

the ultimate
CHIANG RAI
travel guide



Why You Need to Visit Chiang Rai

Most people say there aren't many things to do in Chiang Rai. They're wrong, and I'm going to show you why.

All other Chiang Rai travel guides cover attractions near the town such as; White Temple, Black House, the Clock Tower. Sure, these are interesting, and you should visit them, but there is so much more to be discovered.

The reality is that most travellers don't go beyond the town, and really miss out loads of amazing things to do in Chiang Rai.

Chiang Rai has a very diverse culture. There are the people of Northern Thailand which speak their own dialect of Thai called *Lanna*. Then there are the countless ethnic villagers such as Lahu, Karen, and Hmong which have lived in the mountains around the borders of Cambodia, Laos, China and Thailand for centuries. They maintain age old traditions not seen elsewhere in Thailand.

The nature in Chiang Rai is stunning. While living there I discovered beautiful waterfalls, amazing mountain hikes, relaxing hot springs, and even a beach! I explored by longtail boat down and upriver, motorbiked off-beat trails in the national park, and cruised about town in a Tuk-Tuk after one too many beers.

Chiang Rai is no doubt an incredible place. Now I want to share my experience with you.

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Where is Chiang Rai?

Chiang Rai is located in the far north of Thailand. It is actually the most northern province in Thailand, about 2 hours north of Chiang Mai by road (car, bus, motorbike).

That's right, there is more than one *Chiang* in the north of Thailand, and you're about to learn of more soon!

In Thailand, Chiang Rai borders Chiang Mai to the southwest, Lampang directly south, and Phayao to the southeast.

Chiang Rai shares international borders with Laos and Myanmar. All three countries meet at the point known as *The Golden Triangle*... more on that soon. Just another 130km north of Chiang Rai and you will reach the Yunnan, China.

Now you can imagine how diverse the culture in Chiang Rai is!



You should also know that “Chiang Rai” refers to the province in Thailand. Mueang Chiang Rai refers to the district of the Chiang Rai town. This is the largest town in this province, and the one you will most likely be based in.

Mueang Chiang Rai is then broken down into [16 subdistricts](#), though you will probably never use this information unless you are a geologist or something.

How to Get to Chiang Rai

Bus – Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai

The best way to get from Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai is the Green Bus. It is the quickest, most comfortable, and most frequent public transport option. Tickets start from 129 THB per person. A one-way journey takes about 3hrs.

There are multiple buses departing each day. This is the latest timetable from the GreenBus website as of 2018. [Pre-book tickets on 12GO Asia](#) to ensure you don't miss a seat.

Note that Chiang Rai has two bus terminals; Terminal 1 in the centre for local buses, and Terminal 2 6km away for intercity buses. A local bus connects the two terminals for 15 THB.

Route 166 Chiangmai - Chiangrai

Chiangmai - Chiangrai			Chiangrai - Chiangmai		
Depart	Arrive	Class	Depart	Arrive	Class
6:45	9:45	V-Class	06:15	09:45	A-Class
7:15	10:35	X-Class	07:30	10:30	V-Class
8:15	11:15	V-Class	08:15	11:35	X-Class
08:45	12:05	X-Class	09:15	12:15	V-Class
09:15	12:45	A-Class	09:45	13:05	X-Class
09:45	13:05	X-Class	10:15	13:35	X-Class
10:00	13:20	X-Class	11:15	14:15	V-Class
10:30	13:30	V-Class	12:00	15:20	X-Class
11:00	14:20	X-Class	12:45	15:45	V-Class
11:30	14:50	X-Class	13:15	16:45	A-Class
12:15	15:15	V-Class	13:45	17:05	X-Class
12:30	16:00	A-Class	14:15	17:35	X-Class
13:00	16:00	V-Class	15:00	18:20	X-Class
14:15	17:35	X-Class	15:30	18:30	V-Class
15:00	18:20	X-Class	16:00	19:20	X-Class
15:45	18:45	V-Class	16:30	19:50	X-Class
17:00	20:20	X-Class	17:00	20:00	V-Class
17:30	21:00	A-Class	17:15	20:45	A-Class
18:00	21:00	V-Class	17:30	20:50	X-Class
(Fri,Sun)6:30pm	9:50pm	X-Class	18:00	21:00	V-Class
(Fri,Sun)7:00pm	10:20pm	X-Class	(Fri,Sun)6:00pm	9:00pm	V-Class
			(Fri,sun)6:45pm	10:05pm	X-Class
			(Fri,Sun)7:30pm	10:50pm	X-Class

