

Thailand

Chiang Mai Province (Chapter)

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Coverage includes: Chiang Mai, Northern Chiang Mai Province, Mae Sa Valley & Samoeng, Chiang Dao, Doi Ang Khang, Fang & Tha Ton, Southern Chiang Mai Province, Bo Sang & San Kamphaeng, Mae Kampong, Hang Dong, Ban Wan & Ban Thawai and Doi Inthanon National Park.

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Chiang Mai Province

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Why Go?

The province of Chiang Mai, with its cooling mist-shrouded mountains bursting with dense jungle, has long enticed travellers intent on exploring this southern slice of the great Himalayan mountain range.

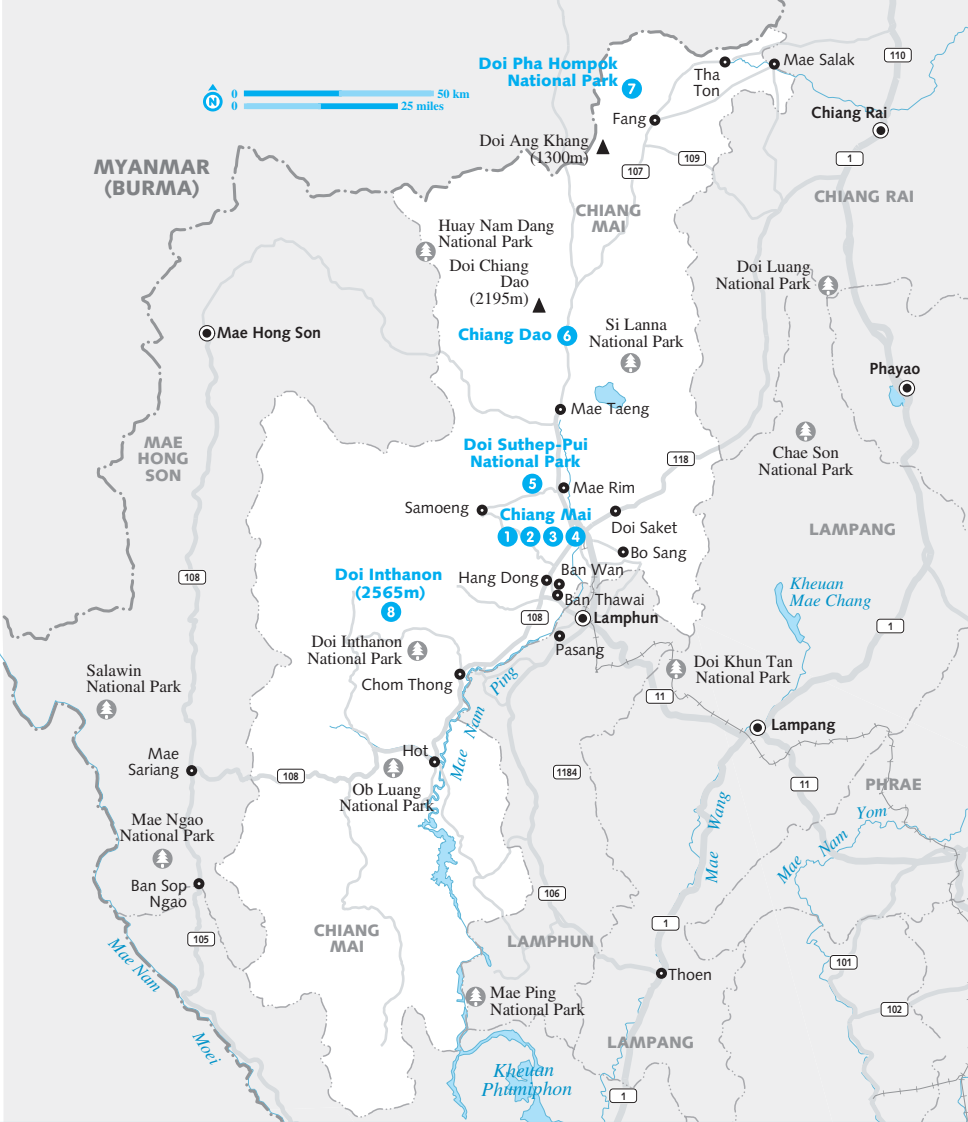
Highlights include the laid-back city of Chiang Mai, with its moated, partially walled old city; its celebrated ancient temples, built with teak money reflecting the aesthetics of an ancient trade dependent on the forest; and a traveller-friendly scene catering for those here to party through to those who prefer their cocktails by the saltwater pool.

Outside of the urban sphere is very accessible countryside and two of Thailand's highest mountain peaks: Doi Inthanon (2565m) and Doi Chiang Dao (2195m). Boasting more natural forest cover than any other province in the north, activities such as cycling, hiking, elephant trekking, birdwatching and river rafting offer an escape from the steaming plains.

When to Go

The weather in Chiang Mai province is best for travel during the cool season, roughly from November to February, when temperatures are mild and rain is scarce. Temperatures can be cool enough to warrant a jacket at night and in the early morning, particularly at higher elevations.

During the hot season, from March until June, Chiang Mai often experiences a 'fire season', when a thick haze forms over the city, a combination of dust and smoke from the burning off of nearby rice fields. April is a great time to be around for the Songkran Festival.



Chiang Mai Highlights

- 1 Taking in the sacred **Wat Phra Singh** (p238) and **Wat Chedi Luang** (p238)
- 2 Picking up bargains at the **Saturday Walking Street** (p245) and **Sunday Walking Street** (p235)
- 3 Stretching out for a traditional **massage** or **meditation course** (p256)
- 4 Dodging the relentless city traffic on a **river cruise** (see boxed text, p244) and floating lazily past stilted houses
- 5 Escaping the brutal city heat in cool, lush **Doi Suthep-Pui National Park** (p250)
- 6 Exploring the mystical cave at **Doi Chiang Dao** (p284), and tucking into fine cuisine afterwards
- 7 Getting nice and wrinkly in the curative hot spring waters of **Doi Pha Hompok National Park** (p287)
- 8 Scaling the heights of **Doi Inthanon** (p291), and posing for pics among the conifers and rhododendrons

CHIANG MAI

เชียงใหม่

POP 174,000

Are you here yet? OK, good, breathe a sigh of relief – you're in Thailand's second city, but it ain't Bangkok. Now, have a look around you, because this nonchalant city encapsulates much of what is unique and breathtaking about Thailand.

Piercing the foothills of northern Thailand, and snuggling up to Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai contains hundreds of sacred temples, with *chedi* and gabled rooftop tiers soaring skyward, and then billowing out protectively as they swoop to the ground. The city's enduring Lanna characteristics are evident in these revered, merit-making houses of worship, along with the quaint, moated old city where so many temples are housed. The surrounding mountains, their legendary, mystical attributes ever watchful over the steamy metropolis, loom large over the city.

Chiang Mai is laid-back, creative and reverential. It's a city with heart – most NGOs working with Burmese refugees have their headquarters here. In reality, the city is dynamic and modern without having lost its down-to-earth charm. There's certainly traffic, pollution and ugly concrete buildings, but this is a very Thai place – Thai culture overwhelmingly pervades a city wrapped up in Western sensibilities and striving for advancement. Fortunately the university students keep Chiang Mai looking and feeling youthful. Head down to Th Nimmanhaemin and you'll glimpse the city's future movers and shakers, intent now on moving and shaking it in the nightclubs, bars and discos that crown this area as Chiang Mai's night-life headquarters.

Oh, and don't forget the eating scene. Specialities of the city include Japanese sushi bars around the university, Burmese curries and salads, and of course Thai: from delicious street food to white-linen riverside dining where fine wines and twinkling candles floating on the water create a special Chiang Mai indulgence.

History

Chiang Mai and Thailand's other northern provinces share more of their early development with the Shan state of present-day Myanmar (Burma), neighbouring parts of Laos and even the southern mountains of China than with Bangkok and Thailand's central plains.

King Phaya Mengrai (also spelt Mangrai) is credited for founding the Lanna kingdom and expanding it into the Ping River valley. Once he reached the valley, he built a temporary capital at Wiang Kum Kam (p243). Around 1296, King Mengrai relocated the Lanna capital to a more picturesque spot between Doi Suthep and the Ping River and named the auspicious city Nopburi Si Nakhon Ping Chiang Mai (shortened to Chiang Mai, meaning the 'New Walled City'). Traces of the original 1296 earthen ramparts can still be seen today along Th Kamphaeng Din in Chiang Mai.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, the Lanna kingdom expanded as far south as Kamphaeng Phet and as far north as Luang Prabang in Laos. During this time, Chiang Mai became an important religious and cultural centre and the eighth world synod of Theravada Buddhism was held here in 1477.

The Lanna kingdom was soon confronted by challenges from Ayuthaya, the powerful city-state that had flourished in Thailand's central plains and that would later consolidate the region under Siamese control and help shape the broader 'Thai' identity. But it was the Burmese who would overtake the city and the kingdom in 1556, an occupation that lasted 200 years.

The fall of Ayuthaya in 1767 to the Burmese marked another turning point in Chiang Mai's history. The defeated Thai army reunited under Phraya Taksin south of Ayuthaya in present-day Bangkok and began a campaign to push out the occupying Burmese forces. Chao Kavila, a chieftain (known as *jōw meu-ang*) from nearby Lampang principality, helped 'liberate' northern Thailand from Burmese control, which led to the eventual integration of the Lanna kingdom into the expanding Thai kingdom based in Bangkok.

Under Kavila, Chiang Mai became an important regional trade centre. In 1800 Kavila built the monumental brick walls around Chiang Mai's inner city and expanded the city in southerly and easterly directions, establishing a river port at the end of what is today Th Tha Phae (*tha phae* means 'raft pier'). Many of the later Shan- and Burmese-style temples were built by wealthy teak merchants who emigrated from Burma during this period.

There were many political and technological factors that ultimately led to the demise of an independent Lanna state. The

Bangkok-based government designated Chiang Mai as an administrative unit in 1892 during the expansion of colonial rule in neighbouring Burma and Laos. The completion of the northern railway to Chiang Mai in 1921 finally linked the north with central Thailand. In 1927, King Rama VII and Queen Rambaibani rode into the city at the head of an 84-elephant caravan, becoming the first central Thai monarchs to visit the north. In 1933, Chiang Mai officially became a province of Siam.

In 2001, then prime minister and Chiang Mai native Thaksin Shinawatra sought to make Chiang Mai one of the nation's primary centres of information technology by expanding the airport and building super-highways. The political demise of the Thaksin administration by the military coup of 2006 and the ongoing political ramifications (such as the red shirt protests in Bangkok and the north, including Chiang Mai, in 2010), together with the global economic downturn, have put the brakes on these plans. The city is warily expecting more protests in the future as discontent about Thaksin's overthrow and the wider political ramifications continue to simmer.

Maps

A copy of Nancy Chandler's *Map of Chiang Mai*, available in bookshops, is a worthwhile investment. It shows the city's main points of interest, shopping venues and oddities that you will be pleased to stumble upon. Groovy Map's *Chiang Mai Map'n'Guide*, also in bookshops, adds Thai script and more nightspots.

Sights

Chiang Mai is a very manageable city to navigate. Most visitors base themselves in the old city, which is easily covered on foot or

by bike – the famous temples are spread out along Th Ratchadammen.

The old city has four gates, often referred to as markers for direction around the city: the easternmost gate is Pratu Tha Phae, which leads to Th Tha Phae, a main drag that links the riverside area with the old city; Pratu Suan Dok exits the western moat and connects the old city to the leafy environs of Chiang Mai University and Doi Suthep; the northern gate is Pratu Chang Pheuk; and the southern gate is Pratu Chiang Mai.

OLD CITY

เมืองเก่า

Chiang Mai's historic quarter has buildings that are human-scaled and reserves the highest elevation for the temple stupas that peak out over the rooftops. Small bells decorating the eaves tinkle in the morning wind before the motorcycle engines awake.

One of the best ways to explore the old city is to jump on a bicycle and head off into the lanes, sois and smaller roads that infest this ancient urban space – traffic is minimal, and a lot of backstreets are surprisingly green and residential. All roads eventually lead to the old city wall, in some parts preserved or rebuilt and in other parts worn and rounded by time.

Sunday Walking Street

MARKET

(ถนนเดินวันอาทิตย์; Map p240; Th Ratchadammen; ☀4pm-midnight Sun) A unique shopping experience, the Sunday Walking Street offers all manner of products and a good dose of provincial culture. It is also a reminder of an itinerant merchant tradition of the ancient Chinese caravans.

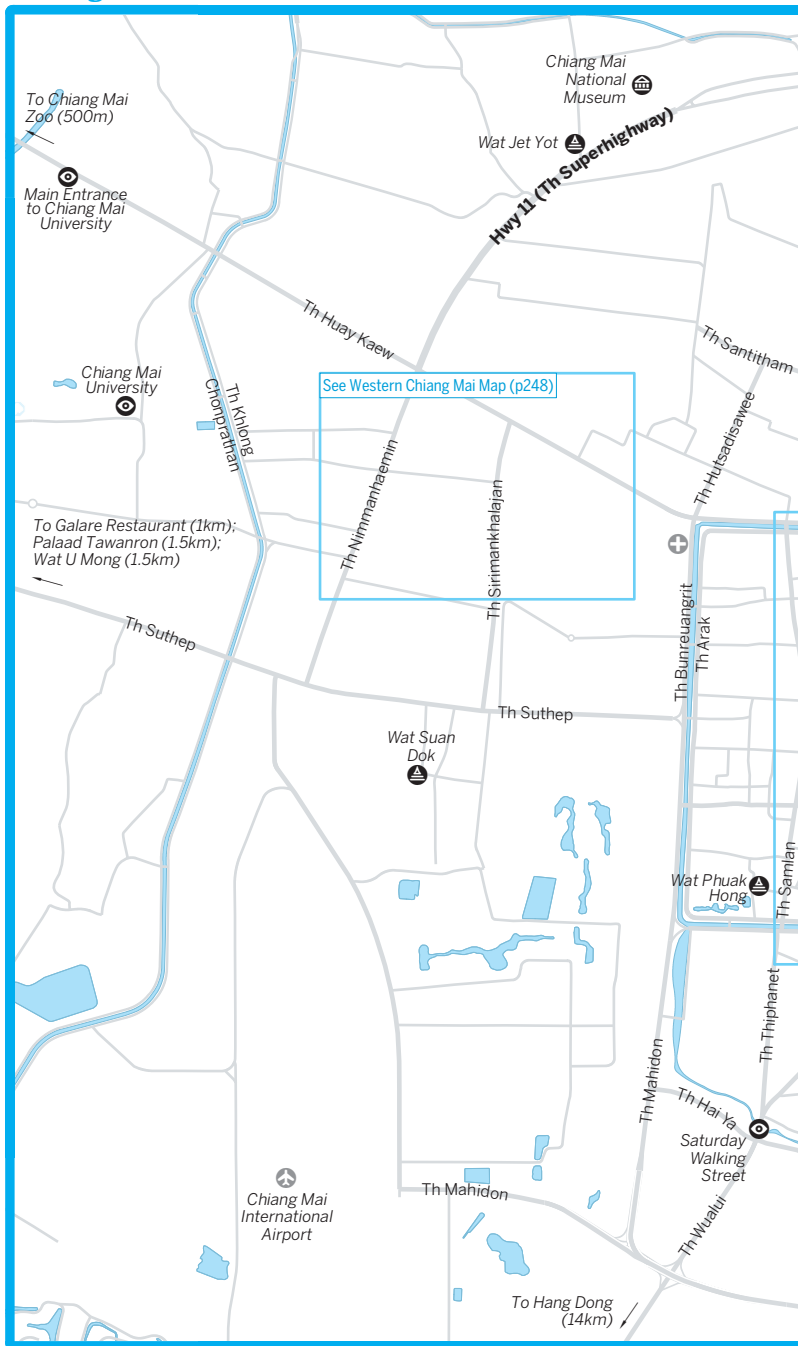
Vendors line Th Ratchadammen all the way from the square in front of Pratu Tha Phae to Wat Phra Singh and stretching a few blocks down both sides of Th Phra Pokklao. Many of the products are handmade in and

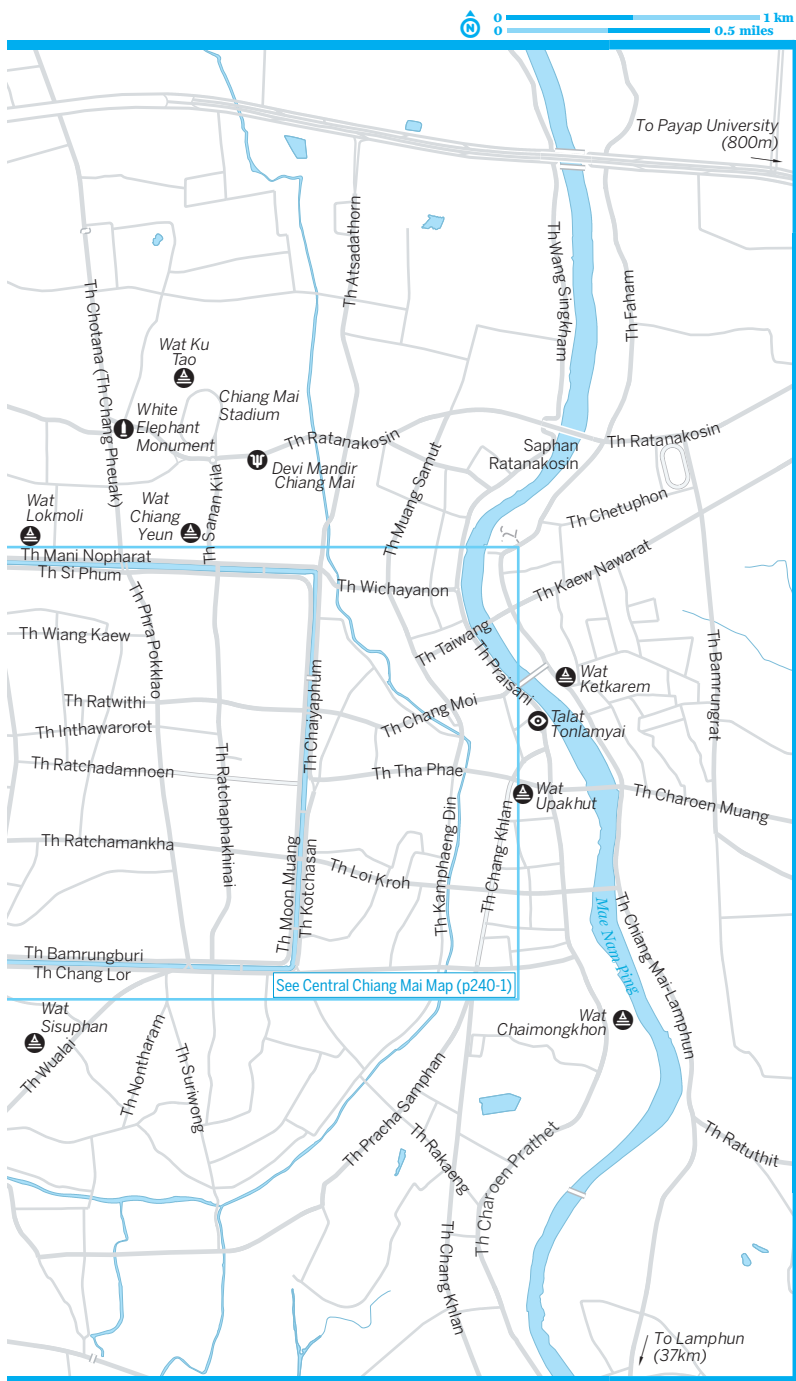
SOI BAN HAW

A remnant from the days when Chiang Mai was a detour on the Silk Road is the Thai-Muslim community along Soi 1 off Th Chang Khlan, near Chiang Mai Night Bazaar. The 100-year-old **Matsayit Chiang Mai** (Map p240; Soi 1, Th Charoen Prathet), also known as Ban Haw Mosque, was founded by *jeen hor* ('galloping Chinese'), the Thai expression for Yunnanese caravan traders. Within the past two centuries, the city's Muslim community has also grown to include ethnic Yunnanese Muslims escaping unrest in neighbouring Laos and Burma.

There are also a number of simple restaurants and vendors selling Thai-Muslim curries, *kôw soy* (curried chicken and noodles), *kôw mòk gàì* (chicken biriani), and *néu-a òp hǒrm* ('fragrant' dried beef), a speciality of Chiang Mai's Yunnanese Muslim community. An evening food vendor does delicious *roh-dee* (Indian flat bread).

Chiang Mai & Around



To Payap University
(800m)To Lamphun
(37km)



ESCAPING THE HEAT – CULTURAL STYLE

The wáts (temples) are one of the city's biggest drawcards for tourists and those such as **Phra Singh, Chedi Luang**, and **U Mong** have beautiful grounds, often shady and cool in the heat of the afternoon. Consider spending time visiting temples not just for historical, cultural and architectural reasons, but also as an escape from the maddening, sweltering streets – there's no better way to relax while sightseeing in Chiang Mai.

around Chiang Mai, including the cotton scarves, leather sandals and wood carvings. Chiang Mai lets down its hippie hair at this market with lots of ethnic chic accessories, undyed cotton T-shirts and 'save the planet' canvas tote bags.

The temples along the way host food stalls selling northern Thai cuisine and other shopping-stamina boosts. The market is extremely popular and gets very crowded, so coming early is a good idea. If you're not in town on Sunday, check out the **Saturday Walking Street** (p245) on Th Wualai.



Wat Phra Singh

TEMPLE

(วัดพระสิงห์; Map p240; Th Singharat; donations appreciated) Chiang Mai's most visited temple, Wat Phra Singh owes its fame to the fact that it houses the city's most revered Buddha image, **Phra Singh** (Lion Buddha), and it has a fine collection of **classic Lanna art** and architecture.

Despite Phra Singh's exalted status, very little is actually known about the image. It is considered one of the most beautiful examples of Lanna religious art thanks to its thick human-like features and lotus-shaped topknot. Because there are two nearly identical images in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Bangkok, no one knows if this is the real one, nor can anyone document its place of origin. Regardless, this Phra Singh image came to reside here around the 1360s and today is a fixture in the religious ceremonies of the Songkran festival.

Phra Singh is housed in Wihan Lai Kham, a small chapel to the rear of the temple grounds next to the *chedi*. The exterior chapel displays the Lanna characteristics of a three-tiered roofline and carved ga-

bles. Inside, the temple features sumptuous *lai-krahm* (gold pattern) stencilling on its interior back wall.

Wat Phra Singh's main *chedi* displays classic Lanna style with its octagonal base. It was built by King Pa Yo in 1345 in honour of his father. Closer to the entrance is the main *wi-hähn* (sanctuary), which houses a bigger but less important Buddha known as Thong Thip. This temple has royal associations, indicated by the garuda (the royal symbol) displayed on the front of the main *wi-hähn*.

If you visit around 11am you may catch the monks having their lunch on the floor of the temple. Either way, there are nice, shady grounds to walk around in the heat of the day and poignant slogans to digest, such as: 'The real evil is ignorance.'

Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre

MUSEUM

(หอศิลป์วัฒนธรรมเชียงใหม่; Map p240; ☎0 5321 7793; Th Ratwithi; adult/child 90/40B; ☀8.30am–5pm Tue–Sun) The Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre offers a fine primer on Chiang Mai history. Be warned that when you enter you are ushered into a room for the obligatory promotional film on the history of Chiang Mai, before you can wander around. The 1st floor has engaging displays on religious and cultural elements of northern Thailand. The 2nd floor rooms have been converted into historic settings: there's an early Lanna village, a temple and a train display. From the 2nd floor you can see more of the beauty of this postcolonial building, Chiang Mai's former Provincial Hall, originally built in 1924. It was awarded a Royal Society of Siamese Architects award in 1999 for its faithful architectural restoration.

Wat Chedi Luang

TEMPLE

(วัดเจดีย์หลวง; Map p240; Th Phra Pokkiao; donations appreciated) Another venerable stop on the temple trail, Wat Chedi Luang is built around a partially ruined Lanna-style *chedi* dating from 1441 that was believed to be one of the tallest structures in ancient Chiang Mai. Stories say it was damaged by either a 16th-century earthquake or by the cannon fire of King Taksin in 1775 during the recapture of Chiang Mai from the Burmese. The famed Phra Kaew (Emerald Buddha), now held in Bangkok's Wat Phra Kaew (p58), sat in the eastern niche here in 1475. Today there is a jade replica sitting in its place, financed by the Thai king and carved in 1995 to celebrate the 600th anniversary of the

chedi (according to some reckonings), and the 700th anniversary of the city.

A restoration of the impressive *chedi* was financed by Unesco and the Japanese government. Despite their good intentions, the restoration work is easily spotted: new porticoes and *naga* (mythical serpent) guardians and new Buddha images in three of the four directional niches. On the southern side of the monument, five elephant sculptures in the pediment can be seen. Four are cement restorations; only the one on the far right – without ears and trunk – is original brick and stucco. The restoration efforts also stopped short of creating a new spire, since no one knows for sure how the original superstructure looked. Regardless, a slow stroll around the massive walls of the *chedi* is quite meditative.

Wat Chedi Luang's other prominent attraction is the *lāk meu-ang* (city pillar, believed to house the city's guardian deity) enshrined in a small building to the left of the compound's main entrance.

In the main *wi-hähn* is the standing Buddha, known as Phra Chao Attarot, flanked by two disciples, both renowned for meditation and mysticism.

Have a chat to the monks while you are here (see boxed text, p250).

Wat Phan Tao

TEMPLE

(วัดพันต่า; Map p240; Th Phra Pokkklao; donations appreciated) Near Wat Chedi Luang, Wat Phan Tao contains a beautiful old teak *wi-hähn* that was once a royal residence and is today one of the unsung treasures of Chiang Mai. Constructed entirely of moulded teak panels fitted together and supported by 28 gargantuan teak pillars, the *wi-hähn* features *naga* bargeboards inset with coloured mirror mosaic. On display inside are **old temple bells**, some ceramics, a few old northern-style gilded wooden Buddhas, and **antique cabinets** stacked with **old palm-leaf manuscripts**. The front panel of the building displays a mirrored **mosaic** of a peacock standing over a dog, representing the astrological year of the former royal resident's birth, making this temple a necessary pilgrimage site for those born in the year of the dog.

Wat Chiang Man

TEMPLE

(วัดเชียงใหม่; Map p240; Th Ratchaphakhinai; donations appreciated) Considered to be the oldest wát in the city, Wat Chiang Man, is believed to have been established by the city's found-

er, Phaya Mengrai. The wát features typical northern Thai temple architecture.

Two important Buddha images are kept in a glass cabinet inside the smaller sanctuary to the right of the main chapel. Phra Sila is a marble bas-relief Buddha that stands about 30cm high and reportedly came from Sri Lanka or India. The well-known Phra Sae Tang Khamani, a **crystal seated-Buddha** image, is thought to have come from Lavo (Lopburi) 1800 years ago and stands just 10cm high. The chapel housing the venerated images is open between 9am and 5pm.

In front of the *bòht* (ordination hall) a stone slab, engraved in 1581, bears the earliest known reference to the city's 1296 founding.

Wat Phuak Hong

TEMPLE

(วัดพุกหงส์; Map p236; off Th Samlan; donations appreciated) This neighbourhood wát, located behind Suan Buak Hat (Buak Hat Park), contains the locally revered Chedi Si Pheuak. The *chedi* is more than 100 years old and features the 'stacked spheres' style seen only here and at Wat Ku Tao, and most likely influenced by Thai Lü *chedi* in China's Xishuangbanna (also spelled Sipsongpanna) district, Yunnan.

Anusawari Sam Kasat

MONUMENT

(อนุสาวรีย์สามกษัตริย์; Map p240; Th Phra Pokkklao) Proudly wearing 14th-century royal garb, the bronze Three Kings Monument commemorates the alliance forged between the three northern Thai-Lao kings (Phaya Ngam Meuang of Phayao, Phaya Mengrai of Chiang Mai and Phaya Khun Ramkhamhaeng of Sukhothai) in the founding of Chiang Mai. The statues mark one of the city's spiritual centres and have become a shrine to local residents, who regularly leave offerings of flowers, incense and candles at the bronze feet in return for blessings from the powerful spirits of the three kings.

