

# Chiang Mai Province



Chiang Mai Province straddles the most important historical crossroads of northern South-east Asia, a fertile region of mountains, valleys and rivers where peoples from China, Laos, Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand have long traded goods and ideas in a fusion of cultures. This blend has been further enlivened by the presence of tribal societies – such as the Hmong-Mien – whose ethnic heritage knows no fixed political boundaries.

In past centuries Chiang Mai served as an entrepôt for a flourishing caravan trade in opium, silks and timber. Today it is Thailand's second-largest city and the north's principal hub for tourism, transport, education and cross-border commerce. In a period of rapid development, Chiang Mai – crowned to the west by Doi Suthep mountain and its sacred temple, and centred on a moated old town – has managed to retain its charm and laid-back feel. Find ancient *chedi* (stupas) side by side with modern architecture, a delicious and distinctive cuisine, accommodation ranging from back-packing digs to boutique hotels, as well as great shopping, pampering spas and a myriad of courses to try out.

Outside of the provincial capital, Chiang Mai Province boasts more natural forest cover than any other province in the north. In addition, two of Thailand's highest mountain peaks are in Chiang Mai Province: Doi Inthanon (2565m) and Doi Chiang Dao (2195m). Cycling, hiking, elephant trekking, bird-watching and river rafting attract those interested in Chiang Mai Province's natural surrounds, while visitors keen on learning more about the region's fascinating ethnic minorities can visit semi-remote villages on mountain slopes.

## FAST FACTS

- **Best Time to Visit** November to February
- **Population** 1.7 million

## Climate

Chiang Mai Province has much the same climate as adjacent provinces in the north. Most visitors will find the weather is most enjoyable from November to mid-February, when temperatures are mild and rain is scarce.

During the cool season (December to February), temperatures can warrant a jacket or pullover at night, particularly at higher elevations.

From February until the monsoon season begins in June, a thick haze often forms over the city, a combination of dust and smoke from the burning off of rice fields near the city. The hot season (March to May) can be brutal in Chiang Mai, although temperatures don't burst the thermometer as much as they do in Lampang or in northeastern Thailand. You'll find some relief from the heat (and to a lesser extent, the smoke) at the cooler elevations of Chiang Dao and Doi Inthanon, or anywhere else where you can get above the Mae Ping plains.

The annual monsoons are generally lighter in Chiang Mai than in central or southern Thailand, lasting from June to October, and rarely into November. Chiang Mai city can flood when rains are unusually heavy.

## Language

Around 80% of the people living in Chiang Mai Province are native to the area, belonging to an ethnic group once known as Yuan or Yün, or less frequently Phayap. Nowadays many Chiang Mai residents consider these to be pejorative names and they prefer the term *khon meuang* (meaning people of the Tai principality).

Most non-hill-tribe people speak Northern Thai as their first language. Northern Thai – or *kham meuang* (speech of the Tai principality) – is very similar to Central (or 'Standard') Thai, as spoken in central Thailand, and with a mutual intelligibility rated at greater than 70%.

Central Thai is taught in local schools and is the official language of all government agencies. Thus most educated Chiang Mai

residents can speak Central Thai, and will usually do so automatically with anyone from outside the region.

Northern Thai has its own script, based on a half-millennium-old Mon script that was originally used only for Buddhist scripture. The script became so popular during the Lanna period that it was exported for use by the Thai Lü in China, the Khün in the eastern Shan State and other Thai-Kadai-speaking groups living between Lanna and China. Although few northerners nowadays can read the Northern Thai script – often referred to as 'Lanna script' – it is occasionally used in signage to add a Northern Thai cultural flavour. The script is especially common for use on signs at the entrance gates of Chiang Mai monasteries, although the name of the wat (temple) will also be written in Thai (and occasionally Roman) script.

Very few outsiders bother to learn Northern Thai, since Central Thai is so widely spoken. Unless you have a very keen interest in learning the Northern dialect, it's best to stick to Central Thai, as many northerners seem to take offence when outsiders try speaking *kham meuang* to them. This attitude dates back to a time, perhaps no more than 25 or 30 years ago, when central Thais considered northerners to be very backward, and thus made fun of their language.

The Language chapter (p781) covers only the Central Thai dialect. If you're interested in learning *kham meuang*, the only generally available book is *Lanna Language* by Kobkan Thangpijaikul. All materials are written out in Lanna script, International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), English translation and Thai translation. It's mostly intended for people who are already fluent, or very familiar with, Central Thai. An optional 90-minute cassette tape is also available to go with the text.

## Getting There & Away

Chiang Mai International Airport fields dozens of daily flights from Bangkok, as well as various other cities in Thailand. There are also international connections with cities in Myanmar, China and Laos.

Chiang Mai serves the main road transport hub for all of northern Thailand, with virtually every town and village linked to the city by bus or *sǎwngthǎew* (small pick-up trucks). Most buses to other provinces in the north (as well as elsewhere in Thailand) arrive at and

## HIGHLIGHTS

- People-watching or shopping till you drop on Chiang Mai's bustling **Sunday Walking Street** (p284)
- Enjoying an invigorating **traditional Thai massage** (p292) or enrolling in a **course** (p293) to become a thumb master yourself
- Experiencing serenity in the brick-lined meditation tunnels of **Wat U Mong** (p286)
- Taking in the far-reaching views at **Wat Phra That Doi Suthep** (p325) and exploring the surrounding **Doi Suthep-Pui National Park** (p325) by motorbike
- Checking out the impressive caves, taking a challenging hike and bird-watching around **Chiang Dao** (p328)



depart from the Chiang Mai Arcade (New bus terminal).

The State Railway of Thailand's (SRT) northern line terminates in Chiang Mai, and many travellers arrive by overnight train from Bangkok.

### Getting Around

Buses and *sǎwnghǎew* run frequently to towns and villages around Chiang Mai Province from Chiang Mai's Chang Pheuk bus terminal. Cars, 4WD vehicles, pick-up trucks and motorcycles are easily rented in Chiang Mai for excursions around the province.

## CHIANG MAI

เชียงใหม่

pop 204,000

One of the many questions Thais may ask a foreigner visiting Thailand is 'Have you been to Chiang Mai yet?', underscoring the feeling that Chiang Mai is a keystone of any journey to Thailand. Along with Sukhothai further south, it was the first Southeast Asian state to make the historic transition from domination by Mon and Khmer cultures to a new era ruled by Thais.

Located more than 700km northwest of Bangkok, Chiang Mai has in excess of 300 temples (121 within the *thêtsábaan* or municipal limits) – almost as many as are in Bangkok – a circumstance that makes the old city centre visually striking. Thais idealise their beloved northern capital as a quaint, moated and walled city surrounded by mountains with legendary, mystical attributes. In reality, Chiang Mai is a dynamic and modern city, which has successfully managed to combine its rich history and traditions with its increasingly modern side. However, a result of this rapid development has been the rise in traffic and pollution. Environmentalists are also voicing concerns about development of the verdant and auspicious Doi Suthep mountain (1676m), located to the west of the city, and sometimes referred to as Chiang Mai's lungs.

Chiang Mai has always had many feathers to its bow with its cultural riches, relative peacefulness, fantastic handicraft shopping, delicious food and proximity to many natural treasures. Changes are afoot however, with the city becoming somewhere to watch

in the style stakes. Chic, Thai-style boutique hotels are popping up everywhere, and one look at the trendsetters setting up shop (and bars and restaurants), particularly in the Th Nimmanhaemin area, shows that the city's identity is changing. Yet, the northern capital still manages to retain the relaxed, temple-sprinkled, cultural capital atmosphere of yore, alongside these new hip happenings. With its many and varied attractions, the days of Chiang Mai just being a quick stop off point before heading to the hills are long gone.

### HISTORY

Thai king Phaya Mengrai (also spelt Mangrai), originally from the Mekong riverside principality of Ngoen Yang (present-day Chiang Saen), established Nopburi Si Nakhon Ping Chiang Mai in 1296 after conquering the Mon kingdom of Hariphunchai (modern Lamphun). Traces of the original 1296 earthen ramparts can still be seen today along Th Kamphaeng Din in Chiang Mai.

Later, in an alliance with Sukhothai in the 14th and 15th centuries, Chiang Mai (New Walled City) became a part of the larger kingdom of Lan Na Thai (Million Thai Rice Fields), which extended as far south as Kamphaeng Phet and as far north as Luang Prabang in Laos. During this period Chiang Mai became an important religious and cultural centre – the eighth world synod of Theravada Buddhism was held here in 1477.

The Burmese capture of the city in 1556 was the second time the Burmese had control of Chiang Mai Province. Before Phaya Mengrai's reign, King Anawrahta of Pagan (present-day Bagan) had ruled Chiang Mai Province in the 11th century. This time around, the Burmese ruled Chiang Mai for more than 200 years.

In 1775 Chiang Mai was recaptured by the Thais under Phaya Taksin, who appointed Chao Kavila, a *jão meuang* (chieftain) from nearby Lampang principality, as viceroy of northern Thailand. In 1800 Kavila built the monumental brick walls around the 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 (*thàa phae* means 'raft pier').

Under Kavila, Chiang Mai became an important regional trade centre. Many of the later Shan- and Burmese-style temples seen around the city were built by wealthy teak merchants

who emigrated from Burma during the late 19th century. Not all the Shan residents were merchants, however. In 1902 several hundred labourers, most of them Shan, protested against the practice of *corvée* (involuntary

service to the state) by refusing to construct roads or otherwise follow government orders. The ensuing skirmishes between *corvée* labourers and Chiang Mai troops – dubbed the 'Shan Rebellion' by historians – didn't

### CARAVANS OF NORTHERN THAILAND

Dating from at least the 15th century, Chinese-Muslim caravans from Yunnan Province (China) used Chiang Mai as a 'back door' for commodities transported between China and the Indian Ocean port of Mawlamyaing (Moulmein) in Myanmar (Burma) for international seagoing trade.

British merchant Ralph Fitch, the first person to leave an English-language chronicle of Southeast Asian travel, wrote of his 1583 to 1591 journey through Thailand: 'To the town of Jamahey (Chiang Mai) come many merchants out of China, and bring a great store of Muske, Gold, Silver, and many other things of China worke.'

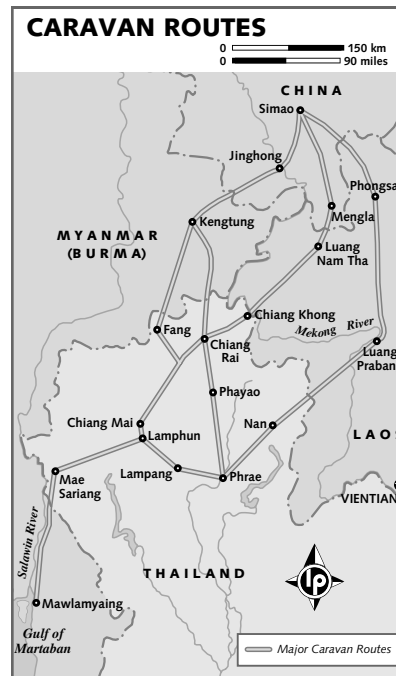
The principal means of transport for the Yunnanese caravaneers were ponies and mules, beasts of burden that were in contrast with the Southeast Asian preference for oxen, water buffalo and elephants. The Chinese Muslims who dominated the caravan traffic owed their preferred mode of conveyance, as well as their religious orientation, to mass conversions effected during the Mongol invasions of Yunnan in the 13th century. The equestrian nature of the caravans led the Thais to call the Yunnanese *jiin haw* (galloping Chinese).

Three main routes emanated from the predominantly Thai Xishuangbanna (Sipsongpanna) region in southern Yunnan into northern Thailand, and onward to the Gulf of Martaban via Mawlamyaing. The western route proceeded southwest from Simao to Chiang Rung (now known as Jinghong), then went on through Chiang Tung (Kengtung) to Fang or Chiang Rai.

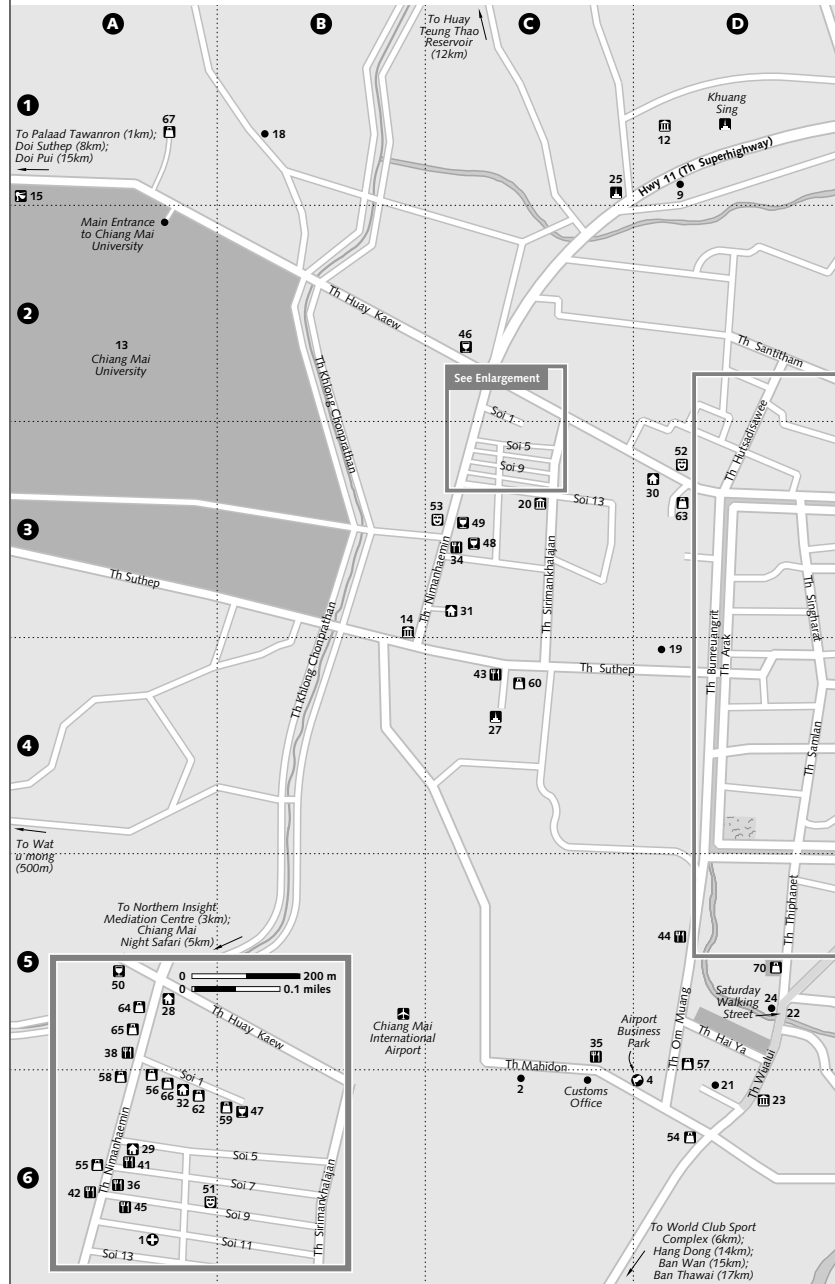
The middle route went south to Mengla near the border of China and Laos, crossed Laos via Luang Nam Tha, and entered Thailand at Chiang Khong (which was an independent principality at the time) on the Mekong River. At this point the middle route merged with the western route at Chiang Rai Province, and formed a single route through Chiang Mai to Mae Sariang, a line that continued along the Salawin River to Mawlamyaing in present-day Myanmar.

The third route went from Simao to Phongsali in northern Laos then via Luang Prabang (Laos), crossing the Mekong River to Nan and Phrae before curving northwestward via Lampang and Lamphun to Chiang Mai.

Principal southward exports along these routes included silk, opium, tea, dried fruit, lacquerware, musk, ponies and mules, while northward the caravans brought gold, copper, cotton, edible birds' nests, betel nut, tobacco and ivory. By the end of the 19th century many artisans from China, northern Burma and Laos had settled in the area to produce crafts for the steady flow of regional trade. The city's original transshipment point for such trade movements was a market district known as Ban Haw, just a stone's throw from today's Night Bazaar (p317) in Chiang Mai.