Ticket Fee:

- V-Class 258 Baht
- X-Class 166 Baht
- A-Class 129 Baht

Flights – Bangkok and Other Locations to Chiang Rai

Chiang Rai has a domestic terminal with daily flights from major airports including Bangkok, Phuket and Chiang Mai. Popular budget airlines include:

- AirAsia Thailand (\$)
- Nok Air (\$\$)
- Thai Smile (\$\$\$)

Bangkok to Chiang Rai – there are 6 daily flights with AirAsia, and another 5 daily flights with Nok Air. The flight duration is 1hr 30 min direct. Flights typically cost less than USD 100 per person, one way, but are generally more expensive on public holidays and long weekends.

Hat Yai to Chiang Rai – there is 1 daily flight with AirAsia, and another 5 daily flights with Nok Air. The flight is just over 2hrs direct and typically costs about USD 140. It saves many hours of travel compared to the bus and train options.

Slow Boat – Chiang Rai to Luang Prabang

The slow boat from Luang Prabang to Chiang Rai is a popular route for travellers heading from Thailand to Laos or vice versa. The slow boat departs from Huay Xai, a small border town 65km away. You will need to get a minivan from

Trains – None

Despite what others may tell you, there is no train to Chiang Rai. You can, however, take a train from Bangkok to Chiang Mai ([tickets and timetables](#)). After the 14-hour train, you then take the Green Bus from Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai.

Attractions in Mueang Chiang Rai (Town)

Let's start with the easy destinations to tick off the list. There are plenty of attractions to explore around the town like temples, markets, monuments, and coffee shops.

The most popular starting point is either the White Temple, the Black House, or the Blue Temple, which are all just a short trip out of town. However, there are also some more unique attractions like the Chiang Rai Beach or a local Muay Thai Gym.



Lunch huts at Chiang Rai Beach

Chiang Rai Walking Street (Saturday Night)

The liveliest attractions in Chiang Rai on the weekends are the walking streets. Chiang Rai's walking streets are like those in Chiang Mai. They are large open-air markets sprawling all over the road. You will find lots of food, clothes, and other goods for sale. It is a fun place to hang out at night and an easy place to meet other travellers.

Opening hours: 5pm to just after midnight

How to get there: The Saturday night walking street is located on Thanalai Road, less than a 5 minute walk from the Clocktower.

Chiang Rai Walking Street (Sunday Night)

The Sunday night walking street (also known as Happy Street) is located just behind Chiang Rai hospital. The Sunday night walking street is quite similar to the Saturday night walking street, but I've typically found there is more street food at the Sunday night version.

If you can't decide which of Chiang Rai's walking streets to visit, just do both!

Opening hours: 5pm to about 11pm

How to get there: less than a 10 minute walk from the Clocktower.

Chiang Rai Night Bazaar

The Chiang Rai Night Bazaar is a popular place to hang out at night for good food, cold beer, and live shows. Some nights there is live music, other nights there may be live theatre or Thai comedy shows. The stalls around the Chiang Rai Night Bazaar offer a wide range of handmade goods from the surrounding ethnic villages. You can also find other typical market type goods such as clothing, food, and painting by local artists.

Opening hours: 6pm to midnight daily (Monday to Sunday)

How to get there: a 5 minute walk from the Clocktower.

Kad Luang Market / Morning Market

The Kad Luang Market is not so much as tourist hotspot as it is a massive local market. You will find all sorts of goods here such as clothing, electronic appliances, fresh fruit and vegetables, street food vendors, and oh so much more.

The best way to explore the market is simply to walk in and aimlessly wander around the small, almost claustrophobic alleyways. The market seamlessly merges into the morning market to make one huge hive of activity.