EAST OF THE OLD CITY & RIVERSIDE

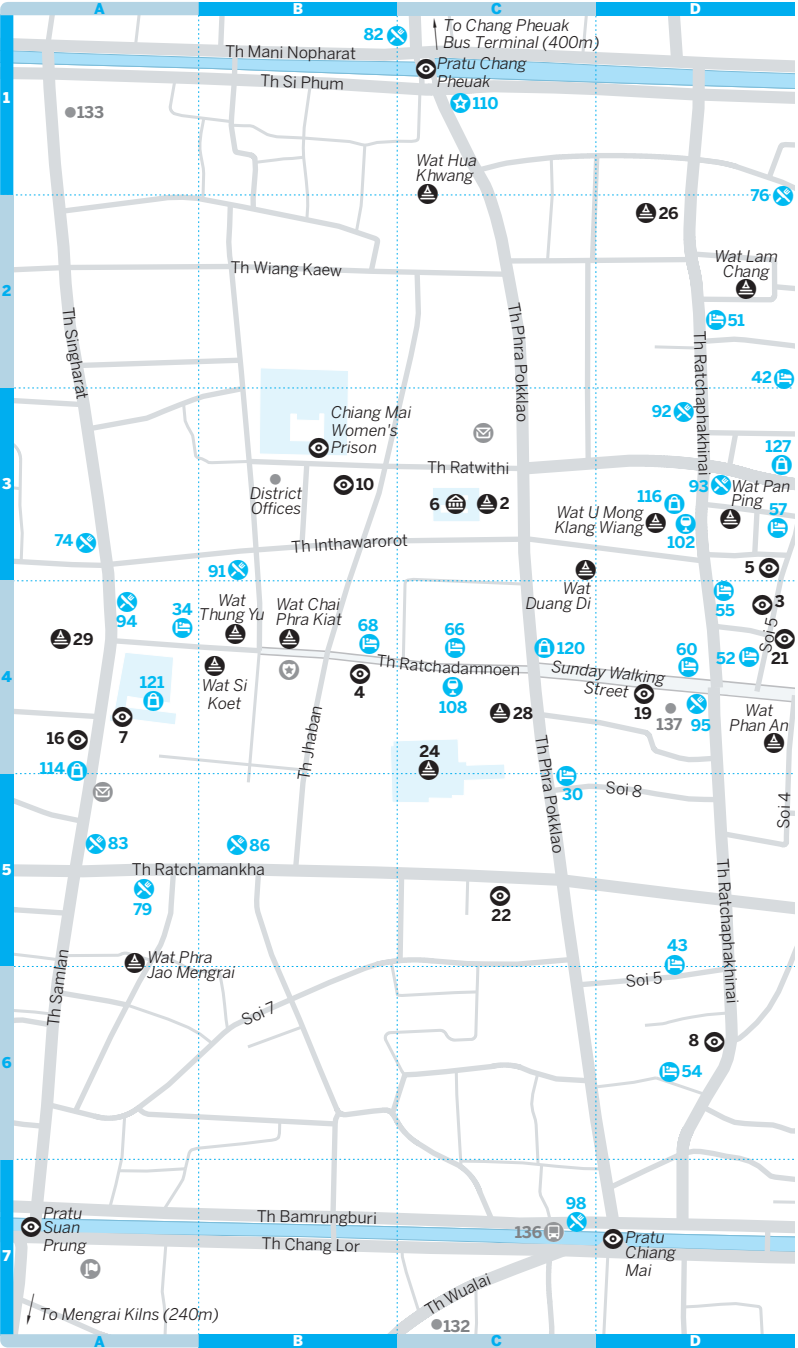
Passing through Pratu Tha Phae leads to a standard-issue commercial neighbourhood of two-storey concrete shophouses and busy multi-laned roads. South of Talat Warorot, on Th Chang Khlan, is the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar (see boxed text, p277). The meandering Mae Ping is another historical attraction.

Wat Chetawan, Wat Mahawan & Wat Bupparam

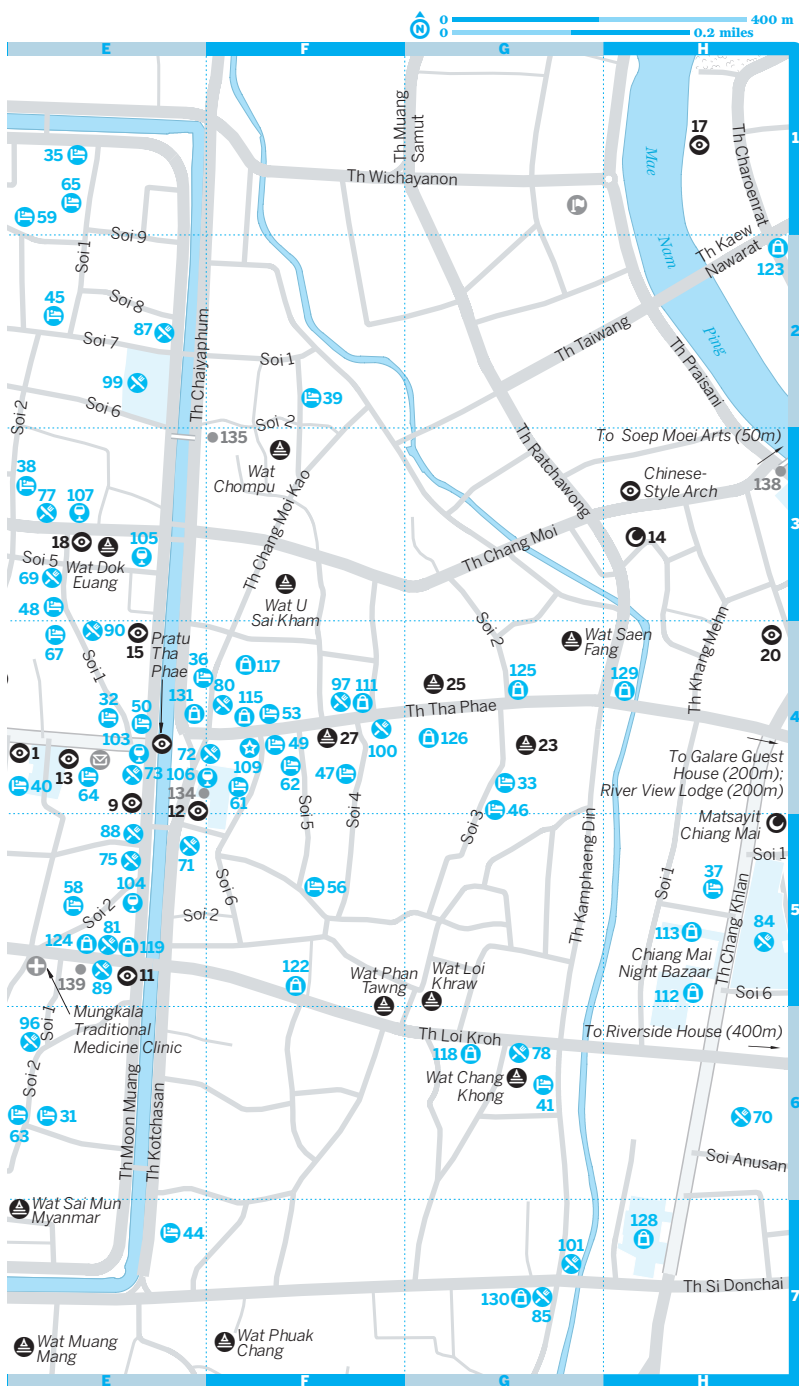
TEMPLE

(วัดเชตะวัน/วัดมหาวัน/วัดบุปผาราม; Map p240) These three wát along Th Tha Phae feature highly

Central Chiang Mai



CHIANG MAI PROVINCE CHIANG MAI



Central Chiang Mai

📍 Sights

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1 | American University Alumni | E4 |
| 2 | Anusawari Sam Kasat | C3 |
| 3 | Asia Scenic Thai Cooking | D3 |
| 4 | Baan Chang Elephant Park
Office | B4 |
| 5 | Baan Thai | D4 |
| 6 | Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural
Centre | C3 |
| 7 | Chiang Mai Mountain Biking | A4 |
| 8 | Chiang Mai Rock Climbing
Adventures | D6 |
| 9 | Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School | E4 |
| 10 | Chiang Mai Women's Prison
Massage Centre | B3 |
| 11 | Elephant Nature Park Booking
Office | E5 |
| 12 | Flight of the Gibbon Booking
Office | E4 |
| | Gap's Thai Culinary School | (see 40) |
| 13 | Lek Chaia | E4 |
| 14 | Namdhari Sikh Temple | H3 |
| 15 | Namo Yoga | E4 |
| 16 | Oasis Spa | A4 |
| 17 | Scorpion Tailed River Cruise | H1 |
| 18 | Siam River Adventures | E3 |
| 19 | Sunday Walking Street | D4 |
| 20 | Talat Warorot | H4 |
| 21 | Thai Farm Cooking School
Booking Office | D4 |
| 22 | Thai Massage Conservation
Club | C5 |
| 23 | Wat Bupparam | G4 |
| 24 | Wat Chedi Luang | C4 |
| 25 | Wat Chetawan | G4 |
| 26 | Wat Chiang Man | D2 |
| 27 | Wat Mahawan | F4 |
| 28 | Wat Phan Tao | C4 |
| 29 | Wat Phra Singh | A4 |
| 30 | Wat Phra Singh | A4 |
| 31 | Wat Phra Singh | A4 |
| 32 | Wat Phra Singh | A4 |
| 33 | Wat Phra Singh | A4 |
| 34 | Wat Phra Singh | A4 |
| 35 | Charcoa House | E1 |
| 36 | Daret's House | E4 |
| 37 | Dusit D2 Chiang Mai | H5 |
| 38 | Eagle House | E3 |
| 39 | Eagle House Guesthouse | F2 |
| 40 | Gap's House | E4 |
| 41 | Imperial Mae Ping Hotel | G6 |
| 42 | Jonadda Guest House | D2 |
| 43 | Julie Guesthouse | D5 |
| 44 | Lai-Thai Guesthouse | E7 |
| 45 | Lamchang House | E2 |
| 46 | Manathai | G4 |
| 47 | Micasa Guesthouse | F4 |
| 48 | Mini Cost | E3 |
| 49 | Mo Rooms | F4 |
| 50 | Montri Hotel | E4 |
| | Nice Apartments | (see 48) |
| 51 | RCN Court | D2 |
| 52 | Rendezvous Guest House | D4 |
| 53 | Roong Ruang Hotel | F4 |
| 54 | Sa Thu Boutique House | D6 |
| 55 | Safe House Court | D4 |
| 56 | Sarah Guest House | F5 |
| 57 | Siri Guesthouse | D3 |
| 58 | Smile House 1 | E5 |
| 59 | Supreme House | E1 |
| 60 | Tamarind Village | D4 |
| 61 | Tawan Guesthouse | F4 |
| 62 | Thapae Boutique House | F4 |
| 63 | Thapae Gate Lodge | E6 |
| 64 | Top North Hotel | E4 |
| 65 | Tri Gong Residence | E1 |
| 66 | U Chiang Mai | C4 |
| 67 | Vieng Mantra | E4 |
| 68 | Villa Duang Champa | B4 |

🍴 Eating

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|
| 69 | Angel's Secrets | E3 |
| 70 | Anusan Night Market | H6 |
| 71 | Aron Rai | E5 |
| 72 | Art Cafe | F4 |
| 73 | AUM Vegetarian Food | E4 |
| 74 | Baan Nok Noodle | A3 |
| 75 | Bierstube | E5 |
| 76 | Blue Diamond | D2 |
| 77 | Chiangmai Saloon | E3 |

ornate *wi-hähn* and *chedi* designed by Shan and Burmese artisans. Financed by Burmese teak merchants who immigrated to Chiang Mai a century or more ago, evidence of Shan/Burmese influence is easily seen in the abundant peacock symbol (a solar symbol common in Burmese and Shan temple ar-

chitecture) and the Mandalay-style standing Buddhas found in wall niches.

Talat Tonlamyai

MARKET

(Map p236; Th Praisani; ☉24hr) Facing the river, the city's main fresh **flower market** is locally called *gàht dōrk mái*. The arm-width

78	Chiangmai Saloon.....	G6	Shopping	
79	Coffee Lovers	A5		Backstreet Books
80	da Stefano.....	F4		(see 117)
81	Dada Kafe.....	E5	111	Book Zone
82	Evening Food Stalls.....	C1	112	Chiang Mai Night Bazaar.....
83	Evening Vendors.....	A5	113	Chiang Mai Night Bazaar
84	Galare Food Centre.....	H5		Building
	Ginger Kafe.....	(see 87)		H5
85	Good Health Store.....	G7	114	Dor Dek Gallery.....
86	Heuan Phen	B5	115	Elements.....
87	House	E2	116	Freedom Wheel Chairs
88	Jerusalem Falafel.....	E5		Workshop
89	Juicy 4U.....	E5	117	Gecko Books
90	Lert Ros.....	E4	118	Gecko Books
91	Mangswirat Kangreuanjam.....	B3	119	Gecko Books
	Moxie	(see 37)	120	Herb Basics
92	Nayok Fa	D3	121	HQ Paper Maker
93	New Delhi	D3		Kesorn.....
94	Pak Do Restaurant.....	A4		(see 129)
95	Pho Vieng Chane.....	D4	122	KukWan Gallery
96	Pum Pui Italian Restaurant.....	E6	123	La Luna Gallery
	Rachamanka.....	(see 29)	124	Lost Book Shop
97	Ratana's Kitchen.....	F4	125	Lost Heavens
	Safe House Court	(see 55)	126	Nova
98	Talat Pratu Chiang Mai.....	C7	127	On the Road Books.....
99	Talat Somphet.....	E2	128	Pantip Plaza
100	Taste From Heaven.....	F4	129	Siam Celadon
	Tea House.....	(see 129)	130	Suriwong Book Centre.....
101	Tianzi Tea House	G7	131	Travel Shoppe.....
				E4
Drinking			Information	
102	Archers.....	D3	132	Baan Kingkaew Orphanage.....
103	Black Canyon Coffee.....	E4		C7
104	John's Place.....	E5	Transport	
105	Kafe.....	E3	133	Cacti Bike.....
	Mix Bar	(see 37)	134	Dang Bike Hire
	Pinte Blues Pub	(see 75)		Mr Mechanic.....
106	Rooftop Bar	F4		(see 105)
107	UN Irish Pub.....	E3	135	North Wheels
108	Writer's Club & Wine Bar.....	C4	136	Pratu Chiang Mai Bus Stop.....
			137	SM Travel.....
			138	Sörng•tãa•ou Stop.....
			139	Tony's Big Bikes
				E5
Entertainment				
109	Inter	F4		
110	North Gate Jazz Co-op.....	C1		
	Thapae Boxing Stadium	(see 64)		

bundles of asters, roses and coreopsis are ripened in the cooler climate of the surrounding highlands and brought to market at night to avoid the wilting daytime heat. Varieties that need even colder temperatures, such as pussy willow, are grown by hill-tribe villages perched at higher altitudes. Then there are the voluptuous tropical flowers, like jasmine, orchids and lotus

buds, which flourish in the heat. The flower market is always busy but even more so during citywide festivals, such as Loi Krathong and, of course, the Flower Festival.

Wiang Kum Kam

HISTORICAL RUINS

(เวียงกุมกาม; ☎8am-5pm) These excavated ruins offer an easy trip into the country. Climb aboard one of the horse-drawn carriages

(200B) and relax into the mellow pace of an old-fashioned conveyance. The driver typically passes pleasantries with the locals who live among the old ruins, which are mainly half-buried brick foundations spread out over 3 sq km. The actual ruins are of more historical importance than spectacle but it is the peaceful surrounding **village** that completes the attraction.

Wiang Kum Kam was the earliest historical settlement in the Chiang Mai area and was established by the Mon as a satellite town for the Hariphunchai kingdom. It was occupied by Phaya Mengrai in 1286 and used as the Lanna capital for 10 years before the construction of Chiang Mai. The city was abandoned in the 16th century due to massive flooding when Mae Ping changed its course.

Over 1300 inscribed stone slabs, bricks, bells and *chedi* have been excavated at the site. The most important archaeological discovery has been a four-piece inscribed stone slab, now on display in the Chiang Mai National Museum. The early 11th-century inscriptions on this slab indicate that the Thai script predates King Ramkhamhaeng's famous Sukhothai inscription (introduced in 1293) by 100 or more years.

One way to reach Wiang Kum Kam is to hire a bicycle; follow Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun (Rte 106) southeast for approximately 3km and look for a sign to the ruins on the right. From this junction it's another 2km. You could also hire a *túk-túk* or red *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* for around 100B (one way).

Chinatown

HISTORICAL DISTRICT

West of the market, along Th Chang Moi, is the city's small Chinatown, most obviously marked by a flamboyant Chinese-style **arch** and the typical two-storey **shophouses** of Southeast Asia's mercantile districts. Most stores are family-owned businesses selling bulk household products and yellow-gold jewellery. There are also the old apothecaries smelling of tree bark and dried herbs. The area is home to two Chinese **temples** and clan houses and hosts an annual Chinese New Year parade. A small population of Sikhs also live in this area and specialise in selling bolts of fabric. They worship at the nearby **Namdhari Sikh Temple** (Map p240; Th Ratchawong), catering to the Namdhari sect of Sikhism.

Talat Warorot

MARKET

(ตลาดวโรรษ; Map p240; cnr Th Chang Moi & Th Praisani; ☺6am-5pm) Following Th Chang Moi towards the river you'll discover a beehive of activity around Chiang Mai's oldest and most famous marketplace, Talat Warorot. In northern Thai dialect, the market is known as *gǎht lǎo-ang* (northern Thai for 'great market'). Technically there are two multistorey buildings that comprise the market, but so much activity surrounds these enclosures and spreads into the neighbouring area that it is hard to define Talat Warorot's specific boundaries.

Outside the market buildings are fruit and vegetable vendors selling highland varieties that are considered exotic to central Thais. Parked nearby are an extinct species in Bangkok: *sǎhm-lór* (also spelt *sáamláw*)

RIVER CRUISES

Mae Ping is rural and rustic in most parts with grassy banks and small stilted houses crouching alongside. There are several day and evening boat tours that explore this waterway.

» **Scorpion Tailed River Cruise** (Map p240; ☎08 1960 9398; www.scorpiontailed.com; Th Charoenrat; fare 500B) focuses on the history of the river using traditional-style craft, known as scorpion-tailed boats. Informative cruises (five daily) last 1½ hours. They depart from Wat Srikhong pier near Rim Ping Condo and stop for a snack at the affiliated Scorpion Tailed Boat Village.

» **Mae Ping River Cruises** (☎0 5327 4822; www.maepingrivercruise.com; Wat Chaimongkhon, 133 Th Charoen Prathet) offers two-hour daytime cruises (450B) in roofed long-tail boats. The boats stop at a small farm for fruit snacks after touring the countryside. The 1½-hour Thai dinner cruise (550B) offers a set menu, and departs daily at 7pm. The departure point is across the river from Ban Kaew Guest House; it's well sign-posted.

» **Riverside Bar & Restaurant** (p270) also has a post-dinner cruise.

drivers who shuttle home shoppers burdened with produce.

If you push your way through the thick barrier of vendor stalls, you'll find the interior market selling pickled products, pre-made curries and packaged *kâap mǎo* (pork rinds). It's an especially good market for cheap clothes, fabrics and cooking implements, as well as inexpensive cosmetics and handicrafts.

Wat Ketkaram

NEIGHBOURHOOD

(แม่โป่ง/วัดเกตการาม; Map 237; Th Charoenrat) Chiang Mai's exalted river is **Mae Ping** (see boxed text, p244). A community of Chinese traders and Western missionaries populated the eastern riverbank directly across from Talat Warorot. Today the neighbourhood is called Wat Ket, the nickname of the nearby temple, Wat Ketkaram. The temple was built in the 15th century and houses an eclectic museum of attic-like treasures.

If Th Charoenrat had footpaths, this area would rival the old city for its ancient ambience and tourist appeal. But speeding traffic claims the narrow space between buildings. Instead, it's best to dive deeper into the neighbourhood by going along one of the little lanes off Th Charoenrat and behind the temple.

SOUTH OF THE OLD CITY

The southern part of the city is a mix of quaint antique districts and impersonal modern spaces. Th Wualai is renowned for its **silver shops** and is often filled with the tapping sound of a decorative pattern being imprinted onto a plate of silver (or, more often, aluminium). One of the best ways to observe Th Wualai is to come at the start of the Saturday Walking Street when traffic is blocked off for pedestrians.

Saturday Walking Street

MARKET

(ถนนเดินวันเสาร์; Map p236; Th Wualai; ☀️4pm-midnight Sat) The Saturday Walking Street has developed a reputation of having more authentic handicrafts and being less commercial than the Sunday Walking Street. This might be a bit of an exaggeration as most vendors work both markets without exclusion. But the atmospheric old neighbourhood with its silver shops and old ladies wrapped up in Thai silk does give it an authenticity. It's also slightly less hectic, making an evening stroll a bit more pleasant.

REACHING OUT TO THE KIDS

If you've some time on your hands, are good with kids, and would like to help some of Chiang Mai's most disadvantaged, consider putting a smile on the face of a young orphan at **Baan Kingkaew Orphanage** (☎️0 5327 5650; www.baan-kingkaew-orphanage.org; 75 Wualai Rd). Opening its doors over 40 years ago, the centre now has around 50 kids aged under 10 and uses qualified carers but also appreciates the time of volunteers. One month is the minimum time required for a voluntary stint. You'll need to fill out an application (call in to pick one up) and go through a rigorous interview process with the director.

Duties include care-giving for early childhood children twice a day: morning and after 3.30pm. Volunteers also help out with the laundry. The orphanage has a fairly central location, not far from the old city down the Saturday Walking Street.

Wat Sisuphan

TEMPLE

(วัดศรีสุพรรณ; Map p240; Soi 2, Th Wualai; donations appreciated) This wát was founded in 1502, but little remains of the original structures except for some teak pillars and roof beams in the *wi-hahn*. The **murals** inside show an interesting mix of Taoist, Zen and Theravada Buddhist elements. The *ubosot* (chapel) next door is allegedly the only silver ordination hall in Thailand (although technically they were using a mix of aluminium, compounded silver and pure silver), and the result of the recent renovation is magnificent. The temple hosts a monk chat and meditation instruction (see boxed text, p250). Wat Sisuphan is one of the few wát in Chiang Mai where you can see the Poy Luang (also known as Poy Sang Long) Festival, a Shan-style group ordination of young boys as Buddhist novices, in late March.

WEST OF THE OLD CITY

Th Nimmanhaemin is the city's most stylish avenue, a busy multilane road with a number of small residential lane offshoots, where 1970s garden houses have been converted into style-conscious commercial concerns, mainly nightlife.

THE PLIGHT OF CHIANG MAI'S MIGRANT WORKERS

When travelling in the 'land of smiles,' exactly whose smiles do we encounter? Thailand is not only home to a diverse range of indigenous ethnic groups, but also to an estimated three million migrant workers from neighbouring countries, notably Laos, Cambodia and, especially, Myanmar (Burma).

Refugees from Myanmar (Burma) have fled across the Thai border since the 1980s, fleeing the armed conflict taking place in ethnic areas and the persecution of pro-democracy activists. Eight IDP (internally displaced persons) camps on the Burmese side of the border provide a little security to 20,000 people and nine camps in Thailand provide more security, but few rights to 100,000, mostly Karen, refugees. There is also an estimated half a million IDPs still in Burma.

In the absence of formal migration channels, many more Burmese live and work in Thailand as undocumented migrant workers – now a significant feature of the Thai economy and society. Over the last 20 years the Thai government has allowed migrants who entered the country without documents to register annually for a temporary work permit. More recently the government has embarked on a complicated process to request the countries of origin to verify the nationality of the migrants and issue them with temporary passports.

Many migrant workforces, often consisting entirely of Burmese, work in exploitative conditions: employers do not bother to pay the minimum wage, with full knowledge of the difficulties their employees will face if they attempt to seek redress. Undocumented migrant workers also live in constant fear of arrest, detention and deportation from the authorities.

There are an estimated 150,000 to 200,000 migrant workers in Chiang Mai Province alone. The vast majority are from Shan State, which borders northern Thailand. Shan migrants find work on construction sites in Chiang Mai, building housing estates, condominiums, shopping malls and prisons. Take a glimpse at the makeshift shelters on the next construction site you pass and you'll get an idea of the conditions migrants are forced to live in. If the building has no safety nets, if there is flimsy bamboo scaffolding, and if the workers are barefooted, then it is migrant workers doing the building for little more than US\$3 a day. And don't be surprised to see women working on construction sites – it is very common in Thailand.

Women migrants also find employment as domestic workers in private households in Chiang Mai. Their living and working conditions are totally dependent on their employer as they have no protection under the labour laws. But they are not all prepared to be exploited and abused: one clever young lady noticed how her employer, who hadn't paid her for two years, always proudly showed off a trophy to visitors. Unable to read Thai, she had no idea what it said, but she laboriously copied down each letter and carefully hid it away. One day she made a run for it, and showed some NGO workers what she had written. It was an award to the president of a respected local club giving his full name. Needless to say, she gained a little leverage in her negotiations with him for her unpaid salary.

A large number of migrants also work in the sprawling orange and lychee orchards that stretch across northern Chiang Mai's Fang district. They live in bamboo huts in small communities and work taking care of the trees, and picking and sorting the fruit. A lot of the work involves dangerous pesticides, and proper training or protective clothing is rarely given.

The needs of migrant communities range from information about their rights, to assistance with their health, education and welfare needs. Several NGOs offer dedicated services and/or carry out advocacy work to try and meet these needs. **MAP Foundation** (www.mapfoundationcm.org) and **Migrants from Mekong Neighbourhood (MMN)**; (www.mekongmigration.org) are two such organisations based in Chiang Mai. If you are interested in helping migrant workers, or in learning more about these issues, contact these organisations via their websites.

*Reiko Harima – Migrants from Mekong Neighbourhood
Jackie Pollock – MAP Foundation*



Best Friend Library

LIBRARY

(Map p248; 302/2 Soi 13, Th Nimmanhaemin; ☉11.30am-8pm Mon-Sat) A nonprofit lending library and resource centre for Myanmar (Burma), this place also sells books, videos and other items about Myanmar (Burma) with profits being ploughed back into charities working directly with Burmese refugees and street children.

Wat U Mong

TEMPLE

(วัดอุโมงค์; Map p236; Soi Wat U Mong, Th Khlong Chonprathan; donations appreciated) If you've never visited a **forest wát**, you should make the trek to this temple. Not only does it offer a secluded sylvan setting, considered an important component for meditation in the forest wát tradition, it is also famous for its interconnecting **tunnels** built underneath the main *chedi* terrace.

The temple was first used during Phaya Mengrai's rule in the 14th century. The brick-lined tunnels were allegedly fashioned around 1380 for the clairvoyant monk Thera Jan. The monastery was abandoned at a later date and wasn't reactivated until a local Thai prince sponsored a restoration in the late 1940s. The since-deceased Ajan Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, a well-known monk and teacher at southern Thailand's Wat Suannmok, sent a number of monks to re-establish a monastic community at Wat U Mong in the 1960s.

A marvellously grisly image of the fasting Buddha – ribs, veins and all – can be seen in the grounds on top of the tunnel hill, along with a very large and highly venerated *chedi*. Also on the grounds is a small artificial lake, surrounded by *gù-dì* (monastic cottages).

Wat U Mong is accessible from a series of small lanes off Th Suthep near Chiang Mai University. Once you reach the university, keep an eye out for signs pointing the way. Note that there is another temple named Wat U Mong in Chiang Mai. To make sure a *sǒng-tǎa-ou* or túk-túk driver understands you want this one ask for 'Wat U Mong Thera Jan'.

Wat Suan Dok

TEMPLE

(วัดสวนดอก; Map p236; Th Suthep; donations appreciated) Built on a former flower garden in 1373, this temple is not as architecturally interesting as the temples in the old city but it does have a very powerful photographic attribute: the temple's collection of white-washed *chedi* sit in the foreground while the blue peaks of Doi Suthep and Doi Pui loom in the background.

Wat Suan Dok is also spiritually united with the temple that sits upon Doi Suthep thanks to an auspicious relic brought to Chiang Mai by Phra Sumana Thera, a visiting monk from Sukhothai. According to legend, the relic miraculously duplicated itself: one piece was enshrined in the temple's large central *chedi* (recently wrapped in gold sheet), while the other was used as a 'guide' for the founding of Wat Doi Suthep. This main *chedi* is a textbook example of the Lanna period that began to be influenced by Sukhothai. The other *chedi* on the grounds contain the ashes of various members of the Lanna royal family.

Today Wat Suan Dok is home to a large population of resident monks and novices, many of them students at the monastery's Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University. Foreigners often come to Wat Suan Dok for the popular monk chat (see boxed text, p250) and the English-language meditation retreats.

Chiang Mai University

UNIVERSITY

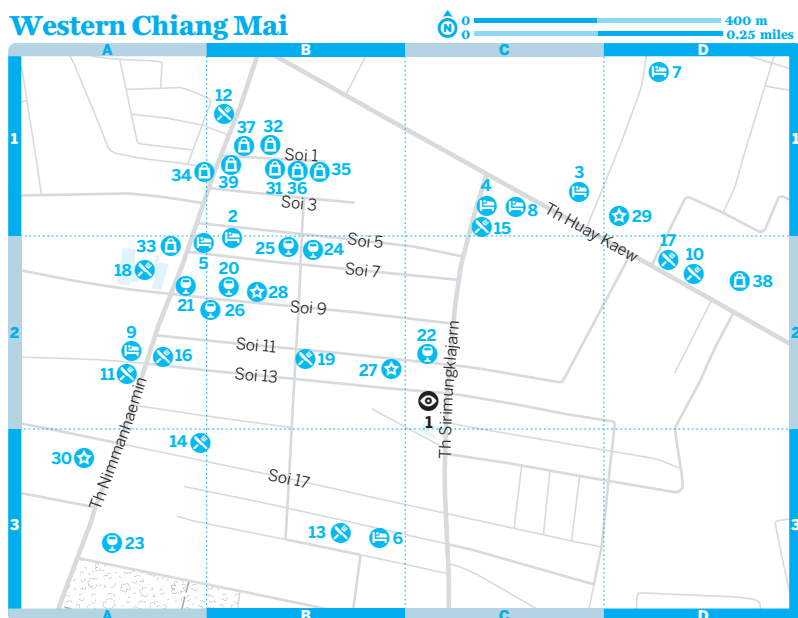
(มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่; CMU; Map p236; Th Huay Kaew) The city's principal public university was established in 1964. The main campus occupies a 2.9 sq km wedge of land about 2km west of the city centre that has preserved much of its original forest character. Architecturally the campus buildings are soot-stained boxes, but the verdant environment achieves a distinctively Thai version of an idyllic collegiate setting. The best way for visitors to enjoy the campus is to ride a bicycle through it – there are bike lanes throughout, and cafes to stop at for a refreshment break.

There are two main entrances into the campus on Th Suthep and Th Huay Kaew. When giving directions, Thais often refer to the university area on Th Suthep as '*lǎng mor*' (behind the university) and on Th Huay Kaew as '*nǎh mor*' (in front of the university).

Chiang Mai University Art Museum

(Th Nimmanhaemin; admission free; ☉9am-5pm Tue-Sun) The museum displays temporary exhibitions of contemporary Thai and international art. Local artists, such as Tanakarn Songlin and Tiwawan Srisombat, were the best of the bunch we saw, bringing everyday activity to life with poignancy and joy. Although the temporary exhibits can be a bit hit and miss (there's no permanent collection), we saw a lot of creativity in the works

Western Chiang Mai



on display. The exhibits in the university grounds outside the museum shop are permanent – we like the crab-creature made of old wood and rusted metal. The museum is near the intersection of Th Suthep and Th Klong Chonprathan.