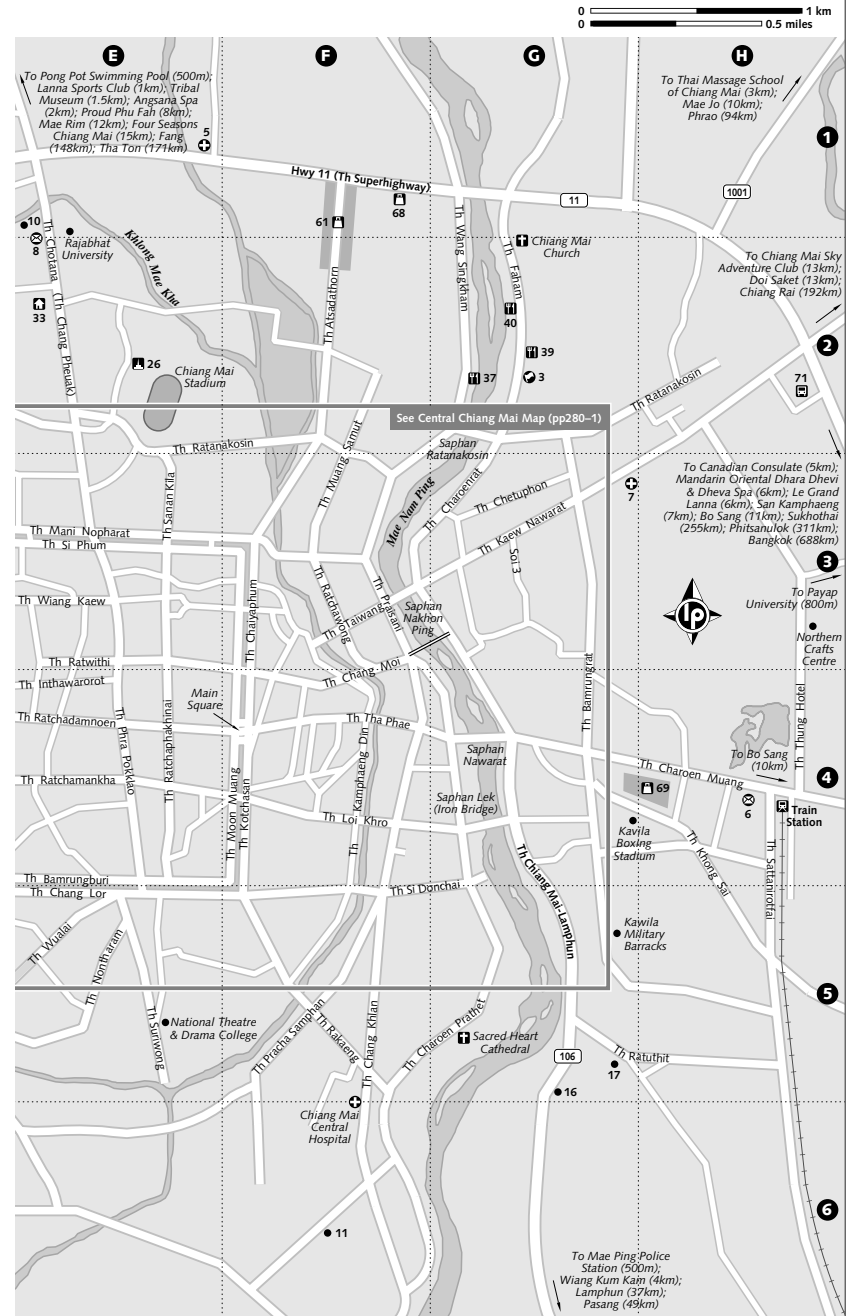


# CHIANG MAI



CHIANG MAI PROVINCE

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|                            |                   |    |    |                                 |    |    |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----|----|---------------------------------|----|----|
| <b>INFORMATION</b>         | Wat Jet Yot.....  | 25 | C1 | NimMahn Bar.....                | 49 | C3 |
| CAT.....(see 6)            | Wat Ku Tao.....   | 26 | E2 | The Pub.....                    | 50 | A5 |
| Fashion House.....(see 63) | Wat Suan Dok..... | 27 | C4 | <b>ENTERTAINMENT</b>            |    |    |
| Grace Dental Care.....     |                   | 1  | A6 | Major Cineplex.....(see 54)     |    |    |
| Immigration Office.....    |                   | 2  | C6 | Monkey Club.....                | 51 | A6 |
| Indian Consulate.....      |                   | 3  | G2 | Vista 12 Huay Kaew.....         | 52 | D3 |
| Japanese Consulate.....    |                   | 4  | D6 | Warm-Up.....                    | 53 | C3 |
| Lanna Hospital.....        |                   | 5  | E1 | Western Union.....(see 63)      |    |    |
| Main Post Office.....      |                   | 6  | H4 | <b>SHOPPING</b>                 |    |    |
| McCormick Hospital.....    |                   | 7  | G3 | Central Airport Plaza.....      | 54 | D6 |
| Post Office.....           |                   | 8  | E2 | Chabaa.....                     | 55 | A6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Deco Moda.....                  | 56 | A6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Galerie Panisa.....             | 57 | D5 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Ginger.....                     | 58 | A6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Gongdee Gallery.....            | 59 | B6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Hill-Tribe Products             |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Promotion Centre.....           | 60 | C4 |
|                            |                   |    |    | JJ Market.....                  | 61 | F1 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Kachama.....                    | 62 | A6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Kad Suan Kaew                   |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Shopping Centre.....(see 63)    |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Khao Soi Ban Faham.....(see 39) |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Khao Soi Lam Duan.....          | 39 | G2 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Khao Soi Samoe Jai.....         | 40 | G2 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Khun Churn.....                 | 41 | A6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Smoothie Blues.....             | 42 | A6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Suandok Vegetarian.....         | 43 | C4 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Vegetarian Centre of            |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Chiang Mai.....                 | 44 | D5 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Wawee Coffee.....               | 45 | A6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | <b>DRINKING</b>                 |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Darling Wine Pub.....           | 46 | C2 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Drunken Flower.....             | 47 | B6 |
|                            |                   |    |    | Glass Onion.....                | 48 | C3 |
|                            |                   |    |    | <b>TRANSPORT</b>                |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Chiang Mai Arcade (New)         |    |    |
|                            |                   |    |    | Bus Terminal.....               | 71 | H2 |

resolve the issue until the custom was discontinued in 1924.

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, and in 1933 Chiang Mai officially became a province of Siam.

Long before tourists began visiting the region, Chiang Mai was an important centre for handcrafted pottery, umbrellas, weaving, silver-work and woodcarving. By the mid-1960s tourism had replaced commercial trade as Chiang Mai's number one source of outside revenue.

After Chiang Mai born-and-raised politician Thaksin Shinawatra became Thailand's prime minister in 2001, the city found itself the focus of a Thaksin-initiated development drive. The premier vowed to make Chiang Mai one of the nation's primary centres of information technology, expand the airport, build more superhighways and double the size and wealth of the city within five years.

Many local residents have reacted with dismay to these proclamations, and have organised a vocal movement to preserve quality of life.

Aspects of the proposed Thaksin developments did come into fruition, such as the continued construction of 5-star hotels, building of roads and the new Night Safari (see p289). However, although a new bus system is in place, the improved transportation system – including trams and metered taxis in the city – has not yet materialised. Since the political demise of Thaksin by the military coup of 19 September 2006, it remains to be seen whether the funding of Chiang Mai from central government will continue apace.

## ORIENTATION

The old city of Chiang Mai is a neat square bounded by moats and partial walls. Thanon Moon Muang, along the eastern moat, is the centre for cheap accommodation and eateries. Thanon Tha Phae runs east from the middle of this side and crosses Mae Nam Ping, changing into Th Charoen Muang. The trendy Th Nimmanhaemin area is west of the old city.

The train station and the main post office are further down Th Charoen Muang, a fair distance from the city centre. There are two intercity bus terminals in Chiang Mai, one near Pratu Chang Phueak (White Elephant Gate; Map pp280–1) and a larger one called Chiang Mai Arcade (Map pp276–7).

Several of Chiang Mai's important temples are within the moat area, but there are others to the north and west. Doi Suthep rises up to the west of the city and from its temples you get a fine view over the city.

## Maps

Navigating around Chiang Mai is pretty simple, although a copy of Nancy Chandler's *Map of Chiang Mai*, available in bookshops, is a worthwhile 160B investment. It shows the main points of interest, shopping venues and oddities that you would be most unlikely to stumble upon by yourself. *Groovy Map Chiang Mai Map'n'Guide*, also in bookshops, adds Thai script and more nightspots.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) puts out a sketchy city map that is free and available from the TAT office on Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun. Several other ad-laden giveaway maps are also available in tourist shops and restaurants.

## INFORMATION Bookshops

**Book Zone** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5325 2418; Th Tha Phae) Directly opposite Wat Mahawan; offers new travel guides and travel literature, plus contemporary fiction.

**Gecko Books** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4066; Th Ratchamankha) A large selection of used & new books. There's also a shop on Th Chiang Mai Kao.

**Lost Book Shop** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 6656; 34/3 Th Ratchamankha) Primarily used books, with a wide choice, and cheaper than Gecko Books.

**Suriwong Book Centre** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 1052; 54 Th Si Donchai) Chiang Mai's best new-book selection, especially strong in nonfiction about Thailand and Southeast Asia.

## Cultural Centres

Several foreign cultural centres in Chiang Mai host film, music, dance and theatre, as well as other cultural events.

**Alliance Française** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 5277; chiangmai@alliance-francaise.or.th; 138 Th Charoen Prathet) French films (subtitled in English) are screened at 4.30pm every Tuesday and at 8pm on Friday; admission is free to members, 30B to general public.

**American University Alumni** (AUA; Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8407, 0 5321 1377; 73 Th Ratchadammoen) Offers English and Thai language courses (see p293).

**British Council** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 2103; 198 Th Bamrungrat) Features a small English-language library and offers the services of an honorary consul.

## Dentists

Thailand has a very good reputation for its dental care, and it is cheaper than at home. Most offer cosmetic dentistry too. The following have been recommended.

**Dental 4U** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4149; www.dental4uchiangmai.com; 382-384 Th Tha Phae)

**Grace Dental Care** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5389 4568; www.gracedentalclinic.com; 45 Soi 11 Th Nimmanhaemin)

## Digital Photos

Most internet cafés will download digital camera pictures onto CDs or DVDs for around 80/200B respectively.

## Emergency

**Tourist police** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 8130, 0 5324 8974, 24hr emergency 1155; Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; ☎ 6am-midnight)

## Internet Access

You'll find plenty of internet centres along the following streets: Tha Phae, Moon Muang, Ratchadammoen, Ratchamankha, Ratchadamri, Nimmanhaemin, Huay Kaew, Chang Khlan and Suthep.

## Internet Resources

**www.chiangmai-online.com** Basic information about Chiang Mai, along with comprehensive accommodation listings.

**www.chiangmainews.com** Posts a variety of articles on local events, culture and art, along with current news developments.

## Media

**Chiangmai Mail** Weekly newspaper; good source of local news.

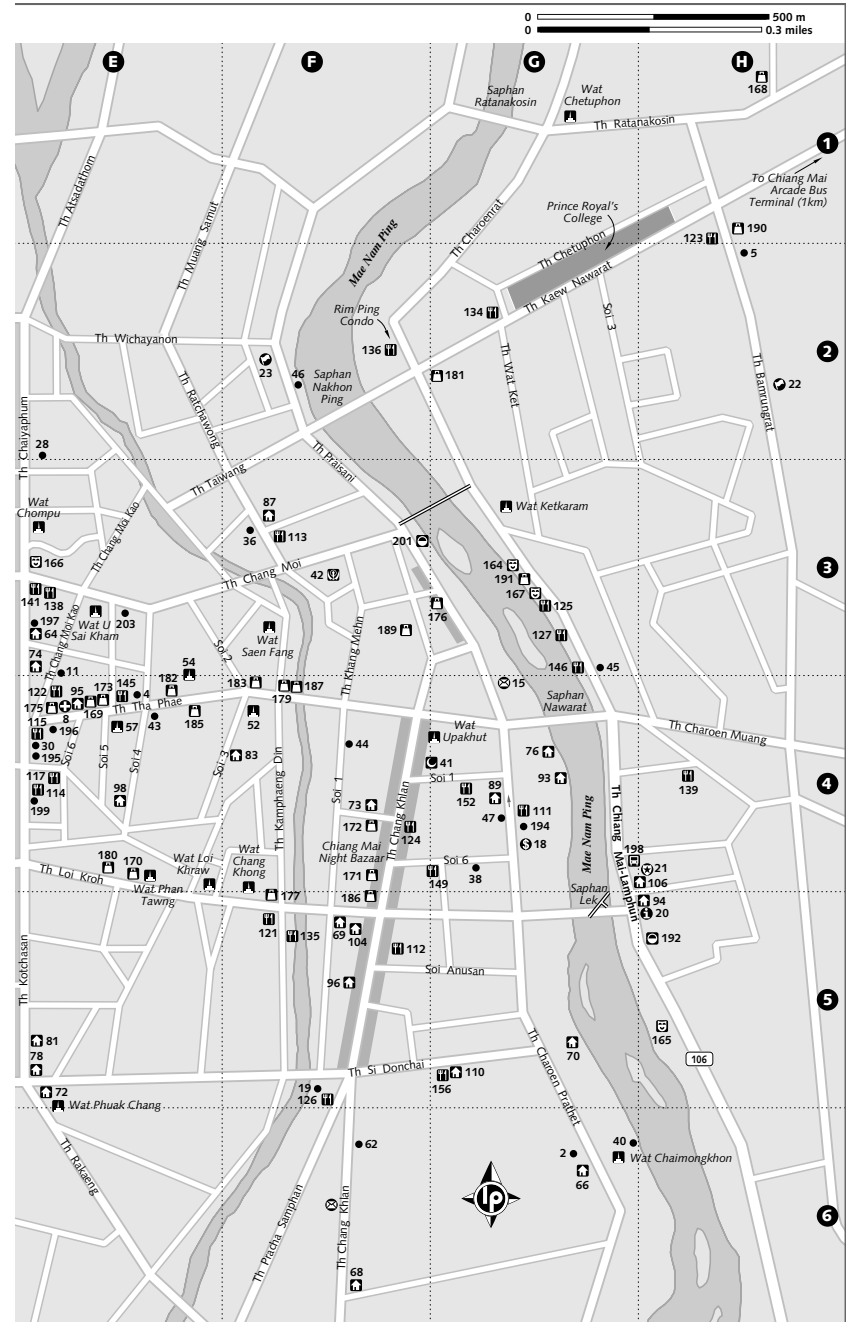
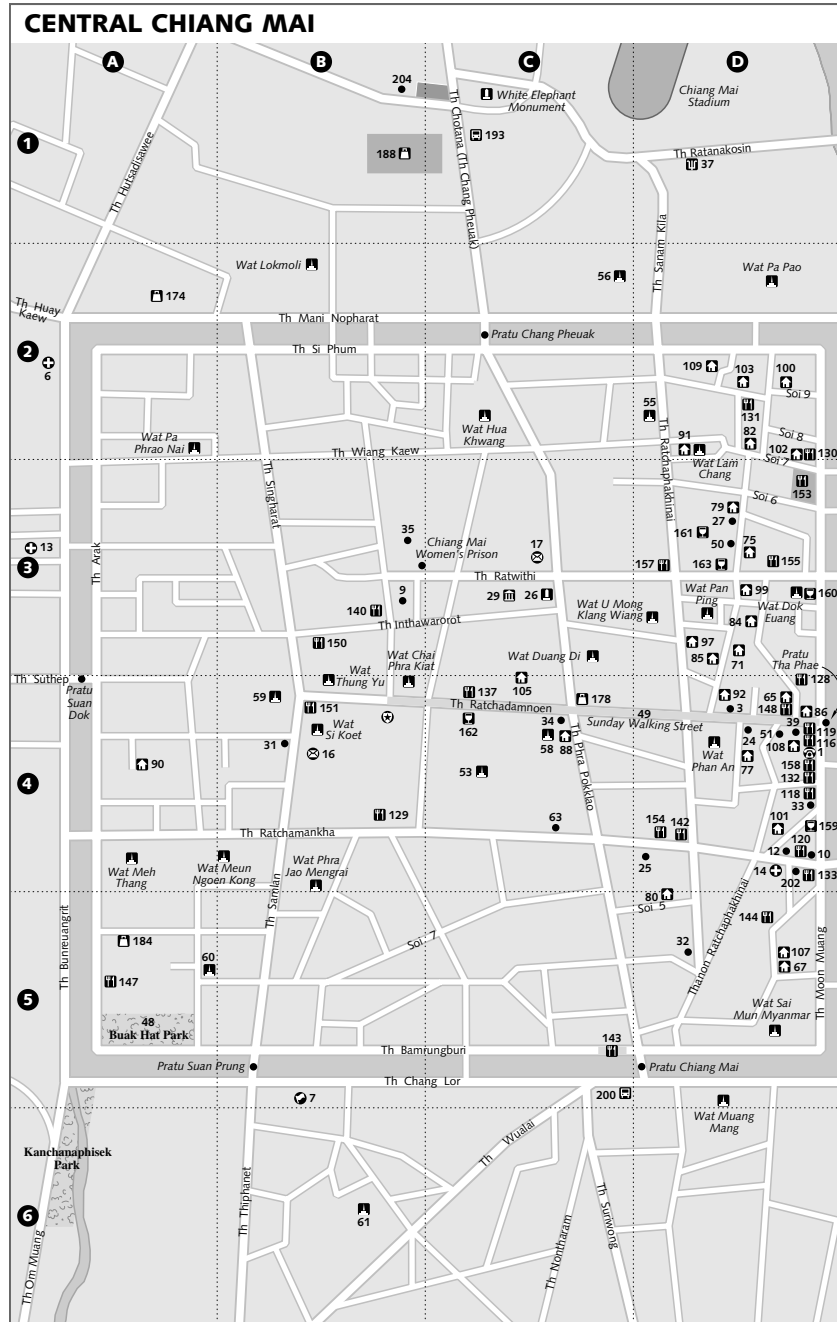
**City Life** Oriented as much towards residents as tourists, with articles on local culture, politics and people.

**City Now** Published by *City Life* magazine, *City Now* is a fortnightly pamphlet listing events and workshops.

## Medical Services

At most hospitals in Chiang Mai, many of the doctors speak English.