One of my favourite things in the Kad Luang Market is the late night vendors selling fried chicken and roti. You have to visit late at night after a drinking session on Jet Yod, you won't regret it.

Opening hours: different parts of it are open all day (24hrs)

How to get there: a 5 minute walk from the Clocktower.

Chiang Rai Clocktower

The Chiang Rai clock tower is a popular monument and artwork to visit right in the centre of town. It is probably the most intricately designed round-a-bout in the world. The Chiang Rai clocktower was designed by the same artist who built the famous White Temple.

If you want to see the clock tower in all its glory, be sure to visit for the light show which kicks off every night at 7, 8, and 9 o'clock - bang on the hour. Don't be late, you will miss it.

How to get there: centre of town, easy walking distance from almost everywhere

King Mengrai Monument

Another popular attraction near the centre of Chiang Rai is the King Mengrai Monument. This monument is dedicated to King Mengrai who established the Lanna Kingdom of northern Thailand (inclusive of Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai) back in 1296. It is a good way to learn a bit about the history of Northern Thailand, and an easy stop on a walking tour of Chiang Rai.

How to get there: The King Mengrai Monument is a 15 minute walk from the Clocktower.

Train Muay Thai

Where better to start your Muay Thai future than in the north of Thailand? Lanna Fighting Muay Thai Gym teaches a traditional Lanna (northern) style of fighting. They focus more on posture and technique than on hardcore cardio. The trainers here have toured internationally fighting and performing traditional Muay Thai shows, so they really know their stuff.

A session typically runs for 1.5 hours which will leave you completely exhausted. If you need a bit more exercise then you're generally welcome to hit the boxing bags out the back of the gym.

Location: [74/8 Sridonchai Rd, Tambon Rop Wiang, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Rai, Chang Wat Chiang Rai 57000, Thailand](#)

There are a number of other Muay Thai gyms around town, however I haven't personally trained at them.

Chiang Rai Beach

Going to the beach in Chiang Rai sounds odd but it is simple, and a great local destination. This beach is not by the ocean obviously. Chiang Rai beach is located 4km outside of town along the banks of the Kok River.

Be careful swimming during the rainy season as the current can get dangerously strong. However, it is fairly safe to swim or tube down the river in the dry season from October to March.

After a swim you can get lunch and some drinks (water, shakes or beers) in one of the nice bamboo huts. Food and drinks are cheap and fresh.

Opening hours: technically open all day, but I wouldn't recommend swimming at night

How to get there: hire a motorbike or charter a *songtaew* in town. The journey will take about 10 minutes. It is also possible to walk however this could take 45 minutes to an hour.

Temples in Chiang Rai



Wat Rong Khun (The White Temple)

White Temple (Wat Rong Khun)

One of the most iconic destinations in Chiang Rai is the White Temple. The art on both the interior and exterior by local artist Chalermchai Kositpipat is incredible. In 2014 a huge earthquake shook Chiang Rai and damaged some of the work inside. The White Temples was closed for a while restoration were ongoing but is now reopen.

Opening hours: 6.30am to 6pm daily (Monday to Sunday)

How to get there: The White Temple is located 13km south of Chiang Rai. A taxi costs about 300THB one way. The cheaper option is to take the local blue bus from Chiang Rai Bus Terminal 1. The bus costs 20THB one way and takes about 20 minutes. The bus timetable is:

- Mornings: 06:15, 07:10, 08:10, 09:10.
- 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM bus every 30 minutes.
- Afternoons: 14:35, 15:10, 15:45, 16:20, 17:00

Black House (Baan Dam)

Many people refer to the Black House as the Black Temple thereby drawing a similarity to the White Temple. The Black House (Baan Dam) is actually not a temple but the house of the creative artist Thawan Duchanee. There are a few buildings to explore in the grounds of the Black House each hosting an odd collection of artefacts.

Opening hours: 9am to 5pm daily (Monday to Sunday). Closed for lunch midday to 1pm.