Chiang Mai Zoo

(สวนสัตว์/แหล่งเพาะพันธุ์ไม้ป่าเขตร้อนเชียงใหม่; off Map p236; ☎0 5322 1179; www.chiangmaizoo.com; 100 Th Huay Kaew; adult/child 100/50B; ☀8am–5pm) At the foot of Doi Suthep, the Chiang Mai Zoo occupies a lush park setting and boasts a fairly comprehensive assortment of animals plus two special attractions (pandas and an aquarium) that require separate admission fees. The **aquarium** (adult/child 520/390B) reportedly has Asia's longest viewing tunnel (measuring 113m) and replicates the water environments of Thailand, from the northern rivers to the mangrove swamps and coastal oceans, as well as the Amazon basin.

Except for the baby elephant on a walkway for entertainment of visitors (with leg chained, which was disturbing) and some animals obviously in distress (ie walking around in circles) in their concrete enclosures, most animals seem fairly well treated here.

The zoo also has a parking garage that costs 10B for motorcycles and bicycles and 50B for cars or trucks.

Chiang Mai Night Safari

(เชียงใหม่ไนท์ซาฟารี; ☎0 5399 9000; www.chiangmainightsafari.com; Rte 121/Th Klong Chonprathan; ☀11am–11pm) This attraction is open during the day but the real action happens at night during the **Predator Prowl** and **'Savannah Safari'** (adult/child 500/300B), when an open-sided tram transports visitors through the parkland. The English-language tram leaves at 7.45pm and 9.30pm and the tour takes about two hours. The night safari differs from the Chiang Mai Zoo in that some animals – like wildebeests, giraffes, white rhinoceroses and zebras – are allowed to roam and often come right up to the bus. In the 'Predator Prowl' section, the tigers, lions, Asiatic black bears and crocodiles are kept at a safe distance by deep trenches.

During the day you can visit the **Jaguar Trail** (adult/child 100/50B) encircling Swan Lake, a 1.2km walk where over 50 species (ranging from rabbits to cranes) are generally not in cages, except of course the trail's namesake animal.

The Night Safari is about 12km from central Chiang Mai and a *sǒng-tǎa-ou* should

ZOO

Western Chiang Mai

📍 Sights

- 1 Best Friend Burmese Library..... C2

🛏 Sleeping

- 2 Baan Say-La B2
 3 Dome C1
 4 H C1
 5 Miso A2
 6 Pann Malee Home..... B3
 7 Sakulchai..... D1
 8 Sweet Room C1
 9 Yesterday The Village..... A2

🍴 Eating

- Ai Sushi (see 17)
 10 Amazing Sandwich..... D2
 11 Burmese Restaurant..... A2
 12 Hong Tauw Inn B1
 13 I-Berry B3
 14 Khun Churn..... A3
 Lemontree (see 17)
 15 Ninja Ramen & Japanese Food..... C1
 16 Salad Concept..... A2
 17 Salsa Kitchen..... D2
 18 Smoothie Blues..... A2
 19 Su Casa B2

☕ Drinking

- 20 94° Coffee B2
 21 At 9 Bar A2
 22 Dayli..... C2
 23 Glass Onion A3
 Impresso Espresso Bar (see 19)
 24 Outdoors..... B2
 25 Pinocchio's B2
 26 Wawee Coffee..... B2

🎮 Entertainment

- 27 Bridge Bar B2
 28 Monkey Club B2
 29 Sudsanan..... D1
 30 Warm-Up A3

🛍 Shopping

- 31 Adorn with Studio Naenna..... B1
 32 Aka..... B1
 33 Chabaa..... A2
 Elephants..... (see 36)
 34 Ginger..... A1
 35 Gongdee Gallery..... B1
 36 Kachama..... B1
 37 Koland..... B1
 38 Shinawatra D2
 39 Srisanpanmai..... B1

cost about 100B. You can also book this through a tour agency that handles hotel transfer.

NORTH OF THE OLD CITY

Sights north of the old city through Pratu Chang Pheuak (the 'white elephant gate', a reference to the elephant who carried the sacred relic to Doi Suthep) are less of a tourist draw, which is a draw in itself for some. These sights tend to be too far spread out to visit on foot; it is advisable to hire your own transport.

Wat Jet Yot

TEMPLE

(วัดเจ็ดยอด; Map p236; Th Superhighway) Dedicated temple-spotters are the prime candidates for Wat Jet Yot. It was built to host the eighth World Buddhist Council in 1477, a momentous occasion for the Lanna capital. To the back of the temple compound are the ruins of the old *wi-hahn*, which was supposed to be a replica of the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya, India, but the proportions don't match up. Some scholars assume that the blueprint for the temple must have come

from a small votive tablet depicting the Mahabodhi in distorted perspective.

Although much of the decorative stucco work is gone, you can still count the *jèt yôrt* (seven spires) that represent the seven weeks Buddha was supposed to have spent in Bodhgaya after his enlightenment. Of the original stucco relief, a few intact Bodhisattva (Buddhist saints, usually associated with Mahayana Buddhism) depictions remain on the outer walls.

Wat Chiang Yeun

TEMPLE

(วัดเชียงใหม่; Map p236; Th Mani Nopharat) Another unique local temple is 16th-century Wat Chiang Yeun, just northeast of Pratu Chang Pheuak. Besides the large northern-style *chedi* here, the main attraction is an old **Burmese colonial-style gate** and **pavilion** on the eastern side of the school grounds attached to the wát. This area of Chiang Mai was historically settled by Shan people and the shops still maintain that ethnic identity, catering to Shan and Burmese temple-goers with such products as pickled tea leaves (*mêe-ang* in Thai) and Shan-style noodles.

MONK CHAT

If you're curious about Buddhism, Chiang Mai is a great place to learn about its teachings and rituals, as well as Thai culture and the life of a monk. Some of the temples in town offer a 'monk chat', where a resident monk or novice fields questions from foreigners. This simple exchange gives them a chance to practise their English while answering questions about daily routines, Buddhist teachings or even how monks stay wrapped up in their robes. Remember that it is respectful to dress modestly: cover your shoulders and knees. Women should take care not to touch the monks or their belongings or to pass anything directly to them.

Wat Suan Dok (Map p236; www.monkchat.net; Th Suthep; ☉5-7pm Mon, Wed & Fri) has a dedicated room for foreigners to interact with the monastic students. To find the room, enter the wát from the main entrance and walk 100m or so into the temple grounds.

Wat Chedi Luang (Map p240; Th Phra Pokklao; ☉1-6pm Mon-Fri) and **Wat Sisuphan** (Map p236; 100 Th Wualai; ☉5.30-7pm Tue, Thu & Sat) both have monk chat tables.

Wat Ku Tao

TEMPLE

(วัดคูท้าว; Map p236; Soi 6, Th Chang Pheauk) North of the moat, Wat Ku Tao dates from 1613 and has a unique *chedi* that looks like a pile of diminishing spheres, a Tai Lü design common in Yunnan, China. The *chedi* is said to contain the ashes of Tharawadi Min, a son of the Burmese king Bayinnaung, ruler of Lanna from 1578 to 1607.

Chiang Mai National Museum

MUSEUM

(พิพิธภัณฑสถานแห่งชาติเชียงใหม่; Map p236; ☐0 5322 1308; www.thailandmuseum.com; off Th Superhighway; admission 100B; ☉9am-4pm Wed-Sun) Operated by the Fine Arts Department and established in 1973, the Chiang Mai National Museum functions as the primary caretaker of Lanna artefacts and as the curator of northern Thailand's history. This museum is a nice complement to the municipally run Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre (p238) because you'll find more art and artefacts here and the scope of the exhibits reaches beyond the city limits. The best curated section of the museum is the **Lanna art** section, which displays a selection of Buddha images in all styles, and explains the different periods and influences. Apart from this upstairs exhibit, the museum is a bit lacklustre, although worth a visit to orient your historical perspective of northern Thailand.

Tribal Museum

MUSEUM

(พิพิธภัณฑชาชาวเขา; ☐0 5321 0872; tribal-museum-chiangmai.com; off Th Chang Pheauk) Overlooking a lake in Suan Ratchamangkhala on the northern outskirts of the city, this octagonal museum houses a collection of handicrafts, costumes, jewellery, ornaments, household

utensils, agricultural tools, musical instruments and ceremonial paraphernalia. The museum was closed for renovations at the time of research.

Huay Teung Thao Reservoir

RESERVOIR

(อ่างเก็บน้ำห้วยตึงเฒ่า; admission 20B; ☉8am-sunset) Thais love lounging by the water and this sizeable reservoir, at the northwestern foot of Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, has become more than just a piece of infrastructure. The banks are dotted with floating bamboo huts (10B per person), where Thais come to snack on fried bugs (another reservoir pastime), share a bottle of whisky and perfect the art of relaxation. The reservoir is about 12km northwest of the city. Travelling by car or motorcycle you can reach Huay Teung Thao by driving 10km north on Rte 107 (follow signs towards Mae Rim), then west 2km past an army camp to the reservoir.

DOI SUTHEP-PUI NATIONAL PARK

อุทยานแห่งชาติดอยสุเทพ-ปุย

Looming over the city like guardian spirits and providing a sanctuary of forest and mountain cool air, Chiang Mai's sacred peaks, **Doi Suthep** (1676m) and **Doi Pui** (1685m) were used by the city's founders as a divine compass in locating an auspicious position. Suthep was named after the hermit Sudeva, who lived on the mountain's slopes for many years, and is the site of Chiang Mai's holy temple Wat Phra That Doi Suthep.

Portions of the mountains form a 265-sq-km **national park** (☐0 5321 0244; adult/child under 14yr 100/50B, car 30B; ☉8am-sunset) that contains a mix of wilderness, **hill-tribe villages** and tourist attractions,

including Wat Phra That Doi Suthep. Despite human encroachment, the park is still an excellent forest playground for city dwellers. Most people stick to the main road, visiting the temple, the winter palace and one of the touristy Hmong villages, altogether bypassing the forested interior.

The eastern side of the mountain stays green and cool almost year-round. The mountain ascends from the humid lowlands into the cool (and sometimes even cold) cloud belt with moss growing on the curbs and mist wafting across the road. Thriving in the diverse climate are more than 300 **bird species** and nearly 2000 species of **ferns** and **flowering plants**. During the rainy season, **butterflies** bloom as abundantly as the flowers.

There are **hiking** and **mountain-biking** trails as well as **camping**, **birdwatching** and waterfall spotting. One of the most scenic waterfalls is **Nam Tok Monthathon** (the park admission fee is collected here), 2.5km off the paved road to Doi Suthep. Pools beneath the falls hold water year-round, although swimming is best during or just after the annual monsoon. Close to the base of the mountain, **Nam Tok Wang Bua Bahn** is free, and full of frolicking locals, although it is more of a series of rapids than a falls.

For off-road mountain biking, the park has technical single-track trails that were old hunting and transport routes used by hill-tribe villagers. The routes are never crowded and provide hours of downhill. Because the trails aren't well marked it is advisable to join a guided mountain-biking tour; see p252 for more information on activities.

The park fee is collected at some of the park's waterfalls. There is no park fee charged to visit the attractions along the main road, though the attractions have their own admission prices.

Accommodation (www.dnp.go.th; camping 60-90B, bungalows 400-2500B) in the national park includes smart bungalows, about 1km north of the temple by the park headquarters and the Doi Pui campground, near the mountain summit.

The park is about 16km northwest of central Chiang Mai and is accessible via shared *sǎrng-tǎa-ou* that leave from the main entrance of Chiang Mai University on Th Huay Kaew. One-way fares start at 40B and increase from there depending on the destination within the park and the number of passengers. You can also charter a *sǎrng-tǎa-ou* (passenger pick-up truck)

for about 500B (round-trip) or rent a motorcycle (check your travel insurance) for much less. *Sǎrng-tǎa-ou* also depart from Pratu Chang Pheuak and the Chiang Mai Zoo. Cyclists (who are very fit) can also make the 13km ascent to the temple – preferably either early in the morning or in the late evening when traffic is diminished.



Wat Phra That Doi Suthep TEMPLE

(วัดพระธาตุดอยสุเทพ; admission 30B) Like a beacon projecting a calming blanket on the urban plains below, Wat Suthep is seen clearly from Chiang Mai, majestically perched atop Doi Suthep's summit. It is one of the north's most sacred temples, and Thai pilgrims flock here to make merit to the Buddhist relic enshrined in the picturesque golden *chedi*. Offering sublime city views, when the clouds and smoke-dust haze (March-June) permit, the temple also has an interesting collection of Lanna art and architecture.

The temple was first established in 1383 under King Keu Naone and enjoys a fantastically mystical birth story. A visiting monk from Sukhothai instructed the Lanna king to take the twin of a miraculous relic (enshrined at Wat Suan Dok) to the mountain and establish a temple. The relic was mounted on the back of a white elephant, which was allowed to wander until it 'chose' a site on which a wát could be built to enshrine it. The elephant stopped and died at a spot on Doi Suthep, 13km west of Chiang Mai, where the temple was built in the year of the goat.

The temple is reached by a strenuous *naga*-balustrade staircase of 306 steps, a feature that incorporates aspects of medita-

THE LONG WALK

At the start of every academic year in July, the freshman class from Chiang Mai University makes the annual pilgrimage on foot to Wat Suthep. It is a long-time tradition that fills the winding mountain road with close to 10,000 exuberant students and faculty members. The purpose of the trek is to introduce the new students to the spirit of the city, believed to reside in the mountain, and to make merit to the revered Buddha relic at Wat Suthep. But it is also a chance for the students to introduce themselves to each other and make friends that might last a lifetime.

tion with a cardio workout. (For the less fit, there's a tram for 20B.) You'll first reach an open-air terrace filled with important statues and shrines documenting the history of the temple. Near a signed jackfruit tree is a shrine to Sudeva, the hermit who lived on the mountain, and nearby is a statue of the white elephant who carried the relic up the mountain slope. Follow the walkway around in the clockwise direction to reach a viewpoint and a small sanctuary dedicated to the king who established the temple.

A second set of stairs leads to the main cloister and the temple's famously photographed **gold-plated chedi**, topped by a five-tiered umbrella erected in honour of the city's independence from Burma and its union with Thailand. It is the *chedi* (and the sacred Buddha relic enshrined inside) not a resident Buddha image that attracts the majority of worshippers.

Within the monastery compound, the **International Buddhism Center** conducts a variety of religious outreach programs for visitors; see p255 for more information.

Phra Tammak Bhu Bhing

TEMPLE

(พระตำหนักภูพิงก์; Bhu Bhing Palace; admission 50B; ☉8.30-11.30am & 1-3.30pm) About 4km beyond the temple is Phra Tammak Phu Bhing, a winter palace for the royal family surrounded by gardens that are open to the public. It closes if the royal family is visiting, but that's not very often. The gardens specialise in cool-weather flowers, like roses, which are exotic to Thais. More interesting is the **water reservoir** brought to life by dancing fountains moving in sync to musical compositions by the king. Though not a must, the **gardens** are good for 'nature sightseers' who like their forests to have paved footpaths.

Hmong Villages

CULTURAL

หมู่บ้านฮมวง

The road that passes the palace splits off to the left, stopping at the peak of Doi Pui. From there, a road proceeds for a couple of kilometres to **Ban Doi Pui**, a Hmong hill-tribe village. Don't expect much evidence of village life here though – it is basically a tourist market selling Hmong crafts and souvenirs. There is a tiny **museum** (admission 10B) giving some information about hill tribes and opium production.

A more interesting Hmong village is **Ban Kun Chang Kian**, north of the Doi Pui campground. Instead of going left on the road past the palace head right. The road is

paved just past the campground and then for the last 500m or so it is a bumpy dirt track. To save wear and tear, you can park at the campground's visitor centre and walk from there to enjoy the ridgeline and the pink flowering trees (called '*pá-yah sěua kròhng*'). You'll find a basic village-run coffee house surrounded by coffee plants that are harvested in January.



Activities

The surrounding mountains, rivers and byways boast a wave of adrenaline sports that have begun to eclipse the traditional trekking tour.

The countryside surrounding Chiang Mai is exceptional for two-wheeled outings. The city's closest green space, Doi Suthep (p250) is gaining its own fame for off-road **mountain biking**. For **motorcyclists** and long-distance **cyclists**, the Mae Sa-Samoeng loop (p284) is the closest and most stunning escape into the mountains.

Chiang Mai is one of Thailand's most famous destinations for **elephant 'encounters'**. In the past, most elephant attractions were circus-like sideshows. But there has been a new sensitivity in recent times towards the quality of life for Thailand's emblematic animal, resulting in a diversification of attractions towards nature preserves and mahout-training schools.

Rock climbers head to Crazy Horse Butte, an impressive set of limestone cliffs located behind Tham Meuang On, near Sankamphaeng, 45km east of Chiang Mai. While the scenery isn't as stunning as Krabi's seaside cliffs, the ascents reward with pastoral views.

White-water rafting is also possible. Mae Taeng is north of Chiang Mai and carves a path through the Doi Chiang Dao National Park and the Huai Nam Dang National Park. The river is a wild and frothy white-water ride for nine months of the year (roughly from July to March), a surprisingly long season in this monsoonal climate. The 10km rafting route travels through grade II to grade IV, and some grade V, rapids. In one particularly thrilling stretch, the river drops almost 60m in about 1.5km. Following a heavy rain, especially in September, the river can become swollen and ferocious and drownings do occur. When choosing a white-water outfitter, ask about their safety standards and training (and check your travel insurance).

TREKKING IN CHIANG MAI

Thousands of visitors trek into the hills of northern Thailand each year hoping to see fantastic mountain scenery, interact with primitive cultures and ride elephants. Most come with an Indiana Jones sense of adventure but leave with disappointment: the actual walk through the jungle lasted less than an hour, the hill-tribe villagers were disinterested in the lowlanders and the other trekkers were boring.

Most companies operating out of Chiang Mai offer the same type of tour: a one-hour mini-bus ride to Mae Taeng or Mae Wang (depending on the duration of the trip), a brief hike to an elephant camp, a one-hour elephant ride to a waterfall, another hour rafting down a river and an overnight in or near a hill-tribe village. The day goes by pretty quickly and then you've got to entertain yourself among strangers from sunset to bedtime, without the usual social lubricants.

Chiang Mai is not the only base for hill-tribe treks but it is the most accessible. Most guest houses in Chiang Mai act as booking agents in exchange for a commission, which in turn subsidises the cheap room rates. One-day treks usually cost around 1000B, while multiday treks (three days and two nights) cost 1500B. Both prices include transport, guide and lunch; in the case of overnight trips, the price also includes lodging (prices will be a bit more in high season). More expensive treks that offer a better experience may be available; ask around.

For general tips on choosing a trekking company and places to go trekking, see boxed text, p253.



Flight of the Gibbon

ZIPLINING

(☎08 9970 5511; www.treetopasia.com; Mae Kampong; 3hr tours 3000B) This adventure outfit in Chiang Mai operates a zipline through the forest canopy some 1300m above sea level. Nearly 2km of wire with 18 staging platforms follow the ridgeline and mimic the branch-to-branch route a gibbon might take down the mountain. You can also tack on mountain biking (5800B), rock climbing (6300B), rafting (6500B) or hiking (7900B) over two days, which includes an overnight at a homestay in Mae Kampong (see p290), a pretty high-altitude village an hour's drive east from Chiang Mai.



Elephant Nature Park

ELEPHANT PARK

(Map p240; booking office ☎0 5320 8246; www.elephantnaturepark.org; 1 Th Ratchamankha; 1-/2-day tours 2500/5800B) Khun Lek (Sangduen Chailert) has won numerous awards for her elephant sanctuary in the Mae Taeng valley, 60km (1½-hour drive) from Chiang Mai. The forested area provides a semi-wild environment for the elephants that have been rescued from abusive situations or retired from a lifetime of work. Visitors can help wash the elephants and watch the herd but there is no show or riding. Volunteer work for up to four weeks (that includes helping to wash the elephants and provide their health care) is available – see the website for details.

Patara Elephant Farm

ELEPHANT PARK

(☎08 1992 2551; www.pataraelephantfarm.com; full-day tours 5800B) More expensive and more hands-on, Patara's farm has a slightly different focus than the Elephant Nature Park. The first mission is to combat the declining numbers of elephants in Thailand through a breeding program and to develop a safe tourism model. The six resident elephants are 'adopted' by the guests for the day. Activities with your elephant include feeding, bathing, learning basic mahout commands and riding to a waterfall. Tours are limited to six people and the fee includes hotel transfers. The farm is a 30-minute drive south of Chiang Mai in the Hang Dong area.

Baan Chang Elephant Park

ELEPHANT PARK

(☎0 5381 4174; www.baanchangelephantpark.com; full-day 1-2 person tours 4200B) Another good option, this place concentrates on educating visitors about elephants and their preservation – we've had good feedback about Baan Chang. Tours involve taking care of an elephant for a day and some training to learn about their behaviour and lifestyle (including feeding and bathing). While you'll ride bareback through the jungle, the centre is firmly against teaching elephants to perform tricks. The training program is in Mae Taeng, 50 minutes north of Chiang Mai.

PAMPERING & PUMPELLING

While there are a few truly exceptional spas in Chiang Mai, the city excels in a more modest category: old-fashioned Thai massage. The massage centre might be just a few mattresses on the floor, but the practitioner can bend, stretch and pummel knotted bodies into jelly without New Age gimmicks.

Many of the temples in the old city have a massage *sǎh-lah* (often spelt *sala*) on the grounds, continuing an ancient tradition of the monasteries being a repository for traditional knowledge and healing.

Chiang Mai Women's Prison Massage Centre (Map p240; 100 Th Ratwithi; foot/traditional massage 150-180B; ☎8am-4.30pm) offers fantastic full body and foot massages, performed by inmates at the women's prison as a part of their rehabilitation training program. Despite their incarceration, those working in the massage centre are due for release within six months. The money earned from these treatments goes directly to the prisoners for use after their release. Other rehabilitation initiatives include teaching sewing and cake baking – the results of which you'll find in the same building.

Ban Hom Samunphrai (☎0 5381 7362; www.homprang.com; 93/2 Moo 12; treatments 500-1300B) is a unique time capsule of old folk ways, 9km from Chiang Mai near the McKean Institute. Maw Hom ('Herbal Doctor') is a licensed herb practitioner and massage therapist. She runs a traditional herbal steam bath recreating what was once a common feature of rural villages. Traditional Thai massage is also available.

Thai Massage Conservation Club (Map p240; 99 Th Ratchamankha; massages 150-250B) employs only blind masseuses, who are considered to be expert practitioners because of their heightened sense of touch.

Dheva Spa (☎0 5388 8888; www.mandarinoriental.com/chiangmai/spa/; Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, 51/4 Th Chiang Mai-San Kamphaeng; treatments from 3500B), the grandest spa in all of Chiang Mai, is also a cheaper passport into the exclusive and stunning grounds of the luxurious Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi resort than a night's stay there would be. Try the *tok sen* massage, an old Lanna technique that uses a wooden gavel to tap on pressure points. Now you'll know how a piece of carved wood feels.

Oasis Spa (Map p240; ☎0 5392 0111; www.chiangmaioasis.com; 4 Th Samlan; treatments 1900-6500B) has a tranquil garden setting navigated by elevated walkways hosting private villas for single or couples treatments. If you've spa-ed elsewhere in Thailand, the Oasis will be a familiar friend, offering scrubs, wraps, massage and ayurvedic treatments.

Chiang Mai Rock Climbing Adventures

ROCK CLIMBING

(Map p240; ☎08 6911 1470; www.thailandclimbing.com; 55/3 Th Ratchaphakhinai; climbing course 2000-6500B) Maintains many of the climbing routes at Crazy Horse Buttress, and the expat owner publishes a guide to rock climbing in northern Thailand. If you prefer subterranean cliffs, it also leads caving trips in the same area. The office on Th Ratchaphakhinai has gear sales and rental, a partner-finding service and a bouldering wall for practice sessions. It offers introductory climbing courses for beginners and advanced training for multipitch climbs; trips include guides, gear, hotel transfers and lunch.

Peak

ROCK CLIMBING

(☎0 5380 0567; www.thepeakadventure.com; climbing course 1800-2500B) Teaches introductory and advanced rock-climbing courses at

Crazy Horse Buttress. The Peak also leads a variety of soft adventure trips, including quad biking, as well as trekking, white-water rafting and a jungle survival cooking course. Note it's best to book directly with the company, and not through a travel agent.

Siam River Adventures

RAFTING

(Map p240; ☎089 515 1917; www.siamrivers.com; 17 Th Ratwithi; tours from 1800B) Has the best safety reputation. The guides have swiftwater rescue training and additional staff are located at dangerous parts of the river with throw ropes. Trips can be combined with elephant trekking and village overnights. It also operates kayak trips.

Chiang Mai Mountain Biking

MOUNTAIN BIKING

(Map p240; ☎08 1024 7046; www.mountainbikingchiangmai.com; 1 Th Samlan; tours from 1450-2700B) Offers a variety of guided mountain

biking (as well as hike-and-bike) tours through Doi Suthep for all levels.

Click and Travel

CYCLING

(☎ 5328 1553; www.clickandtravelonline.com; tours 950-1500B; 🚲) Specialises in half-day and full-day bicycle tours of Chiang Mai. It is a pedal-powered (and family friendly) cultural trip, visiting temples and attractions outside of the city centre. Hotel transfer is included in the price; make arrangements online or via phone.

700-Year Anniversary Stadium

SWIMMING

(☎ 5311 2301; 185 Th Klong Chonprathan) Modern sports complex with Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Anantasiri Tennis Courts

TENNIS

(☎ 5322 2210; off Th Superhighway; 🕒 6am-8pm daily) The best public tennis facility in Chiang Mai. It's just off the Superhighway near the Chiang Mai National Museum.

Gymkhana Club

SPORTS CLUB

(☎ 5324 1035; www.chiangmaigymkhana.com; Th Ratuthit) Scenic sports and social club with squash and tennis courts, golf and driving range open to nonmembers for a day-use fee. It's just of the Chiang Mai-Lamphun Rd.

Centre of the Universe

SWIMMING

(www.therealcentreoftheuniverse.com) Chiang Mai's only saltwater swimming pool; it's 6km north of the city centre.

Namo

YOGA

(Map p240; ☎ 5332 6648; www.namochiangmai.com; 109/1 Th Moon Muang; classes 200B) Tucked away down a quiet lane near Tha Pae Gate, Nammo has drop-in yoga classes at 10.30am and 6pm from Monday to Friday. Also runs a half-day massage workshop.



Courses

Buddhist Meditation

The following temples offer *vipassana* meditation courses and retreats to English-language speakers. Participants here should dress in modest white clothes, which can typically be purchased from the temple. Following Buddhist precepts, there is no set fee but donations are appreciated. Peruse the various websites for course descriptions and daily routines.

International Buddhism Center

MEDITATION

(IBC; ☎ 5329 5012; www.fivethousandyears.org; Wat Phra That Doi Suthep) Headquartered within the temple grounds on Doi Suthep.

It offers beginner to advanced meditation retreats, lasting from three to 21 days.

Northern Insight Meditation Centre

MEDITATION

(☎ 5327 8620; www.watrampoeng.com; Wat Ram Poeng) Located 4km south of Chiang Mai and offers an intensive 26-day or longer course. Days start at 4am and meals are taken in silence. The formal name for Wat Ram Poeng is Wat Tapotaram. Requirements include bringing your own white underwear, an alarm clock, passport and passport photos; and an understanding and acceptance of the strict rules governing a stay here. See website for more.

Wat Sisuphan

MEDITATION

(Map p236; ☎ 5320 0332; 100 Th Wualai) Offers a two-hour introduction to meditation using the four postures: standing, walking, sitting and lying down.

Wat Suan Dok

MEDITATION

(Map p236; ☎ 5380 8411 ext 114; www.monkchat.net; Th Suthep) Offers a two-day meditation retreat every Tuesday to Wednesday. At the end of each month, the temple extends the retreat to a four-day period (Tuesday to Friday). Participants should register in advance and meet at Wat Suan Dok for transfer to the meditation centre, 15km northeast of Chiang Mai. Check the website for cancellation notices.

Cooking

Courses in Thai cuisine are another staple of Chiang Mai's vacation learning scene. Dozens of schools offer cooking classes, typically costing around 1000B a day, either at an in-town location, like an atmospheric old house, or out of town in a garden or farm setting. Classes are usually offered five or more times a week and the menu might vary each day. Students will learn about Thai culinary herbs and spices, tour a local market and prepare a set menu. Of course, you also get to eat the Thai food and travel home with a recipe booklet.

Asia Scenic Thai Cooking

COOKING

(Map p240; ☎ 5341 8657; www.asiascenic.com; 31 Soi 5, Th Ratchadamnoen) Run by Khun Gayray who speaks great English and has done some backpacking herself.

Baan Thai

COOKING

(Map p240; ☎ 5335 7339; www.baanthaicookery.com; 11 Soi 5, Th Ratchadamnoen) Has an in-town location where you can select which

dishes to prepare; most of their courses include a tour of a local market – very useful for identifying local fruit and veg.

Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School COOKING
(Map p240; ☎ 0 5320 6388; www.thaicookeryschool.com; booking office, 47/2 Th Moon Muang) One of Chiang Mai's first cooking schools holds classes in a rural setting outside of Chiang Mai. The school also has a 'master-class' with a northern Thai menu. A portion of the profits funds education of disadvantaged kids.

Gap's Thai Culinary Art School COOKING
(Map p240; ☎ 0 5327 8140; www.gaps-house.com; 3 Soi 4, Th Ratchadamnoen) Affiliated with the guest house Gap's House (where you can make your booking) and holds its classes out of town at the owner's house.

Thai Farm Cooking School COOKING
(Map p240; ☎ 08 7174 9285; www.thaifarmcooking.com; booking office, 2/2 Soi 5, Th Ratchadamnoen) Teaches cooking classes at its organic farm, located 17km outside of Chiang Mai.

