that the fishing season is from mid-January to May.

Sightseeing trips by boat are available to view the scenery and life styles along the Mekong River. An additional attraction is a visit to Ban Hat Bai, a Thai Lu community noted for making beautiful local fabrics. To cross over to Huaixai town in Lao PDR, contact the immigration office or tour agencies at Chiang Khong.