How to get there: charter a songtaew from town for a round trip for about 300 THB. The cheaper option is to take the Green Bus going to Mae Sai from Chiang Rai Bus Terminal 1. The bus costs 20THB one way and takes about 20 minutes. Coming back, you will need to walk out to the main road and wave down any passing buss to hop on board, there is no bus stop here.

Blue Temple (Wat Rong Suea Ten)

Wat Rong Suea Teng is a more recent development in Chiang Rai. The temple was abandoned over 80 years ago, and restorations were complete in 2005. The temple is located about 2 kilometres north of town across the Kok River (much closer than the White Temple or Black House).

Opening hours: 8am to 5pm daily (Monday to Sunday).

How to get there: For the adventurous the Blue Temple is walking or cycling distance from town. Otherwise it is a quick ride in a songtaew or a tuk tuk. Probably the better option.

Waterfalls in Chiang Rai

One of my favourite things to do in Chiang Rai is to visit a waterfall in the jungle. There is no better way to appreciate the beauty of northern Thailand. You will understand once you hike through the jungle for an hour to find a 70-meter waterfall pouring over the edge of a cliff. Adventure travellers, this list is for you.



Phu Kaeng Waterfall

Khun Korn Waterfall

Khun Korn Waterfall is one of the tallest and definitely one of the best waterfalls in Chiang Rai. It is located in the Namtok Khun Korn Forest Park about 30km east of Chiang Rai. The waterfall is reached by a 1.5km trek through the forest. It is a great place to experience Thailand's nature and take a strong shower under a waterfall.

How to get there: there is no public transport to the waterfall, you will need to hire a motorbike or charter a songtaew in town. The best place to do this is around the Clocktower or Jet Yod Road.

Opening hours: 8am to 4.30pm daily (Monday to Sunday). The waterfall can occasionally be closed after heavy rains in the wet season for safety (people have died here before).

Huay Mae Sai Waterfall

Huay Mae Sai Waterfall ([location](#)) is one of my favorite waterfalls in Chiang Rai because as beautiful as it is, no one knows about it. This small two-tiered waterfall is located 19km from the town in the middle of the forest, nearby a nice Lahu Ethnic Hill Tribe.

There is a short 15-20 minute walk from the lower parking area to the Huay Mae Sai Waterfall, quite slippery when wet. At the end, you will find two levels Huay Mae Sai waterfall. The lower level has a deeper pool of water and is great for swimming. The upper level has a taller waterfall and a good place to sunbake on the rocks.

How to get there: Huay Mae Sai waterfall is not known to many western tourists and is not offered on tour packages. The best way of getting to Huay Mae Sai waterfall is by motorbike or to arrange private transport. There is no public transport servicing this waterfall.

Opening hours: all day daily, there is no National Park administration here

Huay Kaew Waterfall

The Huay Kaew Waterfall ([location](#)) is a beautiful two-tiered waterfall, located far out into the forest. Hardly any tourists make it out this far, and most that do are on long hiking tours to the Pha Soet Village, an Akha Hill Tribe. Do not confuse this with the Huay Kaew Waterfall in Chiang Mai.

The road to Huay Kaew Waterfall in Chiang Rai is a steep and badly potholed dirt/concrete trail. The route follows the Kok River before heading deep into the forest. Near the end, you will pass tea plantations surrounding the Pha Soet Village and come across a sign for the waterfall. From here it is a bit of walking up the hill, but not far. I advise only taking your own transport out to the Huay Kaew Waterfall if you are feeling quite adventurous - and seriously have travel insurance. Otherwise, arrange for some private transport.

How to get there: there is no public transport to Huay Kaew Waterfall. You will need to hire a motorbike or charter a *songtaew* in town. The journey will take about 45 minutes one way.

Opening hours: all day daily, there is no National Park administration here

Pu Kaeng Waterfall

Pu Kaeng Waterfall (also spelled Phu Kaeng Waterfall) ([location](#)) is one of the best waterfalls in Chiang Rai and all of Thailand. This waterfall consists of 9 levels flowing through the dense jungle. You will hike through the jungle for about 45 minutes from the starting point up to

level 9. The trail is slippery, and overgrown as not many people visit. Pu Kaeng Waterfall is a great destination to get out into wild Thailand.