Language

Being a university town, Chiang Mai fosters continuing education opportunities in Thai language.

American University Alumni LANGUAGE
(AUA; Map p240; ☎ 0 5327 8407; www.learnthaiinchiangmai.com; 73 Th Ratchadamnoen; group course 4200B) Conducts six-week Thai courses that work on mastering tones, small talk and basic reading and writing. Classes meet for two hours, Monday to Friday. Private instruction is also available.

Payap University LANGUAGE
(off Map p236; <http://ic.payap.ac.th>; Kaew Nawarat Campus, Th Kaew Nawarat) A private university founded by the Church of Christ of Thailand and offers an academic Thai course through the **foreign language centre** (☎ 0 5385 1478 ext 475), which covers all levels in 60/120-hour modules (8000/20,200B).

Thai Boxing

Lanna Muay Thai Boxing Camp BOXING
(Kiatbusaba; ☎ 0 5389 2102; www.lannamuaythai.com; 161 Soi Chang Khian, Th Huay Kaew; fees per day/month 400/8000B) Offers *moo-ay tai* (Thai boxing, also spelt *muay thai*) instruction to foreigners and Thais. Several Lanna students have won stadium bouts, including the famous transvestite boxer Parinya Kiat-

busaba. The camp is difficult to find; get a ride on a *túk-túk* or *sòrng-táa-ou*.

Thai Massage

The following are government accredited programs that will provide students with the fundamentals to practise Thai massage professionally. Some schools are also recognised as continuing education options by international body-work organisations.

Chetawan Thai Traditional Massage School MESSAGE
(☎ 0 5341 0360; www.watpomassage.com; 7/1-2 Soi Samud Lanna, Th Pracha Uthit; basic traditional course 8500B) Bangkok's Wat Pho massage school established the Chiang Mai branch outside of town near Rajabhat University.

Lek Chaiya MESSAGE
(Map p240; ☎ 0 5327 8325; www.nervetouch.com; 27-29 Th Ratchadamnoen; course from 5000B, 11/2 hr massage 550B) Khun Lek learned *jàp sên* (literally 'nerve touch'), a northern Thai massage technique akin to acupressure, from her mother and became a well-known practitioner before retiring and passing the business and the technique on to her son. Courses last from three to five days and cover about 50% of a traditional Thai massage course with the remainder dedicated to the nerve-touch technique and herbal therapies. To experience *jàp sên*, stop in for a massage either from an assistant (550B) or from Lek's son Jack (950B).

Old Medicine Hospital MESSAGE
(OMH; ☎ 0 5327 5085; www.thai.messageschool.ac.th; 78/1 Soi Siwaka Komarat, Th Wualai; 5-day course 6000B) The curriculum is very traditional, with a northern-Thai slant, and was one of the first to develop massage training for foreigners. There are two 10-day massage courses a month, as well as shorter foot and oil massage courses. Classes tend to be large from December to February, but smaller the rest of the year.

Thai Massage School of Chiang Mai MESSAGE, YOGA
(TMC; Map p240; ☎ 0 5385 4330; www.tmc.school.com; 203/6 Th Chiang Mai-Mae Jo; courses 6500-7500B) Northeast of town, has a solid, government-licensed massage curriculum. There are three foundation levels and an intensive teacher-training program. There's also a one-day Thai yoga program.

START WAT PHRA SINGH
FINISH CHIANG MAI WOMEN'S PRISON
DISTANCE 2.5KM
DURATION TWO TO THREE HOURS



Walking Tour Old City Temple Tour

No visit to Chiang Mai is complete without spending a sweaty day temple-spotting. This walking tour takes you to the old city's most famous temples. Start early before the day gets hot so that you can see the everyday uses of a temple: the comings and goings of monks, the prayer rituals of merit-makers and spotting which meditators are really asleep. Remember to dress modestly (covering shoulders and knees), take off your shoes when you enter a building and sit in the 'mermaid' position (with your legs tucked behind you) while you are observing the interior of a sanctuary.

Starting with the best, **1 Wat Phra Singh** is home to the city's most revered Buddha image (Phra Singh) and is an excellent example of Lanna architecture. Trot down Th Ratchadamnoen and turn right on Th Phra Pokklao to **2 Wat Chedi Luang**, another venerable temple. If you're starting to wonder what Buddhism is all about, go and have a chat with the monks at the north side of the *chedi*. Backtrack to charming **3 Wat Phan Tao**, a teak temple that is more photogenic than venerated. If it isn't too

hot, squeeze in one more temple by turning right on Th Ratchadamnoen and left on Th Ratchaphakhinai to **4 Wat Chiang Man**, the oldest wát in the city.

So much merit-making works up an appetite, but you're a little far from the city's main rice breaks. Instead you can use this opportunity to indulge your wheat tooth by continuing north on Th Ratchaphakhinai, and then turning right on Soi 9 to reach **5 Blue Diamond**, a popular expat antidote to rice. After fuelling up, head south on Th Ratchaphakhinai and turn right at Th Ratwithi where you can nod to the **6 Anusawari Sam Kasat**, the Three Kings Monument, on your way to the informative and air-conditioned **7 Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre**.

If your feet are aching, carry on along Th Ratwithi until you reach Chiang Mai Women's Prison, where you'll find the **8 Chiang Mai Women's Prison Massage Centre**. Don't attempt to enter the prison itself (unless you have something to confess!) but go to the building on the south side of the road with the 'Prison Shop' sign.

Festivals & Events

Chiang Mai is famous for the Flower Festival, Songkran and Loi Krathong; make your travelling arrangements far in advance during these periods.

Chiang Mai Red Cross and Winter Fair

FAIR

This 10-day festival is held behind the Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre from late December to early January and assumes a country-fair atmosphere, with food booths purveying northern Thai cuisine and cultural displays.

Flower Festival

FLOWERS

This agricultural celebration (called *têt-sà-gahn mái dōrk mái prà-dàp*) is held over a three-day period in early February and includes displays of flower arrangements, cultural performances and beauty pageants. The festival highlight is the parade that starts at Saphan Nawarat, travelling down Th Tha Phae and then all the way to Suan Buak Hat.

Chiang Mai Chinese New Year

NEW YEAR

The city's Chinatown heralds its cultural new year in February with a spotlight on Chinese food and cultural displays.

Songkran

NEW YEAR

The traditional Thai New Year is celebrated in Chiang Mai in mid-April with an enthusiasm that borders on pandemonium. Thousands of revellers line up along all sides of the moat to throw water on any passerby in the city (and each other). It is virtually impossible to stay dry during the five days of this festival.

Intakin Festival

RELIGIOUS

Held at Wat Chedi Luang in mid-May, this religious festival (known as *ngahn tam bun sǎw in-tá-gin*) is centred on the *lák meu-ang* (city pillar) and propitiates the city's guardian deity to ensure that the annual monsoon will arrive on time.

Loi Krathong

RIVER

From late October to early November Chiang Mai's riverbanks are alive with people floating the small lotus-shaped boats honouring the spirit of the river. In Chiang Mai this festival is also known as Yi Peng, and some *kon meu-ang* (people of northern Thailand) celebrate by launching cylindrical hot-air balloons, lighting up the night skies with hundreds of pinpoints of fire.

Sleeping

Chiang Mai is kind to the thrifty traveller: there are heaps of competing guest houses, and resulting low rates. For the real cheaps, you cannot book a room in advance: instead you have to show up at around check-out time (usually 11am) on the day you want a room and see if anything is available.

A crop of concept/boutique hotels fill in the midrange to top end. Many cultural students come to Chiang Mai for long-term stays and most places offer weekly and monthly discounts or a flat monthly rate with additional electricity and water usage fees.

Many budget and midrange places have bicycle and motorcycle rentals as well as free internet and wi-fi. If you phone ahead, some will collect you from the train or bus terminal for free to avoid paying a commission to a driver.

The top-end range is dominated mainly by huge corporate-style hotels. The more interesting ones are the intimate boutique hotels that tend to marry antique Lanna elements with modern amenities. At the summit of the scale are the destination resorts that have recreated a village setting complete with rice fields and historic architecture.

OLD CITY

There are heaps of guest houses in the residential sois off Th Moon Muang, especially in Soi 7 and Soi 9. There are also a few guest houses in the southeastern corner of the old city off Th Ratchamankha and in the lower numbered sois off Th Moon Muang.



Mini Cost

HOTEL \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5341 8787; www.minicostcm.com; 19/4 Soi 1, Th Ratchadamnoen; r 750-1050B; 🍷🍷) We're very impressed with this place. Apartment-style, contemporary rooms with easy chairs, calming colours and a few touches of Thai-style decor are unusual in Chiang Mai in this price range. It's in a terrific spot too, quiet but accessible to everything around Pratu Tha Phae. A real bargain – one of the few genuine midrange accommodations in the city with rooms priced (mostly) under 1000B.

Villa Duang Champa

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5332 7199; www.duangchampa.com; 82 Th Ratchadamnoen; r 2500B, guest-house r 700B; 🍷🍷) Duang Champa is an excellent small hotel with simple, beautifully furnished concrete rooms that have tasteful

modern fittings. The hotel occupies a colonial-style building marked by its simplicity, airiness and shuttered windows. Most rooms have an extra sitting area, although No 1 has its own private enclosed balcony with lounge seating – it's a beauty. Stick to the hotel as the dark, cramped guest house rooms are not a good deal.

Gap's House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5327 8140; www.gaps-house.com; 3 Soi 4, Th Ratchadamnoen; r 500-750B; 🍷🍷🍷) A profusion of greenery wrapping itself around Lanna architecture meets guests at Gap's House, a quirky little gem. Thai-style wooden rooms are planted in a thick jungle garden and nature's air-con works well – it's definitely cooler in here than on the streets. Some rooms have antique furnishings but can be a tad musty with thin walls. The cheaper, sturdier concrete rooms are more basic. Bring your mozzie spray. Gap's is also famous for its Thai cooking course (p256) and nightly vegetarian buffet.

Vieng Mantra

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5332 6640; www.viengmantra.com; 9 Soi 1, Th Ratchadamnoen; r 2000-4500B; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) This oasis, nestled into its own luxurious gardens, is a class act along bustling Soi 1. Smooth, clean lines and a marriage of concrete and wood dominate the Lanna-style building, while rooms are set around an inner courtyard pool and have balconies with sink-in-and-smile cushioned seating. The beautiful outdoor areas, complete with bar and pool, mean you may never want to leave. Walk-in rates are cheaper if they're not busy.

Safe House Court

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map 240; ☎ 0 5341 8955; www.safehousecourt.com; 178 Th Ratchaphakhinai; r 350-550B; 🍷🍷🍷) There's something about this cheapie that makes it a cut above others in this price category. It may be its leafy location along a main drag, the excellent food at its restaurant next door, or its art deco appeal and friendly service. In any case, rooms are light and bright and those upstairs come with a small balcony taking in the roofs of nearby temples. Internet, cable TV and a smile are all part of the package.

3 Sis

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5327 3243; www.the3sis.com; 1 Soi 8, Th Phra Pokklao; d 1300-1800B; 🍷🍷🍷) Good-sized rooms with double-glazed windows overlooking the street, in the front building,

may be the best deal here. However, those in the 'vacation lodge' have lovely wooden floors, clean white walls, fridge and cable TV. En suites are OK but check the condition of the shower. Wood, water and beanbags greet visitors in the open foyer communal area, which has a relaxing vibe.

Tamarind Village

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5341 8896-9; www.tamarindvillage.com; 50/1 Th Ratchadamnoen; r 6000-18,000B; 🍷🍷🍷🍷) Considered to be one of the first of the 'Lanna revival' hotels, Tamarind Village has recreated the quiet spaces of a temple with galleried buildings and garden courtyards on the grounds of an old tamarind orchard. It's the size of a resort but retains a feeling of intimacy and is a fine option for some serious self-indulgence. The bamboo-shrouded walkway and whitewashed perimeter wall shut out the distracting modern world. Regular exhibitions are a bonus including, recently, on Thai jewellery.

Nice Apartments

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5321 8290; 15 Soi 1, Th Ratchadamnoen; r 320B; 🍷) This old stalwart is a decent deal with cheap, clean rooms that come with fridge, air-con and a fan in a top old city location. The friendly service is a bonus and you need to drop by after 11am (check-out time) to see if they have a room. Its outdoor seating area provides free tea, coffee and fruit.

Wanasit Guesthouse

GUEST HOUSE \$

(☎ 0 5381 4042; 6 Soi 8, Th Rachamankha; s with fan/air-con 250/350B, d 300/400B) In a quiet soi and well signed, this homely guest house is a quiet alternative and not recommended for party animals. Attributes include rooftop terrace and rooms that are clean and well kitted out, if a little battered by age. Rooms also have their own balcony. The friendly, softly-spoken owner has lots of practical info about Chiang Mai on hand.

Sa Thu Boutique House

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5390 3737; www.sathuboutique.com; 31 Soi Prapokklao, Th Ratchaphakhinai; superior/deluxe r 1200/1800B; 🍷) Tucked away off busy Ratchaphakhinai Rd, this small boutique gem is freshly opened and beautifully designed, and has eager staff. The deluxe rooms are much better value with small outdoor courtyards accessed through French doors. Furnishings are in sympathy with the minimalist environment and fittings are funky and fun. The only drawback is the

poky en suites. Walk-in rates are often better than those posted on the website.

Julie Guesthouse

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5327 4355; www.julieguesthouse.com; 7 Soi 5, Th Phra Pokklao; dm 80B, r 100-350B; ☺) Part hostel, part guest house, Julie has cornered the young backpackers' social scene. The garden cafe is full of enthusiastic first-timers swapping tips and tales. In the evenings, folks retire to the covered roof terrace strung up with hammocks. No air-con, TV or fridge in rooms.

Lamchang House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5321 0586; 24 Soi 7, Th Moon Muang; r 200B) One of Chiang Mai's cheapest, this old wooden house has basic fan rooms with some Thai decorations and shared bath. The downstairs rooms are a little dark but there's a pleasant front-yard garden and attached restaurant.

Smile House 1

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5320 8661; www.smileguesthouse.com; 5 Soi 2, Th Ratchamankha; r 300-1000B; ☺☺) A little backpacker village flourishes around an old Thai house here. It's tucked away in a small nook of the old city, on a tranquil little soi. We get good reports from travellers about Smile House – it's popular with young backpackers, especially for lounging around the pool with cold drink in hand. The atmosphere is friendly and the owner confirmed that the old house once served as the 'safe house' of Kun Sa, the infamous Shan-Chinese opium warlord.

Rachamankha

HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎0 5390 4111; www.rachamankha.com; 6 Th Ratchamankha; r from 6000B; ☺☺☺☺) The encore effort by architect Ong-ard Satrabhandu to Tamarind Village, Rachamankha imitates an ancient monastery in Lampang. Considering its reputation, rooms aren't opulent and the superiors are quite small. The deluxe rooms are more generous, however, with four-poster beds and bathrooms that double the living space. The highlight of the hotel is the library, a light-strewn room smelling of polished wood and musty paper. It's well signed near Pratu Suan Dok.

Siri Guesthouse

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5332 6550; 31/3 Soi 5, Th Moon Muang; r with fan/air-con 350/450B; ☺) Go for one of the upstairs rooms here as they have more light and space. The cheaper rooms are fine, although boxy and small on the

ground floor. It's a good, quiet old city location with cafe on-site.

Thapae Gate Lodge

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5320 7134; www.thapaeatelodge.com; 38/7 Soi 2, Th Moon Muang; r 350-500B; ☺☺) Across the street from All in 1, this German-Thai guest house is a good choice. Rooms are compact but neatly furnished and some (even the cheaper ones) come with small balcony. Spending more here gives you air-con, TV and extra space. Check the beds as they can be a little saggy.

Awanahouse

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5341 9005; www.awanahouse.com; 7 Soi 1, Th Ratchadamnoen; r 225-850B; ☺☺☺) What started out as a small guest house has grown into a standard multistorey apartment building on a quiet soi. Awana is a bit institutional, but has large and bright rooms, some with balconies, TV and fridge. The cheapest rooms have fan and shared bathroom; the more you pay, the more space, views and luxuries such as air-con you'll get. The bonus here is the rooftop chill-out area with views of the nearby mountains.

Rendezvous Guest House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5321 3763; 3/1 Soi 5, Th Ratchadamnoen; r 500-900B; ☺) The clean rooms here are a mixed bag with nice modern furnishings, but some en suites could do with an upgrade; all rooms have TV, safety box and fridge. It flaunts its backpacker credentials via traveller info such as the cost of taxis around town, minibuses to places like Pai, details on visa runs and of course lots of activities. Some rooms have small balconies – request one when you check in.

RCN Court

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎0 5341 8280-2; www.rcnguesthouse.com; 35 Soi 7, Th Moon Muang; r with fan/air-con 350/550B; ☺☺☺) This basic place is well known for its affordable monthly rates (from 6300B) and peaceful central location opposite a wát and plenty of trees. Rooms are nothing special but have cable TV and fridge. There is an outdoor kitchen for guests, a small front patio and a fitness room.

Montri Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p240; ☎0 5321 1069/70; 2-6 Th Ratchadamnoen; r 2100; ☺) If you're looking for comforts, you've found the right spot. Rooms are modern and well sized, have muted tones and

are well-kitted out with safes, minibars, and sparkling en suites. Brix bar-and-restaurant here is a built-for-tourists place with nothing authentic about it. Still at least it doesn't pretend – dishes are Western in content and price. The attached outdoor area is perfect for an afternoon beer and people-watching on this busy corner (although you'll no doubt inhale the odd lungful of exhaust from the relentless traffic hurtling past). There's a 20% discount on room tariff if paying by credit card!

Top North Hotel

HOTEL \$\$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5327 9623; www.topnorthgroup.com; 41 Th Moon Muang; standard/superior/deluxe r 850/1200/1500B; 🍷🍷) This place feels quite resortish and seems to have far too much room for the old city. Standard and superior rooms are in the older building and are a bit of a mixed bag (en suites in particular should be carefully examined). Deluxe rooms in the newer wing are a much better option. The real pull here is the central salt-water swimming pool and bar.

Buri Gallery

GUEST HOUSE \$\$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5341 6500; www.burigallery.com; 102 Th Ratchadamnoen; superior/deluxe r 1000/2000B; 🍷🍷🍷) Buri Gallery occupies a converted teak building decorated with Lanna handicrafts. Some superior rooms are pretty cramped, dingy and vary in size, so check out a few; the walls are also too thin to block out noise. The upstairs deluxe rooms are quieter and have small terraces. Though the rates are a tad high, the staff provide the kind of services you'd find at fully fledged hotels.

Charcoa House

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5321 2681; www.charcoa.com; 4 Soi 1, Th Si Phum; r 1400-2500B; 🍷🍷🍷) Small but beautifully-presented rooms rely on an imported heritage style with exposed timbers and whitewashed walls.

U Chiang Mai

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5332 7000; www.uchiangmai.com; 70 Th Ratchadamnoen; superior/deluxe r 4800/6000B; 🍷🍷🍷) Corporate-friendly hotel with a 24-hour checkout policy: you leave at the same time you arrived.

Tri Gong Residence

GUEST HOUSE \$\$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5321 4754; www.trigong.com; 8 Soi 1, Th Si Phum; r 700-1000B; 🍷🍷🍷) It offers large rooms with decent furnishings, cable TV and fridge.

All In 1

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5320 7133; www.allin1gh.com; 31 Soi 2, Th Moon Muang; r 400-700B; 🍷🍷🍷) Clean rooms with cable TV. Outdoor garden bar is an attractive feature fronting the street.

Supreme House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5322 2480; 44/1 Soi 9, Th Moon Muang; r 150B) Relaxed atmosphere and you'll have plenty of money left over to hit the nearby bars.

Jonadda Guest House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5322 7281; 23/1 Soi 2, Th Ratwithi; r 250-450B; 🍷) Has spotless, basic rooms.

EAST OF THE OLD CITY

Traffic is more intense outside of the old city and the roar of engines often detracts from Chiang Mai's low-key ambience. While it isn't as quaint as the old city, Th Tha Phae is just as convenient for sightseeing and nightlife and even closer to the night bazaar. Corporate hotels with business centres and conference capacity occupy the area near the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar.



Mo Rooms

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☑ 0 5328 0789; www.morooms.com; 263/1-2 Th Tha Pae; small/medium/large r 2800/3200/3500B; 🍷🍷🍷) This outrageous design hotel is completely unique in Chiang Mai and a great choice if you are inspired by art – 'art you can live in'. The 12 rooms are all individually designed according to the animals of the Chinese zodiac. Each is an inspiration from a local artist born under that zodiac sign. Our favourites are the rat, goat and monkey rooms but ask to see a few; it's great fun and more like walking around a gallery than a hotel. Arguably it's a bit overpriced but does that matter when the manager here tells you: 'You don't just choose a hotel, it must choose you?' There's also a suave cocktail bar overlooking the street at the front of the building.



Baan Kaew Guest House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(☑ 0 5327 1606; www.baankaew-guesthouse.com; 142 Th Charoen Prathet; r 800B; 🍷🍷) We like this place. The two-storey apartment building is set back from the road behind the owner's own residence. Rooms are fairly standard with fridge and cable TV, but upstairs rooms also have small balconies, and are light and airy. It's a good honest deal, very friendly, and in a quiet part of town in

its own green patch. It's also conveniently opposite a departure point for river cruises, and elegant Wat Chaimongkhon (Map p236) with its lovely riverside setting.

DusitD2 Chiang Mai

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5399 9999; www.dusit.com; 100 Th Chang Khlan; r from 3500B; ④@☎) Designed to impress and overwhelm, the gleaming white and blinding orange of the lobby in this slick hotel version of an urban hipster is dizzying. The rooms with moulded furnishings, an intelligent design, thoughtful features such as reading lights and a warmth that defies the modern decor, don't disappoint. The deluxe rooms with couch and cushions alongside windows overlooking Doi Suthep are very good but we'd recommend an upgrade to a suite, which is like a mini apartment - in this crowded city you can't help but feel spoilt by walk-in wardrobes.

Yaang Come Village

BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$

(☎ 0 5323 7222; www.yaangcome.com; 90/3 Th Si Donchai; r 5000-10,000B; ④@☎) A clever twist on the Lanna reproduction hotel is this homage to a Tai Lue village, based on the owner's travels to the Yunnan region of China. Deluxe rooms are much better than the superior, having the right combination of tradition, luxury and home comfort. All rooms are spacious with murals, textiles and teak furniture and have balconies overlooking the 'village' with cushioned seating so you can drink in the ambience at your leisure. For what you actually get the rooms are a tad overpriced, however walk-in rates can be heavily discounted. It's about 300m west of the Chedi on a main thoroughfare.

Banthai Village

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5325 2789; www.banthai.village.com; 19 Soi 3, Th Tha Phae; superior/deluxe r 3100/4100B; ④@☎) The village action is centred on a long narrow pool and outside bar at this relaxing stylised-rice-village boutique lodge. With only 33 rooms, it strikes the right balance between intimacy and privacy. Superior rooms are smaller but better located in a separate building with garden views - ask for an upstairs one. Rooms occupy several Lanna-style terraced houses with funky fittings, huge stone bathtubs and dinner-plate-sized showerheads. Note that floors are a bit wonky for people with movement disabilities.

Daret's House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5323 5440; 4/5 Th Chaiyaphum; s/d 160/220B) A long-time backpackers' fave with a great location and stacks of basic, well-worn rooms, Daret's looks like many of Th Khao San's backpacker flops. But because this is Lanna-land, Kun Daret is an amiable guy often found in the cafe downstairs. You pay more for the luxury of hot water.

Micasa Guest House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5320 9127; 2/2 Soi 4, Th Tha Phae; r 300-1000B; ④@☎) Trying hard to fabricate an air of sophistication, and with its dinky common area spilling out onto the soi, Micasa is a wanabee-boutique guest house. What it does best though is slightly higher standard, cheap rooms. Pluses include free internet, book exchange, quality bicycles for rent, and a helpful tour office with good info for getting around northern Thailand.

Roong Ruang Hotel

HOTEL \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5323 4746; www.roongruanghotel.com; 398 Th Tha Phae; r 450-900B; ④@) With a prime location near Pratu Tha Phae, Roong Ruang is a great deal for an older-style hotel. It doesn't look like much from the outside but the interior courtyard is cocooned from traffic noise. Go for a room in the new building as they are spacious and have huge showers. Cheaper rooms are fine to crash, just a bit cell-like and dark.

Tawan Guesthouse

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5320 8077; 4 Soi 6, Th Tha Phae; r 200-300B) This simple guest house stands out from the pack with its stunning garden filled with fountains and *k'oi* ponds, all woven together by the flowering vines of bougainvillea and a big shade tree with hairlike tendrils. Rooms are nothing special: some occupy an old wooden house while others are in a flimsy bamboo hut.

Eagle House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5387 4126; www.eaglehouse.com; 16 Soi 3; Th Chang Moi Kao; r 150-380B; ④) In a shady location just outside the old city, the rooms here, with fan or air-con, and en suites, are pretty basic but clean and secure. There's also a laundry, book exchange and safety deposit boxes. The owners conduct eco-sensitive tours, which we get good feedback about; lots of info about Chiang Mai and beyond is available too. There is another branch of Eagle House in the old city.

Sarah Guest House

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5320 8271; <http://sarahgh.hypermart.net>; 20 Soi 4, Th Tha Phae; s 250-400B, d 300-450B; ④⑤) A long-running backpacker spot, Sarah's sits in a quiet garden and is run by the original English owner. There are only 12 simple rooms, which have chunky wood furniture and large bathrooms, and the option of fan or air-con.

Manathai

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5328 1666; www.manathai.com; 39/9 Soi 3, Th Tha Phae; r from 3500B; ④⑤) Boutique Manathai has an Arabian-nights feel and merges Lanna and colonial elements.

Thapae Boutique House

GUEST HOUSE \$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5328 4295; www.thapaeboutiquehouse.com; 4 Soi 5, Th Tha Phae; r superior/deluxe 1000/1200B; ④) Superior rooms are the best deal.

Lai-Thai Guesthouse

GUEST HOUSE \$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5327 1725; www.laithai.com; 111/4-5 Th Kotchasan; r 600-700B; ④⑤) Rooms are comfortable if a little cramped, with cable TV and mini-fridge. They're a decent price but the location is right beside a busy, traffic-filled street.

Imperial Mae Ping Hotel

HOTEL \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5328 3900; www.imperialhotels.com; 153 Th Si Donchai; r from 2400B; ④⑤) Best combination of Asian quirks and contemporary fashion for this large, modern hotel near the night bazaar. Superior rooms are better value than deluxe.

RIVERSIDE**Riverside House**

GUEST HOUSE \$

(off Map p240; ☎ 0 5324 1860; www.riversidehousechiangmai.com; 101 Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; r 500-800B; ④⑤) Next door to the Tourism Authority of Thailand, this friendly and professional set-up has great cheap rooms arranged around a pretty garden. The best rooms are of course the most expensive, but they are well worth the extra, being in a new building at the rear of the property. You share a common balcony out front and have your own private balcony at the rear. All rooms are extremely well presented, very clean and recommended.

River View Lodge

HOTEL \$\$

(off Map p240; ☎ 0 5327 1109; www.riverviewlodgch.com; 25 Soi 4, Th Charoen Prathet; r 1500-2200B; ④⑤) The simple, spacious rooms are a bit overpriced at this breezy riverside lodge with its emphasis on charm and some old-

fashioned hospitality. But you aren't paying for a spectacular room – go and sit by the pool and drink in the extensive and beautiful gardens, and you'll appreciate the quiet nature of the dead-end soi location. In our opinion it makes it well worthwhile for short visits. And you'll definitely fall for the place when you're entertained by chirping red bulbs on your balcony in the morning.

Galare Guest House

GUEST HOUSE \$\$

(off Map p240; ☎ 0 5381 8887; www.galare.com; 7 Soi 2, Th Charoen Prathet; r 1100B; ④) Right next to River View Lodge, Galare is a modern place with less ambience but more change left in your wallet after a night's stay. You can dine on tables set on grass virtually on the waterfront creating your own river panorama of Chiang Mai. Rooms are a bit sterile but very clean and spacious, if a tad dated, and open on to a wide shared veranda.

Baan Orapin

B&B \$\$

(☎ 0 5324 3677; www.baanorapin.com; 150 Th Charoenrat; r from 2100-3400B; ④⑤) It's a family affair at Baan Orapin, a pretty garden compound anchored by a stately teak house, which has been in the family since 1914. Luxurious guest residences (a total of 15 rooms) are in separate and modern buildings spread throughout the property. It's right next to Sop Moei Arts.

Hollanda Montri

GUEST HOUSE \$

(☎ 0 5324 2450; <http://hollandamontri.com>; 365 Charoenrat Rd; r with fan/air-con 450/550B; ④) We get a lot of readers' letters recommending this place. It's a bit out of town and the accommodation is fairly rudimentary but the riverside setting is nice if you feel like getting away from the crush of the old city. We're not really sure what all the fuss is about, but then there aren't many cheapies to choose from on the river. Free use of bicycles is great. This place is right on the river just north of Saphan Ratanakosin.

WEST OF THE OLD CITY

Prices tend to be a little higher here than in the backpacker areas but you're closer to Chiang Mai University and in the best area of town for local nightlife.

Sakulchai

HOTEL \$

(Map p248; ☎ 0 5321 1982; Soi Plubpueng, Th Huay Kaew; r 450-650B; ④) The Sakulchai recently underwent extensive renovations and is now one of the bargain options in Chiang

Mai. Located down a quiet, dead-end soi and within walking distance of both the old city and Th Nimmanhaemin, contemporary spacious hotel rooms are priced very cheaply for what you get. It's basically a midrange option at budget prices. It's a popular hotel with Thais, not so much for foreigners and there's not much English spoken.