**Chiang Mai Ram Hospital** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5322 4861; www.chiangmairam.com; 8 Th Bunruangrit)



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| INFORMATION                              |         | Chiang Mai Thai Cookery              |           | SLEEPING ☑                         |        |
|--|---------|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------------------------------|--------|
| 7-11.....                                | 1 D4    | School.....                          | 33 D4     | Amora.....                         | 64 E3  |
| Alliance Française.....                  | 2 G6    | Chiang Mai Thai Language Center..... | 34 C4     | Awana Sleep & Swim Guesthouse..... | 65 D4  |
| American University Alumni (AUA).....    | 3 D4    | Chiang Mai Women's Prison Spa.....   | 35 B3     | Baan Kaew Guest House.....         | 66 G6  |
| Book Zone.....                           | 4 E4    | China Town.....                      | 36 F3     | Baan Manee.....                    | 67 D5  |
| British Council.....                     | 5 H2    | Contact Travel.....                  | (see 194) | Buarawong Residence.....           | 68 F6  |
| Chiang Mai Ram Hospital.....             | 6 A2    | Devi Mandir Chiang Mai.....          | 37 D1     | Central Duangtawan Hotel.....      | 69 F5  |
| Chinese Consulate.....                   | 7 B5    | Gap's Thai Culinary School.....      | (see 77)  | Chedi.....                         | 70 G5  |
| Dental 4U.....                           | 8 E4    | Heaven Hut.....                      | 38 G4     | Chiang Mai White House.....        | 71 D3  |
| District Offices.....                    | 9 B3    | Lek Chaiya.....                      | 39 D4     | Chiangmai Gold Star Hotel.....     | 72 E5  |
| French Consulate.....                    | (see 2) | Mae Ping River Cruises.....          | 40 G6     | D2Hotel.....                       | 73 F4  |
| Gecko Books.....                         | 10 D4   | Matsayit Chiang Mai.....             | 41 G4     | Daret's House.....                 | 74 E3  |
| Gecko Books.....                         | 11 E3   | Namdhari Sikh Temple.....            | 42 F3     | Eagle House 2.....                 | 75 D3  |
| Lost Book Shop.....                      | 12 D4   | Nova Artlab.....                     | 43 E4     | Galare Guest House.....            | 76 G4  |
| Malaria Centre.....                      | 13 A3   | Peak.....                            | 44 F4     | Gap's House.....                   | 77 D4  |
| Mungkala.....                            | 14 D4   | RarinJinda Wellness Center.....      | 45 G3     | Imperial Mae Ping Hotel.....       | 78 E5  |
| Post Office.....                         | 15 G4   | Scorpion Tailed River Cruise.....    | 46 F2     | Jonadda Guest House.....           | 79 D3  |
| Post Office.....                         | 16 B4   | SK House.....                        | (see 100) | Julie Guesthouse.....              | 80 D5  |
| Post Office.....                         | 17 C3   | Spa de Siam.....                     | 47 G4     | Lai-Thai Guesthouse.....           | 81 E5  |
| SK Moneychanger.....                     | 18 G4   | Suan Buak Hat (Buak Hat Park).....   | 48 A5     | Lamchang House.....                | 82 D2  |
| Suriwong Book Centre.....                | 19 F5   | Sunday Walking Street.....           | 49 D4     | Manathai.....                      | 83 F4  |
| Tourist Authority of Thailand (TAT)..... | 20 H5   | Thai Farm Cooking School.....        | 50 D3     | Mini Cost.....                     | 84 D3  |
| Tourist Police.....                      | 21 H4   | Thapae Boxing Stadium.....           | 51 D4     | Montra House.....                  | 85 D3  |
| UK & Northern Ireland Consulate.....     | 22 H2   | Tony's Big Bikes.....                | (see 202) | Montri Hotel.....                  | 86 D4  |
| US Consulate.....                        | 23 F2   | Top North Guest House.....           | (see 107) | New Mitrapap Hotel.....            | 87 F3  |
|  |         | Top North Hotel.....                 | (see 108) | Parasol Inn.....                   | 88 C4  |
|  |         | Velocity.....                        | (see 204) | Pomping Tower Hotel.....           | 89 G4  |
|  |         | Wat Bupparam.....                    | 52 F4     | Rachamanka.....                    | 90 A4  |
|  |         | Wat Chedi Luang.....                 | 53 C4     | RCN Court.....                     | 91 D2  |
|  |         | Wat Chetawan.....                    | 54 E3     | Rendezvous Guest House.....        | 92 D4  |
|  |         | Wat Chiang Man.....                  | 55 D2     | River View Lodge.....              | 93 G4  |
|  |         | Wat Chiang Yeun.....                 | 56 C2     | Riverside House.....               | 94 H5  |
|  |         | Wat Mahawan.....                     | 57 E4     | Roong Ruang Hotel.....             | 95 E4  |
|  |         | Wat Phan Tao.....                    | 58 C4     | Royal Princess.....                | 96 F5  |
|  |         | Wat Phra Singh.....                  | 59 B4     | Safe House Court.....              | 97 D3  |
|  |         | Wat Phuak Hong.....                  | 60 A5     | Sarah Guest House.....             | 98 E4  |
|  |         | Wat Sisuphan.....                    | 61 B6     | Siri Guesthouse.....               | 99 D3  |
|  |         | Yoga Sense Discovery of Life.....    | 62 F6     | SK House.....                      | 100 D2 |
|  |         | Yoga Studio.....                     | 63 C4     | Smile House 1.....                 | 101 D4 |
|  |         |                                      |           | Sri Pat Guest House.....           | 102 D2 |
|  |         |                                      |           | Supreme House.....                 | 103 D2 |
|  |         |                                      |           | Suriwongse Hotel.....              | 104 F5 |
|  |         |                                      |           | Tamarind Village.....              | 105 C4 |

The most modern hospital in town, with higher-than-average prices.

**Lanna Hospital** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5335 7234; www.lanna-hospital.com; Hwy 11/Th Superhighway) One of the better hospitals in town and less expensive than Chiang Mai Ram.

**Malaria Centre** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5322 1529; 18 Th Bunreuangrit) Offers free blood checks for malaria.

**McCormick Hospital** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5326 2200; www.thai.net/mccormick; 133 Th Kaew Nawarat) Former missionary hospital; good for minor treatment, and inexpensive.

**Mungkala** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8494; www.mungkala.com; 21-27 Th Ratchamanka) Traditional Chinese clinic offering acupuncture, massage and herbal therapy.

## Money

All major Thai banks have several branches throughout Chiang Mai, many of them along

Th Tha Phae; most are open from 8.30am to 3.30pm. In the well-touristed areas – for example, the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, Th Tha Phae and Th Moon Muang – you'll find ATMs and bank-operated foreign-exchange booths open as late as 8pm.

**SK Moneychanger** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 1864; 73/8 Th Charoen Prathet; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat) Private agency specialising in cash exchanges in several currencies. Travellers cheques are also accepted, usually at better rates than banks.

**Western Union** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 4979; Central department store, Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre, Th Huay Kaew) Also at any post office; send or receive money by wire.

## Post

**Main post office** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5324 1070; Th Charoen Muang; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12pm

|                            |        |                                 |           |                                       |           |
|----------------------------|--------|---------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Tea Vanna.....             | 106 H4 | Pum Pui Italian Restaurant..... | 144 D5    | Art Deco.....                         | 170 E4    |
| Top North Guest House..... | 107 D5 | Rachamanka.....                 | (see 90)  | Chiang Mai Night Bazaar.....          | 171 F4    |
| Top North Hotel.....       | 108 D4 | Ratana's Kitchen.....           | 145 E4    | Chiang Mai Night Bazaar Building..... | 172 F4    |
| Tri Gong Residence.....    | 109 D2 | Riverside Bar & Restaurant..... | 146 G3    | City Silk.....                        | 173 E4    |
| Yaang Come Village.....    | 110 G5 | Roi Sawoei.....                 | 147 A5    | Computer Plaza.....                   | 174 A2    |
|                            |        | Sailomroy.....                  | 148 D4    | Elements.....                         | 175 E4    |
|                            |        | Shere Shiraz.....               | 149 G4    | Flower Market.....                    | 176 G3    |
|                            |        | Si Phen Restaurant.....         | 150 B3    | Hangdong Rattan.....                  | 177 F5    |
|                            |        | Sila-aat.....                   | 151 B4    | Herb Basics.....                      | 178 C4    |
|                            |        | Aomngum.....                    | 113 F3    | Kesom.....                            | 179 F4    |
|                            |        | Arabia.....                     | (see 112) | Talat Sompheet.....                   | 153 D3    |
|                            |        | Aroon (Rai) Restaurant.....     | 114 E4    | The Wok.....                          | 154 D4    |
|                            |        | Art Café.....                   | 115 E4    | UN Irish Pub.....                     | 155 D3    |
|                            |        | AUM Vegetarian Food.....        | 116 D4    | Whole Earth Restaurant.....           | 156 G5    |
|                            |        | Bake & Bite.....                | 117 E4    | Yok Fa.....                           | 157 D3    |
|                            |        | Bierstube.....                  | 118 D4    | Zest.....                             | 158 D4    |
|                            |        | Black Canyon Coffee.....        | 119 D4    |                                       |           |
|                            |        | Café Souvannaphoum.....         | 120 D4    | <b>DRINKING ☑</b>                     |           |
|                            |        | Chiangmai Saloon.....           | 121 F5    | Heaven Beach.....                     | (see 161) |
|                            |        | Da Stefano.....                 | 122 E4    | John's Place.....                     | 159 D4    |
|                            |        | Dalaabaa Bar & Restaurant.....  | 123 H1    | Kafé.....                             | 160 D3    |
|                            |        | Galare Food Centre.....         | 124 F4    | Life House.....                       | (see 161) |
|                            |        | Gallery.....                    | 125 G3    | Mix Bar.....                          | (see 73)  |
|                            |        | Giorgio Italian Restaurant..... | 126 F5    | Pinte Blues Pub.....                  | (see 118) |
|                            |        | Good View.....                  | 127 G3    | Rasta Café.....                       | 161 D3    |
|                            |        | Herb Garden.....                | 128 D4    | UN Irish Pub.....                     | (see 155) |
|                            |        | Heuan Phen.....                 | 129 B4    | Writer's Club & Wine Bar.....         | 162 C4    |
|                            |        | House.....                      | 130 D2    | Yoy Pocket.....                       | 163 D3    |
|                            |        | Indian Restaurant               |           |                                       |           |
|                            |        | Vegetarian Food.....            | 131 D2    | <b>ENTERTAINMENT ☑</b>                |           |
|                            |        | Jerusalem Falafel.....          | 132 D4    | Bubbles.....                          | (see 89)  |
|                            |        | Juicy 4U.....                   | 133 D4    | Ceramthai.....                        | (see 172) |
|                            |        | River View Lodge.....           | 93 G4     | Good View.....                        | (see 127) |
|                            |        | Khao Soi Prince.....            | 134 G2    | Le Brasserie.....                     | 164 G3    |
|                            |        | Kuaytiaw Kai Tun Coke.....      | 135 F5    | Riverside Bar & Restaurant.....       | (see 146) |
|                            |        | La Gondola.....                 | 136 F2    | Smooth.....                           | 165 H5    |
|                            |        | La Villa Pizzeria.....          | 137 C4    | Spicy.....                            | 166 E3    |
|                            |        | Libernard Café.....             | 138 E3    | Tha Chang Gallery.....                | 167 G3    |
|                            |        | Love at First Bite.....         | 139 H4    | Under the Bo.....                     | (see 172) |
|                            |        | Mangawarist.....                |           |                                       |           |
|                            |        | Kangreuanjam.....               | 140 B3    | <b>SHOPPING ☑</b>                     |           |
|                            |        | Mike's Burgers.....             | 141 E3    | Aka Wilai.....                        | 168 H1    |
|                            |        | Mitmai Restaurant.....          | 142 D4    | Angel.....                            | 169 E4    |
|                            |        | Moxie.....                      | (see 73)  |                                       |           |
|                            |        | Night food stalls.....          | 143 C5    |                                       |           |

Sat & Sun) Other useful branch post offices are at Th Singarat/Samlan, Th Mahidon at Chiang Mai International Airport, Th Charoen Prathet, Th Phra Pokklao, Th Chotana and Chiang Mai University.

## Telephone

Many internet cafés are able to arrange inexpensive internet phone hook-ups. There are also numerous yellow phone-card booths in shops and bars around town.

**Communications Authority of Thailand** (CAT; Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5324 1070; Th Charoen Muang; ☎ 24hr) Out of the way, by the main post office.

**Home Country Direct Phones** 7-Eleven (Th Moon Muang); Chiang Mai International Airport (Map pp276-7); Main post office (Map pp276-7; Th Charoen Muang); TAT (Map pp280-1; Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun) Easy one-button connection to foreign operators in a number of countries around the world.

## Tourist Information

**TAT** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 8607; Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; ☎ 8am-4.30pm) Friendly English-speaking staff can answer questions, and there are racks filled with free maps and brochures.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Upon arrival in Chiang Mai by bus or train, most waiting sawngthæw and tók-tók (motorised pedicab) drivers will try to get you to a particular hotel or guesthouse so that they can collect a commission. Since the better guesthouses refuse to pay any commissions, this means if you follow the driver's lead you may end up at a place with less appealing conditions or an out-of-the-way location. A handful of guesthouses now maintain their own free shuttle services from the train station. At any rate, if you call a guesthouse from

the bus or train station, staff will be delighted to arrange a ride to avoid paying such exorbitant commissions.

Beware of bus or minivan services from Th Khao San in Bangkok, which often advertise a free night's accommodation in Chiang Mai if you buy a Bangkok–Chiang Mai ticket. What usually happens on arrival is that the 'free' guesthouse demands you sign up for one of the hill treks immediately; if you don't, the guesthouse is suddenly 'full'. Sometimes they levy a charge for electricity or hot water. The better guesthouses don't play this game.

Theft is also more of a risk on the Th Khao San buses than on legitimate buses that leave from Bangkok's Moh Chit terminal.

Many less expensive guesthouses in Chiang Mai will evict guests who don't engage trekking or tour services through the guesthouse, or who don't eat meals regularly at the guesthouse. We've tried to avoid listing guesthouses where this practice is known to happen, but if in doubt, be sure to ask before checking in whether it's OK to take a room only.

Take care in the unlit backstreets around the Night Bazaar. We have had a few reports of women being attacked and robbed.

## SIGHTS

### Walking Streets

A more chilled out shopping experience than the Night Bazaar, Chiang Mai's **Sunday Walking Street** (pp280-1; Th Ratchadamnoen; ☎ 4pm-midnight Sun) has become more and more popular with Thais and tourists alike. Stretching from Th Pae Gate square and along most of Th Ratchadamnoen, the area is blocked off to traffic from late Sunday afternoon to midnight. The whole of Th Ratchadamnoen, and the wats along its length, are filled with colourful stalls selling wares ranging from hill-tribe crafts and blinking lights, to wooden bangles and tasty morsels. There is a great atmosphere helped along by buskers playing down the street. When tired of the shopping, it is fun to sit at one of the bars or restaurants along the strip and watch the hubbub.

The newer and not yet as popular **Saturday Walking Street** (pp280-1; Th Wualai; ☎ 4pm-midnight Sat), happens in the south of the city on Th Wualai. There are similar stalls to the Sunday Walking Street but the point of interest here is the historic silver shops. Thai Khün silversmiths from Kengtung in Myanmar's Shan State migrated to Chiang Mai a century

or two ago and established several silverwork shops in this street. The descendants of those silversmiths have shops and stalls here still. There is also a beautiful textile museum further down the street (p288).

### Wat Phra Singh

วัดพระสิงห์

Chiang Mai's most visited Buddhist temple, **Wat Phra Singh** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 4164; Th Singarat) owes its fame to the fact that it houses the city's most revered Buddha image, Phra Singh (Lion Buddha). Started by King Pa Yo in 1345, the *wihān* (large hall) that houses the Phra Singh image was completed between 1385 and 1400. Architecturally it's a perfect example of the classic northern Thai or Lanna style followed during this period from Chiang Mai to Luang Prabang. The Phra Singh Buddha supposedly comes from Sri Lanka, but it is not particularly Sinhalese in style. As it is identical to two images in Nakhon Si Thammarat and Bangkok, and has quite a travel history (Sukhothai, Ayuthaya, Chiang Rai, Luang Prabang – the usual itinerary for a travelling Buddha image, involving much royal trickery), no-one really knows which image is the real one, nor can anyone document its place of origin. The *sim* (central sanctuary) was finished in about 1600.

Wat Phra Singh's main *chedi* displays classic Lanna style with its octagonal base. Wihan Lai Kham, a small chapel next to the *chedi*, features sumptuous *laai kham* (gold pattern) stencilling on its interior back wall. The *wihān* is also well known for the narrative mural paintings which run along its main walls and date back to c 1870. The scene on the south wall depicts the popular northern Thai story of a divine golden swan, Phra Suwannahong.

Paintings on the north wall, executed by an ethnic Chinese thought to have trained in Bangkok, display a much higher level of skill. A small figure above one of the windows is thought to be a self-portrait of the artist.

### Wat Chedi Luang

วัดเจดีย์หลวง

This **temple complex** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8595; main entrance Th Phra Pokklao) encloses a very large and venerable Lanna-style *chedi* dating from 1441. Now in partial ruins, stories say it was damaged by either a 16th-century earthquake or the cannon fire of King Taksin in 1775

during the recapture of Chiang Mai from the Burmese.