Pu Kaeng waterfall is located about 70km south of Chiang Rai nearby the district of Pan. To get here you Phahonyothin Road south of Chiang Rai towards Chiang Mai. After about an hour you will see the sign for the waterfall on the opposite side of the road.

How to get there: Hire a motorbike or charter a songtaew in Chiang Rai.

Opening hours: 8am to 4.30pm daily (follows the National Park opening hours)

Entry fees: National park entry fees are 200 THB per person plus a vehicle entry fee. The journey will take about 1.5hrs one way.

Pong Phrabat Waterfall

The Pong Phrabat waterfall is located 14km north of Chiang Rai in the Lam Nam Kok National Park. The entrance to the waterfall is at the end of a long road veering off to the mountains behind the Rajabhat University. You will find the National Park HQ at the end of the road. From there it is an easy walk to the Phong Phrabat Waterfall itself.

The waterfall is only a small cascading stream, nothing like the huge Khun Korn Waterfall. There are a couple of pools deep enough for swimming in, and some grass to lay back and relax in the forest.

The area nearby the National Park HQ makes for a great picnic location. You may see many locals hanging out here, especially students from the nearby Rajabhat University. The Phong Phrabat Waterfall is not visited by many western tourists or tour groups.

How to get there: there is no public transport to Pong Phrabat Waterfall. You will need to hire a motorbike or charter a *songtaew* in town. The journey will take about 25 minutes one way

Opening hours: 8am to 4.30pm daily (follows the National Park opening hours)

Art in Chiang Rai

Chiang Rai seems to be the art capital of Thailand. There is a huge range of talented artists living here turning out some amazing artwork from landscape painting to modern sculptures. There are a few great galleries to view both these traditional and contemporary artworks near the town.

Art Bridge Chiang Rai

The Art Bridge Gallery is located at the turnoff to Chiang Rai International Airport (Mae Fah Luang Airport) and hosts the works of many local Chiang Rai artists. The collection changes every few months. Expect to find huge panorama paintings of the northern Thailand landscape, modern art and a collection of sculptures.

The Art Bridge gallery is best visited together with a trip to the Black House (Baan Daam).

How to get there: charter a songtaew from town for a round trip for about 300 THB. The cheaper option is to take the Green Bus going to Mae Sai from Chiang Rai Bus Terminal 1. The bus costs 20THB one way and takes about 15 minutes. Coming back, you will need to walk out to the main road and wave down any passing buss to hop on board, there is no bus stop here.

Opening hours: 10am to 7pm daily (Monday to Sunday)

Chalermchai Kostipipat Hall of Masterwork

This amazing art gallery is located right next door to the White Temple. I'm always surprised by how little people make the effort to walk an extra 20 meters, but I highly recommend it. The art in here is possibly more impressive than the temple itself.

There is a mixture of artworks in this gallery by both Chalermchai and by his students. You will find a lot of intricate paintings in his Buddhist inspired White Temple style art.

How to get there: right across the road from the White Temple, see directions.

Opening hours: 8am to 5pm daily (Monday to Sunday)

Hiking Chiang Rai's Mountains

Getting out of the city and exploring the mountain ranges is among the best things to do in Chiang Rai. The province is flanked by mountains on both the east bordering Laos and the west bordering Myanmar. The mountains are the perfect place to do some trekking in Chiang Rai while visiting the hill tribes in the area.



Phu Chi Fa Lookout at Sunrise

Phu Chi Fa

One of Chiang Rai's most scenic locations is tucked away in the far north-east corner. The rocky summit of Phu Chi Fa lets you to stand way above the clouds for sunrise. Down below in the valley you will be looking at a small village in rural Laos.

The 1-kilometer hike to the peak of Phu Chi Fa is best done early in the morning around 5am so that you can catch sunrise at the summit. The walk is steep and slippery in some sections, but overall relatively easy. You won't have to walk along the edge of the mountain unless you really want to, no danger here.