H HOTEL \$\$
(Map p248; ☏ 5322 0444; www.h-designhotel.com; 1 Th Sirimungklajarn; r from 1590B; 🏠📶) This new concrete, cubist, monolith style-hotel is quite a find. Although calling itself a letter of the alphabet swings somewhere between pretentious and moronic, don't be discouraged. Staff are tripping over themselves to be helpful, and the architect has gone for space – and a lot of it. The rooms are huge (even the smaller ones) and bathrooms are modern and spacious. Huge windows let in plenty of light and the furnishings have a minimalist intent accentuating the feeling of space. The bright colours inside probably take things a bit too far, but overall this is an impressive and unique place for Chiang Mai. To find H, look out for the Mango Chill Restaurant below.

Sweet Room GUEST HOUSE \$
(Map p248; ☏ 5321 4668; sweet_room_cafe@hotmail.com; 81 Th Huay Kaew; s/d 700/1000B; 🏠) Sweet it is indeed – it's also unique and personal. Not looking much from the outside, the narrow street frontage hides six very spacious and individually furnished rooms. Considering that two rooms share an outside bathroom on each level, the price is a bit cheeky, but rooms are beautifully kitted out in very contemporary styles, and we dare say a bit of bargaining would probably bring the price down, especially for longer stays. Definitely go for a room at the back of the building to avoid street noise. The 1st floor is given over to a kitchen and small living area. Great little cafe downstairs.

Uniserv-International Center Hostel HOSTEL \$
(☏ 5394 2881; 239 Th Nimmanhaemin; r 600B; 🏠📶) Looking for a place to stay close to the university? You can't get much closer than this hostel, which shares space with CMU's busy International Center. Rates include breakfast and monthly rates are available. Large old-fashioned rooms come with comfy armchairs and modern bathrooms; request a room with a view. It's signposted off Th Nimmanhaemin, just north of Th Suthep.

Dome HOTEL \$\$
(Map p248; ☏ 5340 5400; www.thedomechiangmai.com; 1 Soi Plubpueng, Th Huay Kaew; standard/deluxe/suite r 700/900/1200B; 🏠📶) What you see here is what you get: modern, comfortable accommodation. Standard rooms are OK, but it's worth upgrading to deluxe for the extra space. Cheaper weekly and monthly rates are available. It's a good long-term option if you're going to be in the area for a while. The new downstairs restaurant-bar is a fine addition.

Baan Say-La GUEST HOUSE \$\$
(Map p248; ☏ 08 1930 0187; www.baanstaylaguesthouse.com; Soi 5, Th Nimmanhaemin; r 500-1500B; 🏠) In the old city, a room with shared bathroom would be half the price or less but this is the Nimmanhaemin district, and prices reflect the hippest of Chiang Mai locations. Rooms in this bohemian-chic guest house with shared bathroom are very basic, but do come with cable TV and decent linen although mattresses have seen better days. Other rooms have four-poster beds and rattan furnishing. Black-and-white photography decorates the walls, and the shared seating areas have large easy chairs.

Miso GUEST HOUSE \$
(Map p248; ☏ 5389 4989; 9 Soi 7, Th Nimmanhaemin; r from 500B) Primarily a Korean restaurant and travel agent, Miso also lets cheap rooms in the building above. Admittedly they're a pretty disorganised crew here, but the friendly owner will probably cut you a deal on a decent room – good news as long as you can stand the garish colours of the bathrooms. It's pretty basic digs but clean and you won't find cheaper this close to Nimmanhaemin road. Long term stays also possible.

International Hotel Chiangmai HOSTEL \$
(☏ 5322 1819; www.ymcachiangmai.org; 11 Soi Sermsak, Th Hutsadisawee; r 600-1800B; 🏠📶) Quite possibly the ugliest building in a country where the competition is fierce, this local branch of the YMCA redeems itself with some excellent bargains for rooms with a view of Doi Suthep. Skip their overpriced dorm beds. Warm and cordial inside with an extensive range of well worn but clean rooms, this place has standard rooms that are fine, although for 100B more you get great views from the 6th floor. Some rooms also come with leather armchairs. Check the shower recess in bathrooms. To get here, turn onto Th Hutsadisawee from corner of

Th Huay Kaew and Th Mani Nopharat and then take your first left.

Pann Malee Home GUEST HOUSE \$\$
(Map p248; ☑ 0 5328 9147; www.pannmalee.com; off Soi 17, Th Nimmanhaemin; r 1000-1400B; ☹) This converted townhouse really is like staying in somebody's house, the rooms are all individually furnished with the owner's eclectic taste and feel very homely. Apparently each room reflects the personalities of her family members. The extra baht basically buys you more space, less stairs and a slightly nicer setting.

Yesterday the Village BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$
(Map p248; ☑ 0 5321 3809; www.yesterday.co.th; 24 Th Nimmanhaemin; r from 2000B; ☹@) Yesterday does a quick trip backwards to the near past. The common spaces of the converted apartment building are artistically decorated with vintage prints, old phonographs and the soon-to-be-extinct tube televisions. Rooms are plush, bathroom fittings impressive, and superior rooms come with balcony but no view; deluxe rooms have more panache than superiors and overall are a better deal.

SpicyThai Backpackers HOSTEL \$
(Map p248; ☑ 0 5340 0444; www.spicyhostels.com/spicythai-backpackers.html; 4/80 Nanthawan Village, Th Nimmanhaemin; dm 250B; ☹@) This place offers female-only as well as male dorms in the former US Ambassador residence. It's recommended by readers. You'll find it near the corner of Th Nimmanhaemin and Th Huay Kaew.

ELSEWHERE

Tri Yaan Na Ros BOUTIQUE HOTEL \$\$\$
(☑ 0 5327 3174; www.triyaannaros.com; 156 Th Wualai; r from 2500B; ☹☹) A honeymoon candidate of superb qualifications, this pint-size boutique hotel on what's called the Saturday Walking Street, creates a romantically antique world with its artfully restored house, galleried chambers and narrow walkways. It's quite a warren inside and just off a busy road with rooms set well back from the relentless screech of the traffic. Rooms are intimate, old-fashioned Lanna affairs with sink-in-and-smile four-poster beds. There are only eight rooms and you'll probably get a few hundred baht discount if you walk in off the street. The charming owner will soon win your affections.

Viangbua Mansion

APART-HOTEL \$\$

(☑ 0 5341 1202; www.viangbua.com; 3/1 Soi Viangbua, Th Chang Pheuk; r/apt per week 5600/1400B; ☹@☹) North of Pratu Chang Pheuk, this multi-storey hotel doesn't have the best location for sightseers but it has plenty of amenities for long-term guests and is a classy set-up. The rooms have contemporary furnishings, fridge, small lounge, some also have a kitchen. Nightly rates are available.

Four Seasons Chiang Mai

RESORT \$\$\$

(☑ 0 5329 8181; www.fourseasons.com; Th Mae Rim-Samoeng Kao; r from 18,000B; ☹@☹☹) Chiang Mai's first premier destination resort features vaulted pavilion suites and residences spread amid eight hectares of landscaped gardens and rice terraces worked by water buffalo. The resort is north of the city in the forested foothills and includes all the necessary self-contained distractions: cooking school, award-winning spa, swimming pool and tennis courts.

Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi

RESORT \$\$\$

(☑ 0 5388 8888; www.mandarinoriental.com; 51/4 Th Chiang Mai-San Kamphaeng; r from 16,000B; ☹@☹☹) Almost a kingdom unto itself, the Dhara Dhevi is an amazing resort destination that has recreated a miniature Lanna village with footpaths through walled residence compounds surrounding terraced rice fields. So much architectural history has been reproduced here that the resort fancies itself a cultural attraction, offering guided tours to guests as well as craft demos. The rooms are of course aristocratic and the grounds host many wedding parties. There's also a slightly cheaper and less imposing colonial wing. It's 5km east of the old city.

Eating

The restaurant scene in Chiang Mai is surprisingly down to earth and wholesome. Modest family-run establishments and open-air food courts dominate the city's hot dining spots. As the sun sets on the city, evening food stalls emerge (from about 6pm), peddling all sorts of delicious, cheap street food. It's hard to go wrong but locals recommend the stalls on the corner of Th Mani Nopharat and Th Chang Pheuk with chairs and tables sprawling on the wide street frontage along Th Mani Nopharat.

Plus there are loads of vegetarian restaurants, ranging from backpacker cafes to religious society outreaches. You can also explore the local markets and small shopfronts

for the regional speciality of *kôw soy* (sometimes written as *khao soi*), a curried noodle dish claiming Shan-Yunnanese heritage. It's usually accompanied by pickled vegetables and a thick red chilli sauce.

OLD CITY

Residents pick up *gàp kôw* (pre-made food served with rice) from evening vendors lining the stretch of Th Samlan south of Th Ratchadamnoen.



New Delhi

INDIAN \$\$

(Map p240; Th Ratwithi; mains 100-180B; ☺dinner) This basic eatery serves up some of the most delicious Indian food we've tasted in northern Thailand. Lovingly and expertly prepared, predominantly northern Indian food dominates the menu. The deliciously spiced 'Handi' dishes are among our favourites. Note that the service is poor, but all will be forgiven when you're tucking into the delectable curries.

Pum Pui Italian Restaurant

ITALIAN \$\$

(Map p240; ☎0 5327 8209; 24 Soi 2, Th Moon Muang; dishes 150-250B; ☺lunch, dinner) Fresh ingredients and an intimate knowledge of Italian cooking ensures the food here tastes just like Mama used to make...well almost. Pum Pui has a romantic garden setting, ideal for an intimate dinner. Pasta, pizza and risotto dishes feature on the extensive menu and there are some fine Italian beverages to linger over.

Jerusalem Falafel

MIDDLE EASTERN \$\$

(Map p240; 35/3 Th Moon Muang; meze 100B, mains 220B, meze platters from 500B; ☺9am-11pm) You might yawn at the thought of yet another Middle Eastern restaurant in a backpacker ghetto but let us sing the praises of this exotic import. The restaurant is a lively place to assemble with friends and nosh on a meze platter of falafel, shashlik, hummus and tabouli. Yoghurt, haloumi and feta cheese are home-made here.

Safe House Court

THAI \$

(Map p240; 178 Th Ratchaphakhinai; dishes 50-80B; ☺7am-10pm) Steer away from Western offerings such as sandwiches and go for the cheap and well-prepared Thai dishes here, including regional specialities, spicy salads and good veggie options. It's a friendly, family-run affair in a leafy garden setting – well designed for a book read and slow consumption (watch the mozzies in the evening). Lip-curling fruit shakes too.

Baan Nok Noodle

NOODLES \$

(Map p240; Th Singharat; noodles 25-35B; ☺10am-6pm, closed Wed) For a quick bite on the street, perhaps after a visit to nearby Wat Phra Singh, locals recommend this Thai noodle place. Various types of noodles are served in spicy or clear soup (pork) but the signature dish is *tom yum baan nok* with small noodles. Vegetarian noodle dishes also served.

Lert Ros

NORTHEASTERN THAI \$

(Map p240; Soi 1, Th Ratchadamnoen; small/large dish 30/50B; ☺1-9pm) Whole fish frying on top of cooking drums at the front of this restaurant alerts passers-by to this simple Thai restaurant. Cooking food in the north-eastern style, there are various meat and rice dishes strongly spiced, whole tilapia fish, and *sôm-dam* (spicy green papaya salad) to choose from. It's very popular so try early or late for dinner – it's the best cheapie in the area. Helpful picture menu.

Angel's Secrets

VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p240; cnr Soi 1 & 5; dishes 60-90B; ☺breakfast, lunch, closed Mon; ☎) Shielded from the roadside by a fast-growing fence of greenery and simply, but warmly, furnished, this outdoor eatery has a touchy-feely goodness flowing from the kitchen in the form of tasty and freshly prepared vegetarian dishes. There's lots of healthy alternatives for breakfast including crepes with fresh fillings or a bowl of fruit. The friendly service will make you smile, and your happy stomach will be nudging you back for more.

House

ASIAN FUSION \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎0 5341 9011; 199 Th Moon Muang; dishes 200-800B; ☺6pm-11pm) This restaurant is definitely the place to treat yourself. It occupies a mid-20th-century house (it once belonged to an exiled Burmese prince) that's now outfitted with colonial accoutrements. The House menu is a pan-Pacific affair, combining imported lamb and salmon with local spices and cooking techniques. If you're after something lighter, stop in and enjoy a few mouth-watering tapas dishes at the outdoor Moroccan-themed bar, or even in the 'tents' set up outside.

Rachamankha

THAI \$\$\$

(Map p240; ☎0 5390 4111; Rachamankha Hotel, 6 Th Ratchamankha; dishes 300-1000B) Tucked away behind Wat Phra Singh, in the sumptuous grounds of the boutique hotel of the same name, one dines at the Rachamankha

to enjoy the crisp white linens and antique atmosphere just as much as the food. The menu is Thai-centred, along with hints of Myanmar (Burma), Yunnan and Europe at the periphery.

Pak Do Restaurant

THAI \$

(Map p240; Th Samlan; dishes 30-35B; ☺7am-early afternoon) Across the street from Wat Phra Singh, this morning curry shop displays its dishes in big metal bowls out front. Do as the Thais do and lift the lids to survey the contents. If your stomach has developed a hankering for rice in the morning, you'll be glad you peaked into the pots.

Heuan Phen

NORTHERN THAI \$

(Map p240; ☑0 5327 7103; 112 Th Ratchamankha; dishes 50-150B; ☺lunch & dinner) At this well-known restaurant everything is on display, from the northern Thai food to the groups of culinary visitors and the antique-cluttered dining room. Try the young jackfruit with a spicy paste. Daytime meals are served in a large canteen out front.

Dada Kafe

JUICE BAR \$

(Map p240; Th Ratchamankha; breakfast 60-80B; ☺8am-10pm) Promoting itself as a healthy alternative, this eatery is very popular for breakfast. There are simple but comfy chairs and tables and a menu featuring freshly prepared food that has a good stab at sandwiches, pasta dishes and Thai mains. It specialises in juices and claims to have the liquid fruit answer to many ailments including acne, heart disease and high-blood pressure. True or not, they are delicious.

Nayok Fa

RESTAURANT \$

(Map p240; Th Ratchaphakhinai; dishes 30-35B; ☺10am-6pm) This ma-and-pa place cooks up fresh food in the massive woks out front. Try *pat see-ew* (stir-fried wide noodles with a choice of beef, pork or chicken) or the suckling pig and rice.

Fern Forest Cafe

CAFE \$

(Map p240; 2/2 Soi 4, Th Singharat; desserts 70B; ☺8.30am-8.30pm) Indeed it is set among ferns, and plenty of other greenery too. Add to that the quiet soi location, the sound of running water, cushioned seating and yummy desserts, and you're onto a winner. Delectable Western-style desserts (try the carrot cake) or sandwiches are available, and you can also loll about in the beautiful garden setting over a fruit drink or coffee. The cool of the garden makes it the perfect

place to wait out the heat of the afternoons too. From the top of Th Singharat in the old city, head south and before you reach Th Ratwithi you will see this place signposted down a soi on your left.

AUM Vegetarian Food

VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p240; 66 Th Moon Muang; dishes 50-60B; ☺8am-5pm; ☑) Aiming square at the health-conscious traveller is AUM's vegetarian delights. There's organic coffee from Laos, seasonal juices and a range of all-veggie Thai-style stir-fries, soups, salads and rice dishes. The restaurant has an eating area with floor cushions and low tables. A more expensive, limited Japanese menu (that includes sweet chilli maki) is also available.

Blue Diamond

BAKERY \$

(Map p240; 35/1 Soi 9, Th Moon Muang; mains 50-60B; ☺7am-9pm Mon-Sat) Always popular but a bit less frenetic than other traveller eating spots around here. Evidence of the quality of the food is in the return clientele. Blue Diamond bakes its own bread and pours fresh local coffee; breakfast is the meal to go for, or possibly a vegetable salad for lunch (Thai vegetarian is big on the menu). Trickling water and a shady garden setting complement the morning munchies.

Bierstube

GERMAN \$

(Map p240; 33/6 Th Moon Muang; dishes 60-150B; ☺breakfast, lunch & dinner) This cosy, slightly dingy wooden place is the restaurant version of an old German uncle. It has been cooking up German comfort fare for so many years that its age can be measured by the regulars' expanding waistlines. In Bangkok such dinosaurs would be shunned, but here in Chiang Mai this is considered family. Thai and Western dishes are also available and it's popular for a drink in the evening, being slightly classier than many other places on this strip.

Chiangmai Saloon

INTERNATIONAL, BAR \$\$

(Map p240; 30 Th Ratwithi; mains 120-200B; ☺breakfast, lunch & dinner; @) Welcome to the Wild West, Thai style. Although very kitsch this friendly old joint, serves plenty of comfort food and mixes Aussie beef with southern American know-how. While the odd veg dish can be found, it's a real carnivore's delight – get your iron fix. If that's not enough, there's free popcorn, a pool table, internet and peanuts! The original branch is on Th Loi Kroh.

MARKET MEALS

Market mavens will love Chiang Mai's covered food and grocery centres, which offer everything from morning noodles to daytime snacking and evening supping. To impress a Thai friend, pick up a bag of *man gâa-ou*, a roasted acorn-like nut harvested at the end of the rainy season.

North of the Th Ratwithi intersection, **Talat Somphet** (Map p240; Soi 6, Th Moon Muang; ☺6am-6pm) sells all the fixings for a Thai feast, including takeaway curries, sweets and fruit. Many of the cooking schools do their market tours here. Unfortunately, the market's proximity to the tourist area has encouraged the fruit sellers to be creative with their prices.

In the early morning, **Talat Pratu Chiang Mai** (Map p240; Th Bamrungburi; ☺4am-noon & 6pm-midnight) is Chiang Mai's communal larder, selling foodstuffs and ready-made dishes. If you want to make merit to the monks, come early and find the woman who sells pre-assembled food donations (20B). Things quiet down by lunchtime, but the burners are re-ignited for a large and popular night market that sets up across the road.

Market aficionados will be impressed by **Talat Thanin** (off Th Chang Pheuk; ☺5am-early evening), an efficient and clean covered market. The meat vendors are segregated into their own glass-enclosed area preventing an accidental tour by sensitive stomachs. The fruit and vegetable section is a beautiful display of tropical bounty. In the prepared food section you'll find Chiang Mai's recent food trends. Continue deeper to the covered food centre for made-to-order noodles and stir-fries. Easy to find, Th Chang Pheuk is the main thoroughfare heading north out of the city.

Talat Ton Phayom (Th Suthep) acts as both a local market and a souvenir stop for Thais visiting from other provinces. Take a look at the packaged food area to see the kinds of edible gifts (like bags of *kâap mǎo* and *sâi òu-a*) that make a visit to Chiang Mai complete. Because CMU students make up a good portion of the clientele, prices tend to be low. This place is just off Th Suthep near the corner of Th Khlorng Chonprathan.

Pho Vieng Chane

(Map p240; Th Ratchadamnoen; dishes 30-70B; ☺lunch, dinner) Vietnamese street food behind Wawee Coffee. The steamed rolls and noodle soups are recommended.

Mangawirat Kangreuanjam

(Map p240; Th Inthawarorot; dishes 25-35B; ☺8am-2pm; 🍴) The cooks put out several pots of fresh, 100% Thai vegetarian dishes daily.

Juicy 4U

(Map p240; 5 Th Ratchamankha; breakfast 60-80B, juices 50-80B; ☺8.30am-5.30pm) Serves hangover-fighting juices. Make-your-own vegetarian sandwiches and tasty breakfasts.

Coffee Lovers

(Map p240; 175/1 Th Ratchamankha; mains 40-60B; ☺7am-6pm) This place knows how to cook eggs and makes a top breakfast spot. Delicious juices too.

Ginger Kafe

(Map p240; 199 Th Moon Muang; dishes 100-250B; ☺10am-11pm) In the same grounds as the House.

STREET FOOD \$

EAST OF THE OLD CITY

Chiang Mai's small Chinatown, along Th Chang Moi, is a tasty quarter to investigate early in the morning. On Th Khang Mehn, you'll find *kà-nǎm jeen* and other noodle dishes. An alley next to the Top Charoen Optical shop, wakes up early thanks to a popular *nâm dow-hôo* (soy milk) stall, serving warm soy milk accompanied with Chinese-style deep-fried doughnuts.



Taste From Heaven

(Map p240; 237-239 Th Tha Phae; dishes 60-110B; ☺lunch, dinner; 🍴) This fine vegetarian restaurant makes delectable curries and fusion dishes incorporating Indian cuisine (such as veg samosas). It's also very friendly, ethically sound - with proceeds going towards the Elephant Nature Park (p253) - and has a cooling garden out the back for outside dining.

da Stefano

(Map 240; ☎0 5387 4187; 2/1-2 Th Changmoi Kao; mains 180-250B; ☺11.30am-11pm) This unassuming Italian eatery, with its portraits of the Mediterranean hanging on its walls, is tucked into a soi just outside of the old city.

JUICE BAR \$

VEGETARIAN \$

CAFE \$

CAFE \$\$

ITALIAN \$\$

It's one of the best Italian restaurants in Chiang Mai, and you can't really go wrong with the menu, but we'd recommend the rich lasagne, and richer tiramisu.

Aroon Rai

THAI \$

(Map p240; 45 Th Kotchasan; mains 40-80B; ☺8am-10pm) The Aroon Rai is a basic, Thai-style, open-air eatery proclaiming to have the best curries in town. It certainly does have variety: soup, noodle and rice dishes along with the curries, even frog dishes, appear on the menu. It's very popular with Thais and budget travellers, and is an excellent cheapie; peruse the northern Thai sausage and pots of curry on the way in to warm-up your appetite.

Antique House

NORTHERN THAI \$\$

(71 Th Charoen Prathet; dishes 80-200B; ☺lunch, dinner) Antique House is a quaint two-storey teak house and garden filled with wooden antiques and mellow nightly music. Better to come for dinner rather than lunch – it's a much better time to experience the magic of this beautiful setting. Excellent fish dishes especially the tab-tim fish in both Chinese and Thai style. Also available is cook it yourself BBQs and *rod duen* (fried crispy worm!). This place is just north of the old city, off Th Chang Pheuk.

Whole Earth Restaurant

RESTAURANT \$\$

(Map p240; 88 Th Si Donchai; dishes 150-350B; ☺11am-10pm) This confectionery-coloured teak house wears a garden of hanging vines, koi ponds and orchids growing in the crooks of tree limbs. It is the sort of place Thais go to treat someone special – where the staff will treat you like royalty and the dishes seem exotic (Thai Indian and vegetarian) without being demanding.

Just Khao Soy

KHO SOY \$

(Map p240; 108/2 Th Charoen Prathet; mains 100-150B, tapas 50B; ☺lunch, dinner) This is the gourmet version of *kho soy*. Served on a wooden artist's palette, this delightful eatery specialises in noodle dishes, which are prepared to order via a step-by-step process. First you order your meat (or vegies) with free range, grain-fed chicken favoured on the menu, then choose your level of spice, your type of noodles, sauce and a delicious, hearty broth is born. Although the food is beautifully presented it's probably a bit expensive for what you get. Lanna art decorates the bamboo walls.

La-Own

THAI \$

(Th Charoen Prathet; dishes 40-80B; ☺lunch, dinner) Tempting aromas waft down the street from this affable restaurant. Its grill-BBQ out front often seems empty; usually a bad sign. Not on this occasion. Dishes are thoughtfully prepared and include lots of seafood and chicken options. We enjoyed the seafood fried-rice with basil. Although it advertises itself as a 'grilled chicken restaurant' in fact the excellent Thai menu is much more extensive. This place is close to the river, on busy Th Charoen Prathet, just near the corner of Th Tha Phae.

Anusan Night Market

FOOD MARKET \$\$

(Map p240; Anusan Night Bazaar, Th Chang Khlan; dishes 100-350B; ☺dinner) Anusan is a buzzing food market best known for its Thai-Chinese seafood restaurants. Stalls surround a large cluster of tables where each 'restaurant' has a section allocated with its own waiters. Nearby are other stand-alone restaurants, some of which have their own prawn holding ponds acting as centrepieces for their menu speciality. The prices are higher than they ought to be but these are special-occasion splash-out restaurants for Thais. Try **Lena Restaurant** here, where a kilo of succulent grilled prawns will set you back 300B. Or have a stab at the fish in Thai spices and basil leaves.

Tianzi Tea House

HEALTH \$

(Map p240; Th Kamphaeng Din; dishes 60-120B; ☺10am-10pm) Such hard-core health food is usually found in dirt-floor hippy shacks, but Tianzi has adopted the ascetic's meal to an aesthetic surrounding. Pretty open-air *sah-lah*, decorated with flowers and dappled with sunlight, host a range of organic and macrobiotic dishes, such as Yun-nanese tofu cheese.

Ratana's Kitchen

INTERNATIONAL-THAI \$

(Map p240; 320-322 Th Tha Phae; dishes 30-150B; ☺7.30am-11.30pm) For all the talk of Chiang Mai having cool temperatures, it still gets hot by midday. Jump out of the oven and into Ratana's kitchen. It isn't a culinary legend but the dishes and prices are sensible and it's got a prime spot near Pratu Tha Phae for wilting tourists.

Good Health Store

HEALTH FOOD \$

(Map p240; Th Si Donchai; set breakfast 75-120B; ☺7am-2pm Mon-Sat) Sells mainly chemical-

free products as well as herbal remedies, and does healthy breakfasts.

Art Cafe

INTERNATIONAL \$\$
(Map p240; cnr Th Tha Phae & Th Kotchasan; dishes 80-200B; ☺breakfast, lunch & dinner) Popular meeting spot just outside Tha Pae Gate, serving Thai, Italian, Mexican and American dishes.

Moxie

INTERNATIONAL-THAI \$\$\$
(Map p240; ☎0 5399 9999; DusitD2 Chiang Mai, 100 Th Chang Khlan; dishes 200-450B; ☺6.30am-10.30pm) In the DusitD2 hotel; offers edible sculptures of Thai, Japanese and Italian components.

RIVERSIDE

Past Saphan Nakhon Ping, is Th Faham, known as Chiang Mai's *kôw soy* ghetto. Situated here are **Khao Soi Lam Duan** (Th Faham; dishes 40-60B), which also serves *kà-nôm rang pêung* (literally beehive pastry – a coconut-flavoured waffle), **Khao Soi Samoe Jai** (Th Faham; dishes 30-65B) and **Khao Soi Ban Faham** (Th Faham; dishes 35-55B). *Kôw soy* foodies sometimes spend the day sampling a bowl at each place to select their favourite.

Chedi

THAI-INDIAN \$\$\$
(☎0 5325 3333; 123 Th Charoen Prathet; mains 500-1000B; ☺dinner) Chiang Mai's most ambitious homage to modernism, the Chedi has transformed the former British Consulate into a minimalist sculpture with restrained Zen-like grounds. Fine Indian cuisine is available (the *jinga masala* is recommended by readers) as well as one of Chiang Mai's few quality wine lists. Shockingly expensive but swamped with first-class service, enjoy gorgeous white-linen dining on the riverbank with floating candles twinkling on the water. This is the place to impress. Even coming here for a drink in the bar allows you to enjoy the setting without having to take out a loan.

Love at First Bite

BAKERY \$
(28 Soi 1, Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; desserts 50-90B; ☺10.30am-6pm, closed Mon) Tucked deep into a residential soi on the east bank of the river, this famous dessert shop is filled with middle-class, cake-confident Thais. Don't be surprised to see folks posing in front of the dessert display case for a souvenir photo. It's on the eastern side of the river about 500m north of the tourist office.

Riverside Bar & Restaurant

INTERNATIONAL-THAI \$\$
(Th Charoenrat; dishes 100-200B; ☺10am-1am) This rambling set of wooden buildings has been the most consistently popular riverside place for over 20 years. The food – Thai, Western and vegetarian – is just a minor attraction compared to the good-times ambience. The clientele is a mix of Thais and *fa-ràng*. There's inside and outside dining; the bar area inside is musty and worn, and rather boisterous, while outside by the river is more sedate. Some veterans opt to dine on the docked boat before the nightly 8pm river cruise. It's right on the river just 300m north of Saphan Nawarat.

Good View

THAI \$\$
(13 Th Charoenrat; dishes 100-250B; ☺10am-1am) Next door to the Riverside, Good View lives up to its name with open-air seating in a contemporary setting. The formula is similar to the Riverside, except the menu focuses more on Thai food and the nightly music covers a broader genre range. Try to nab a table beside the river for a romantic evening.

Mahanaga

INTERNATIONAL-THAI \$\$\$
(☎0 5326 1112; 431 Th Charoenrat/Faham; dishes 30-500B; ☺5.30pm-midnight) The Chiang Mai branch of a Bangkok-based fusion restaurant, Mahanaga is all style and romance with flickering candles, traditional Lanna-style buildings and tall trees. The menu features Thai food: classic recipes using high-end, imported meats, such as grilled Australian chilled ribeye with spicy Thai sauce. It's on the same street as Riverside Bar, about 1km further north.

Huan Soontaree

THAI \$
(☎0 5387 2707; 46/2 Th Wang Singkham; dishes 120-150B; ☺4pm-1am) Visiting Thais from Bangkok make the pilgrimage to this rustic restaurant, built on the west bank of the river, partly for the food but mainly for the owner, Soontaree Vechanont, a famous northern singer popular in the 1970s. She performs at the restaurant from 8.30pm to 10pm Monday to Saturday. The menu is a pleasant blend of northern, northeastern and central Thai specialties. This place is on the river about 4km north of the city.

WEST OF THE OLD CITY

The area west of Wat Suan Dok on Th Suthep has several popular vegetarian (*ah-hähn jair*) restaurants. Th Nimmanhaemin and the surrounding sois are an incredibly fast-

growing area with new restaurants and cafes popping up every month. Step across culinary continents with the best Burmese and Japanese food in the city; there are adventures to be had in Mexican, fine Thai in the foothills of Doi Suthep, and some up-market cafes, where students like to preen and imagine a tomorrow when they really can afford all this.



Palaad Tawanron

THAI \$\$

(☑️ 0 5321 6039; Th Suthep; dishes 120-320B; ☺️lunch, dinner) Set into a rocky ravine next to a waterfall (in wet season) near Doi Suthep, this is a spectacularly sited restaurant. The Thai menu is extensive and includes plenty of seafood such as serpent-head fish, freshwater prawns, and sea bass. There's an extensive outdoor seating area overlooking a small reservoir and the city of Chiang Mai beyond. It's a magical spot in the evenings and much cooler than in the city. Follow the signs at the end of Th Suthep.