The Phra Kaew ('Emerald' Buddha), now held in Bangkok's Wat Phra Kaew, sat in the eastern niche here in 1475. Today there is a jade replica of the original Phra Kaew 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 great *chedi* of the wat, financed by Unesco and the Japanese government, stopped short of creating a new spire, since no-one knows for sure how the original superstructure looked. New Buddha images have been placed in three of the four directional niches.

New porticoes and *naga* (mythical serpent) guardians for the *chedi* lack the finesse of the originals. On the southern side of the monument, six elephant sculptures in the pediment can be seen. Five are cement restorations; only the one on the far right – without ears and trunk – is original brick and stucco.

The *lak meuang* (guardian deity post) for the city can be seen in a small building to the left of the compound's main entrance.

Have a chat to the monks while you are here. They sit at the tables on the right side of the *chedi* as you walk in (see the boxed text, p295).

### Wat Chiang Man

วัดเชียงใหม่

A stone slab inscription, engraved in 1581 and erected at **Wat Chiang Man** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5337 5368; Th Ratchaphakhinai), bears the earliest known reference to the city's 1296 founding. It is thus thought to be the oldest wat in the city, and founded by Phaya Mengrai. The wat features typical northern Thai temple architecture, with massive teak columns inside the *bôt* (central sanctuary; *sim* in Northern Thai).

Two important Buddha images are kept in a glass cabinet inside the smaller sanctuary, to the right of the *sim*. The Phra Sila, a marble bas-relief Buddha that stands 20cm to 30cm high, is supposed to have come from Sri Lanka or India 2500 years ago, but since no Buddha images were produced anywhere before around 2000 years ago, it must have arrived later. The well-known Phra Satang Man, a crystal seated-Buddha image, was shuttled back and forth between Thailand and Laos like the Emerald Buddha. It's thought to have

come from Lavo (Lopburi) 1800 years ago and stands just 10cm high.

Red-and-gold stencilled murals on the walls of the *sim*, which were completed in 1996 to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the founding of the city, depict scenes from the life of Chiang Mai's founding father, Phaya Mengrai.

The chapel housing the venerated images is open between 9am and 5pm. Wat Chiang Man is off Th Ratchaphakhinai in the north-eastern corner of the old city.

### Wat Jet Yot

วัดเจ็ดยอด

Out of town on the northern highway loop near the National Museum, **Wat Jet Yot** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 9483; Hwy 11/Th Superhighway) was built in the mid-15th century to host the eighth World Buddhist Council in 1477. Based on the design of the Mahabodhi Temple in Bodhgaya, India, the proportions for the Chiang Mai version are quite different from the Indian original; it was probably modelled from a small votive tablet depicting the Mahabodhi in distorted perspective. The *jèt yāwt* (seven spires) represent the seven weeks Buddha was supposed to have spent in Bodhgaya after his enlightenment.

Some of the original stucco relief, depicting Bodhisattva (Buddhist saints, usually associated with Mahayana Buddhism) remains on the outer walls of the old *wihān*. There's an adjacent *chedi* of undetermined age and a very glossy *wihān*. The entire area is surrounded by well-kept lawns. It's a pleasant, relaxing temple to visit, but a bit too far from the city centre to reach on foot; by bicycle it's easy, or you can take a red *sāwngthāew*.

#### WAT'S NOT TO MISS

- Wat Phra Singh (opposite), with its impressive Lanna architecture
- Wat Chedi Luang (opposite), for a relaxed atmosphere and monk chats
- Wat Chiang Ma (left), the oldest temple in Chiang Mai
- Wat U Mong (p286), a beautiful, atmospheric forest wat
- Wat Phra That Doi Suthep (p325), a jewel on the mountain

## Wat Phan Tao

วัดพันตอ

Diagonally adjacent to Wat Chedi Luang, **Wat Phan Tao** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 4689; Th Phra Pokkiao) contains a large, old teak *wihāan* that is one of the unsung treasures of Chiang Mai. Constructed of moulded wooden teak panels fitted together and supported by 28 gargantuan teak pillars, the *wihāan* 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. Also in the compound are some old monastic quarters.

## Wat U Mong

วัดอุโมงค์

This **forest wat** (☎ 0 5327 3990; Soi Wat U Mong) was first used during Phaya Mengrai's rule in the 14th century. Brick-lined tunnels through a large, flat-topped hill 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 Ajahn Buddhadasa, a well-known monk and teacher at southern Thailand's Wat Suankom, sent a number of monks to re-establish a monastic community at U Mong in the 1960s.

One building contains modern artwork by various monks who have resided at U Mong, including several foreigners. 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 *kūti* (monastic cottages).

A small library/museum with English-language books on Buddhism can be found on the premises. Resident foreign monks give talks in English on Sunday afternoon at 3pm by the lake.

To get to Wat U Mong, travel west on Th Suthep for about 2km, then take a left and follow the signs for another kilometre to Wat U Mong.

Note that there is another temple named Wat U Mong in Chiang Mai, a smaller urban version found in the old city. To make sure a *sāwngthāew* or *túk-túk* driver understands you want the original, ask for 'Wat U Mong Thera Jan'.

## Wat Suan Dok

วัดสวนดอก

Phaya Keu Na, the sixth Lanna king, built this **temple** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5327 8967; Th Suthep) in a forest grove in 1373 as a place where the visiting Phra Sumana Thera, who was a teaching monk from Sukhothai, could spend in retreat. The large, open *wihāan* was rebuilt in 1932. The *bòt* contains a 500-year-old bronze Buddha image and vivid *jataka* (Buddha's past-life stories) murals. Amulets and Buddhist literature printed in English and Thai can be purchased inexpensively in the *wihāan*.

On the grounds stands a group of striking whitewashed Lanna *chedi*, framed by Doi Suthep when viewed from the east. The large central *chedi* contains a Buddha relic that, according to legend, miraculously duplicated itself in the 14th century. The duplicate relic was mounted on the back of a white elephant (commemorated by Chiang Mai's Pratu Chang Pheuak), which was allowed to wander until it 'chose' a site on which a wat could be built to enshrine it. The elephant stopped and died at a spot on Doi Suthep, 13km west of Chiang Mai, where Chiang Mai residents built Wat Phra That Doi Suthep.

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. See p295 for details on how visitors may interact with monastic students at Wat Suan Dok.

## Wat Ku Tao

วัดคูเต่า

North of the moat, near Chiang Mai Stadium, **Wat Ku Tao** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 1842) dates from 1613 and has a unique *chedi* that looks like a pile of diminutive spheres, a Thai 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.

## Wat Chiang Yeun

วัดเจียงยี่น

Another unique local temple is the 16th-century **Wat Chiang Yeun** (Map pp280-1; Th Mani Nopharat) outside the northeastern corner of the old city, east 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 wat.

Catering to Shan and Burmese templegoers, a few shops and street vendors in the vicinity of Wat Chiang Yeun sell Burmese-style pickled tea (*miang* in Thai) and Shan-style noodles.

## Wat Chetawan, Wat Mahawan & Wat Bupparam

วัดเชตะวัน/วัดมหาวัน/วัดบุปผาราม

These three wats along Th Tha Phae feature highly ornate *wihāan* 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 architecture) and the Mandalay-style standing Buddhas found in wall niches.

At **Wat Mahawan** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5384 0189) and **Wat Bupparam** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 6771), no two guardian deity sculptures are alike; the whimsical forms include animals playing and various mythical creatures. Wat Bupparam contains a charming little *bòt* constructed of teak and decorated in pure Lanna style.

## Wat Sisuphan

วัดศรีสุพรรณ

This **wat** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 0332; Th Wualai), south of the moat, was founded in 1502, but little remains of the original structures except for some teak pillars and roof beams in the *wihāan*. The murals inside show an interesting mix of Taoist, Zen and Theravada Buddhist elements. Wat Sisuphan is one of the few wats 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.

## Wat Phuak Hong

วัดพุกหงษ์

Located behind Suan Buak Hat (Buak Hat Park), this **wat** (☎ 0 5327 8864; Th Samlan) 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 district, Yunnan.

## Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre

หอศิลปวัฒนธรรมเชียงใหม่

Chiang Mai's former Provincial Hall, originally built in 1924 and a masterpiece of post-

colonial Thai architecture, has been converted into a cultural space with interesting, interactive exhibits, music, historical displays and more, spread across 15 rooms. There are also temporary art exhibitions, monthly workshops and a library.

The **Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 7793; www.chiangmaicitymuseum.org; Th Phra Pokkiao; adult/child 90/40B; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) was awarded a Royal Society of Siamese Architects award in 1999 for its faithful architectural restoration.

## Chiang Mai National Museum

พิพิธภัณฑ์สถานแห่งชาติเชียงใหม่

Established in 1954 with a lone curator overseeing a small collection of Lanna Buddhas and potsherd (fragments of pottery), **Chiang Mai National Museum** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 1308; www.thailandmuseum.com; off Hwy 11/Th Superhighway; admission 30B; ☎ 9am-4pm Wed-Sun) has grown to having a full-time staff of 20 cataloguing and caring for up to a million artefacts. These items are shared among four important national museums in Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Chiang Saen and Nan, all under the auspices of the Chiang Mai National Museum. The museum displays a very good selection of Buddha images in all styles, including a huge bronze Buddha downstairs. Pottery is also displayed downstairs, while upstairs there are household and agricultural tools, along with historic weaponry.

The museum is close to Wat Jet Yot on Hwy 11 (also known as 'the Superhighway'), which curves around the city.

## Tribal Museum

พิพิธภัณฑ์ชาวเขา

Overlooking a lake in Suan Ratchamangkhal on the northern outskirts of the city, this octagonal **museum** (☎ 0 5321 0872; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) houses a collection of handicrafts, costumes, jewellery, ornaments, household utensils, agricultural tools, musical instruments and ceremonial paraphernalia. There are also informative displays showing the cultural features and background of each of the major hill tribes in Thailand; an exhibition on activities carried out by the Thai royal family on behalf of the hill tribes; and various bits of research and development sponsored by governmental and non-governmental agencies. Video shows run from 10am to 2pm (20B to 50B). The museum is closed on public holidays.



## Sbun-Nga Textile Museum

The three-year-old **Sbun-Nga Textile Museum** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5320 0655; www.sbun-nga.com; 185/20 Th Wuaijai; admission 100B; 🕒 10.30am-6.30pm Thu-Tue) displays a stunning collection of northern Thai textiles set in five adjoining Lanna teak buildings. The result of 20 years of collecting by the owner Akarat Nakkabunlung, the museum showcases different ethnic textiles with old photographs, accessories and furniture.

*Tai Lue, Tai Lao, Tai Kaun, Tai Yai and Tai Yuan* textiles are on display, with explanations of the geographical areas they come from, and the designs they are most famous for. Textiles range from everyday sarongs to opulent royal garments, and include the Lanna-and-Burmesepatterned dress of Princess Dararasi (consort of King Rama V) and the bejewelled coronation costume of a *Thai Yai* prince.

## Anusawari Sam Kasat (Three Kings Monument)

อนุสาวรีย์สามกษัตริย์

Next to the Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre, these three **bronze sculptures** (Map pp280-1; Th Phra Pokkklao) portray men standing in 14th-century royal costume. They represent Phaya Ngam Meuang, Phaya Mengrai and Phaya Khun Ramkhamhaeng, the three northern Thai-Lao kings most associated with Lanna history. The statuary has become a shrine to local residents, who regularly leave offerings of flowers, incense and candles at the bronze feet in return for (hoped for) blessings from the powerful spirits of the three kings.

## Chiang Mai Zoo

สวนสัตว์แหล่งเพาะพันธุ์ไม้ป่าเขตร้อนเชียงใหม่

At the foot of Doi Suthep, the modern Chiang Mai Zoo (☎ 0 5335 8116; www.chiangmaizoo.com; Th Huay Kaew; adult/child 100/50B, Twilight Zone adult/child 200/100B, motorcycle & bicycle 10B, car & truck 50B; 🕒 8am-6pm, Twilight Zone 6pm-9pm) is set in a lush location, with waterfalls, forests and lakes on the grounds. Open-sided buses take you around the site, which houses a walk-through aviary with over 5000 birds, an aquarium, a children's zoo and a penguin house. It's also home to large African and Asian mammals, including tigers and giraffes. There are also giant pandas (adult/child extra 100/50B) and koalas.

Come here in the evening for the 'Twilight Zone', which gives an alternative (and cooler) view. The price includes a visit to the pandas, animal feeding and zoo transport. It costs

around 30B to 40B by *sǎwngthǎew* to Chiang Mai Zoo from town.

## Chiang Mai University (CMU)

มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่

The city's principal public **university** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5384 4821; Th Huay Kaew), established in 1964, was the first Thai university to be established outside of Bangkok. Today the 14-sq-km university boasts more than 18,000 students and 2000 lecturers divided among 107 departments.

Although scholastically CMU doesn't compare overall to such notable Bangkok universities as Silpakorn, Chulalongkorn or Thammasat, the CMU has earned special respect for its faculties of engineering and medical technology.

The main campus lies 2km west of the city centre in a 2.9-sq-km wedge of land between Th Suthep and Th Huay Kaew; there are entrances to the campus along both roadways. Students live in more than 20 dormitories on campus, as well as in off-campus housing.

**Chiang Mai University Art Museum** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5394 4833; nr Th Suthep & Th Nimmanhaemin; 🕒 9am-5pm, Tue-Sun) has temporary exhibitions set in a slick modern building, showcasing contemporary Thai and international art.

The abundant green areas between the faculty buildings and student residences, along with the tree-shaded, tranquil Ang Kaew reservoir, are pleasant places for strolling. For more vigorous movement, the campus offers a fitness park and sports track, both open to the public at no charge, as well as a public swimming pool with a small usage fee. Other facilities on the main campus include restaurants, banks, a post office, a bookshop and grocery store.

## Mosques

Of the 12 mosques in Chiang Mai, the oldest and most interesting is **Matsayit Chiang Mai** (Chiang Mai Mosque; Map pp280-1; Th Charoen Prathet, Soi 1), also known as Ban Haw Mosque. Founded by *jiin haw* more than 100 years ago, it still primarily caters to this unique ethnic group; you'll hear Yunnanese spoken as often as Thai within the compound. It's located between Th Chang Khlan and Th Charoen Prathet, not far from the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar.

Along this *soi* (lane) are several Yunnanese Muslim restaurants that serve *khào sawy kái* (curried chicken and noodles).

## Hindu & Sikh Temples

The most colourful of Chiang Mai's two Hindu temples is the brightly painted *mandir* (traditional shrine room) and the *sikhara* (tower) of **Devi Mandir Chiang Mai** (Map pp280-1; Th Ratanakosin), opposite Chiang Mai Stadium.

**Namdhari Sikh Temple** (Map pp280-1; Th Ratchawong), between Th Chang Moi and Th Tha Phae, is the place of worship for the Namdhari sect of Sikhism.

## Suan Buak Hat (Buak Hat Park)

สวนบวกหาด

This well-maintained public **park** (Map pp280-1; 🕒 8am-5pm), wedged into the southwestern corner of the old city quadrangle, is Chiang Mai's miniature counterpart to Bangkok's Lumpini Park (p137), with pleasant expanses of grass, fountains and palms; many people jog in this area.

## Wiang Kum Kam

เวียงกุมกาม

These **excavated ruins** (☎ 0 5332 1523; 🕒 8am-5pm) are tucked away near the banks of Mae Nam Ping, 5km south of the city via Hwy 106 (also known as Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun). The earliest historical settlement in the Chiang Mai area, it was established by the Mon in the 11th or 12th century as a satellite town for the Hariphunchai kingdom. The city was abandoned in the early 18th century due to massive flooding, and visible architectural remains are few – only the four-sided Mon-style *chedi* of Wat Chedi Si Liam and the layered brick pediments of Wat Kan Thom (its Mon name; in Thai the temple was known as Wat Chang Kham) are left. Chedi Si Liam is said to have been inspired by the similar *chedi* at Wat Kukut in Lamphun.

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.

An ideal way to reach Wiang Kum Kam is to hire a bicycle; follow Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun 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 *sǎwngthǎew* to take you there for around 90B (one way). The site is around 3 sq km, so if you're not on a bicycle, you can rent a horse and cart (200B) to see the main sites.

Once you've finished looking around you can walk back to Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun and catch a *sǎwngthǎew* or a blue Chiang Mai-Lamphun bus back into the city.

## Chiang Mai Night Safari

One of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's projects, the slick **Night Safari** (☎ 0 5399 9050; www.chiangmainightsafari.com; Moo12, Tambon Nong-Kwail; adult/child day 100/50B, adult/child night 500/300B; 🕒 1pm-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun, 6pm-midnight daily) has obviously had a lot of money spent on it. It's caused much controversy throughout its creation – primary of which is its location on 1.3 million sq km of Doi Suthep National Park land, and the consequential (and as yet unassessed) environmental impact it may have.

In the evening, you can go through the parkland on an open-sided bus on either the 'Savannah Safari' (wildebeests, giraffes, white rhinoceroses, zebras etc) or the 'Predator Prowl' (tigers, lions, Asiatic black bears, crocodiles etc). The more dangerous animals are separated from the bus by deep trenches; other animals sometimes come right up close. Afterwards an impressive water show, accompanied by the King's Jazz, is held at the 'Swan Lake'.

During the day, the Jaguar Trail around the same lake is a pleasant 1.2km walk where the 50 species (ranging from rabbits to orangutans) are generally not in cages. The breeding of animals has been a success here, with the recent addition of two black leopards and four lion cubs. It costs 30B by *sǎwngthǎew* to get to the Night Safari from town.