I suggest spending about 1 hour at the summit enjoying sunrise. You can explore the small walking trails on the mountain ridge which let you wander along the Thai-Laos border a little farther. There are no maps, just wander a little bit and you'll find the way back.

If you want to see sunrise in a one-day trip from town you will have to leave Chiang Rai by 3am. I recommend you spend a night at the village instead.

Stay Here: [Resorts Near Phu Chi Fa](#)

Most people don't know about the small ethnic villages near to Phu Chi Fa. I suggest taking a 20 minute drive south east of Phu Chi Fa to Ban Rak Phaen. Here you can explore the small streets by foot and have a chat with the locals. The villagers don't generally speak English or Thai but their own ethnic language.

How to get there: Phu Chi Fa is a 2.5 hour drive from Chiang Rai. There is no public transport so you either have to hire car/motorbike in town or charter car with a driver.

Doi Pha Tang

Doi Pha Tang ([location](#)) is located 30km north of Phu Chi Fa, nearby the small ethnic Chinese settlement called Ban Pha Tang. The road from Ban Pha Tang to the peak of Doi Pha Tang is a steep 1km ascent via a badly potholed road. It is another 1km hike from the car park to the top of Doi Pha Tang where the peak sits at an altitude of 1,909m. The peak of Doi Pha Tang offers a stunning 360-degree view of Laos and Thailand divided by the Mekong River.

This is another opportunity to do some hiking in Chiang Rai, with small trails following the mountain ridge. These trails offer a scenic view all the way along, I highly suggest you spend a few hours up here. You can also take a tent up Doi Pha Tang and camp up on the summit, which is by far one of the best things to do in Chiang Rai.

After the climb, be sure to stop by Ban Pha Tang to try out the local foods. One popular dish here is the stewed pork and steamed buns. The local offers a fantastic view looking down the mountains. You will find this store at the bottom of the steep road which heads up to Doi Patang.

How to get there: Doi Patang 3 hour drive from Chiang Rai. There is no public transport so you either have to hire car/motorbike in town or charter car with a driver – best to combine with a trip to Phu Chi Fa.

Doi Mae Salong

Doi Mae Salong is located in north-western Chiang Rai and just 6km from Myanmar. The peak at an elevation of 1,367m is accessed via a very steep road. The area around Doi Mae Salong is home to many ethnic villages, tea, fruit and coffee plantations.

The most popular time to visit Doi Mae Salong is between December and January when flowers bloom all over the mountain. Doi Mae Salong is best reached by spending a night in the village of Tha Ton from where you can take songtaew in the early morning.

How to get there: There is no public transport so you either have to hire car/motorbike in town or charter car with a driver.

Doi Tung

Doi Tung is located in the north of Chiang Rai by the Myanmar border, not too far from Mae Sai. There are ethnic villages and tea plantations around the area to explore.

The Doi Tung Development project has a set of different activities to visit including:

- The Hall of Inspiration, which is an exhibition on the Thai royal family and their impact on the country
- Royal Villa, an elegant teak wood home built for the Princess Mother
- The Hill Tribe market, where you can find fresh produce and souvenirs by the local ethnic villagers
- Mae Fah Luang Arboretum, a garden of native flowers and trees approximately 9km north of the Royal Villa
- Wat Phra That Doi Tung, a Buddhist temple with amazing views from up on the mountain.
- Treetop Walk, an amazing walk among the trees and over the coffee plantations via rope bridges

How to get there: There is no public transport so you either have to hire car/motorbike in town or charter car with a driver. I suggest visiting Doi Tung along with a trip to Mae Sai if you're already heading north.

Entry fees: different activities have entry fees, some are also free

Chiang Rai Hot Springs

In the winter the air in Chiang Rai drops to freezing. One of the best things to do is soak away in a natural hot spring. Here is a selection of hot springs in Chiang Rai to keep you warm all winter long.

Note: Many of the Chiang Rai hot springs can be difficult to get to, and drivers may even refuse to go to those which are further out. I've provided the location for each hot spring below so you can get there yourself with a bit of effort. Otherwise, send me an inquiry and I can help to arrange the transport for you.