Khun Churn

VEGETARIAN \$

(Map p248; Soi 17, Th Nimmanhaemin; buffet 100B; ☺️lunch; ☑️) Thais love their buffets – it's the all-you-can-eat allure for these food-loving people. This place is certainly one of the best going around. There's a plethora of well-prepared vegetarian dishes and salads to choose from and basic fruit drinks are included. The shady outdoor setting will entice you to linger.

Hong Tauw Inn

THAI \$

(Map p248 95/17-18 Nantawan Arcade, Th Nimmanhaemin; dishes 70-130B; ☺️11am-11pm) It's a relief to step through the doors at this old-fashioned, intimate Thai inn, decked out in an old-fashioned costume of aged pendulum clocks and antiques, and escape the fashionable haunts that have devoured this area. It's a really good spot to begin your Thai culinary adventures – there's an extensive menu that includes regional specialities such as *naem mog sai ou* (spicy grilled northern sausage with herbs). Relaxed dining, staff who speak English and decent quality, inexpensive Thai food – it ticks a lot of boxes for newbies. It's popular with Thais as well and the food is genuinely spicy. The *sôm-dam*, and curries are spot on.

Su Casa

TAPAS \$\$

(Map p248; ☑️ 0 5381 0088; 28 Soi 11, Th Nimmanhaemin; tapas 70-100B; ☺️lunch, dinner) The chef at this vivacious Mediterranean gem invites

Chiang Mai's fresh produce and imported ingredients to tango with him in the kitchen, preparing tapas standards and artful entrees. Try the baby octopus in lemon citrus dressing, the chorizo is also very good here. The outside eating area is perfect for breezy evenings as are the jugs of margarita.

Ai Sushi

JAPANESE \$

(Map p248; Th Huay Kaew; dishes 50-100B; ☺️dinner) This sushi bar could well be the best Japanese in the city. The pace gets furious later in the evening as diners in-the-know pack it out. Watch the sushi chefs at work at the bar or sit at small tables inside or out right on Huay Kaew Rd. The food is fresh and delicious, and highly recommended is the *ebi tem maki* (crispy dragon sushi with prawns) – very morish. Salmon dishes are also a highlight. Service is very fast.

Pun Pun

THAI, VEGETARIAN \$

(Wat Suan Dok, Th Suthep; mains 30-40B; ☺️breakfast & lunch; ☑️) This shady outdoor eatery quietly churns out top quality Thai vegetarian dishes with little fuss. Food is simple, spicy and delicious. It does an excellent *sôm-dam* and the fruit shakes are also superb. Enter Wat Suan Dok from Suthep road, walk past the temple, and it's on your right after the 'monk chat' office.



Royal Project Restaurant

NORTHERN THAI \$\$

(Th Huay Kaew; mains 70-300B; ☺️9am-6pm) Fine dining Thai-style is dished out at this outlet for the Royal Project, which supports various agricultural initiatives in Thailand. It's popular with Thais for a special occasion, university staff from across the road, and families. Unusually for a Thai restaurant rainbow trout features on the menu, which focuses predominantly on Northern Thai specialties, some only available during certain months of the year. It's located opposite the Huay Kaew Fitness Park and next to the CM Animal Quarantine station. Also on-site is a top class supermarket selling fruit & veg, grown organically where possible, as part of the Royal Project and packaged smoked trout.

Salsa Kitchen

MEXICAN \$\$

(Map p248; Th Huay Kaew; mains 130-150B; ☺️11am-11pm) Churns out authentic south-of-the-border dishes including burritos, enchiladas, fajitas and tacos; our favourites here

are the chicken quesadillas – be warned the portions are huge. It's an expat favourite but Thais indulge here also, and it's often busy in the evening; certainly it's the best Mexican in town.

Burmese Restaurant

BURMESE \$

(Map p248; cnr Th Nimmanhaemin & Soi 14; dishes 30B; ☺lunch, dinner) This basic eatery behind another eatery with plastic chairs selling fried foods on the pavement, sells delicious Burmese food very cheaply. The food comes quick, goes down even quicker and at these prices you should be able to afford to sample a few of its offerings. Try the tamarind leaf salad (our favourite), goat offal curry or catfish balls in gravy.

100% Isan Restaurant

NORTHERN THAI \$

(Th Huay Kaew; dishes 60-200B; ☺lunch & dinner) Directly in front of CMU's main gate, this fluorescent-lit shop does a bumping business of northeastern standards: *sôm-dam*, *kôw nêe-o* and *gài yâhng*. From the looks of it, everyone who leaves the university gets hungry when they hear the mortar-and-pestle music of *sôm-dam*.

Implaphao Restaurant

THAI \$

(Rte 121; dishes 700-160B; ☺11am-10.30pm) Dining by the water is an appetising feature for Thais and this barn-like restaurant lures in the supping parties for *blah pôw* (broiled fish stuffed with aromatic herbs) and *dôm yam gûng*. It isn't the easiest restaurant to reach, 10km southwest of Chiang Mai, across from Talat Mae Huay, but it is an undiluted Thai experience.

NinjaRamen & Japanese Food

JAPANESE \$

(Map p248; Th Sirimungklajarn; mains 60-110B; ☺lunch & dinner) Ramen-based soups such as wanton dumplings and ramen topped with pork slices in soybean are some of the dishes on the extensive menu at this excellent Japanese restaurant. It also serves soba and udon noodle dishes, and fancy versions of sashimi and sushi. It's often full and turning people away, so nab a table early.

Galare Restaurant

NORTHERN THAI \$\$

(off Map p236; 65 Th Suthep; dishes 100-220B; ☺10am-10pm) Out on the outskirts of Chiang Mai, Galare is a terraced, open-air restaurant nestled by a small lake and a green park that overlooks the city. A carpet of flowers fills in the spaces between the wooden picnic tables. The menu is mainly northern

Thai, and though it's not spectacular, you'll hardly notice more than the tranquil setting. It's a great way to escape the frenetic traffic of the city.

D-Lo

BURMESE \$

(soi off Th Huay Kaew; mains 30-50B; ☺lunch & dinner) This is a new Burmese restaurant and according to local Burmese food aficionados it serves up very authentic versions of the cuisine. Curries and salads feature on the small menu – try the fishball salad or one of the goat curries. Expect attentive service and warm smiles at no charge. It's located in a lane off Huay Kaew road, look for the sign to the Holiday Garden Hotel – it's about halfway down on the right-hand side.

Amazing Sandwich

CAFE \$

(Map p248; 20/2 Th Huay Kaew; sandwiches 100B; ☺daily) A self-described island in a sea of rice, Amazing Sandwich delivers bread to the wheat-deprived. Expats rank the make-your-own sandwiches right up there with sliced bread. Has recently expanded into pizza, hamburgers, and breakfasts. Rely on takeaway; the dining room does not win any awards.

I-Berry

ICE-CREAM PARLOUR \$

(Map p248; lane off Soi 17, Th Nimmanhaemin; ice cream from 60B) A Bangkok-based ice-cream store has churned a pretty wooden lot into a hip phenomenon. Students and locals flock here with cameras in tow hoping to run into the famous owner, comedian Udom Taepanich (nicknamed 'Nose'). If he's not around they'll settle for the huge yellow sculpture out front, said to mimic the star's signature feature (his big nose). The ice cream is pretty good, but watching Chiang Mai's celebrity worship is even better.

Salad Concept

SALAD \$

(Map p248; Th Nimmanhaemin; basic salad dishes 50B; ☺lunch, dinner; 🍴) Build your own fresh salad, which consists of eight types of greens, five optional toppings and a dressing. Some toppings are a little light on.

Boat

THAI \$

(Th Huay Kaew; mains 30-40B; ☺breakfast, lunch, dinner) Popular with Thais for its comfy seating and cheap food – the real puller is the local people-watching. It's about 300m northwest of Th Khlorng Chonprathan on the left hand side of Huay Kaew as you head towards Doi Suthep from the city.

A TASTE OF MYANMAR (BURMA) IN CHIANG MAI

You don't need to travel to Myanmar (Burma) to experience it. More and more tourists head to Mae Sot to partake of breakfasts of nan bread and beans, shop at the border market, marvel at the official and unofficial crossings going on above and below the bridge and wander around the bilingual, bicultural town. But you can also have a Burmese experience here in Chiang Mai. Visit the Shan temples **Wat Pa Pao** or **Wat Ku Tao**. If you are lucky, you may chance upon the colourful and fascinating Poy Sanlong (Novice Ordination) festival. Wat Pa Pao also hosts a pilot project school for Shan children jointly organised by the Ministry of Education and the Shan community. Or you can visit the Burmese temple, **Wat Sai Moon**, on the moat. To experience the flavours of Burmese food, do not miss **D-Lo restaurant** (p272), there is usually an interesting gathering of people there too! Or a little further afield, but equally delicious, is the **Mee Mee Shan Burmese** at Ruamchoke market on the way to Mae Joe. On a Friday morning you can pop into the market off Chang Klan Soi 1, opposite the mosque, for Burmese noodles (*mohinga*) or Shan soft tofu and a whole host of other ethnic delights.

Jackie Pollock – MAP Foundation

Lemontree

THAI \$
(Map p248; Th Huay Kaew; mains 40-70B; ☺11am-10pm) The well-worn dining room tells you it's been around for a long time – plenty of local Thais eat here. Does good curries serving up a piping hot meal nice and quick. Servings are large and mains are much better than appetizers.

Smoothie Blues

CAFE \$
(Map p248; 32 Th Nimmanhaemin; dishes 100-150B; ☺7.30am-9pm) Expat favourite; and known for its breakfasts, as well as its sandwiches, baguettes and namesake drink.

ELSEWHERE

Chiang Mai reveals its Chinese heritage with its devotion to pork products, most obvious in the northern Thai speciality of *sai ò-a* (pork sausage). Good quality *sai ò-a* should be zesty and spicy with discernible flavours of lemongrass, ginger and turmeric. Two famous sausage makers are **Mengrai Sai Ua** (Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun), near the Holiday Inn on the east bank of the river, and **Sai Ua Gao Makham** (Rte 121), a small stall in Talat Mae Huay (Mae Huay market), which is a few kilometres south of the Night Safari on the way to Hang Dong.

Wrap & Roll

INTERNATIONAL-THAI \$\$
(88 Soi 2, Th Wualai; mains 60-130B; ☺lunch, dinner) If you're checking out the Saturday Walking Street market, and want to get off your legs for a breather, this place offers the perfect respite. Cold beer, wine by the glass, ice-cold soda water with fresh lime, and well-prepared dishes like fresh spring rolls, or healthier wraps, can be consumed at out-

door tables while you keep an eye on all the goings-on of the market.

Vegetarian Centre of Chiang Mai

VEGETARIAN \$
(14 Th Mahidol; dishes 15-30B; ☺6am-2pm Mon-Fri; ☺) Sponsored by the Asoke Foundation, an ascetic Buddhist movement, this restaurant serves inexpensive cafeteria-style veg. It's about 500m south of the old city.

Spirit House

INTERNATIONAL-THAI \$\$
(Soi Viangbua, Th Chang Pheuak; dishes 100-200B; ☺from 5pm) Sometimes the most charming restaurants are just display cases for an eccentric personality. This antique-filled dining room is the creative outlet for the American owner who's a master of many trades, from antique dealer to classical musician. A former chef in New Orleans, he's a self-described 'nut about food' and builds the daily menu around what looks interesting at the market. The leafy surrounds and rustic feel add to the charm. This place is just off busy Th Chang Pheuak, near the market.



Drinking

See p270 for **Riverside**, a bar-restaurant that is a great drinking option right on the river, especially recommended at sunset.

Pub

PUB
(189 Th Huay Kaew) In an old Tudor-style cottage set well off the road, this venerable Chiang Mai institution semi-successfully calls up the atmosphere of an English country pub. The Friday-evening happy hour assembles all the old expats who claim to have arrived in the city on the back of elephants.

Ice-cold Tiger beer on tap. It's a couple of hundred metres past Th Nimmanhaemin on the west side of Th Huay Kaew.

Writer's Club & Wine Bar

BAR

(Map p240; 141/3 Th Ratchadamnoen) Run by an ex-foreign correspondent, this unassuming traveller hangout is popular with expats and serves a good range of cold beer and cocktails. There's also English pub grub to help anchor a liquid meal.

Archers

BAR

(Map p240; 33/4 Th Ratchaphakhinai; ☎) Come to this chilled-out restaurant-bar for the cold beer and the people-watching – not the food. It's a good spot to knock back a couple in the afternoon with the newspaper and maybe your laptop (free wi-fi). Popular with expats and travellers.

Dayli

BAR

(Map p248; Soi 11, Th Nimmanhaemin) This enormous outdoor bar-eatery is frankly a bit grotty. But it serves cheap, cold beer and service is attentive. The plastic chairs and tables on your right as you enter are a bit newer and cleaner – the further to the left you stray the more you invite trouble with hygiene. Has a rickety feel and the shady trees and palms give it a certain kitsch ambience. We like it! It's certainly party-central late Friday and Saturday nights.

Rooftop Bar

BAR

(Map p240; Th Kotchasan) This grungy backpacker bar is a good place to party. It's set out in rasta colours with plenty of graffiti and the inebriated sit around small, low tables on a bamboo floor admiring the views over Pratu Tha Phae and Doi Suthep beyond – until the dancing starts that is...

UN Irish Pub

PUB

(Map p240; 24/1 Th Ratwithi) A two-storey bar and restaurant, and stalwart on the Chiang Mai traveller scene, this is an old favourite for its Thursday quiz night and boozy nights. There's Guinness on tap, a beer garden and TV screens – sporting events are popular, especially rugby and football games.

At 9 Bar

BAR

(Map p240; Th Nimmanhaemin & Soi 9; ☎6pm-midnight) For a bird's-eye view of all the action on Th Nimmanhaemin, pop into this upstairs, open-air bar. A great spot for a people watch, it's a perfect perch while you slug back a Chang (on tap).

Pinte Blues Pub

BAR

(Map p240; 33/6 Th Moon Muang) This place deserves some sort of award for staying in business so long (more than 20 years) while serving only espresso and beer, and for sticking to a blues-music format the whole time. It is easy to walk by and not notice it, so you'll have to use your ears as your guide.

John's Place

BAR

(Map p240; Th Moon Muang) Another old-school spot, John's dominates the triangular wedge of Th Ratchamankha and Soi 2 with neon and beer bellies. Climb the stairs past the faded posters of Thai scenery to the roof deck where a cold beer is good company at sunset and beyond. The downstairs bar is the place to park yourself if you want a chat with the locals (local expats that is).

Kafe

BAR

(Map p240; Th Moon Muang) A cute wooden affair with a couple of sunny, outdoor tables snuggled in beside Soi 5, Kafe is often crowded with Thais and backpackers when every other place is empty. It offers a simple formula: cheap cold beer and efficient service.

Mix Bar

BAR

(Map p240; DusitD2 Chiang Mai, 100 Th Chang Khlan) Looking for a night out on a town that is more cosmopolitan than Chiang Mai? Chart a course to DusitD2 hotel's slinky cocktail bar; a swish elixir after roving the night market. The last weekend of the month hosts gay-friendly rainbow parties.

Glass Onion

BAR

(Map p248; Rooms Boutique Mall, Th Nimmanhaemin; ☎8pm-late) Tucked away at the far end of the walking mall is this small lounge bar outfitted in '60s-style mod fashions. While the barely legals try to blow their eardrums out at Nimmanhaemin's dance clubs, this is the domain of grown-ups desiring cocktails and conversation. The bar also enjoys a gay-friendly reputation. Friday night is ladies night and 7pm to 9pm is happy hour.

Pinocchio's (Map p248; Soi 7, Th Nimmanhaemin) and **Outdoors** (Map p248; Soi 7, Th Nimmanhaemin) are two large outdoor bars where the weekend action really hots up. They are deserted in the afternoon, but drop by in the evening if you want to see the young and beautiful at play. Pinocchio's is more up-market, and gets packed with younger Thai students while Outdoors is a bit more mixed with Thais, expats and tourists. Be warned,

though, the large screen TVs at both places take away any pretence at ambience.

Cafes & Teashops

Chiang Mai's creative and sociable temperament has eagerly adopted the global phenomenon of cafe culture, largely supplied by local coffee chains and home-grown Arabica beans. Almost an attraction in its own right, Soi Kaafae (Coffee Lane on Soi 9, Th Nimmanhaemin) is populated by two bustling coffee shops with lush garden seating and lots of laptop-tapping Thais. On one side of the street is **Wawee Coffee** (Map p248; Soi 9, Th Nimmanhaemin), a local chain that originally started at Mae Sa Elephant Camp and has since expanded to the point of Starbucks saturation. (There's also a Wawee on Th Ratchadamnoen in the old city.) Across the street is **94° Coffee** (Map p248; Soi 9, Th Nimmanhaemin).

Black Canyon Coffee CAFE
(Map p240; 1-3 Th Ratchadamnoen) Local chain with multiple branches in the city and a high energy 'see-and-be-seen' location in front of Pratu Tha Phae that is always packed with people-watchers.

Impresso Espresso Bar CAFE
(Map p248; 28/1 Soi 11, Th Nimmanhaemin; coffee 50B) If you want to get away from the bigger chain coffeeshops try this gem, in a top spot for some people-watching too (inside the cafe and outside on the street). Staff know their way around a coffee machine and it also pours smoothies, mocktails and teas such as jasmine dragon pearl.

Tea House TEAHOUSE
(Map p240; Th Tha Phae; ☎9.30-6pm) The mountains of the north also produce Assam tea, served in the Victorian-era Tea House, which shares space with Siam Celadon. It's a beautiful setting for a cup of jasmine tea and a snack.

★ Entertainment

TOP CHOICE **Sudsanan** LIVE MUSIC
(Map p248; Th Huay Kaew) Down a driveway opposite a Shell Service Station, this warmly lit wooden house is filled with a lot of local soul. Long-haired Thais and expats, especially from local NGOs, come here to applaud the adept performances that jog from samba to *pleng pèu-a chee-wit* (songs for life). Oozing with character it's one of the best spots in the city to take in some local Thai bands. Be

prepared for some bowed heads and snuffles during particularly tear-jerking songs.

Bridge Bar LIVE MUSIC
(Map p248; Soi 11, Th Nimmanhaemin) In their words, chic, retro and ready. Chic? Ummm, yes a little. Retro? Not really. Ready? Ready for what? Well, anyway, this is a very cool, local small bar (a nice change from the sprawling bar-restaurants in these sois) that hosts local bands in the evenings on most weekend nights and sometimes during the week too. Be warned the music is loud, so bring earplugs if you're a little sensitive to throbbing decibel levels.

North Gate Jazz Co-Op JAZZ
(Map p240; Th Si Phum) This tight little jazz club packs in more musicians, both local and foreign, than patrons, especially for its Tuesday open-mic night.

Riverside Bar & Restaurant LIVE MUSIC
(9-11 Th Charoenrat) In a twinkly setting on Mae Ping, Riverside is a one of the longest-running live-music venues in Chiang Mai. The cover bands made up of ageing Thai hippies stake out centre stage and fill the room with all the singalong tunes from the classic-rock vault. It is the perfect antidote for electronica overload. Also good as an eatery (see p270).

Inter LIVE MUSIC
(Map p240; 271 Th Tha Phae) A small band space in a wooden house spilling out onto the roadside, it's popular with travellers and backpackers staying around Pratu Tha Phae – it really ramps up some nights. There are opportunities to get involved if you've any musical talent.

Warm-Up NIGHTCLUB
(Map p248; ☎0 5340 0676, 306 253; 40 Th Nimmanhaemin) The hippest joint in town, and a perennial favourite for the young and beautiful, Warm-Up is one of Chiang Mai's best dance houses. Hip-hop is spun by DJs in the main room, the electronic beat of house reverberates in the lounge and bands playing rock/indie music can be found in the garden. Young hipsters arrive in their coolest duds: tight jeans, spiked wolf hair-dos, sparkly shirt dresses and pointy heels. But ever youthful *fà-ràng* join the crowd as well.

Monkey Club NIGHTCLUB
(Map p248; 7 Soi 9, Th Nimmanhaemin) Merging dinner with dancing and live music in the beautifully-lit tropical garden and featuring

local, crooning live bands, Monkey Club attracts a tribe of affluent Thai students and a few expats who might migrate from the garden seats to the glassed-in, all-white bar and club. It's a very happening place for the younger set.

Discovery NIGHTCLUB
(12 Th Huay Kaew) This is the place to carve up the dance floor and show the locals your latest moves. And fortunately, you don't have to be hip to have fun at this disco. It is big, loud and totally cheesy – the perfect recipe for joining the massive blob of gyrating bodies. Discovery is across the street from Kad Suan Kaew.

Bubbles NIGHTCLUB
(Pomping Tower Hotel, Th Charoen Prathet). A tad sleazy but Bubbles still mysteriously wins the affections of the prowlers and the ravers alike. Pretty much anything goes on the dance floor, including techno-trance, which is usually jammed full of tourists.

Thapae Boxing Stadium BOXING
(Map p240; ☎08 6187 7655; Th Moon Muang; standard/VIP ticket 400/600B; ☎9pm various nights) Right in the heart of the backpacker scene, this stadium caters to foreign audiences, complete with a cabaret.

Kawila Boxing Stadium BOXING
(off Th Charoen Muang) Near Talat San Pakoy, this is the locals' stadium for *moo-ay tai* (also spelt as *muay thai*) and has a very good reputation. Unfortunately fire gutted the building and it was being refurbished during research: it should reopen in 2012. Ask a local for directions.

Chiang Mai University Art & Culture Center CINEMA
(Map p236; Faculty of Media Art & Design; admission free; ☎7pm Sun) Feed your art-flick hunger at the university's weekly showings of foreign films, often showcasing a certain theme; screenings are in the main auditorium.

Good View LIVE MUSIC
(13 Th Charoenrat) Modern interpretation of cover tunes; it's next to Riverside Bar & Restaurant.

Le Brasserie LIVE MUSIC
(37 Th Charoenrat) A popular late-night spot filled with devotees of local guitarist legend Took. Rock and blues from all the dead legends fill the set. It's about 500m north of Saphan Nawarat, right on the river.

Gallery LIVE MUSIC
(27 Th Charoenrat) Traditional Thai music from 7pm to 9pm nightly. The beautiful, leafy, riverside setting marries well with the sounds. It's next to La Brasserie.

Major Cineplex CINEMA
(Central Airport Plaza, 2 Th Mahidol)

Vista Movie Theatre CINEMA
(Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre, Th Huay Kaew)

Shopping

Chiang Mai is Thailand's handicraft centre, ringed by small cottage factories and workshops. There are several shopping corridors throughout the city: the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, east of the old city; Saturday Walking Street on Th Wualai; Sunday Walking Street on Th Ratchadamnoen; and Th Charoenrat, alongside the river, for high-quality ethnic textiles. Th Nimmanhaemin, west of the old city near Chiang Mai University, has a handful of contemporary boutiques haunted by trend-conscious Thais.

Handicraft villages lie just outside of the city to the south and to the east. Hang Dong (p291) is widely regarded as the area's furniture capital.

OLD CITY
Mengrai Kilns POTTERY

(off Map p240; ☎0 5327 2063; www.mengraikilns.com; 79/2 Th Arak) In the southwestern corner of the inner moat, Mengrai Kilns are particularly focused on keeping the old Thai celadon-pottery traditions alive.

HQ Paper Maker PAPER

(Map p240; ☎0 5381 4718; www.hqpapermaker.com; 3/31 Th Samlan; ☎8.30am-5.30pm) Mainly an art paper retailer, this small shop sells handmade mulberry paper (*sāh*), another Chiang Mai handcrafted speciality. There's a variety of colours and designs, including sheets printed with the northern Thai alphabet.

Herb Basics HERBAL PRODUCTS

(Map p240; ☎0 5323 4585; Th Ratchadamnoen; ☎9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-9pm Sun) All of these good-smelling products – such as herbal lip balm, soap and shampoo – were made in Chiang Mai.

Lost Book Shop BOOKS

(Map p240; 34/3 Th Ratchamankha) Secondhand books free of plastic wrap for easy browsing; same owner as Backstreet Books.

NIGHT TIME SHOPPING

Chiang Mai Night Bazaar (Map p240; Th Chang Khlan; ☉7pm-midnight) is one of the city's main night-time attractions, especially for families, and is the modern legacy of the original Yunnanese trading caravans that stopped here along the ancient trade route between Simao (in China) and Mawlamyaing (on Myanmar's Gulf of Martaban coast). Today the night bazaar sells the usual tourist souvenirs, like what you'll find at Bangkok's street markets. In true market fashion, vendors form a gauntlet along the footpath of Th Chang Khlan from Th Tha Phae to Th Loi Kroh. In between are dedicated shopping buildings: the **Chiang Mai Night Bazaar Building** is filled mainly with antique and handicraft stores. Across the street is the **Galare Night Bazaar** selling upmarket clothes and home decor. Behind the collection of shops is the **Galare Food Centre** (Map p240). The **Anusan Market** is less claustrophobic and filled with tables of vendors selling knitted caps, carved soaps and other cottage-industry goods. Deeper into the market is the **Anusan Food Centre** (p269).

The quality and bargains aren't especially impressive, but the allure is the variety and concentration of stuff and the dexterity and patience it takes to trawl through it all.

On the Road Books

BOOKS

(Map p240; 38/1 Th Ratwithi) A long-running secondhand shop with a small selection of good-quality reads.

EAST OF THE OLD CITY

Elements

GIFTS, JEWELLERY

(Red Ruby; Map p240; 400-402 Th Tha Phae) Located next to Roong Ruang Hotel, Elements stocks embroidered bags, a diverse collection of fun jewellery and other trinkets.

Nova

JEWELLERY

(Map p240; www.nova-collection.com; 201 Th Tha Phae; ☉10am-8pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-8.30pm Sun) For contemporary jewellery, this studio hand-makes high-quality rings (7000B to 8000B), pendants and earrings using silver, gold and precious stones. Pieces can be custom made and are very classy.

Lost Heavens

TRIBAL ARTS

(Map 240; 228-234 Th Tha Phae) This store specialises in museum-quality tribal arts, including textiles, carpets and antiques, as well as ritual artefacts from the Yao (also known as Mien) tribe.

Kesorn

TRIBAL ARTS

(Map p240; 154-156 Th Tha Phae) A collector's best friend, this cluttered shop has been trading old stuff for years. It specialises mainly in hill-tribe textiles, beads and crafts.

Siam Celadon

CERAMICS

(Map p240; www.siamceladon.com; 158 Th Tha Phae; ☉8am-6pm) This established company sells its fine collection of cracked-glazed celadon ceramics in a lovely teak building. Enjoy the Victorian-era structure and its dainty fret-

work longer with a proper English tea at the attached Tea House Siam Celadon (p273).

KukWan Gallery

TEXTILES, GIFTS

(Map p240; 37 Th Loi Kroh) Set slightly back from the road, this charming teak building houses natural cotton and silk by the metre. It's a great place to shop for gifts, with scarves, bedspreads and tablecloths available in subtle colours.

Pantip Plaza

ELECTRONICS

(Map p240; Th Chang Khlan) Near the night bazaar, this shiny shopping centre is a more legitimate version than its grey-market counterpart in Bangkok. Mainly licensed suppliers of electronic hardware, such as computers and cameras, fill the space without a single bootleg software vendor in sight.

Suriwong Book Centre

BOOKS

(Map p240; 54 Th Si Donchai; ☉8am-8pm) A Chiang Mai institution carrying mainly magazines and Thai titles with a small but sturdy English-language section of Thai and Southeast Asian nonfiction.

Backstreet Books

BOOKS

(Map p240; 2/8 Th Chang Moi Kao) In a rambling shop next to Gecko Books, Backstreet has a good selection of crime and thriller novels. Also a reasonable map section, although some are waaaaay out of date.

Book Zone

BOOKS

(Map p240; Th Tha Phae) Directly opposite Wat Mahawan; new travel guides and travel literature, plus contemporary fiction.

Gecko Books

(Map p240; 2/6 Th Chang Moi Kao) A Chiang Mai chain, Gecko Books has several branches, including those at Th Ratchamankha and Th Loi Khro; includes new and used books sheathed in annoying plastic wrap.

BOOKS

eastern side of the road about 400m north of Saphan Nawarat.

Sop Moei Arts

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5330 6123; www.sopmoeiarts.com; 150/10 Th Charoenrat) Lots of shops sell hill-tribe crafts, but this one has put a modern makeover on the traditional crafts of the Pwo Karen, a tribal group living in Mae Hong Son Province. The result is some genuinely exquisite textiles including cushion covers, table pieces and wall hangings. The shop's directors began working with the people in the village through a health program some 30 years ago, but have since harnessed the craft traditions of textile weaving and basketry as an economic-development project.

TEXTILES

RIVERSIDE**La Luna Gallery**

(Map p240; ☎ 0 5330 6678; www.lalunagallery.com; 190 Th Charoenrat) In the old shophouse row on the east bank of the river, this professional gallery picks a fine bouquet of emerging Southeast Asian artists. Many canvases have a social commentary angle and give the viewer a window into the different artistic styles in the region. The handpainted elephants (1000B) make great gifts.

ART

Vila Cini

(☎ 0 5324 6246; www.vilacini.com; 30-34 Th Charoenrat) Vila Cini sells high-end, handmade silks and cotton textiles that are reminiscent of the Jim Thompson brand. Perhaps the real draw is the store's atmospheric setting: a beautiful teak house with marble floors and a narrow, rickety staircase that leads to a galleried courtyard. It's on the

TEXTILES

Thai Tribal Crafts

(☎ 0 5324 1043; www.ttcrafts.co.th; 208 Th Bamrungrat) Peruse the ornate needle-work of the various hill tribes at this tribe-owned store near the McCormick Hospital. It operates by the principals of a fair-trade organisation. It's just south of cnr Th Bamrungrat and Th Kaew Nawarat.