## ACTIVITIES

### Flying

**Chiang Mai Sky Adventure Club** (☎ 0 5386 8460; www.skyadventures.info; 143 Mu 6, Tambon Choeng Doi, Amphoe Doi Saket; per person 15/30min 1700/2900B) offers 15- and 30-minute microlight flights over the Doi Saket area. Prices include transport from your hotel to the airfield.

If you're looking for an early morning hot-air balloon flight over the Chiang Mai countryside, contact **Oriental Balloon Flights** (☎ 08 5040 2001; www.orientalballoonflights.com; 1hr flight per

person 8800B; ☎ Nov-Feb). The rate includes transport to/from your hotel or guesthouse, and a champagne breakfast.

### Horse Riding

At **Chiang Mai Horse Riding** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4091; <http://horseriding.chiangmaiinfo.com>; Travel Shop, 2/2 Th Chaiyaphum; per person 2200B) instructors lead horse and pony trails, with a maximum of five people, in the Mae Rim area. The price includes three hours riding, and transport to and from your hotel.

### Motorcycle & Mountain Bike Tours

**Contact Travel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 2444; [www.activethailand.com](http://www.activethailand.com); 73/7 Th Charoen Prathet; per trip including meals, bike & accommodation from 4800B) arranges mountain-bike trips with guides and escort vehicles. Itineraries include two- to four-day trips from Chiang Mai, through Chiang Dao to Chiang Rai, as well as into Laos and Cambodia.

**Velocity** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 0665; [velocity.thaimail.com](http://velocity.thaimail.com); 177 Th Chang Phuak) also offers cycling tours and hires out mountain bikes.

Stephen from **Tony's Big Bikes** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 6730 1088; [coolkyboy9@yahoo.com](mailto:coolkyboy9@yahoo.com); 17 Th Rachamanka; 1-day tour incl 400cc bike 1700B) runs motorcycle tours around northern Thailand. Options range from one-day trips around Doi Suthep, to four- to five-day trips doing the Mae Hong Son loop.

Check out the **Golden Triangle Rider** ([www.gt-rider.com](http://www.gt-rider.com)) website for excellent information on motorcycle touring in northern Thailand.

### River Cruises

Operating from a small pier behind Wat Chaimongkhon, **Mae Ping River Cruises** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 4822; [www.maeingrivercruise.com](http://www.maeingrivercruise.com); Th Charoen Prathet; per person 400B) offers two-hour daytime cruises in roofed long-tail boats. After cruising through countryside, the boats stop at a small fruit and flower farm (about 40 minutes away) where fruit can be sampled and a beverage is provided. Hotel pick-up is included in the price and tours run between 8.30am and 5pm. The Thai dinner cruise offers a set menu (500B; alcoholic drinks extra) and goes from 7pm to 9pm.

With a boat landing 200m north of Nakhon Ping bridge, **Scorpion Tailed River Cruise** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 1960 9308; [www.scorpiontailed.com](http://www.scorpiontailed.com); Th Charoen Prathet; per person 400B; ☎ 9am-5pm) focuses more on the history of the river. It also

stops at a fruit farm for free tastings. Call for a pick-up.

**Riverside Bar & Restaurant** has dinner cruises; see p305.

### Rock Climbing

Rock-climbing and caving courses by experienced instructors are offered at **Chiang Mai Rock Climbing Adventures** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 6911 1470; [www.thailandclimbing.com](http://www.thailandclimbing.com); 55/3 Th Ratchaphakhinai; 1-day top-rope climbing course 1800B, 3-day intensive course 6600B). It offers climbing and caving trips to Crazy Horse Buttress, an impressive set of limestone cliffs located behind Tham Meuang On (about 20km east of Chiang Mai). Rates include two guides trained in first aid and CPR, transport, food, drinking water, equipment rental, insurance and a T-shirt. The office on Th Ratchaphakhinai has gear sales and rental, a partner-finding service and a bouldering wall for practice sessions.

**The Peak** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5382 0777, 08 1716 4032; 28/2 Th Chang Khlan; climbing wall per hr from 150B, 1-day climbing course 2500B; ☎ 5pm-midnight) also offers a variety of climbing courses at Crazy House Buttress. Its climbing wall at Th Chang Khlan is 15m high and 16m wide – one of the largest rock-climbing walls in Southeast Asia. Non-climbers can watch the action from several adjacent bars and restaurants.

### Swimming

Landlocked Chiang Mai can get very hot, particularly from March to July. Fortunately, local opportunities for a refreshing swim abound.

There are several swimming pools open to the public. Fees can range from 20B to 100B per day (public pools are cheaper than hotel or private pools), while annual memberships start at around 300B. Some recommended pools:

**Anodard Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 0755; 57-59 Th Rachamankha)

**Chiang Mai University** (☎ 0 5322 1699; Faculty of Education, Th Huay Kaew) 300B membership, then daily fee.

**Maharaj Hospital** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 1310; Faculty of Medicine, Th Suthep)

**Pong Pot Swimming Pool** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 2812; 73/22 Soi 4, Th Chotana)

**SK House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8396; [www.sk-riverview.com](http://www.sk-riverview.com); Th Moon Muang, 30 Soi 9)

**Top North Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8900; Th Moon Muang, 15 Soi 2)

**Top North Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 9623; [www.topnorthgroup.com](http://www.topnorthgroup.com); 41 Th Moon Muang)

**World Club Sport Complex** (☎ 0 5343 1501; 178/832 Mu 7, Nong Khwai, Th Hang Dong)

### Tennis

Located opposite Chiang Mai National Museum, the **Anantasiri Tennis Courts** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 2210; off Hwy 11/Superhighway; court hire day/night 70/130B; ☎ 6am-8pm daily) is the best public tennis facility in Chiang Mai. The six courts are lit at night, and you can hire a 'knocker' (tennis opponent) for a 30B/hour in addition to the regular court fee.

Other recommended tennis courts in Chiang Mai:

**Chiang Mai Land Village** (☎ 0 5327 2821; Th Chiang Mai Land) South of the city.

**Gymkhana Club** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5324 1035; Th Ratuthit)

**Lanna Sports Club** (off Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 1911; Th Chotana) North of the city.

### Thai Boxing Matches

**Thapae Boxing Stadium** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 6187 7655; Th Ratchaphakhinai; admission 400B; ☎ 9pm Mon) has Thai boxing matches every Monday, complete with a cabaret.

## WALKING TOUR Old City Temple Tour

Within the walls of the old city, this tour takes you through the most historic parts of Chiang Mai. It includes a stop at the Chiang Mai City Arts & Culture Centre and a look at some interesting temples. There is some massage along the way too.

Starting at **Wat Chiang Man** (1; p285), the oldest wat in the city, head south down Th Ratchaphakhinai until you hit Th Ratwathi. Turn right and walk for about 500m until you see the **Anusawari Sam Kasat** (2; p288) on the left; you may see residents leaving offerings at the bronze statues of these famous Lanna kings. Next door is the impressive post-colonial Thai building, now home to the **Chiang Mai City Arts & Cultural Centre** (3; p287). Head in here to learn about the history of the old city you're walking around.

If your feet are aching, carry on along Th Ratwathi until you reach Chiang Mai Women's Prison, where you'll find a **spa** (4; p295). Don't attempt to enter the prison itself (unless you have something to confess!) but go to the building on the right with the 'Prison

Shop' sign. Inside, inmates offer very good massage, the earnings of which are saved for when they're released.

When your massage is finished, head back down Th Ratwathi until you hit the Anusawari Sam Kasat again. Go south on Th Phra Pokkklao until you reach **Wat Phan Tao** (5; p286) on your right. This intricate teak temple is an unsung treasure of Chiang Mai. Adjacent to Wat Phan Tao, further south on Th Phra Pokkklao, is the charming **Wat Chedi Luang** (6; p284). 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*. Or you can pay your respects to the relics inside by filling a can with some blessed water and, with a pulley, pouring it over the top of the *chedi*.

As you leave Wat Chedi Luang, turn left on Th Ratchadamnoen until you come to the **Writer's Club and Wine Bar** (7; p306). Stop here for some food, a drink and a scribble. Keep heading to the end of Th Ratchadamnoen, where you'll find the entrance to **Wat Phra Singh** (8; p284), one of the most impressive temples in Chiang Mai and home to the city's most revered Buddha image.

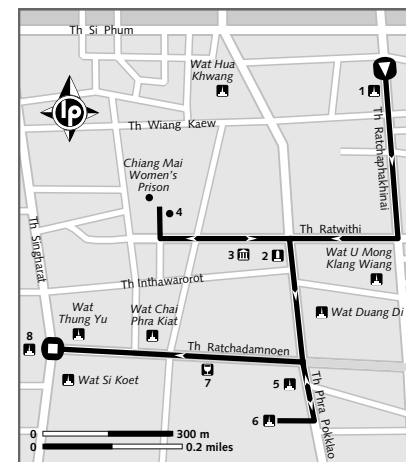
### WALK FACTS

**Start** Wat Chiang Man

**Finish** Wat Phra Singh

**Distance** 3.5km

**Duration** Two to three hours



For those who just want to flop and be pampered, turn right out of Wat Phra Singh, and on the corner is the **Oasis spa** (below) – perfect for a bit of accessible Nirvana.

However, if you feel inspired by all the temples you've just seen, jump aboard a

sáwngtháew and head to **Wat Suan Dok** (opposite) for a short meditation retreat. Alternatively, if it's a Sunday afternoon and you feel like being a consumer, go back up Th Ratchadamnoen and shop on the **Sunday Walking Street** (p284).

## PUMPELLING & PAMPERING

In Thailand, *núat pháen boraan* (traditional massage) is seen as a health essential rather than a pampering treat. Traditional massage places are all over Chiang Mai, with seats even lined up in markets for reviving foot massages. Sometimes dubbed 'yoga massage', *núat pháen boraan* is done while you're fully clothed. It often feels like yoga is being performed on you, with postures that stretch the muscles; strong acupressure is also used. It tends to be a social activity, so in most *núat pháen boraan* places don't be surprised to hear the gossip of the day rather than plinky-plonky New Age music.

For years, a different kind of massage culture has been emerging in Chiang Mai, with spas becoming big business. This new style tends to combine traditional Thai techniques with the quiet, retreat like atmosphere associated with Western spas. Most have Thai massage, herbal compress massage (local herbs steamed in a muslin compress then applied hot to the body) and reflexology, as well as the newer additions of oil massage, aromatherapy, body wraps, scrubs, facials and whole day pampering packages.

All of the massage schools (opposite) offer extremely good massage, usually for around 200B per hour. For some added pampering the following have been recommended:

**Heaven Hut** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 6205; Th Charoen Prathet, Soi 6; 1hr treatment from 200B) In the midst of the Night Bazaar, Heaven Hut is perfectly placed for shopping fatigue. Flop in a chair for an excellent foot massage or go the whole hog with one of the spa packages on offer.

**Let's Relax** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 8498; www.bloomingspa.com; 2nd fl, Chiang Mai Pavilion, 145/27 Th Chang Khan; 1hr treatment from 400B) Another spot in the heart of Night Bazaar land, this place offers full-body massage, as well as half-hour back, shoulder and foot massages for those who don't want to lose precious shopping time.

**Spa de Siam** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5382 0312; 62/3 Th Charoen Prathet; 1hr treatment from 500B) This simple, relaxing place has very good and well-priced massages, scrubs and facials. Call for free transport.

**RarinJinda Wellness Center** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 7000; www.rarinjinda.com; 14 Th Charoenrat; 1hr treatment from 1000B) This smart, tastefully decorated new spa opposite the Riverside Restaurant has herbal steam rooms, hot stone massage, the usual facials and massage treatments, plus day packages.

**Chiang Mai Oasis Spa** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 5000; www.chiangmaioasis.com; 4 Th Samlan; 1hr treatment from 1200B) This spa features individual, thatched wooden huts for single or couples treatments, set in calming grounds of decked walkways lined with small fountains. Signature treatments include four hands massage and herbal hot oil massage.

**The Chedi** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5325 3333; www.ghmhotels.com; 123 Th Charoen Prathet; 1hr treatment from 1800B) The new Chedi's spa is all understated contemporary chic with 10 private rooms. Try a Thai herbal clay bath or a couples' 'love bath' with essential oils, petals and champagne. A variety of massages, wraps and facials are also on offer.

**Angsana Spa** (☎ 0 5329 7716; www.greenviewresort.com; 183/1 Chotana Rd; 1hr treatment from 2600B) Part of the Chiang Mai Green Valley Country Club, Angsana Spa is a luxurious space offering treatments from a variety of massage techniques to body scrubs, wraps and facials. The treatment rooms have views of the club's landscaped gardens.

**Dheva Spa** (☎ 0 5388 8888; www.mandarinoriental.com/hotel; Dhara Dhevi Chiang Mai, 51/4 Th Chiang Mai-San Kamphaeng; 1hr treatments from 3400B) Chiang Mai's grandest spa (3100 sq metre) is part of the Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi resort, east of the city. Treatments range from relaxation massage to prescribed Ayurvedic programmes.

## COURSES

### Buddhist Meditation

**International Buddhism Center** (IBC; ☎ 0 5329 5012; www.fivethousandyears.org; admission free, donations appreciated) Located at Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, 16km northwest of Chiang Mai, the centre offers informal chats and discussion (1pm to 3pm) as well as chanting (6pm). It's also possible to do a three-day meditation retreat; see p325.

**Northern Insight Meditation Centre** (☎ 0 5327 8620; www.palikanon.com/vipassana/tapotaram/tapotaram.htm; donation) Located at Wat Ram Poenghe, where 10- to 26-day individual intensive courses in Vipassana are taught by a Thai monk or nun, with Western students or bilingual Thais acting as interpreters. Days start at 4am and meals are in silence. The formal name for Wat Ram Poeng is Wat Tapotaram.

**Wat Suan Dok** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5380 8411 ext 114; www.monkchat.net; Th Suthep; retreats/courses free) Wat Suan Dok has a two-night/three-day meditation retreat at the end of each month. It also offers a meditation course every Tuesday (2.15pm) to Wednesday (1.30pm), with an overnight stay. You meet at Wat Suan Dok before being taken to its new meditation centre 15km northeast of Chiang Mai. It's worth booking online for the three-day retreat.

## Cooking

### THAI

Courses in Thai cuisine are another staple of Chiang Mai's vacation learning scene. Nowadays at least a dozen independent schools, as well as virtually every guesthouse in Chiang Mai, offer cooking classes from 800B to 990B a day. Some courses offer a choice of city or countryside based classes.

Classes typically include an introduction to Thailand's herbs and spices, a local market tour, cooking instructions and a recipe booklet. Of course, you get to eat the delicious Thai food as well – everything from Chiang Mai-style chicken curry to steamed banana cake. These courses have been recommended:

**Baan Thai** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5335 7339; www.baanthaicookery.com; Th Ratchadamnoen, 11 Soi 5)

**Chiang Mai Thai Cookery School** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 6388; www.thaicookeryschool.com; 47/2 Th Moon Muang) The most established cooking school, it has classes at The Wok restaurant, and also in a rural setting outside of Chiang Mai.

**Gap's Thai Culinary Art School** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8140; www.gaps-house.com; Gap's House, Th Ratchadamnoen, 3 Soi 4)

**Thai Farm Cooking School** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 7174 9285; www.thaifarmcooking.com; Th Ratchadamnoen, 2/2 Soi 5) Learn to cook at this organic farm.

## INDIAN

**Indian Restaurant Vegetarian Food** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5322 3396; Soi 9, Th Moon Muang) offers inexpensive cooking lessons; see p303.

## Jewellery-making

From creating a silver ring or pendant to setting stones, **Nova Artlab** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 3058; www.nova-collection.com; Th Tha Phae, 16/1 Soi 4; 1-1/5-day course 1100/5500B) teaches the fundamentals of jewellery craft in workshops lasting from one to five days. Materials cost extra.

## Language & Culture

**American University Alumni** (AUA; Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8407, 0 5321 1377; www.auathailand.org/chiangmai; 73 Th Ratchadamnoen; 1hr private lesson 270B, 60hr course 3900B) The AUA Thai course consists of three levels, with daily two-hour lessons (Mon-Fri). Private tutoring is also available.

**Chiang Mai Thai Language Center** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 7810; www.chiangmai-adventure-tour.com/thai-language.html; 131 Th Ratchadamnoen; 1hr private lesson 230B, 30hr course from 2200B) Offers courses for beginners to advanced learners, as well as private lessons. As part of the course it is possible to stay in a village homestay just north of Chiang Mai.

**Payap University** (☎ 0 5330 4805 ext 250-1; http://thaistudies.payap.ac.th; Th Kaew Nawarat; 60/120hr course 7000/14,000B) Intensive 60- and 120-hour Thai language courses at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. These focus on conversational skills, as well as elementary reading and writing, and Thai culture. Payap also offers a Thai Studies Certificate Program, which involves two semesters of classroom lectures and field trips.

## Thai Boxing

**Lanna Muay Thai Boxing Camp** (Kiatbusaba; ☎ 0 5389 2102; www.lannamuaythai.com; 64/1 Soi Chiang Khan; fees per day/month 250/7000B) offers authentic *muay thai* (Thai boxing) instruction to foreigners as well as Thais. Several Lanna students have won stadium bouts, including the famous transvestite boxer Parinya Kiatbusaba. According to the camp director, foreign boxers are much sought after, and match-ups with local boxers is offered. Simple camp accommodation is available (2600B to 3600B per month).