Private rooms at Fang Hot Spring

Pong Phrabat Hot Spring

The Pong Phrabat Hot Spring ([location](#)) is the closest hot spring to Chiang Rai, located just 11km north of town. The water is naturally heated however the Pong Phrabat hot spring is concreted and tiled. Don't expect a scenic setting like those hot springs in the National Park.

A trip to the Pong Phrabat hot spring is best combined with a day trip to the Pong Phrabat Waterfall.

How to get there: there is no public transport to Pong Phrabat Hot Spring. You will need to hire a motorbike or charter a *songtaew* in town. The journey will take about 25 minutes one way – best to combine with Pong Phrabat Waterfall.

Opening hours: 8am to 8pm daily (subject to change)

Entry fee: 20 THB per person.

Huay Mak Lium Hot Spring

The Huay Mak Lium Hot Spring ([location](#)) is located along the Kok River in the Lam Nam Kok National Park, about 24km north-west of Chiang Rai. This is one of the nicest hot springs in Chiang Rai. The hot spring is set in a relaxing forest surrounding with a water temperature of 65 degrees Celcius.

How to get there: For an adventure hire a motorbike or 4WD in Chiang Rai. Alternatively, take a longtail boat upriver from the Chiang Rai pier located by the Mae Fah Luang Bridge.

Opening hours: 8am to 4.30pm daily (follows the National Park opening hours) however you may be able to get in after hours as there is no administration office here.

Pong Phra Soet Hot Spring

The Pong Phra Soet Hot Spring ([location](#)) is also located in the Lam Nam Kok National Park. It is only 1km away from the Huay Mak Lium Hot Spring and is in a similar natural forest surrounding by the Kok River. There is a large outdoor pool for the general public and 8 private spa rooms which can be reserved.

How to get there: For an adventure hire a motorbike or 4WD in Chiang Rai. Alternatively, take a longtail boat upriver from the Chiang Rai pier located by the Mae Fah Luang Bridge.

Opening hours: 8am to 4.30pm daily (follows the National Park opening hours) however you may be able to get in after hours as there is no administration office here.

Fang Hot Spring

The Fang Hot Spring is located in the Doi Pha Hom Pok National Park about 2 hours from town. Note that it is actually in Chiang Mai Province, but easier to reach from Chiang Rai. There is a natural geyser by the park entrance which erupts every 10 minutes or so up to a height of 50 meters.

There are a set of private hot spring houses within walking distance of the geyser. These houses contain naturally heated baths and are some of the best hot springs in northern Thailand. You will have to pay an additional hourly fee to use these private rooms.

How to get there: there is no public transport to Fang Hot Spring. Hire a motorbike in Chiang Rai or charter a driver in Fang.

Opening hours: 8am to 4.30pm daily (follows the National Park opening hours).

Entry fees: National park entry fees are 300 THB per person plus a vehicle entry fee. The journey will take about 1.5hrs one way.

Nam Roo Hot Spring

Nam Roo is my favourite hot spring in all of Thailand. Set high up in the mountains, this hot spring is the closest thing you'll get to a natural infinity pool. The view over the mountains is incredible.

Nam Roo hot spring is not marked on maps, nor is it known by western tourists. There are signs along the way from Fang, though it can be tough following the way. If going there I suggest you use these co-ordinates on a map (19°55'19.9"N 99°06'27.6"E).

How to get there: there is no public transport to Fang Hot Spring. Hire a motorbike in Chiang Rai or charter a driver in Fang – best to combine with a trip to Fang Hot Spring.

Opening hours: 8am to 4.30pm daily (follows the National Park opening hours).

Towns in Chiang Rai Province

Chiang Rai is just one of many towns in the province. If you want to see what the rest of Chiang Rai looks like, then I suggest visiting at least one of the following towns. Each has its own unique attractions. With one week to spend in Chiang Rai, you may as well them all.

Chiang Khong



Riverside views in Chiang Khong

Chiang Khong is a sleepy little town situated along the Mekong River. The main attraction here is to stay at a riverside guesthouse. From here you can enjoy the river view with a Laotian mountain backdrop.