TRIBAL CRAFTS

SHOPPING FOR A CAUSE

Chiang Mai is Thailand's conscience in part because the city is the de facto caretaker of struggling immigrants from Myanmar (Burma) and hill-tribe villagers who lack the proper citizenship to get an education, good paying jobs and medical care. This close proximity to poverty prods the average resident out of complacency and into action, resulting in a myriad of nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) that help develop legitimate sources of income.

Dor Dek Gallery (Map p240; ☎ 08 9859 6683; Th Samlan) sells the craft projects of street children employed by the Volunteers for Children Development Foundation. This private organisation runs an orphanage and work-training program for displaced children. The profits from sales are divided among the child artist, the program's educational fund and future supply purchases. It's particularly good for handmade bags, purses and prezzies for the kids.

Or what about something novel, like a gift that doesn't need to be carried home? At **Freedom Wheel Chairs Workshop** (Map p240; ☎ 0 5321 3941; www.freedomwheelchairs.org; 133/1 Th Ratchaphakhinai) you can purchase a wheelchair (9500B) that will be donated to a disabled person who cannot afford such an expense. Run by a Thai survivor of polio and her husband, the workshop purchases and customises wheelchairs and mobility aids for needy recipients.

Would you rather treat yourself to something pretty with a social-justice hook? **Adorn with Studio Naenna** (p279) is the in-town showroom of a village weaving project that gives young women in the Chom Thong district of Chiang Mai a viable economic income without having to leave their families and migrate to the city for work. It also preserves traditional weaving techniques and aims for a softer environmental footprint through the use of natural fibres and dyes.

Other handicraft outlets for village-weaving projects include **KukWan Gallery** (p277), **Sop Moei Arts**, **Thai Tribal Crafts** and the **Hill-Tribe Products Promotion Centre** (p279).

WEST OF THE OLD CITY

Close to Chiang Mai University, Th Nimmanhaemin is often referred to as the trendy part of town. It has several malls filled with closet-sized clothing and gift boutiques. Don't miss the home-grown art and decor shops lining Soi 1 off Th Nimmanhaemin and its art and design festival every December.

Elephants

WOOD CARVING

(Map p248; 8 Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) Founded by Mr Phet Wiriya, who has a passion for the art of wood carving, for elephants, and for developing new methods of carving, such as using local Cassia wood and changing the postures of the elephant. The results can be seen (and bought) at his excellent shop.

Hill-Tribe Products Promotion

Centre

TRIBAL CRAFTS

(21/17 Th Suthep) This royally sponsored project sells handmade hill-tribe crafts and touristy souvenirs. There are tribal costumes available from six hill-tribes. All the profits from sales go to hill-tribe welfare programs. It's right next to the entrance of Wat Suan Dok.

Srisanpanmai

SILK

(Map p248; 6 Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) The display cases here show a visual textbook of the textiles of the Lanna people. From the technicolour rainbow patterns of Myanmar (Burma) to the wide-hem panel style of Chiang Mai, Srisanpanmai specialises in silks made in the old tradition.

Adorn with Studio Naenna

TEXTILES

(Map p248; 22 Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) The pervasive colours of the mountains have been woven into these naturally dyed silks and cottons, part of a village weaving project pioneered by Patricia Cheeseman, an expert and author on Thai-Lao textiles. This is the in-town shop, but you can see the production process at the studio. This is one of the best places in Chiang Mai for textiles – the quality is excellent. A quick browse and you'll be sold.

Studio Naenna

TEXTILES

(www.studio-naenna.com; 138/8 Soi Chang Khian, Th Huay Kaew) If you liked what you saw at Adorn with Studio Naenna, then head out of town to the main gallery of this textile cooperative. It's about 1km northwest of the intersection of Th Huay Kaew and Th Khlorng Chonprathan, along Soi Chang Khian.

Shinawatra

SILK

(Map p248; www.shinawatrathaisilk.co.th; 18 Th Huay Kaew) This venerable family-owned silk shop was already a household name before the owners' nephew, Thaksin Shinawatra, became the controversial prime minister. The colours and styles are a little dowdy for foreign tastes, but reconsider the selection should you happen to be elected mayor of Chiang Mai.

Koland

KITSCH ART

(Map p248; Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) Chairman Mao greets visitors to the hippest store on the block, which sells a mix of locally made ceramics and kitsch art from China.

Kachama

TEXTILES

(Map p248; www.kachama.com; 10 Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) If you're planning on hanging textiles instead of wearing them, visit this upmarket textile studio featuring the artist's traditionally inspired weavings.

Gongdee Gallery

GALLERY

(Map p248; gongdeegallery.com; 30 Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) With one of the largest showrooms on the block, Gongdee is the so-called primary incubator for young artistic talent. There's a mix of home decor, furniture and paintings. Keep an eye out for the Byzantine icon-like Buddhas and altars painted by Chiang Mai artist Barinya.

Aka

FURNITURE

(Map p248; www.aka-aka.com; Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) Thai furniture and decorative arts designer Eakrit Pradisuwana has created a contemporary look for modern Asia-philes. The furniture is slick and minimalist but distinctively 'Eastern' in character.

Chabaa

CLOTHING

(Map p248; www.atchabaa.com; Nimman Promenade, 14/32 Th Nimmanhaemin) If Putumayo put out clothes instead of music, you'd have Chabaa, which specialises in global ethn chic. You'll find brightly coloured embroidered tops and skirts plus big-statement jewellery.

Ginger

CLOTHING, ACCESSORIES

(Map p248; 6/21 Th Nimmanhaemin) For something more night-on-the-townish, check out the shimmering dresses, sparkly mules, fabulous jewellery and colourful accessories offered in this place.

i Information

Dangers & Annoyances

Compared to Bangkok, Chiang Mai is a breeze for tourists. The hassles from *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* and *túk-túk* drivers are minimal.

A major annoyance is the traffic, but if you've just come from Bangkok you'll probably find it a relief as it's nowhere near as bad, and although very busy the main arteries do generally flow pretty well.

In March and April Chiang Mai can be enveloped in a smoky, dusty haze caused in large part by farmers burning off their fields in nearby districts.

Many less expensive guest houses in Chiang Mai will sometimes evict guests who don't engage trekking tours. Most places are pretty forthcoming with their policies on this and will usually offer rooms to nontrekking guests for a limited period.

Emergency

Tourist police (☎0 5324 7318, 24hr emergency 1155; Th Faham; ☀6am-midnight) Has a volunteer staff of foreign nationals who speak a variety of languages; some volunteers are posted at the Sunday Walking Street. It's on the eastern side of the river, just south of the superhighway.

Internet Access

Most of the guest houses in Chiang Mai have free internet access, including wi-fi. You'll also find plenty of internet centres along Th Tha Phae, Moon Muang and Ratchamankha.

Internet Resources

1 Stop Chiang Mai (www.1stopchiangmai.com) Website covering city attractions with an emphasis on day trips and outdoor activities.

Chiang Mai Sawadee (<http://chiangmai.sawadee.com>) A useful website guide to Chiang Mai, especially when first arriving with airport information, accommodation and maps.

Guidelines (www.guidelineschiangmai.com) Monthly advertorial magazine that features respectable historical essays on the north; also a visitors guide.

Media

Chiangmai Mail (www.chiangmai-mail.com) Weekly English-language newspaper covering local and regional news and politics.

Citylife (www.chiangmainews.com) Lifestyle magazine profiling restaurants, bars local culture, politics and people; also has classified section.

Irrawaddy News Magazine (www.irrawaddy.org) A well-respected journal covering news in Myanmar (Burma), northern Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia.

Medical Services

Chiang Mai Ram Hospital (☎0 5322 4880; www.chiangmairam.com; 8 Th Bunreuangrit) The most modern hospital in town; recommended by most expats.

Lanna Hospital (☎0 5399 9777; www.lanna-hospital.com; Th Superhighway) One of the better hospitals in town and less expensive than Chiang Mai Ram.

Malaria Centre (☎0 5322 1529; 18 Th Bunreuangrit) Offers blood checks for malaria.

Mungkala Traditional Medicine Clinic (Map p240; ☎0 5327 8494; 21-27 Th Ratchamankha; ☀9am-12.30pm, 2.30-7pm) Government-licensed clinic using acupuncture, massage and Chinese herbal remedies.

McCormick Hospital (☎0 5392 1777; www.mccormick.in.th; 133 Th Kaew Nawarat) Former missionary hospital; good for minor treatments.

Money

All major Thai banks have several branches and ATMs throughout Chiang Mai; many of them along Th Tha Phae.

Western Union (☎0 5322 4979) Send or receive money by wire; counters at Central Airport Plaza, Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre, Th Huay Kaew and also available at any post office.

Post

Main post office (☎0 5324 1070; Th Charoen Muang; ☀8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat & Sun) Other convenient branches are at Th Singharat/Samlan, Th Mahidon at Chiang Mai International Airport, Th Charoen Prathet, Th Phra Pokklao, Th Ratchadamnoen, Th Chotana and Chiang Mai University. The branch at Th Ratchadamnoen is a good place to organise packages home – staff are happy to wrap up boxes and awkward packages.

Telephone

Many internet cafes are outfitted with headsets so that customers can use Skype. There are also some direct-dial shops in the tourist sections of Chiang Mai and numerous phonecard booths in shops and bars around town.

Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT; ☎0 5324 1070; Th Charoen Muang; ☀24hr) Out of the way, by the main post office.

Tourist Information

Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT; ☎0 5324 8604; www.tourismthailand.org; Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; ☀8.30am-4.30pm) English-speaking staff provide maps and recommendations for tour guides; TAT doesn't make hotel reservations. It's just over Saphan Lek on the eastern side of the river.

Travel Agencies

Travel Shoppe (☎0 5387 4280; www.travel-shoppe.com; 2/2 Th Chaiyaphum) Excellent travel agency, just outside of Pratu Tha Phae. Used to dealing with foreigners.

Getting There & Away

Air

Regularly scheduled flights arrive into and depart from **Chiang Mai International Airport** (Map p236; www.chiangmaiairportonline.com), which is 3km south of the centre of the old city. Unless otherwise noted the following airlines use the Suvarnabhumi Airport for travel from and to Bangkok.

Air Asia (☎0 2515 9999; www.airasia.com) Flies to Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur daily.

Bangkok Airways (☎0 5328 9338-9; www.bangkokair.com) Flies daily to Bangkok and continues to Samui.

Korean Air (☎662-620 6900; www.koreanair.com) Flies between Chiang Mai and Seoul twice weekly in either direction; direct flights.

Lao Airlines (☎0 5322 3401; www.laoairlines.com) Flies to Luang Prabang daily.

Nok Air (☎1318; www.nokair.com) Flies to Bangkok's Don Muang Airport; note that Nok Air is a subsidiary of Thai Airways. Also flies to Udon Thani.

Orient Thai Airlines (☎1126; www.flyorientthai.com) Flies to Bangkok's Don Muang Airport four times a day; and three times weekly to Pai (operated by Kan Air).

Silk Air (☎0 5390 4985; www.silkair.com) Flies to Singapore three times weekly.

Thai Airways International (THAI; ☎0 5321 1044/7; www.thaiair.com) Flies to Bangkok at least six times daily. Also flies to many other domestic destinations, although few are direct.

Bus

Chiang Mai's long-distance terminal is known as **Arcade Bus Terminal** (Th Kaew Nawarat) and is about 3km from the old city. From the town centre, a *túk-túk* or chartered *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* should cost 50B to 80B. Green Bus Thailand is the biggest company at the Arcade terminal. The ticket counters that serve Pai, Mae Hong Son and Mae Sariang are beyond the main terminal.

Minibuses also depart from the terminal, and can be quicker than the buses, although they are potentially more hair-raising journeys: destinations include Mae Hong Son (250B) and Pai (150B).

Do note that from Bangkok, the most reliable companies use Bangkok's Northern and Northeastern bus terminal (Mo Chit). It is not advisable to go north with a bus company that leaves from Bangkok's tourist centres, like Th

Khao San. These invariably over-promise and under-deliver.

For buses to destinations within Chiang Mai Province, use the **Chang Pheueak Bus Terminal** (off Map p240; Th Chang Pheueak), which is north of the old city. Destinations served by the Chang Pheueak terminal include Chiang Dao (40B, 1½ hours, every 30 minutes), Chom Thong (34B, two hours, every 20 minutes), Fang (80B, three hours, every 30 minutes), Hang Dong (15B, 30 minutes, every 20 minutes) and Tha Ton (90B, five daily, four hours).

There is also a *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* stop on Th Praisani between Talat Warorot and Mae Ping serving nearby towns, such as Lamphun, Bo Sang, San Kamphaeng and Mae Rim. *Sǒrng-tǎa-ou* and buses also park on the east side of the river near Saphan Lek and make the trip to Lamphun, Lampang and Chiang Rai (via an older and slower road).

Train

Chiang Mai's **train station** (off Map p236; Th Charoen Muang) is about 2.5km east of the old city. The train station has an ATM, a left-luggage room (20B per piece) and an advance-booking counter at the regular ticket window. For information on schedules and fares contact the **State Railway of Thailand** (☎free hotline 1690; www.railway.co.th) or grab a timetable from the station.

All Chiang Mai-bound trains originate from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong station. At the time of research there were six daily departures from Bangkok to Chiang Mai (and the same number in the opposite direction) and the journey took between 12 and 15 hours. The following fare information indicates seats in air-con cars; if there is no designation this means that the seats are in fan-cooled cars.

Rapid trains leave Bangkok at 2.30pm arriving at 5.10am the next day. Fares are 391/251B for 2nd-/3rd-class seats and 541/491B for lower/upper sleeping berths in the 2nd-class cars.

Express trains leave Bangkok at 10pm and arrive in Chiang Mai at 12.45pm the following afternoon. Fares are 431/291B for 2nd-/3rd-class seats, 541B for 2nd-class air-conditioned seats, 581/531B for lower/upper sleeping berths in 2nd-class cars, and 821/751B for lower/upper sleeping berths for 2nd-class air-conditioned cars.

Sprinter (special express diesel) trains leave Bangkok at 8.30am and 7.20pm arriving in Chiang Mai at 8.30pm and 7.40am, respectively. Fares are 611B for 2nd-class air-conditioned seats.

Special Express trains leave at 6pm and 7.20pm, arriving the next day at 7.15am and 9.45am. Fares are 1253B for a 1st-class air-conditioned sleeper and 881/791B for lower/upper 2nd-class air-conditioned sleeper.

BUS SERVICES FROM CHIANG MAI'S ARCADE TERMINAL

DESTINATION	FARE (B)	DURATION (HR)	FREQUENCY
Bangkok	605-810	9½	every 30min (6.30am-9.30pm)
Chiang Khong	215-275	6½	3 daily
Chiang Rai	135-265	3-4	every 30min (5.30am-5pm)
Chiang Saen	165-220	3½-4	2 daily
Khon Kaen	505	12	10 daily
Khorat	560-660	12	11 daily
Lampang	20-100	2	hourly (6.30am-9.30pm)
Lamphun	35	1	hourly (6.30am-9.30pm)
Mae Hong Son (via Pai)	145-170	7-8	8 daily
Mae Hong Son (via Mae Sariang)	180-340	6 daily	
Mae Sai	165	5	2 daily
Mae Sariang	100-200	4-5	6 daily
Mae Sot	240-310	6-6½	2 daily
Nan	150-420	6	11 daily
Pai	75-85	4	12 daily
Phayao	115-150	2½-3	6 daily
Phrae	140-280	3½-4	7 daily
Phitsanulok (2nd class)	210-320	5-6	very frequently
Sukhothai (2nd class)	220	5-6	very frequently
Udon Thani (2nd class)	410-620	12	4 daily

Trains from Chiang Mai to Bangkok include the following services: express (departing 2.50pm, arriving 5.30am), special express (departing 4.30pm and 5.55pm, arriving 6.40am and 7am, respectively), sprinter (departing 9pm and 8.45am, arriving 9.10am and 8.25pm) and rapid (departing 6.45am, arriving 9.10pm).

Sleeping berths are increasingly hard to reserve without booking well in advance; tour groups sometimes book entire cars and available spots are even more scarce during holidays such as Songkran (mid-April), Chulalongkorn Day (October) and Chinese New Year (late February to early March). See p776 for information about advance bookings.

i Getting Around

To/From Airport

There is only one licensed airport taxi service, charging a flat 150B fare. Public bus number 6 (15B) goes from the airport to points west en route to Chiang Mai University; it isn't a convenient option if you're staying in the old city. Many guest houses and hotels also provide airport transfers.

From any point within the city, you can charter a *túk-túk* or red *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* to the airport for about 60B to 80B; you can usually get one from the airport into the old city too, although you may have to wait around for a while until one shows up.

Bicycle

Cycling is a good way to get around Chiang Mai. Rickety cruiser bikes with a fixed gear can be rented for around 60B a day from some guest houses or from various places along the east moat. Check the bike carefully before you hire – brakes in particular can be dodgy. **Chiang Mai Mountain Biking** (Map p236; ☎ 0 5381 4207; www.mountainbikingchiangmai.com; 1 Th Samlan) rents well-maintained mountain bikes and city bikes for the day, and runs mountain bike tours of the area.

If you want to buy a bike or you need repairs, your best bet is **Cacti Bike** (Map p236; ☎ 0 5321 2979; 94/1 Th Singharat), which also offers reliable bike hire (80B to 350B daily depending on type of bike), from simple cruisers to serious mountain bikes with all the accessories. For the really good mountain bikes a deposit of US\$250

or passport is required. An alternative, handily located option, is **SM Travel** ((Map p240 ☞ 0 5320 6844; 87 Th Ratchadamnoen), which also hires bikes and is a bit cheaper, reflective of the quality of their bikes (mountain bikes 100B to 200B).

Car & Truck

Private transport is available from rental agencies throughout the city, mainly along Th Moon Muang. Be sure that the vehicle you rent has insurance (liability) coverage, which usually includes a 5000B excess. This does not cover personal injury and medical payments of anyone injured in a traffic accident. Ask to take a look at the terms of the insurance policy so you're clear on what is and isn't included.

One of the most well-regarded agencies is **North Wheels** (Map p240; ☞ 0 5387 4478; www.northwheels.com; 70/4-8 Th Chaiphum), which offers hotel pick-up and delivery, 24-hour emergency road service, and comprehensive insurance. Another good bet is **Thai Rent a Car** (Petchburee Car Rent; ☞ 0 5328 1345; www.thairentacar.com; 81/1 Th Arak), located in the southwestern corner of the old city.

Standard rental rates per day are: small 1.5 litre cars such as Toyota Yaris or Honda Jazz are 900B to 1300B. Weekly and monthly rates are available and petrol is not included in the price. Unlimited kilometres should be included.

Other car-rental agencies in town:

Budget Car Rental (☞ 0 5320 2871; 201/2 Th Mahidol) Access from Central Airport Plaza.

Motorcycle

One of the most popular options for getting about on your own is to rent a scooter or motorcycle. Agencies along Th Moon Muang and even some guest houses rent Honda Dream 100cc step-through manual bikes for between 130B and 150B a day (automatic 200B); and Honda or Yamaha 125cc to 150cc rent for 250B a day. A few places rent 400cc motorcycles (600B to 900B), while a 650cc can go for 1300B.

Most agencies offer motorcycle insurance for around 50B a day; ask what this insurance coverage actually includes. Some policies will cover free repairs if the bike breaks down, but will charge a 1500B excess in case of accident and a 10,000B excess if the motorbike is stolen.

If you're renting a motorcycle for touring the countryside around Chiang Mai, check out the tips and routes at **Golden Triangle Rider** (www.gt-rider.com).

Among the more established and more reliable outlets:

Dang Bike Hire (Map p236; ☞ 0 5327 1524; 23 Th Kotchasan; ☺ 9am-5pm daily)

Mr Mechanic (Map p236; ☞ 0 5321 4708; www.mr-mechanic1994.com; 4 Soi 5, Th Moon

Muang) There are also two other branches in the old city.

Tony's Big Bikes (Map p236; ☞ 0 5320 7124; 17 Th Ratchamankha) Rents well-maintained 125cc to 400cc motorbikes that all have license plates. Also offers riding lessons, can give touring advice and repairs motorcycles.

Sǒrng-tǎa-ou, Túk-Túk & Sǎhm-lór

Chiang Mai residents who don't have their own wheels rely on the *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* (also called *rót daang*) or *túk-túk*.

The *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* are shared taxis: you can flag them down, tell them your destination and if they are going that way they'll nod. Along the way they might pick up other passengers if the stops are en route or close by. Short trips should cost 20B per person (eg between the old city and the river or Th Nimmahemin to the west) and longer trips from 40B per person, and more depending on the distance and your negotiation skills. If you travel from the riverside area to Th Nimmahemin you'll probably have to pay around 30B to 40B. By and large you hopefully shouldn't have a problem with *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* drivers being too greedy about fares. Most quote honest prices and it seems to be something of a tradition for the drivers to scoot around town in the evenings and on weekends with their wives in the front seat for company.

Túk-túks work only on a charter basis and are more expensive than *sǒrng-tǎa-ou*. In entertainment areas at night most túk-túk drivers will ask for an optimistic 100B.

Chiang Mai still has a few *sǎhm-lór* (pedicabs), typically parked at Talat Warorot. *Sǎhm-lór* cost around 20B to 30B for most trips.

Taxi

It is very rare to see a metered taxi to flag down in Chiang Mai. Call **Taxi Meter** (☞ 0 5326 2878; www.taxichiangmai.com) for a pick-up if you want one – most fares within greater Chiang Mai are no more than 150B. You can also organise tours in and around the city.

TÚK-TÚKS VERSUS SǒRNG-TǎA-OU

Túk túks are more expensive and their drivers are likely to rip you off, but they do offer a direct service and most drivers speak English. *Sǒrng-tǎa-ou* drivers are cheaper, less inclined to rip off passengers (because many Thais use them too), but English can be a problem and routes are not always direct. Riding in a *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* is an excellent way to meet local Thais.

NORTHERN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE

North of Chiang Mai the province becomes mountainous and rugged as it bumps against Myanmar's (Burma's) frontier. Among the highlights are the beautiful Mae Sa Valley and the forested peaks around Chiang Dao.

Mae Sa Valley & Samoeng

น้ำตกแม่สา/สะเมิง

One of the easiest mountain escapes, the Mae Sa–Samoeng loop travels from the lowland's concrete expanse into the highlands' forested frontier. The 100km route makes a good day trip with private transport or a country getaway with an overnight in Samoeng. **Golden Triangle Rider** (www.gt-rider.com) publishes a detailed map of the area.

Head north of Chiang Mai on Rte 107 (Th Chang Pheuk) toward Mae Rim, then left onto Rte 1096. The road becomes more rural but there's a steady supply of tour-bus attractions: orchid farms, butterfly parks, snake farms, you name it. Also lots of all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and offroad buggy hire.

Only 6km from the Mae Rim turn-off, **Nam Tok Mae Sa** (adult/child 100/50B, car 30B) is part of the Doi Suthep-Pui National Park. The cascade is a picturesque spot to picnic or tramp around in the woods for a bit and it is a favourite weekend getaway for locals. The falls are more a series of pools and a great place to cool off during the build-up (March to June); get there early and stake out your waterhole.

The road starts to climb and twist after the waterfall entrance. Not far past an elephant camp is the **Queen Sirikit Botanic Gardens** (☎ 5384 1000; www.qsb.org; Rte 1096; adult/child 30/10B; ☀ 8.30am–5pm), featuring a shorn mountainside displaying 227 hectares of various exotic and local flora for conservation and research purposes. The best part of the collection is the glasshouse complex sitting near the mountain peak. The drive to the glasshouse affords some wonderful views and once up here highlights include: the waterlily and lotus collections with some enormous leafy examples, and beautiful two-, even three-tier flowers; and the huge **tropical rainforest glasshouse** complete with indoor waterfall, where you can walk around on a raised platform giving a bird's eye view of the forest below. Take the provided bus (30B) or your own car (100B) to

get around the whole facility. Motorbikes are not allowed in the gardens.

Opposite the botanic gardens and set high on the hillside, the **Botanic Resort** (☎ 5381 8628; www.botanicresort.org; Rte 1096; r 1500–4800B; 🏠🏠) is all about fresh mountain air, views and relaxation in semi-luxurious rooms.

After the botanic gardens the road climbs up into the fertile Mae Sa Valley, once a high-altitude basin for growing opium poppies. Now the valley's hill-tribe farmers have re-seeded their **terraced fields** with sweet peppers, cabbage, flowers and fruits – which are then sold to the royal agriculture projects under the Doi Kham label. The royal project at the Hmong village of **Nong Hoi** sits some 1200m above sea level and is accessible by a turn-off road in the village of Pong Yeang.

Sitting at the western wedge of the valley, **Proud Phu Fah** (☎ 5387 9389; www.proudphufah.com; Km17, Rte 1096; r 4500–7000B; 🏠@🏠🏠) is a small boutique hotel with creature-comfort villas designed to give the illusion of sleeping amid the great outdoors. Each villa also has a patio area right on the water's edge. The open-air restaurant serves healthy Thai food (dishes 100B to 150B) with a panoramic view of the valley.

After Proud Phu Fah, the road swings around the mountain ridge and starts to rise and dip until it reaches the conifer zone. Beyond, the landscape unfolds in a cascade of mountains. Eventually the road spirals down into **Samoeng**, a pretty village. If you want to stay overnight, try the simple, rather rundown **Samoeng Resort** (☎ 5348 7074; Rte 6033; r 400–500B; 🏠), which is not a resort at all but rather a bunch of OK concrete bungalows in a bushy setting, about 2.5km outside the village. To get here take Rte 1349 from Samoeng (a right-hand turn in the town).

📍 Getting There & Away

Only part of the route is accessible via public transport. *Sǒrng-tǎa-ou* go to Samoeng (70B, 2½ hours, two morning departures) from the Chang Pheuk bus terminal in Chiang Mai. In Samoeng, the vehicles stop near the market, across from Samoeng Hospital.

Chiang Dao

เชียงใหม่

In a lush, jungle setting and slammed up against the limestone cliffs of a mighty *doi* (mountain), Chiang Dao is a very popular escape from the steaming urban plains of Chiang Mai. Local accommodation plays on this

theme attracting families and 30-something travellers looking for good eating, plenty of relaxing and northern rural ambience. The star attraction in this mountainous playground is **Doi Chiang Dao**, allegedly Thailand's highest limestone mountain. It is a thickly forested peak with a revered **cave shrine** burrowed into the base, and trails popular with birders and trekkers.

Chiang Dao town isn't much but a dusty crossroads that hosts a colourful **Tuesday morning market** (☀7am-12am), when hill tribes come to sell their wares. The more charming part of town is 5km west along the road that leads to Tham Chiang Dao (Chiang Dao Cave). The surrounding village and guest houses are smack up against the mountain.

From the main four-way junction at Chiang Dao, those with their own wheels can head eastwards to visit Lahu, Lisu and Akha villages, which are all within 15km. Roughly 13.5km east from Rte 107 is the Lisu village of Lisu Huay Ko, where rustic accommodation is available. Without independent transportation, you can arrange **hill-tribe treks** through the guest houses at Chiang Dao.

Sights

Some guest houses rent mountain bikes for 100B a day – not much of a bargain but an improvement over two feet.

Tham Chiang Dao

CAVES

(ถ้ำเชียงดาว; admission 20B) In the heat of the day, the coolest place in town is the Chiang Dao Cave, a complex said to extend some 10km to 14km into Doi Chiang Dao. There are four interconnected caverns that are open to the public. Tham Phra Non (360m) is the initial segment and is electrically illuminated and can be explored on one's own. It contains several religious shrines, a common feature of Thailand's caves, which are regarded as holy meditation sites. There are also some surreal-looking stalactites reminiscent of a Salvador Dali painting.

To explore the other caves – Tham Mah (735m), Tham Kaew (474m) and Tham Nam (660m) – you can hire a guide with a pressurised gas lantern for 100B for up to five people. Local village ladies lead the guided tours and can point out the interior cave formations that have been named.

Local legend says this cave complex was the home of a *reu-sée* (hermit) for a thousand years and that the sage was on such intimate terms with the deities that he convinced some *tair-wá-dah* (the Buddhist

equivalent of angels) to create seven magic wonders inside the caverns: a stream flowing from the pedestal of a solid-gold Buddha; a storehouse of divine textiles; a mystical lake; a city of *naga* (mythical serpents); a sacred immortal elephant; and the hermit's tomb. Such fantastical wonders are said to be much deeper inside the mountain, beyond the last of the illuminated caverns.

There is a temple complex outside the cavern, and a stream with huge carp and catfish you can feed (which handily counts as making merit via a donation). Vendors by the parking lot sell medicinal roots and herbs harvested in the nearby forests.

Doi Chiang Dao

MOUNTAIN

(ดอยเชียงดาว) Part of the Doi Chiang Dao National Park, Doi Chiang Dao (also called Doi Luang) pokes into the heavens at 2195m above sea level. From the summit, reachable by a two-day hike, the views are spectacular. The southern side of the mountain is believed to be one of the most accessible spots in the world to see the giant nuthatch and Hume's pheasant. **Bird-watching** and **overnight treks** can be arranged through local guest houses.

If you just want to wander by yourself, continue to the end of the cave road to **Samnak Song Tham Pha Plong** (Tham Pha Plong Monastic Centre), where Buddhist monks sometimes meditate. A long, steep stairway leads up the mountain to a large *chedi* framed by forest and limestone cliffs.

Sleeping

Many of the guest houses are spread out along the road leading to Tham Chiang Dao and enjoy a view of the mountain and butterfly-filled gardens.

Chiang Dao Nest

BUNGALOWS \$\$

(☎08 6017 1985; <http://nest.chiangdao.com>; r 550-1600B; @☎☎) Simple, great-value A-frame bungalows get the basics right – comfy beds, privacy and immaculate interiors. Those closest to the restaurant have terrific views from the rickety rear porches. Bungalows further away have limited views but plenty of privacy and a lush garden setting. There's a secluded swimming pool in a forest setting with mountain views; and this place has a great feel to it, generated at least in part by the friendly owners and staff, and evidenced by the large return clientele – especially expats from Chiang Mai. However, the accommodation here is really window dressing for the sensational restaurant.