## Traditional Massage

More visitors learn to pummel bodies the Thai way in Chiang Mai than anywhere else in Thailand. We've received good reports about the following courses:

**Ban Nit** (Map pp280-1; Th Chaiyaphum, Soi 2) A unique, one-on-one course available from Khun Nit, an older woman who is a specialist in deep-tissue, nerve and herbal massages. Length of study and payment for Nit's tutelage is up to the individual – according to what you can afford. Most students live in and eat meals with Nit and her family.

**Chetawan Thai Traditional Massage School** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5341 0360; www.watpomassage.com/map\_chiangmai\_en.html; Th Pracha Uthit, 7/1-2 Soi Samud Lanna; foot massage/Thai massage 30hrs 5500/7000B) Off Th Chotana, this highly recommended massage school is affiliated with the Wat Pho massage school in Bangkok. Foot and Thai traditional massage courses are available over 5 days (6hrs per day).

**Lek Chaiya** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8325; www.nervetouch.com; 25 Th Ratchadamnoen; 5-day course 4000B) Khun Lek, a Thai woman who has been massaging and teaching for more than 40 years, specialises in *jāp sēn* (similar to acupressure) and the use of medicinal herbs.

**Old Medicine Hospital** (OMH; Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5327 5085; www.thaimassageschool.ac.th; Th Wualai, 78/1 Soi Siwaka Komarat; 2-day foot massage course 2000B, 10-day course 4000B) The OMH curriculum is very traditional, with a northern-Thai slant. There are two massage courses a month year-round (except for the first two weeks of April), as well as weekend foot-massage courses. Classes tend to be large from December to February, but smaller the rest of the year.

**Thai Massage School of Chiang Mai** (TMC; ☎ 0 5385 4330; www.tmc.school.com; Th Chiang Mai-Mae Jo; 30hr/5 day foundation course 5300B, 2-day reflexology course 3200B) Northeast of town, TMC has a solid, government-licensed massage curriculum. Different levels are offered, from foundation course to teacher training. Transport to the school is included.

## Yoga

**Yoga Sense Discovery of Life** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 1021 6566; caymeeto@yahoo.co.uk; 191/15 Chang Klan Plaza, Th Chang Klan; classes 129B)

**Yoga Studio** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 4698 1982; www.yoga-chiangmai.com; 90/1 Th Rathamankha; classes 200-250B) In a convenient location, Yoga Studio offers 1½hr morning & evening classes.

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

During the week-long **Winter Fair** (*thêtsàkaan ngaan reuduu nǎo*) in late December and early January, the area around Pratu Tha Phae assumes a country-fair atmosphere, with an abundance of rustic booths purveying northern Thai culinary delicacies, handicrafts, local designer clothing and just about anything else that can be traded.

Perhaps Chiang Mai's most colourful festival is the **Flower Festival** (*thêtsàkaan mái dawk mái pràdàp*), also called the Flower Carnival, held annually in February (dates vary from year to year). Events occur over a three-day period and include displays of flower arrangements, a parade of floats decorated with hundreds of thousands of flowers, folk music, cultural performances and the Queen of the Flower Festival contest. Most activities are centred at Buak Hat Park near the southwestern corner of the city moat. People from all over the country turn out for this occasion, so book early if you want a room in town.

In mid-April the **Songkran Water Festival** is celebrated with an enthusiasm bordering on pure pandemonium. Thousands of revellers line up along all sides of the moat, and temporary pumps are installed so that water can be sucked from the moats and sprayed about with liberal abandon. It is virtually impossible to stay dry during the five days of this festival.

In May the **Intakin Festival** (*ngaan tham bun sǎo inthákin*), held at Wat Chedi Luang and centred around the *lák meuang* (city pillar), propitiates the city's guardian deity to ensure that the annual monsoon will arrive on time. Also in May – when the mango crop is ripe – a **Mango Fair** (*thêtsàkaan mámiang*) is celebrated in Suan Buak Hat, with lots of mango eating and the coronation of the Mango Queen.

During the festival of **Loi Krathong**, usually celebrated in late October or early November, Chiang Mai's river banks are alive with people floating the small lotus-shaped boats that mark this occasion. In Chiang Mai this festival is also known as Yi Peng, and some *khon meuang* (people of northern Thailand) celebrate by launching cylindrical hot-air balloons, lighting up the night skies with hundreds of pinpoints of light.

## SLEEPING Budget

Inexpensive guesthouses are clustered in several areas, primarily along the streets and lanes off Th Moon Muang and along several lanes running south off Th Tha Phae. You'll also find a few along Th Charoen Prathet, parallel to and west of Mae Nam Ping.

There are basically two kinds of budget guesthouse accommodation – old family homes

## QUIRKY CHIANG MAI

### Chiang Mai's Prison Spa

'Spa' and 'prison' are not two words you usually use together, but at **Chiang Mai Women's Prison** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 1706 1041; 100 Th Ratwithi; ☎ 8.30-4.30pm) you'll find just that. A small spa at the women's prison offers traditional Thai full-body massage (150B), foot massage (120B), herbal massage (180B) and a sauna. The money earned from these treatments goes directly to the prisoners to save for when they are released. The atmosphere here is nice and the massages are great. And don't worry: you're not going to be massaged by a hardened crim – and those working in the message centre are due for release within six months. Other rehabilitation initiatives include teaching sewing and cake baking to prisoners – the results of which you'll find in the same building. It's located in the 'Prison Shop' building.

### Museum of World Insects & Natural Wonders

พิพิธภัณฑ์แมลงโลก

If the idea of face-to-face encounters with prehistoric flying superinsects, giant iridescent scarabs or long-tailed scorpions excites, then visit this private **museum** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 1891; insects\_museum@hotmail.com; Th Sirimangkalajon by Soi 13; adult/child 300/100B; ☎ 9am-5pm). Aside from perusing a detailed, well-labelled collection of preserved insects, you'll learn about the habits and habitats of Thailand's 436 mosquito species – 22 of which were named by the owner, renowned entomologist Manop Rattanarithikul. There are also fantastic fossil samples and pieces of petrified wood, some of which are humorously labelled. A true eccentric, Manop is passionate about his collection, and is as much a reason to visit this museum as the insects themselves.

### Monk Chat

บรรพชาสนทนาวัดสวนดอก

A room at **Wat Suan Dok** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5327 3149; Th Suthep; admission free; ☎ 5-7pm Mon, Wed & Fri) is set aside for foreigners to meet and chat with resident monks and novices. It is a chance for the monastic students to practise their English, and for foreigners to learn about Buddhism and Thai life. To find the room, enter the wat from the main entrance and walk straight past the large *wihān* to a smaller building 100m or so into the temple grounds. Turn right at this smaller temple and watch for the 'Monk Chat' signs. The monastery asks that visitors dress modestly – covered shoulders, no shorts or short skirts – and that women visitors take care not to make physical contact with the monks.

**Wat Chedi Luang** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8595; main entrance Th Phra Pokklao; ☎ 1-6pm, not Buddhist holidays) also gives an opportunity to chat to the monks. As you enter the wat head to the right side of the *chedi* and you'll see some tables set up outside with a 'Monk Chat' sign.

### Foreign Cemetery

สุสานต่างชาติ

For spooky atmosphere, head out to this historic **cemetery** (Map pp276-7; Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun) near the Gymkhana Club. Century-old headstones bearing American, English and European names mark the remains of traders, missionaries, failed entrepreneurs and numerous other expats who have died in Chiang Mai. A bronze statue of Queen Victoria, imported from Calcutta, India, during the Raj era, stands sentinel.

converted into guest rooms (these usually have the best atmosphere, but the least privacy), and hotel- or apartment-style places with rows of cell-like rooms. In both, the furnishings are basic – a bed and a few sticks of furniture. You can assume that rooms under 150B won't have a private bathroom but will probably have a fan.

The cheaper guesthouses make most of their money from food service and hill-tribe trekking rather than from room charges, hence you may be pressured to eat and to sign up for a trek. Places that charge 200B or more usually don't hassle guests in this way.

Many of the guesthouses can arrange bicycle and motorcycle rental. If you phone a

### WHAT TO EXPECT IN CHIANG MAI

- Budget (under 600B)
- Midrange (600B to 2500B; 1500B in provinces)
- Top end (over 2500B; 1500B in provinces)

guesthouse, most will collect you from the train or bus terminal for free if they have a room available (this saves them having to pay a commission to a driver).

### INNER MOAT AREA

**Lamchang House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 0586; Soi 7, Th Moon Muang; r 90-170B) Run by a Thai family, this wooden Thai-style house is a great budget choice and has plenty of character. Rooms have some Thai decorations and fresh flowers, and there's a small garden restaurant. The downside is that all the bathrooms are shared.

**Julie Guesthouse** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 4355; www.julieguesthouse.com; Th Phra Pokkiao, 7 Soi 5; dm 60B, r 90-300B) This funky place has a colourful range of rooms and is a great place to meet other travellers. There are lots of areas to hang out, like the covered roof terrace with hammocks and the garden café with a pool table. There is a travel agency on site.

**Supreme House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5322 2480; 44/1 Soi 9, Th Moon Muang; s/d/tr 150/175/250B) This nondescript three-storey, hotel-like building attracts mainly long-termers. The atmosphere is relaxed, the rooms are large, the roof has hammocks and there's a library on the ground floor.

**Montra House** (Home; Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8658; Th Ratchadamnoen, Soi 5; r 200B; 🚻) Opposite Chiang Mai White House, this place has good-value, basic but spotless digs. Some rooms are in a wooden house with shared bathrooms, others are concrete rooms behind the wooden house, each with bathroom; all rooms cost the same.

**Safe House Court** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8955; 178 Th Ratchaphakhinai; r 200-350B; 🚻) This friendly budget choice features basic rooms with large bathrooms in an apartment-court feel.

**Baan Manee** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 7133; nanthakwang@hotmail.com; Th Moon Muang, 31 Soi 2; r 250-350B; 🚻) Next door to Top North Guest House, this new place has well-equipped,

super clean rooms with cable TV. If you fancy a swim, you can use Top North's pool (100B per day).

**Siri Guesthouse** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5332 6550; www.siri.gh@hotmail.com; Th Moon Muang, Soi 5; r 300-350B) This new place offers fantastic value rooms, stylishly decorated with dark wood furniture and some Thai touches. There's a pretty fishpond out front.

**Eagle House 2** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 0620; www.eaglehouse.com; Th Ratwithi, 26 Soi 2; dm 80B, r 200-360B; 🚻) This three-storey, modern building has basic rooms with a jarring yellow, green and red décor. There's a pleasant garden sitting area. It's fairly quiet except when the bars around Th Ratwithi get going from 9pm to midnight.

**RCN Court** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8280-2, 0 5322 4619; fax 0 5321 1969; Th Moon Muang, 35 Soi 7; r 300-450B; 🚻 🚻) This welcoming place has well-equipped, large and light rooms with cable TV, fridge and safety box. Facilities include a small fitness room, 24-hour internet, laundry service and a kitchen. Monthly rates are available.

**Chiang Mai White House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5335 7130; www.chiangmaiwhitehouse.com; Th Ratchadamnoen, 12 Soi 5; r 250-400B; 🚻) This guesthouse features clean, quiet, air-con rooms with cable TV.

**Jonadda Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5322 7281; Th Ratwithi, 23/1 Soi 2; s/d/tr 250/350/450B) Run by an Aussie-Thai couple, this place has spotless but bland rooms. There is a pleasant café attached and it's convenient to the pub crawl area off Th Ratwithi.

**Rendezvous Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 3763; rendezvouschiangmai@hotmail.com; Th Ratchadamnoen, 3/1 Soi 5; r 300-450B; 🚻) All the rooms in this three-storey guesthouse have TV, safety box and fridge. Ask for the slightly more expensive 'new rooms' – these are much better value. There is a pleasant restaurant with red banquettes.

**Top North Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8900; Th Moon Muang, 15 Soi 2; r 300-500B; 🚻 🚻) Same location as the Top North Hotel – come here for the pool but don't expect great shakes from the rooms. There's also a small spa and sauna.

**Tri Gong Residence** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 4754; www.trigong.com; Th Sribhum, 8 Soi 1; r 600B; 🚻 🚻) Located at the end of Th Moon Muang's soi 9, Tri Gong has a courtyard surrounded by stylish rooms. The large rooms feature smart rattan and teak furniture, big

bathrooms, cable TV, fridges and free wireless internet. There are cheaper fortnightly rates, a kitchen, plus free internet on computers at reception.

**Smile House 1** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 8661; www.smileguesthouse.com; Th Ratchamankha, 5 Soi 2; r 200-600B; 🚻 🚻) This place offers plain rooms in an old Thai house surrounded by a row of newer rooms. The small pool is a plus but the communal area is shabby. This house once served as the 'safe house' of the infamous Shan-Chinese opium warlord Khun Sa whenever he came to Chiang Mai.

**SK House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8396; www.sk-riverview.com; Th Moon Muang, 30 Soi 9; r 300-600B; 🚻 🚻) Rooms here have traditional Thai scenes painted on the door, tasteful furnishings and a cosy feel. Air-con rooms have cable TV. Extras include a large swimming pool, an atmospheric communal area full of antiques, a restaurant and TV, and an internet room.

**Awana Sleep and Swim Guesthouse** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 9005; www.awana.com; Th Ratchadamnoen, Soi 1; dm 120B, r 450-700B; 🚻 🚻) Down a quiet soi, yet right by Thae Pae Gate, Awana is a good deal with its large, neat and light rooms with balconies, TV and fridge. The tiny pool is good for a plunge but not for sunbathing. Dorm beds with mozzie nets are available on the covered roof terrace; there's also a pool table.

**Gap's House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8140; www.gaps-house.com; Th Ratchadamnoen, 3 Soi 4; r 350-750B; 🚻) Gap's wooden rooms have some lovely antique furnishings but the walls are thin. The cheaper, sturdier concrete rooms are more basic. All rooms surround a lush garden and breakfast area, filled with cabinets of trinkets. A cookery course (p293) and tours are offered, as well as a popular nightly vegetarian buffet upstairs.

### PRATU THA PHAE TO THE RIVER

**Daret's House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 5440; 4/5 Th Chaiyaphum; r 180B) A long-time backpackers' fave with stacks of basic, well-worn rooms. The large sidewalk café at the front is popular.

**Sarah Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 8271; www.sarahguesthouse.com; Th Tha Phae, 20 Soi 4; r 250-400B; 🚻) Run by an English woman, the rooms have chunky wood furniture and large bathrooms, with the option of fan or air-con. In a pretty garden setting, this is a quiet place with a café attached.

**New Mitrarap Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 5436; fax 0 5325 1260; 94-98 Th Ratchawong; r/suite incl breakfast 330-430/700B; 🚻) This is a classic Thai-Chinese spot on Chiang Mai's small Chinatown, between the east moat and Mae Nam Ping. A major renovation was near completion at the time of writing. The rooms are good value but feel quite child-like with the outside of the doors painted in different pastel and primaries, and matching paint work inside. It's close to several inexpensive Chinese restaurants, as well as the Talat Warorot (p318).

**Riverside House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 1860; www.riversidehousechiangmai.com; 101 Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; r 350-600B; 🚻) Next door to TAT, this quiet and friendly place is set back from the road. The rooms are large, pristine, well-furnished and great value. Arranged around a pretty garden, all have cable TV and include breakfast. There is an adjoining travel agency, coffee shop and internet service.

**Roong Ruang Hotel** (Roong Raeng; Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 4746; fax 0 5325 2409; 398 Th Tha Phae; 350-800B; 🚻) With a prime location near Pratu Tha Phae, on the eastern side of the city moat, all of the well-furnished rooms with cable TV have pleasant sitting areas out the front. The more expensive rooms have air-con and are in the new building. This is a good place to stay for the Flower Festival in February as the Saturday parade passes right by the entrance, but for the same reason it's probably not the best choice for the raucous Songkran and Loi Krathong festivals.

### TH NIMMANHAEMIN AREA

**Thanasiri House** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 5949; oulan51@yahoo.com; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 1; r incl breakfast 400-500B; 🚻) The simple yet stylish rooms here are a good-value base for the area. Rooms have cable TV, and a small desk and chair.

### Midrange

In this range you can expect daily room cleaning, the option of air-con, cable TV and additional (and usually, more stylish) furniture. Prices at midrange go from 600B to around 2500B.

### INNER MOAT AREA

**Montri Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 1069/70; www.norththaihotel.com/montri.html; 2-6 Th Ratchadamnoen; r 750B; 🚻) This conveniently located five-storey hotel is on the busy corner of Th Moon Muang and Th Ratchadamnoen. The rooms

have no character but are well equipped with safety deposit box, cable TV and fridge. A renovation was in process at the time of writing. Avoid the noisy street-facing rooms.

**Top North Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 9623; www.topnorthgroup.com; 41 Th Moon Muang; r 600-800B; 📶 📺) This high-rise, close to Pratu Tha Phae, is in a good location and has a great pool. Unfortunately, the rather dark rooms look grubby and are in need of a major revamp.

**Mini Cost** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8787; www.minicostcm.com; Th Ratchadamnoen, Soi 1; s/d 500/750-850B; 📶 📺) This new guesthouse has contemporary styled rooms with easy chairs, calming colours and modern Thai prints. The larger rooms are better value as the single rooms are a bit cramped. All are nonsmoking and have TV. Shame the boss is rather gruff.