Catch the early morning procession of monks. The monks walk the streets at around 6am to fill the alms with food offerings. It is a cultural experience not to be missed.

I highly suggest staying a night at the Fortune River View. It is incredibly cheap for a luxury hotel and offers a great view of the Mekong River. **Stay Here:** [Fortune River View](#).

Chiang Saen



Ancient Lanna temples in Chiang Saen

Chiang Saen is another border town located 50km north of Chiang Kong. Chiang Saen is home to a city of ancient temples dating back to the year 1325, well before the Ayutthaya period.

The most popular thing to do in Chiang Saen is to visit the Golden Triangle. This is the where Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar meet. The countries are divided by the Mekong and Ruak rivers. The Golden Triangle is really nothing more than a quick photo stop and an iced coffee.

I suggest spending your time in Chiang Saen exploring the ancient temples. A few notable temples in Chiang Saen are; Wat Pa Sak, Wat Phra That Chedi Luang, Wat Roi Ko, and Wat Phra Buat. All are located within Chiang Saen's Old City precinct and are within walking distance of each other.

These old temples in Chiang Saen give it a similar feeling to the ancient cities of Ayutthaya and Sukhothai.

Mae Sai



Scorpion Temple, Mae Sai

Mae Sai is located 60km north of Chiang Rai on the Thai-Myanmar border. In the past, Mae Sai was a popular crossing point for "border runs" a quick and cheap way to extend tourist visas for an additional 14 days.

These days the Myanmar border market is the main attraction. Here you can find a wide range of knock-off goods, terrible cigarettes, and questionable Burmese whiskey. Most people only head across the border to Tachilek for an hour or so, but it is also possible to stay for a couple of nights in a hotel near the market.

You can also apply for a special permit before crossing the border to venture deeper into Myanmar to the Kentung district.

Hotels in Chiang Rai

Chiang Rai may be a small town, but there is no shortage of quality hotels and resorts. Whether you want a budget guesthouse or a luxury hotel, there is a good option out there.

Budget

Mercy Hostel



Mercy Hostel is located right by the Chiang Rai Night Bazaar, just 500 meters from the centre of town. It is one of the closest hotels in to the town centre. There are 8-bed dorms and private rooms. Rooms have Wi-Fi and air conditioning. You will love the swimming pool and the pool table, a great place to meet other backpackers.

Stay here: [Mercy Hostel](#)

Fun-D Hostel



Fun-D Hostel is located just 700 meters from of the town centre nearby the King Mengrai Monument. There are private rooms, 6-bed dorms, and 8-bed dorms to choose from. Rooms have Wi-Fi and air conditioning. Watch out for the amazing beer specials and live music nights.

Stay here: [Fun-D Hostel](#)

Banlomnow



The Banlomnow Guesthouse is a nice colonial building located about 2km south of the town. There are private rooms with air conditioners, free Wi-Fi, and private bathrooms. The guesthouse is close enough to town to be walking distance (about 30 minutes) though it is a fair bit further out than Mercy Hostel.

Stay here: [Banlomnow Guesthouse](#)

Mid-Range and Luxury

The Riviere (formerly Dusit Island)



The Riviere Island Resort is located 2km from the centre of town alongside the Kok River (walking distance). The Riviere Island Resort overlooks the mountain ranges to the north, perhaps one of the nicest views in Chiang Rai.

Stay here: [The Riviere](#)

The Legend Chiang Rai



The Legend Chiang Rai is a super luxury style resort located right along the banks of the Kok River. If you want to splurge a bit on your trip, then look no further. Everything here is amazing; food, pool, views, rooms, and beds. You may only stay one or two nights here, but you won't forget them.

Stay here: [The Legend Chiang Rai](#)

Laluna Resort, Chiang Rai



Laluna Resort is a great mid-range hotel nearby the center of Chiang Rai. It is located within walking distance of the weekend walking street markets, 2km south of the city center. Laluna Resort has a great swimming pool and comfortable rooms. A great spot for your time spent in the city.

Stay here: [Laluna Resort](#)