Malee's Nature Lovers**Bungalows**

BUNGALOWS \$\$

(☎08 1961 8387; www.maleenature.com; r 650-1150B; @) Malee's has a more rustic traveller vibe than the Nest next door with its old-fashioned backpacker camaraderie. The cheaper bungalows are pretty basic but come with high ceilings, fans and decent bathrooms. The more expensive 'honeymoon bungalows' are excellent, with soaring ceilings, fridge and wrap-around porch, and set high off the ground, so they catch the breeze. There's also lots of info on stuff to do around Chiang Dao, and on public transport.

Chiang Dao Rainbow

BUNGALOWS \$\$

(☎08 4803 8116; small/large bungalows 650/750B, r 380B) The two recycled teak bungalows are a great size, have suitably creaky floors, four-poster beds, and shuttered windows overlooking rice fields and mountains. There are also cheaper rooms in the house at the back and plenty of info on things to do around Chiang Dao, such as visiting hill-tribe villages or waterfalls. It's a difficult place to find: look for the turn-off, not far from where the bypass road meets Rte 107 (almost opposite Aurora Resort on the bypass road). There's a small sign and a lot of Thai banners.

Nature Guest House

BUNGALOWS \$

(☎08 9955 9074; r 550B; @☎) Closer to town than the other guest houses, this quiet place is set in a neat garden with mountain views. The brick and wood A-frame bungalows with terraces are simple yet stylish. A very peaceful option. Motorbike and mountain bike hire available.

Hobby Hut

BUNGALOWS \$

(☎08 0034 4153; r 250B) These simple huts are the real backpacker option in Chiang Dao. Promoting itself as accommodation to experience a simple life on a Thai farm and enjoy 'Mum's home cooking', meals with the family are available. Very basic wooden huts raised off the ground to catch the breeze share a bathroom. It's very friendly and bike rental for 80B a day is available.

Chiang Dao Nest 2

BUNGALOWS \$\$

(☎0 5345 6242; nest.chiangdao.com; r 500-950B; @) The overflow site for Chiang Dao Nest, about 600m past the cave turn-off on the left side of the road.

Chiang Dao Hut

BUNGALOWS \$

(☎0 5345 6384; www.chiangdahut.com; r 500B) There's something very cute about this

place near Chiang Dao Nest 2. There are just three huts, all spacious, clean and with fans, hot water and TV.

**Eating**

Chiang Dao has a lovely assortment of farm-fresh produce – mostly chemical free – thanks to the nearby royal agriculture projects.

There is a **daily food market** off the main street through Chiang Dao. The **Tuesday morning market** is the most colourful, with hill tribes bringing wares to sell.

**Chiang Dao Nest**

INTERNATIONAL \$\$\$

(☎0 6017 1985; dishes 300-500B; ☺breakfast, lunch, dinner) The Nest's restaurant serves sophisticated fusion-European food in a relaxed garden setting. Wicha, the owner and chef, received her culinary training in the UK and creates a menu that reflects the seasons and the best of the local produce. Dishes such as double baked cheese soufflé with spinach cream and roasted-veg salad; and baked passionfruit cheesecake grace the menu. The food ain't cheap but definitely comes with the wow factor.

Chiang Dao Rainbow

THAI/MEDITERRANEAN \$\$

(☎08 4803 8116; set menu 250B) This highly recommended restaurant offers two menus – northern Thai and Greek-Mediterranean. There is an à la carte or set menu and plenty of vegetarian options, too.

**Getting There & Around**

Chiang Dao is 72km north of Chiang Mai along Rte 107. Buses to Chiang Dao (40B, 1½ hours, frequent) leave from Chiang Mai's Chang Phueak terminal. The buses arrive and depart from Chiang Dao's bus station from where you can catch a *sǒng-tǎa-ou* to your guest house. Most drivers charge 150B to deliver passengers to guest houses on the cave road. Buses also travel to Fang (60B). Most accommodation hires mountain bikes, and some organise scooters and cars. Or, you can hire a *sǒng-tǎa-ou* for about 1000B a day to drive you round the area.

Doi Ang Khang

คืออ่างขาง

Welcome to Thailand's 'Little Switzerland', so called for its cool climate and mountain scenery. Tucked away in the northern corner of the province, motoring up here is a good chance to escape the brutal heat of the plains 1300m below. Doi Ang Khang supports the cultivation of many species of

temperate flowers, fruits and vegetables that are considered exotic in Thailand and were introduced as substitutes for opium. But it is the sensation of winter that draws many Thais here, especially in January when they might spot frost or even a dusting of snow and get the rare opportunity to bundle up in heavy jackets and hats. Doi Ang Khang borders Myanmar (Burma) and offers the illusion of peeping over the border into that country's vast frontier.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand in Chiang Mai has a basic map of Doi Ang Khang outlining cycling routes and treks to hill-tribe villages, many of whom participate in royal agriculture projects. Another source of information on Doi Ang Khang is the ecofriendly Angkhang Nature Resort, which arranges cycling, mule riding and trekking to hill-tribe villages.

The main way to the summit is via Rte 1249 (there are great views from this route, but keep your eyes on the road as there are also some very steep switchbacks), but a more scenic back road is Rte 1178, which winds along a ridge to the mountain's western slopes. The village of **Ban Luang** is an interesting stopover for the Yunnanese atmosphere. Nineteen kilometres south of the park's turn-off on Rte 107, you can make a 12km detour west to visit **Ban Mai Nong Bua**, a Kuomintang (KMT) village with an old-fashioned Yunnanese feel.

Near the summit of Doi Ang Khang and the Yunnanese village of **Ban Khum**, is the **Royal Agricultural Station** (www.angkhang.com; admission 50B), showcasing fruit orchards and other flora (such as a bonsai garden). The restaurant serves Thai standards and there are several places to stay.

Close to the station's entry **Angkhang Nature Resort** (☎ 05345 0110; www.oamhotels.com/angkhang; r from 2500B; @*) has accommodation in the way of large bungalows set in a slope behind the main reception building. They are quite plush, kitted out more like hotel rooms and a good size. The best feature is the small, wooden outdoor porches giving lovely garden views. In the resort itself, the attractive lobby boasts stone fireplaces to complete the winter-lodge atmosphere. The lodge can arrange lots of outdoor activities – there's a map of what's available on the lobby wall. The on-site restaurant uses locally-grown organic produce.

At the base of the slope are a couple of open-air restaurants serving a variety of

dishes with an emphasis on Thai and Yunnanese Muslim cuisine.

Getting There & Away

Doi Angkhang is about 25km from the intersection of Rte 107 and 1249; from this turn-off it's a further 13km to Fang. It is possible to get to Doi Ang Khang via public transport, but travelling to points along the mountain will be difficult. You can catch a bus heading to Fang (90B, three hours, every 30 minutes) from Chiang Mai's Chang Pheuek terminal. Tell the driver that you want to get off at the Rte 1249 turn-off. From there you can take a *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* to Ban Khum (1500B chartered), which is near the summit.

Fang & Tha Ton

ฟาง/ท่าต๋อน

For most people Fang is just a road marker on the way to Tha Ton, the launching point for river trips to Chiang Rai. If you do hang around this large, bustling town, there are some quiet backstreets lined with little shops in wooden buildings and the Shan/Burmese-style **Wat Jong Paen** (near the New Wiang Kaew Hotel), which has an impressive stacked-roof *wi-hǎhn*. The city of Fang was originally founded by Phaya Mengrai in the 13th century, although the locale dates back at least 1000 years as a stop for *jeen hor* caravans. Being so close to Myanmar (Burma), the surrounding district is an 'underground' conduit for *yah bǎh* (methamphetamine).

Along the main street in Fang there are banks offering currency exchange and ATMs.

Tha Ton is a petite settlement plonked on the banks of a pretty bend in Mae Nam Kok, which is lined with a few riverside restaurants and the boat launch for river trips to Chiang Rai.

In Tha Ton, there is a **tourist police office** (☎1155) near the bridge on the boat-dock side.

Sight & Activities

Wat Tha Ton

TEMPLE

(☎ 05345 9309; www.wat-thaton.org) In Tha Ton, this temple climbs up the side of a wooded hill. There are nine different levels punctuated by shrines, Buddha statues and a *chedi*. Each level affords stunning views of the mountainous valley towards Myanmar (Burma) and the plains of Tha Ton. From the base to the ninth level, it is about 3km or a 30-minute walk. The short walk to the first level has a statue of Kuan Yin, the Chinese

goddess of compassion; the international liaison monk has his office here too. There's also a herbal medical centre with traditional massage, acupuncture and public saunas.

Local Villages

ETHNIC VILLAGES

Within 20km of Fang and Tha Ton you can visit local villages, inhabited by Palaung (a Karennic tribe that arrived from Myanmar (Burma) around 16 years ago), Black Lahu, Akha and Yunnanese, on foot, mountain bike or motorcycle. Treks and rafting trips can be arranged through any of Tha Ton's guest houses or hotels.

Boat Trip to Chiang Rai

BOAT TRIP

(☎0 5305 3727; fare 350B; ☀ departs 12.30pm) From Tha Ton you can make a half-day long-tail boat trip to Chiang Rai. The regular passenger boat takes up to 12 travellers. The trip is a bit of a tourist trap as the passengers are all tourists, and the villages along the way sell cola and souvenirs. The best time to go is at the end of the rainy season in November when the river level is high. The travel time down river depends on river conditions and the skill of the pilot, taking anywhere from three to five hours. You could actually make the boat trip in a day from Chiang Mai, catching a bus back from Chiang Rai as soon as you arrive, but it's better to stay overnight in Tha Ton so that you aren't rushed.

Some travellers take the boat to Chiang Rai in two or three stages, stopping first in **Mae Salak** (90B), a large Lahu village, or **Ban Ruammit** (300B), a Karen village. Both are well toured, but you can get off the path by joining a **hill-tribe trek** from here to other Shan, Thai and hill-tribe villages or longer treks south of Mae Salak to Wawi, a large multi-ethnic community of *jeen hor*, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, Shan, Karen, Mien and Thai peoples. The Wawi area has dozens of hill-tribe villages of various ethnicities, including the largest Akha community in Thailand (Saen Charoen) and the oldest Lisu settlement (Doi Chang). Another alternative is to trek south from Mae Salak all the way to the town of Mae Suay, where you can catch a bus on to Chiang Rai or back to Chiang Mai.

You can also make the trip (much more slowly) upriver from Chiang Rai – this is possible despite the rapids. The boats are also available for charter hire (2200B, six people).

Sleeping

Most visitors who do stay overnight prefer to stay in Tha Ton.

Apple Resort

GUEST HOUSE \$\$

(☎0 5337 3144; garden bungalows with fan/air-con 350/500B, river bungalows 1000/1200B; ☹) Newly opened and right on the river opposite the boat launch (across the other side of the river), Apple Resort is a feel-good place with stylishly decorated riverfront bungalows that are light, bright and breezy and come with fantastic front porches right on the waterfront. The garden bungalows are well worth the price and quite roomy; the only downside is the very small twin beds. Bathrooms, with separate shower recess in all rooms, are excellent. Tariff includes breakfast.

Old Tree's House

HOTEL \$\$

(☎08 5722 9002; www.OLDTREESHOUSE.NET; bungalows 1200-1400B; ☹☹☹) Up a steep driveway and nestled into a hillside, this place is a great find, offering luxury bungalows in a garden setting. It's a cleverly designed mini-resort with lots of nooks and crannies and even a platform set in a tree where you can enjoy the views while drying off from the pool. What you give up at this place in riverside setting you more than make up for with spectacular views of mountains across the border in Myanmar (Burma). Included in the tariff is a stocked minibar and breakfast. It's 400m past Tha Ton, and well signed off the road.

Thaton Garden Riverside

GUEST HOUSE \$

(☎0 5345 9286; r 300-600B) Next to Thaton Chalet by the bridge, this is not the friendliest place around, but has Tha Ton's best budget choice of air-con and fan rooms. It's worth paying the extra baht for an air-con room as you get a river terrace. Conveniently located close to the centre of town.

Garden Home

HOTEL \$\$

(☎0 5337 3015; r 600-1800B) A tranquil place along the river, about 150m from the bridge, with thatch-roofed bungalows spaced among lychee trees and bougainvillea. There are also a few stone bungalows, and three larger, more luxurious bungalows on the river with lovely verandahs, a TV and fridge. From the bridge, turn left at the Thaton River View Hotel sign.

Thaton River View

HOTEL \$\$

(☎0 5337 3173; thatonriverview@hotmail.com; r 1700B; ☹) You are really paying for the

location here not the rudimentary comforts – with bungalow rooms peeping out of green thickets along the riverfront, joined by wooden walkways lined with frangipani trees. Rooms are fairly basic, although clean and serviceable, but sitting out on the common porch areas where you're almost falling into the water, is a real pleasure especially with a cold drink in the evening. If you want a quiet, comfortable spot to while away a couple of days staring at the river, this is it.

Thaton Chalet

HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎) 0 5337 3155/7; www.thatonchalet.com; r 1400-2200B; (☎) A bit more institutional, this four-storey hotel next to the bridge is called a chalet, but the rooms here are far more like a hotel – there's nothing rustic about the place. Deluxe rooms however have huge balconies overlooking the river and heaps of space inside too with plenty of cane sitting chairs. Where the rooms fall down is in the bathrooms, which could really do with an upgrade. Try to get a corner deluxe room, they have wall-to-wall windows providing magnificent vistas of the river and beyond.

Areeya Phuree

HOTEL \$\$\$
(☎) 0 5305 3658; <http://areeyaphuree.com>; r 1000B, hostel dm 225B; (☎) On the boat-dock side, downstream along the river, this sprawling place was undergoing a change of ownership and major renovations when we passed through. We saw cute rooms that are a bit

dark but have 'garden bathrooms' complete with plants and built mainly from stone. There is also hostel-style accommodation with shared sleeping arrangements. The hotel has a beautiful, quiet riverside location not far from town.

Eating

The food stalls on the main street in Fang are good places to eat. There are also a few restaurants serving Yunnanese specialities such as *kôw soy*, *man-toh* (steamed buns; *mantou* in Mandarin) and *kôw mǎk gài*, plus *gǎo-ay dǎe-o* (rice noodles) and other standards.

In Tha Ton, most of the top-end hotels have riverside restaurants. There is a row of basic **Thai-Chinese restaurants** (dishes 25-35B) by the boat dock.

Chankasen

THAI \$
(209 Rimnumkok, Tha Ton; mains 60-80B; ☺breakfast, lunch, dinner) The food is fine at this friendly, entrepreneurial Thai spot, but the real puller is the seating right on the river. Conveniently located right alongside the boat dock.

Sunshine Cafe

CAFE \$
(Tha Ton; breakfast 70B; ☺breakfast, lunch) This is the place to come for freshly brewed coffee (30B) in the morning. It also does a wide selection of Western breakfasts including muesli, fresh fruit and yoghurt. Located on the main road, just before the bridge.

DON'T MISS

A CHANCE TO SOAK YOUR CARES AWAY

Doi Pha Hompok National Park (☎) 0 5345 3517; adult/child 200/100B) has a hot-springs complex (*bòr nām rǎn*; *bòr nām hòrn* in northern Thai) that lies about 10km west of Fang at Ban Meuang Chom, near the agricultural station, off Rte 107 at the end of Rte 5054 (the park is sometimes referred to as Doi Fang or Mae Fang National Park). At the top of the mountain average temperatures are a mere 2°C during winter and 14°C during summer. From November to February average temperatures in the park are 14°C to 19°C.

Set amidst a boulder-strewn field, the 40 or so springs are in a very picturesque spot, and if you arrive early in the morning, before the tour buses, it's very tranquil too. The temperature of the water is between 50°C and 87°C: boiling eggs is a popular pastime for Thai visitors.

After walking the network of paths around streams and vents shooting steam (sometimes 30m) and bubbling water into the air you can immerse yourself in the good stuff, taking advantage of the water's curative powers. A public bath is just 20B with no time limit so you can get properly wrinkly. If you're a bit shy about these things, a private bath is 50B.

Accommodation (tent for 3/6/8 persons 225/450/600B, 4-/6-/10-person bungalows 600/1000/2000B) is available through the park headquarters; and sleeping bag, pillows, blankets etc. are also offered for campers.

i Getting There & Away

Bus & *sǒrng-tǎa-ou*

Buses to Fang (90B, three hours, every 30 minutes) leave from the Chang Pheuak bus terminal in Chiang Mai. Air-con minivans make the trip to Fang (150B, three hours, every 30 minutes), leaving from behind the Chang Pheuak bus terminal on the corner of Soi Sanan Kila.

From Fang it's about 23km to Tha Ton (30B). Yellow *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* leave from the market for the 40-minute trip between 5.30am and 5pm.

The river isn't the only way to get to points north of Tha Ton. Yellow *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* leave from the northern side of the river in Tha Ton for Mae Salong (70B, 1½ hours, mornings only).

To get to Mai Sai (80B to 90B) or Chiang Rai (100B to 110B) directly, take the afternoon bus from the bridge.

If you're heading west to Mae Hong Son Province, it's not necessary to dip all the way south to Chiang Mai before continuing on. At Mae Malai, the junction of Rte 107 (the Chiang Mai–Fang highway) and Rte 1095, you can pick up a bus to Pai for 70B; if you're coming from Pai, be sure to get off at this junction to catch a bus north to Fang.

Motorcycle

Motorcycle trekkers can travel between Tha Ton and Doi Mae Salong, 48km northeast, over a fully paved but sometimes treacherous mountain road. There are a couple of Lisu and Akha villages on the way. The 27km or so between the village of Muang Ngam and Doi Mae Salong is very steep and winding – take care, especially in the rainy season. When conditions are good, the trip can be done in 1½ hours.

SOUTHERN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE

To the immediate south of Chiang Mai is the Ping Valley, a fertile agricultural plain that has also grown some noteworthy handicraft villages. Further to the southwest is Thailand's highest peak, Doi Inthanon.

Bo Sang & San Kamphaeng

บ่อสร้าง/สันกำแพง

Southeast of Chiang Mai is Bo Sang, known throughout the country as the 'umbrella village'. It is mainly a tourist market filled with craft shops selling painted umbrellas (often produced elsewhere), fans, silverware, statuary, celadon pottery and lacquerware. You'll find many of the same items at the Chiang

Mai Night Bazaar but there's a greater concentration and variety here.

In late January the **Bo Sang Umbrella Festival** (*têt-sà-gahn rôm*) features a colourful umbrella procession during the day and a night-time lantern procession. Although it sounds touristy, this festival is actually a very Thai affair; a highlight are the many northern-Thai music ensembles that perform in shopfronts along Bo Sang's main street.

Further down Rte 1006 is **San Kamphaeng**, known for its cotton and silk weaving shops. The main street is lined with textile showrooms while the actual weaving is done in small factories down side streets. You can take a peek if you like.

i Getting There & Away

White *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* to Bo Sang (20B) and San Kamphaeng (20B) leave Chiang Mai frequently during the day from the *sǒrng-tǎa-ou* stop on Th Praisani near Talat Warorot. Bo Sang is 10km from Chiang Mai and San Kamphaeng is 14km.

Mae Kampong

แม่กำปอง

If you plough across the Ping Valley on Rte 1317 past the rice fields and cow pastures to Mae On district, the road begins to narrow and climb into the forested hills of Mae Kampong, an area that entices visitors for a day or overnight excursion because of its interesting combination of nature and cultural activities. Most visitors are first introduced to the area on daytrips with **Flight of the Gibbon** (p253), a zipline canopy tour.

Sitting at an altitude of about 1300m, **San Mae Kampong** is a Thai village that produces *mêeang* (pickled tea leaves), the northern Thai equivalent of betel nut. Most villagers make their living in this small-scale industry and head out into the forest to collect the tea leaves. In the early mornings the pickers stop by the local temple where the monk has prepared a restorative brew of medicinal herbs.

The village itself is a gravity-defying collection of maze-like huts hugging the steep hillside. Flowers bow in the cool breezes and the jungle insects screech at each other. Several families participate in a **homestay program** (☎ 0 5331 5111, 08 9559 4797; per person 1/2 nights 550/900B) that includes three meals and basic lodging.

The narrow road through the village summits the hill and winds down into **Chae Son**

National Park, where you'll find waterfalls and hot springs.

If the natural solitude is appealing, stay awhile at one of the nature lodges south of the village. **Tharntong Lodge** (☎08 6420 5354; www.tharntonglodges.com; r 1200-4000B) is bisected by a pebble-strewn stream crossed by a wooden bridge to the six houses dotting the property. If you don't need a bed, stop by the restaurant to enjoy the affordable Thai food (dishes 80B to 160B).

Or try **Baan Chom Nok Chom Mai** (☎08 9559 9371; r 600B), a simple set-up with very good rooms.

Mae Kampong is 48km east of Chiang Mai and can be reached by following Rte 1317 toward San Kamphaeng. At the T-junction at Ban Huay Kaew, turn right towards the signs for Ban Mae Kampong.

Hang Dong, Ban Wan & Ban Thawai ทางดงบ้านวันบ้านถาว

Just 15km south of Chiang Mai is a veritable 'furniture highway' where stores and workshops specialise in decorative arts, woodcarving, antiques and contemporary furniture.

The shops along Rte 108 in Hang Dong are impossible to explore on foot and still a bit of a pain in a car. North of Hang Dong centre, near Amarin Place, **Siam Lanna Art** (☎0 5382 3419; Rte 108; ☹closed Sun) is an eccentric stop for junk aficionados. We're told it is a great spot for browsing, but impossible to buy from as no one knows the prices.

A greater concentration of stores can be found in Ban Wan on Th Thakhilek, the first left turn after Talat Hang Dong. A cluster of stores near the intersection sells antique reproductions using new wood; in times past they used salvaged teak but most of that is now gone. Further down the road is **Chili Antiques & Arts** (☎08 9952 7898; chiliantiques.com; 125 Th Thakhilek), a massive showroom of bronze and wooden Buddhas, sculptures, wood carvings and fine decor. Across the street is **Piak Antiques** (☎0 5344 1157; www.piakantique.com; Th Thakhilek) selling reclaimed, chunky wooden furniture. **Crossroads Asia** (☎0 5343 4650; Chaiyo Plaza, 214/7 Th Thakhilek) sells ethnic art and antiques from across Asia; our favourites are the brass lanterns and tribal masks upstairs. With its folk art, bronze statues and buddha collection, **World Port Services** (☎0 5343 4200; Th Thakhilek) is a bit quirker than

most. If you're after something for the kids, pop into **Kala Design** (☎08 1034 5495; Th Thakhilek). It's a bit more downmarket but there are some wonderful animal interpretations in wood: the goggle-eyed owls are adorable.

Continue toward the right fork in the road to **Ban Thawai Tourism Village**, which is a pedestrian-friendly market with 3km of shops selling all sorts of home decor. Past Zone 5 is Sriboonmuang's workshop, an example of what made Ban Thawai famous in the first place. In the factory's covered sheds, workers sand and polish small armies of wooden elephants, hobby horses and dolls.

When you need a break from the browsing, call into **Pana Botanicals** (www.panabotanicals.com; Th Thakhilek; dishes 80-90B) where, in this fine wooden house, you can sit out on a deck overlooking extensive gardens and sip a peppermint tea or iced coffee; alternatively indulge in some well-prepared Thai food. Afterwards you can pick up some organic, locally made bathing products.

Many of the shops here deal in wholesale as well as retail, and shipping can be arranged.

It is advisable to come with private transport, but you can catch a *sǒrng-tāa-ou* from Pratu Chiang Mai to Hang Dong (20B) and to Ban Thawai (30B).

Doi Inthanon National Park อุทยานแห่งชาติดอยอินทนนท์

Thailand's highest peak is Doi Inthanon (often abbreviated as Doi In), which measures 2565m above sea level, an impressive altitude for the kingdom, but a tad diminutive compared to its cousins in the Himalayan range. The 1000-sq-km **national park** (☎0 5328 6730; adult/child 200/100B, car/motorbike 30/20B; ☀8am-sunset) surrounding the peak has hiking trails, waterfalls and two monumental stupas erected in honour of the king and queen. It is a popular day trip from Chiang Mai for tourists and locals, especially during the New Year's holiday when there's the rarely seen phenomenon of frost.

There are eight waterfalls that dive off the mountain. **Nam Tok Mae Klang** (at Km8) is the largest and the easiest to get to. **Nam Tok Wachiratan** (at Km20.8) is another popular stop with food vendors at its base and a huge frothy mane that plummets 50m. If you'd rather be a part of the cascade, try abseiling with the Peak (p254). **Nam Tok Siriphum** (at Km30) looks like a

SAN PA THONG

ถิ่นป่าทอง

Further south on Rte 108, on the outskirts of San Pa Thong, **Kaomai Lanna Resort** (☎ 0 5383 4470; www.kaomailanna.com; Km29, Th Chiang Mai-Hot; r 2400-3500B; ♿) is almost reason enough to travel this far. The resort has turned many of the property's abandoned tobacco-curing sheds into comfortable lodgings amid a lush garden setting. With plant-covered walkways and creeper covered buildings, this place is brimming with character and is a Thai version of English cottage accommodation. The cute rooms have comfy futons and wooden floors. The yoga studio, spa and swimming pool mean you can easily spend a few relaxing days here.

This used to be one of many northern Thai tobacco farms supplying the international cigarette market before China supplanted the local growers. The resort also arranges tours to the nearby **handicraft villages** (which are truly villages instead of souvenir markets). Even if you don't stay here, the outdoor restaurant serves superb Thai food.

If you want to stay out here, you really need your own wheels – whether you're heading into Chiang Mai, or out to Doi Inthanon.

river of silver from the vantage point of Ban Mong Khun Klang, a Hmong village. In February the village builds and races wooden carts down a steep incline. Along the road to the top are terraced rice fields and covered greenhouses tended by Hmong and Karen tribespeople.

About 3km before the summit of Doi Inthanon, **Phra Mahathat Naphamethanidon** and **Nophamethanidon** (admission to both 40B) at Km41-42 are two *chedi* built by the Royal Thai Air Force to commemorate the king's and queen's 60th birthdays in 1989 and 1992, respectively. In the base of the octagonal *chedi* is a hall containing a stone Buddha image.

The whole point of the park is to get as high as you can to see life in a colder climate, and the coolness is such a relief from the sweltering plains below. Thais relish bundling up in hats and jackets and posing for pictures among conifers and rhododendrons. Almost at the exact summit there's a *chedi* dedicated to one of the last Lanna kings (Inthawichayanon). From there, a lovely boardwalk through the thick, cool forest leads to a cafe, obligatory souvenir shop and the start of the **Ang Ka nature trail**, a 360m platform walkway through a moss-festooned bog. Walking through the forest on the nature trail is an enchanting experience (if devoid of crowds).

The views from Doi Inthanon are best in the cool dry season from November to February. But don't expect a rewarding view from the summit, as for most of the year a mist, formed by the condensation of warm humid

air below, hangs around the top of the mountain creating an eerie effect. You can expect the air to be quite chilly towards the top, so take a jacket or sweater. The views on the way to the summit are much better.

The park is one of the top destinations in Southeast Asia for naturalists and bird-watchers. The mist-shrouded upper slopes produce abundant orchids, lichens, mosses and epiphytes, while supporting nearly 400 **bird species**, more than any other habitat in Thailand. Most of the park's bird species are found between 1500m and 2000m; the best bird-watching season is from February to April, and the best spots are the *beung* (bogs) near the top. The mountain is also home to Assamese macaques, Phayre's leaf monkeys, and a selection of other rare and not-so-rare monkeys and gibbons as well as the more common Indian civet, barking deer and giant flying squirrel – around 75 mammal species in all.

Sleeping & Eating

Park **accommodation** (reservations ☎ 08 8587 5680; www.dnp.go.th) is available in comfortable bungalows (from 1000B) located next to the information centre (the best ones overlook the water) and at Km31 there's a **restaurant** (mains 30-80B) that has decent Thai mains but is really a dining hall for tour bus patrons. There is camping (sites 60B to 90B) in front of the information centre too, or at Nam Tok Mae Pan.

Outside the park there are a number of accommodation options lining Rte 1009, none of which are outstanding but all perfectly OK for a night or two.

Touch Star Resort

BUNGALOWS \$\$\$

(☎) 0 5303 3594; www.touchstarresort.com; bungalows 1600-2200B; (♿) A step up in comfort, and luxury, the cheapest bungalows here are fairly small and rudimentary inside, but have lovely little outside porches overlooking the extensive gardens, which are the best feature of this place. It's well signed down a small lane off Rte 1009, just before entry into the park. Good restaurant serving Thai standards on site.

Ratchaphruek Hotel

HOTEL \$

(☎) 0 5334 1901; www.ratchaphruekhotel.com; superior/deluxe r 550/650B; (♿) Close to the turn-off with Rte 108. Has straight up-and-down rooms, comfortable and no fuss. Warning: karaoke bar on site.

Little Home Inthanon Resort

BUNGALOWS \$

(☎) 0 5303 3555; www.littlehomeinthanonresort.com; bungalow with fan/air-con 400/600B; (♿)

These boxy bungalows are good value for the price, although a bit dark inside. You can park your car right alongside, like a motel

i Getting There & Away

Although most visitors come with private transport or on a tour from Chiang Mai, you can reach the park via public transport. Buses leave from Chang Pheuak terminal and yellow *sǎrng-tǎa-ou* leave from Pratu Chiang Mai for Chom Thong (70B), 58km from Chiang Mai and the closest town to the park. Some buses go directly to the park's entrance gate near Nam Tok Mae Klang and some are bound for Hot and will drop you off in Chom Thong.

From Chom Thong there are regular *sǎrng-tǎa-ou* to the park's entrance gate at Nam Tok Mae Klang (30B), about 8km north. *Sǎrng-tǎa-ou* from the turn-off to Mae Klang, just outside the park gates, to the summit of Doi Inthanon (90B) leave almost hourly until late afternoon.

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