**Sri Pat Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 8716; www.sri-patguesthouse.com; Th Moon Muang, 16 Soi 7; r 900B; 📶 📺) This stylish 17-room guesthouse is decorated in a chic Thai modern style. The rooms have rustic looking tiles in the bathrooms, plenty of rattan furniture and lots of Thai touches. All rooms have a terrace, cable TV, minibar and hairdryer.

**Parasol Inn** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 4011; www.parasolinn.com; 105/1 Th Phra Pokkiao; r 1000-1500B; 📶 📺) Just off the Sunday Walking Street, this new hotel has large, well-equipped rooms decorated in a modern Thai style. Some rooms at the back have views of Wat Chedi Luang. Big discounts can be had in low season.

#### PRATU THA PHAE TO THE RIVER

**Baan Kaew Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 1606; www.baankaew-guesthouse.com; 142 Th Charoen Prathet; r 700B; 📶) Opposite Wat Chaimongkhon and two doors south of the Alliance Française, Baan Kaew is set back off the road, so it's very quiet. Well-furnished and maintained, the rooms, although rather bland, have fridges, safety deposit boxes and outdoor seating areas. Meals are available in a small outdoor dining area.

**Lai-Thai Guesthouse** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 1725; www.laithai.com; 111/4-5 Th Kotchasarn; r 750B; 📶 📺) Northern Thai décor is the bonus to what is otherwise just another three-storey hotel court. The rooms, with cable TV and minibar, feel cramped as too much furniture is squashed in.

**Chiangmai Gold Star Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 2492; 53 Th Si Donchai; r 350-750B; 📶 📺) This friendly 29-room hotel is a little old fashioned but has

character. The large rooms are decorated with ornate Burmese furniture and Thai pictures. There is a restaurant on site.

**Viangbua Mansion** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5341 1202; www.viangbua.com; 3/1 Th Viangbua; r from 900B; 📶 📺) North of Pratu Chang Pheuk and opposite the Rajabhat University, this new hotel has smart, contemporary, Thai-styled rooms. Designed for the longer-term guest, rooms have wardrobes, shelving, a large fridge, small lounge, cable TV and wireless internet; some also have a kitchen. A gym, restaurant and coffee shop are on the premises, and weekly rates are available.

**Galare Guest House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 8887; www.galare.com; Th Charoen Prathet, 7/1 Soi 2; r 1100B; 📶) Set in an old style Thai house, this well-managed and friendly guesthouse has spacious rooms with some charm. The Galare is popular with repeat visitors for its Mae Nam Ping location and proximity to the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar. The traffic over nearby Saphan Nawarat can be a bit noisy.

**Buarawong Residence** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 3283; www.buarawong.com; 129/9 Th Rakaeng; r/st ind breakfast 600-800/1500B; 📶 📺) This well-looked-after high-rise has good value, well-furnished large rooms with wood floors and cable TV. Avoid the rooms by the main road as they can get noisy.

**Pornping Tower Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 0099; www.pornpinghotelchiangmai.com; 46-48 Th Charoen Prathet; r from 1800B; 📶 📺) This large, 324-room high-rise looming over the back of the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar has standard, comfortable rooms. The Pornping is most famous for Bubbles, a popular disco in town, but there are also two restaurants (one of them open 24 hours), a lobby bar, karaoke lounge, live music club, fitness centre and massage service. Discounts are usual in low season.

**Royal Princess** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 1033; www.royalprincess.com; 112 Th Chang Khlan; r from 1950B; 📶 📺) In the middle of the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, facilities at this hotel include international, Chinese and Japanese restaurants and a lobby bar. Rooms have a contemporary bent.

**River View Lodge** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 1109; www.riverviewlodgch; 25 Soi 2, Th Charoen Prathet; r 1450-2200B; 📶 📺) The River View Lodge has got an edge on charm, with cabinets stuffed full of objects, a two-level garden overlooking Mae Nam Ping and a good-size pool. The rooms by contrast are rather plain. In the

dry season you'll find the owner's collection of classic cars in the parking lot.

**Suriwongse Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 0051; www.suriwongsehotels.com; 110 Th Changklan; r incl breakfast 1500-3000B; 📶 📺) Close to the Night Bazaar, the rooms here are spick-and-span but slightly old fashioned. The staff are friendly, and facilities include a massage centre, restaurant, coffee shop and business centre.

#### TH NIMMANHAEMIN AREA & CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY (CMU)

**CMU International Center Hostel** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5394 2881; www.ic.cmu.ac.th; 239 Th Nimmanhaemin; r 690-790B; 📶 📺) Housed in CMU's busy International Center, this cosy hostel offers 88 rooms, all with TV and fridge. Rates include breakfast and monthly rates are available. Downstairs there's Doi Wawi café and Lemongrass restaurant.

**Baan Say-La** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 08 6911 1184; aimaschana@gmail.com; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 5; r 450-950B; 📶) This chic and contemporary new addition has rooms with four-poster beds, rattan furnishing and cable TV. Black-and-white photography decorates the walls, and the shared seating areas have large easy chairs, sofas and hammocks. The 450B rooms have shared, well-equipped bathrooms. Downside is that it is behind the 'Fine Thanks' live music bar, so some rooms may be noisy.

#### Top End

In general, hotel rates for luxury hotels are lower in Chiang Mai than in Bangkok. You can expect to pay anywhere from 2600B to around 20,000B and beyond for large, well-maintained rooms with air-con, TV and International Direct Dial (IDD) telephone in hotels with a restaurant (usually more than one), swimming pool and fitness centre. Booking through a travel agency or via the internet almost always means lower rates, or try asking for a hotel's 'corporate' discount.

Since 2004, the city has seen a sudden boom in five-star hotels. Some are chains, but the more interesting ones are the smaller 'boutique' hotels that tend to marry Lanna styles with a modern edge and a more intimate setting. In addition to some of our favourites listed here, hammers and drills are busy assembling more top-end offerings.

#### IN TOWN

**D2hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5399 9999; www.d2hotels.com; 100 Th Chang Khlan; r US\$154-513;

📶 📺) Chiang Mai's ultimate flashpacker digs, D2 attracts hip international and Thai visitors. The rooms manage to be minimalist and cosy at the same time with orange, brown and cream lux fabrics, understated abstract art and slinky white bathrooms. The Moxie restaurant and Mix Bar are chic places to hang out. There's also a fitness centre, business club lounge and spa.

**Amora** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5325 1531; www.amora.group.com; 22 Th Chiayapoom; r from 2584B; 📶 📺) The most central top-end option, the Amora is right near Thae Pae Gate. The rooms are light and fresh looking with all the amenities you'd expect at this price range.

**Imperial Mae Ping Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 3900; www.imperialhotels.com; 153 Th Si Donchai; r from 3000B; 📶 📺) This sprawling hotel near the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar has well-outfitted standard rooms with some Thai touches. There's also a pool and fitness centre on the premises.

**Central Duangtawan Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 3900; www.imperialhotels.com; 132 Th Loi Kroh; r incl breakfast 2696-6217B; 📶 📺) Located by Chiang Mai Night Bazaar this 24-floor, 500-room hotel has smart, modern, although rather bland rooms, with good views of Chiang Mai. There's a 4th floor pool, fitness centre, conference facilities and restaurant. Better deals can be had online.

**Yaang Come Village** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 7222; www.yaangcome.com; 90/3 Th Si Donchai; r 4800-9800B; 📶 📺) This new addition is Tai Lue in architecture and style. Rooms are tastefully decorated with murals, intricate textiles and beautiful teak furniture. Winding paths and a manicured garden lead to the impressive pool and a romantic restaurant.

**Tea Vanna** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5330 2805; www.tea-vanna.com; 75 Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; r 2700-10,000B; 📶 📺) Tea Vanna is a funky new 30-room hotel with a contemporary Chinese feel. The well-designed, chic rooms are named after different teas and surround a pool decorated with a kitschy lotus mural. Some have fun '60s inspired bubble-shaped furniture, others are all sleek lines and Chinese motifs. A spa and stylish looking restaurant were being built at the time of writing.

**Tamarind Village** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8898; www.tamarindvillage.com; 50/1 Th Ratchadamnoen; r 5000-10,000B; 📶 📺) A fusion of Thai and Mediterranean architectural styles, this quiet spread with 40 rooms on the grounds of an

old tamarind orchard features a pool, bar, modest restaurant and, like its more upscale sister the Rachamankha, easy access to old city sights.

**The Chedi** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5325 3333; www.ghmhotels.com; 123 Th Charoen Prathet; r 10,400-15,600B; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Located on the Mae Ping river, The Chedi mixes minimalist design with Lanna style. The hotel is centred around the beautiful, colonial style, ex-British Consulate, now functioning as the breakfast area, restaurant and bar. With floor to ceiling windows, the contemporary style rooms are all understated luxury and sleek lines. A spa, fitness centre and pool are on site. Definitely one of the most stylish hotels in the city.

**Manathai** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 1666; www.manathai.com; Th Tha Phae, 39/9 Soi 3; r 7000-16,000B; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This new boutique hotel is conveniently located in a quiet *soi* off Th Tha Phae. Manathai has a colonial feel with two-storey buildings surrounding a pool. Rooms are stylishly decked out with teak furniture, black-and-white photographs and contemporary touches. The intimate atmosphere makes it a nice place for a romantic stay. Online rates are cheaper.

**Rachamankha** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5390 4111; www.rachamankha.com; 6 Th Ratchamankha; r 6900-18,000B; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Walking into this architect-owned hotel is like walking into the compound of a 16th-century Lanna temple built for royalty. The 24 tastefully decorated, supremely serene guest rooms are a mix of Lanna and Chinese styles. The Rachamankha also has a gourmet dining room (see p302), small bar, and impressive library, all filled with exquisite Lanna antiques and artworks.

#### TH NIMMANHAEMIN AREA

**Chiang Mai Orchid Hotel** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 2091; www.chiangmaiorchid.com; 23 Th Huay Kaew; r from 2800B; 🍷 🍷 🍷) A 266-room hotel next to Kad Suan Kaew shopping centre, the Chiang Mai Orchid is oriented towards business travellers and upscale package tourists. The rooms have some Thai styling, and there's a fitness centre, business centre, pool and beauty salon.

**Amari Rincome Hotel** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 1130, 0 5322 1044; www.amari.com; 1 Th Nimmanhaemin; r 2700-6200B; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Very reliable business hotel. Amenities include a lovely pool area, a tennis court, Italian restaurant, coffee shop, lobby bar, conference facilities and nail salon. The

deluxe rooms have recently been revamped with a more contemporary look.

#### OUT OF TOWN

North of the city in the Mae Rim/Mae Sa area are a few plush countryside resorts. Most of these establishments have free shuttle vans to/from the city.

**Four Seasons Chiang Mai** (☎ 0 5329 8181; www.fourseasons.com; Th Mae Rim-Samoeng Kao; r US\$450; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Located north of the city, this is one of Chiang Mai's premier resorts, featuring 64 vaulted pavilion suites (each around 75 sq metres), plus two- and three-bedroom residences spread amid eight hectares of landscaped gardens and rice terraces worked by water buffalo. On the premises are a state-of-the-art, semi-outdoor cooking school, two full-service restaurants, a bar, a health club, two swimming pools and two illuminated tennis courts. The resort's Lanna Spa has earned much acclaim.

**Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi** (☎ 0 5388 8888; www.mandarinoriental.com; 51/4 Th Chiang Mai-San Kamphaeng; r US\$429-1100; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Almost a kingdom unto itself, the new Dhara Dhevi has taken 52 partially wooded acres just east of the city limits and filled them with architecture inspired by Greater Lanna (including neighbouring Shan State, northern Laos and Sipsongpanna/Xishuangbanna in southern China) at its 15th- to 17th-century peak. The 310-sq-metre spa is the largest in northern Thailand.

**Proud Phu Fah** (☎ 0 5387 9389; www.proudphu.fah.com; Km 17, Th Mae Rim-Samoeng; r 4000-6500B; 🍷 🍷 🍷) This new, well signposted place has a very relaxed and romantic setting. It offers modern bungalows with four-poster beds, all-white interiors, huge windows and individual decked terraces over the river. The infinity pool and restaurant make the most of the panoramic mountain views. Mountain bikes are available to rent.

#### EATING

You won't lack for variety in Chiang Mai as the city has arguably the best assortment of restaurants of any city in Thailand outside of Bangkok. Chiang Mai's guesthouses serve a typical menu of Western food along with a few pseudo-Thai dishes. If you're interested in authentic Thai cuisine, you'll do well to leave the guesthouse behind for the most part.

#### Thai

**Sailomyoy** (Map pp280-1; Th Ratchadamnoen; dishes 20-50; 🍷 9am-11pm) By Pratu Tha Phae, this simple, cheap place serves good Thai noodles, rice, curries and soups. Breakfast is available; try the mango and sticky rice pudding.

**Si Phen Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5331 5328; 103 Th Inthawarorot; dishes 40-80B; 🍷 9am-5pm) This inexpensive stopover near Wat Phra Singh specialises in both northern- and northeastern-style dishes. The kitchen prepares some of the best *sôm-tam* (spicy papaya salad) in the city, including a variation made with pomelo fruit.

**Ratana's Kitchen** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4173; 320-322 Th Tha Phae; dishes 30-90B; 🍷 9am-11pm) An air-con spot owned by an English-Thai couple, Ratana's is situated in a prime Th Tha Phae location near Book Zone. The inexpensive menu offers Thai dishes from several regions, as well as a few *faràng* items.

**Aron (Rai) Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 6947; 45 Th Kotchasarn; dishes 40-90B; 🍷 8am-10pm) Look for Chiang Mai specialities such as *kaeng hang-leh*, *kaeng awm* and *kaeng khae*. The latter two dishes are more like stews than curries, and rely on local roots and herbs for their distinctive, bitter-hot flavours. The spacious open-air dining area upstairs is favoured by night-time clientele, and in hot weather it's cooler than downstairs.

**Sila-aat** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 4552; 3/6-7 Th Samlan; dishes 30-100B; 🍷 8am-8pm) Opposite the entrance to Wat Phra Singh, this is a good place to refuel after temple exploring. Sila-aat offers generous portions of Thai and Chinese dishes. Their *pad thai* (rice noodle dish) is particularly delicious and has lots of salad on the side.

**Hong Tauw Inn** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 8333; 95/17-18 Nantawan Arcade, Th Nimmanhaemin; dishes 30-120B, set menu 400-470B; 🍷 11am-11pm) This intimate, charming place has got an old-fashioned feel, with 1940s pendulum clocks, scattered antiques and traditional tablecloths. Particularly good are the northern Thai dishes, like the intense *phanaeng* curry and the yummy banana flower salad. The set menu is for two people and includes seven dishes.

**Heuan Phen** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 7103; 112 Th Ratchamankha; dishes 50-140B; 🍷 8.30am-3pm & 5-10pm) Highly regarded for its northern Thai food, the house specialities include *khào sawy* (egg noodles in a curried broth), *lâap khúa* (northern-style minced-meat salad), *nám phrik*

*nùm* (a chilli dip made with roasted peppers) and *kaeng hang-leh* (very rich Burmese-style pork curry). Daytime meals are served in a large dining room out the front, while evening meals are served in an atmospheric antique-decorated house at the back.

**Heuan Soontharee** (no Roman-script sign; Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5325 2445; 46/2 Th Wang Singkham; dishes 40-150B; 🍷 5pm-1am) Rustic dining areas built on several levels open onto the west bank of the river. The owner, famous northern Thai singer Soontaree Vechanont, performs at the restaurant on weekends; other local musicians perform during the week. The menu is a pleasant blend of northern, northeastern and central Thai specialities.

**The Wok** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 8287; 44 Th Ratchamankha; dishes 60-150B; 🍷 3pm-10pm) Run by the Chiang Mai Cookery School, this popular place is set in a covered outside eating area with pretty lanterns. It serves a selection of veggie dishes and is especially good on northern Thai cuisine. If you are thinking of doing its cookery course, come here first to get an idea of the kind of dishes you'll be making.

**Cafe de Nimman** (Map pp276-7; Room, Th Nimmanhaemin; dishes 55-160B; 🍷 10am-11pm) Located at the front of the 'Room - boutique mall' (an open-air walkway with a row of shops and bars). Sit in the pleasant outside seating area or the small air-con section and choose from a large menu of Thai rice dishes, spicy salads and curries.

**Antique House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 6810; 71 Th Charoen Prathet; dishes 80-160B; 🍷 11am-11pm) Set in a two-storey teak house filled with interesting antiques, the food here is beautifully presented and predominately northern Thai. There is also a garden seating area. There is no smoking allowed in the house.

**Dalaabaa Bar and Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 2491; 113 Th Bamrungrat; dishes 100-200B; 🍷 6pm-midnight Mon-Sat) This trendy eatery, with subdued lighting washing over orange and red silks, brings a Bangkok-style sophistication to Chiang Mai dining with a clever Thai fusion menu.

**Whole Earth Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 2463; 88 Th Si Donchai; dishes 120-300B) Set in a teak house, there is the option to sit outside on the 2nd-floor terrace, or inside with air-con. The food here is well presented Thai and Indian (both vegetarian and nonvegetarian). The atmosphere is suitably mellow, as are the toned-down flavours.

☎ 0 5321 6039; Th Suthep; dishes 90-350B; ☎ 11.30am-midnight) Set by a waterfall, this buzzing new restaurant draws in Thais and foreigners alike for the fantastic Thai food and the spectacular views over twinkly Chiang Mai. Try the fiery *tôm yam* (spicy and sour soup) or any of the delicious fish dishes. Entry is via the rear gate to Chiang Mai Zoo; go to the end of Th Suthep, then at the zoo follow the signs.

**Le Grand Lanna** (☎ 0 5385 0111; Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi Hotel, 51/4 Th Chiang Mai-San Kamphaeng; dishes 150-350B) Part of the Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi complex, Le Grand Lanna is a 4000-sq-metre complex of restored northern Thai buildings filled with antique furniture, high-end art and handicrafts. The cuisine can be wonderful, especially the upmarket versions of northern Thai specialities.

**Rachamankha** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5390 4111; 6 Th Rachamankha; dishes 220-1100B) 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 antique-laden atmosphere as much as the food. The menu is Thai-centred, with hints of Myanmar, Yunnan and Europe floating at the periphery. On Friday to Sunday evening (7pm to 9pm) there's traditional Thai music.

## Chinese & Japanese

**Yok Fa** (Map pp280-1; Th Ratchaphakhinai; dishes 25-30B; ☎ 8am-8pm) Opposite the Red Cross Building, this simple but popular place cooks up fresh food in the massive woks upfront. Try *pat see lew* (fried wide noodles with pork, soybean sauce, morning glory and egg) or the suckling pig and rice.

**Mitmai Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 5033; 42/2 Th Rachamankha; dishes 50-120B; ☎ 9am-9pm) A clean, simple and spacious Yunnanese place specialising in delicious vegetable soups made with pumpkin, taro, snowpeas, mushrooms or other vegetables. Try the *tôm sôm plaa yáwt máphráo* (hot-and-sour fish soup with coconut shoots). The bilingual menu also includes *yam* (tangy, Thai-style salad) made with Chinese vegetables, as well as Yunnanese steamed ham and many vegetarian dishes. No MSG is used in the cooking.

**Dai-Kichi** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 3873; 40/2-3 Mocha Place, Th Nimmanhaemin; set menus 90-250B, set menu 129-169B; ☎ 10am-10pm) Just past *soi* 7, this new, highly recommended place on the main road

offers reasonably priced sushi and sashimi, plus a variety of nine-dish set menus.

Chiang Mai's small **Chinatown** (Map pp280-1; Th Ratchawong) is located on Th Ratchawong, north of Th Chang Moi. Here you'll find a whole string of inexpensive Chinese rice and noodle shops, most of them offering variations on *Tae Jiu* (Chao Zhou) and Yunnanese cooking. Recommended is **Aomgurn** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 3675; Th Ratchawong; dishes 20-90B), next to the New Mitrapap Hotel. This funky looking place with blackboard signs outside serves fantastic grilled chicken and various Chinese/Thai dishes. There are English menus.

## Noodles

*Khào sawy* – a Shan-Yunnanese concoction of chicken (or, less commonly, beef), spicy curried broth and flat, squiggly, wheat noodles – is one of the most characteristic of Chiang Mai's noodle dishes. It's served with small saucers of shallot wedges, sweet-spicy pickled cabbage and a thick red chilli sauce.

**Khao Soi Prince** (Map pp280-1; Th Kaew Nawarat; dishes 20-35B; ☎ 9am-3pm) Near Prince Royal's College, this is regarded by many locals as their favourite spot for authentic *khào sawy*. The *khào mòk kài* (Thai-style chicken briyani) is also well worth trying.

**Rot Sawoei** (Map pp280-1; Th Arak; dishes 25-35B) Around the corner from Buak Hat Park, this unassuming open-air spot is famous for its delectable *küaytiaw kài tún yaa jiin* (rice noodles with Chinese herb-steamed chicken) that practically melts off the bone. A normal bowl costs 25B, while a *phísèht* (special) order with extra chicken costs 35B.

**Kuaytiaw Kai Tun Coke** (Map pp280-1; Th Kamphaeng Din; dishes 40B) A small food stall directly opposite the main entrance to the Imperial Mae Ping Hotel prepares a simpler version of *küaytiaw kài tún yaa jiin* but substitutes Coca-Cola for the Chinese herbs. Here the chicken is marinated in cola and spices overnight, then steamed and served with rice noodles. It's actually quite good and has become famous as far away as Bangkok.

**Khao Soi Lam Duan** (Map pp276-7; Th Faham; dishes 30-55B) This place serves large bowls of beef, pork or chicken *khào sawy*. Also on the menu are *kao-lào* (soup without noodles), *míu sà-té* (grilled spiced pork on bamboo skewers) and *khànm rang phéung* (literally beehive pastry – a coconut-flavoured waffle).

**Just Khao Soi** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 8641; 108/2 Th Charoen Prathet; dishes 100B; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is the gourmet version of *khào sawy*. Served on a wooden artist's palette you can create your own noodle broth with several condiments, including coconut milk, to thicken it at will. Two different noodle shapes are offered: Chiang Mai style and Mae Salong style.

Two other good *khào sawy* places along Th Faham are **Khao Soi Samoe Jai** (Map pp276-7; Th Faham) and **Khao Soi Ban Faham** (Map pp276-7; Th Faham).

## Indian, Muslim & Middle Eastern

Along Soi 1, Th Charoen Prathet, between Th Chang Khlan and Th Charoen Prathet and near Matsayit Chiang Mai, are a number of simple restaurants and alley vendors selling inexpensive but tasty Thai Muslim curries and *khào sawy*. *Néua òp háwm* ('fragrant' Yunnanese Muslim-style dried beef), a speciality of Chiang Mai, is also sold along the lane. A food vendor, also on this lane, does delicious *rotii* (Indian flat bread) as well as chicken *mutabak* (*mátàbà kài*; *rotii* stuffed with chicken). Burmese food stalls set up along here on Friday mornings.

**Sophia** (Map pp280-1; Th Charoen Prathet, Soi 1; dishes 30-50B; ☎ 8am-7pm Sat-Thu) Sophia serves good curries and *khào mòk kài* (Thai-Muslim version of chicken briyani).

**Indian Restaurant Vegetarian Food** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5322 3396; Th Moon Muang, Soi 9; dishes 30-70B; ☎ 8am-11pm) A very friendly, family-owned place that serves up cheap and adequate vegetarian thalis as well as individual Indian dishes. The owners also offer Indian cooking lessons.

**Arabia** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 8850; Anusan Night Market; dishes 30-90B) This small restaurant does north Indian-Pakistani-Arab-style cuisine very well, perhaps better than any of the others in terms of the freshness of the flavours. Don't let the fact that it's often empty throw you off the trail; it has a steady and discerning, if small, clientele.

**Shere Shiraz** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 6132; Th Charoen Prathet, Soi 6; dishes 50-120B) Serves mostly north Indian food, with a few south Indian dishes. The extensive menu includes many vegetarian options.

**Jerusalem Falafel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 0208; 35/3 Th Moon Muang; dishes 60-160B; ☎ 9am-11pm Sat-Thu) This brightly coloured restaurant serves a selection Middle Eastern food, as well

as salads and sandwiches. Choose from a list of side dishes like falafels, shashlik, hummus and tabbouleh, or have mains like beef kebab and moussaka. The meze for two or four people is a good deal. Yogurt, haloumi and feta cheese are homemade here.

## Italian

**La Gondola** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5330 6483; dishes 60-120B) Fresh pasta, salads and vegetarian options are offered in an atmospheric, under-the-stars setting on a grassy area by the river.

**La Villa Pizzeria** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 7403; 145 Th Ratchadamnoen; dishes 60-140B) Set in and around a large, old Thai house, La Villa serves pizza baked in a wood-fired oven, and the rest of the Italian food on the menu is tops.

**Pum Pui Italian Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8209; 24 Soi 2, Th Moon Muang; dishes 60-150B; ☎ 11am-11pm) This casual place features a low-key garden setting and moderate prices. The menu includes olive pâté and other antipasti, along with salads, lots of vegetarian options, ice cream, breakfast, Italian wines and espressos.

**Da Stefano** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4189; 2/1-2 Th Chang Moi Kao; dishes 70-160B) An intimate, well-decorated, air-con place, Da Stefano focuses on fresh Italian cuisine, with one of the better wine lists in town.

**Giorgio Italian Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 8236; 2/6 Th Pracha Samphan; dishes 100-250B) Chiang Mai's most ambitious, and some say best, Italian eatery features a full range of pasta, some of it homemade. The salads are particularly good, while the décor is classy and retro.

## International Food

**Café Souvannaphoom** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5390 3781; 20/1 Th Rachamankha; dishes 60-100B; ☎ 8am-12pm) Next to Lost Book Shop, this new, Swiss-Thai run, hip looking café and wine bar stands out in this budget backpacker area. Real coffee, good breakfast, sandwiches and salads are served in a chic décor of rattan-and-cream easy chairs. Wine is a big focus of this place, with regular wine-tastings. Expect a bigger menu by the time this guide is published.

**Art Café** (Map pp280-1; ☎ /fax 0 5320 6365; cnr Th Tha Phae & Th Kotchasarn; dishes 50-110B; ☎ 10am-10pm) Facing Pratu Tha Phae, this popular place has a huge menu including Thai, Italian, Mexican and American food. It is particularly good for breakfasts and there are lots of vegetarian options. This is a non-smoking restaurant.



**Mike's Burgers** (Map pp280-1; cnr Th Chaiyaphum & Th Chang Moi; dishes 40-115B; ☎ 6pm-3am) Grab a stool for a dose of après-clubbing handmade burgers and chilli fries. Considered the best burgers outside the US by expats, there is also a branch on Th Nimmanhaemin.

**Bierstube** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8869; 33/6 Th Moon Muang; dishes 50-130B; ☎ 7am-midnight) This cosy place, decorated with black-and-white photos of Thailand, has wooden benches and a bar. It's popular with German expatriates and visitors, and the menu is mainly German/European with some Thai. It's near Pratu Tha Phae.

**Herb Garden** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8991; Th Ratchadamnoen, Soi 1; dishes 40-150B; ☎ 8am-11pm) This small and friendly place, run by a Thai-English couple, is one of those rare places where the Western food and Thai food are equally good. Thai dishes like *néua deh dio* (beef salad with sesame seeds and basil) are delicious. For something very English, choose the bangers and mash (with proper pork sausages) and the treacle tart. Breakfast is good here too.

**Zest** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5390 4364; 41/3 Th Moon Muang; 50-170B; ☎ 6am-midnight) Sitting in a pukka position in front of the Top North Hotel, this funky alfresco café has the usual Thai and European menu. It's a good place to watch the world of Chiang Mai go by.

**UN Irish Pub** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 4554; 24/1 Th Ratwithi; dishes 40-200B; ☎ 9am-midnight) This 'pub' offers comfort food like jacket potatoes, fresh bread and good coffee. There is beer on tap, and fruit and vegetable juices. The homey indoor section is decorated with Irish kitsch and there's pleasant garden seating out the back.

**Chez John** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5320 1551; 18/1 Th Mahidon; dishes 90-250B) Near the airport and opposite the customs office, Chez John prepares moderately priced French cuisine and has a large selection of wines.

**Chiangmai Saloon** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 6161 0690; 80/1 Th Loi Kroh; dishes 80-300B) Ignore the ersatz Wild West décor, and head straight for the huge steaks and Tex-Mex.

**Moxie** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5399 9999; D2 Hotel, 100 Th Chang Klan; dishes 90-460B; ☎ 10.30am-1am) This achingly hip restaurant has a sleek and ultra-modern décor in orange, cream and dark wood. The interesting lunch and dinner menu offers Thai, Japanese and Italian choices.

**House** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 9011; 199 Th Moon Muang; tapas 50-110B, mains 200-790B; ☎ 6pm-11pm) This ambitious restaurant occupies a mid-20th-century house that once belonged to an exiled Burmese prince. The menu successfully fuses Thai and European elements, complemented by an excellent wine list and attentive service. For a more relaxed setting, lounge in the separate and sumptuous, Moroccan-style area for delicious tapas and drinks.

The main fast-food district in Chiang Mai runs along Th Chang Khlan, in the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar area (Map pp280-1). This strip features the usual Western fast-food outlets, most of which are clustered within the Pavilion building. Similar franchise-style places can be found in the Kad Suan Kaew shopping centre (Map pp276-7) on Th Huay Kaew and at Central Airport Plaza (Map pp276-7) near the airport.

### Coffee, Juice & Sandwich shops

**Juicy 4U** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8715; 5 Th Ratchamankha; dishes 50-135B; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm) This cute café serves fantastic organic breakfasts, sandwiches, salads, juices and smoothies. Choose your own sandwich fillings and bread type from a list, and they will rustle up your concoction. The Thai owner studies nutrition and can advise on the best juices for ailments ranging from a killer hangover to insomnia.

**Black Canyon Coffee** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 0793; 1-3 Th Ratchadamnoen; dishes 50-115B; ☎ 8am-10.30pm) Right at Pratu Tha Phae, this contemporary styled place is great for people watching, especially on Sundays, when the Walking Street is on. Delicious ice coffee and teas, plus the usual Thai and Western food suspects are on offer here.

**Wawee Coffee** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5326 0125; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 9; coffee 40-75B; ☎ 7am-10pm) Want to go where the hip Thais go? Head to soi 9 in the trendy Nimmanhaemin area and drink coffee among the fashionable, laptop tapping locals. There's a pretty outside area with a fountain, while inside it's contemporary and air-conditioned. Don't get this one mixed up with Wawee Coffee on the main road.

**Smoothie Blues** (Map pp276-7; Th Nimmanhaemin; dishes 50-120B; ☎ 7.30am-9pm) Great for breakfast and lunch, Smoothie Blues does fantastic muffins, bagels, waffles and muesli, as well as sandwiches and baguettes. Its smooth-

ies are to die for – try Berry Berry Booster packed with raspberries, and blue, red and black berries.

**Libernard Café** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 4877; 295-299 Th Chang Moi; dishes 50-110B; ☎ 7.30am-5pm) Libernard serves fresh Arabica coffee grown in Thailand and roasted daily on the premises. The array of pancakes and other breakfast specialities also deserve acclaim, and Thai food is available as well. This is a good place to buy coffee to take home.

**Love at First Bite** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 2731; 28 Soi 1, Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; pastries 40-80B; ☎ 10.30am-6pm) It's almost too good to be true: the cheese-cakes, layer cakes, pies and blintzes stocked in the glass-fronted refrigerators taste as delicious as they look. There are tables where you can sit and drink coffee or tea while sampling the fruits of the Thai owners' 27-year sojourn in the USA.

**Bake & Bite** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 5185; Th Kothasan, 6 Soi 1; dishes 40-160B; ☎ 7am-6pm Mon-Fri, 7am-4pm Sat & Sun) Bake & Bite prepares delicious European- and American-style pastries, pies and sandwiches on your choice of bread. It also offers more vegetarian options than most for breakfast, and has good chocolate cake. There's another branch at 183/8-9 Th Chang Klan.

### Vegetarian

Chiang Mai is blessed with more than 25 vegetarian restaurants, most of them very inexpensive. All of the Indian restaurants mentioned earlier in this section feature short vegetarian sections in their menus.

**Mangawirat Kangreuanjam** (Map pp280-1; Th Inthawarorot, Soi 1; dishes 10-30B; ☎ 8am-early afternoon) Look for the difficult-to-see English sign that reads 'Vegetarian Food'. The cooks put out 15 to 20 pots of fresh, 100% Thai vegetarian dishes daily. The dishes feature lots of tofu, squash, peas, pineapple, sprouts and potato, and the desserts are good.

**Suandok Vegetarian** (Map pp276-7; Th Suthep; dishes 10-30B; ☎ 7am-2pm) This tiny stall just west of the entrance to Wat Suan Dok offers a simple array of inexpensive, wholesome Thai vegetarian dishes and brown rice.

**Vegetarian Centre of Chiang Mai** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5327 1262; 14 Th Om Muang; dishes 15-30B; ☎ 6am-2pm Mon-Fri) Sponsored by the Asoke Foundation, an ascetically minded Buddhist movement, the long-running Vegetarian Centre serves extremely inexpensive but very good cafeteria-

style veg – you push a tray along a rack and point out what you want.

**Khun Churn** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 4124; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 7; dishes 35-80B; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5pm-10pm) This new place, in a pleasant covered outdoor setting, has more interesting vegetable choices than most. Start with crispy rice with coconut dip or try the pomelo salad with deep fried coconut, limejuice and chilli. Lots of tofu and fresh veg are used. It's closed on the 16th of each month.

**AUM Vegetarian Food** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8315; 66 Th Moon Muang; dishes 40-100B; ☎ 8am-2pm & 5-9pm) Near Pratu Tha Phae, AUM at first appears to be a second-hand book shop. Go inside though and the all-veggie menu features a varied list of traditional Thai and Chinese dishes prepared without meat or eggs. There is an upstairs eating area with cushions on the floor and low tables.

### On the River

**Riverside Bar and Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 3239; Th Charoenrat; dishes 75-200B; ☎ 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 always good, and it's as popular with Thais as with *faràng*. The atmosphere is convivial and there's live music nightly. Choose from the indoor and outdoor dining areas or pay 70B for a seat (extra for food) on the nightly 8pm river cruise.

**Good View** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 1866; 13 Th Charoenrat; dishes 80-200B; ☎ 10am-1am) Next door to the Riverside, Good View also offers open-air areas in a more contemporary setting. The huge menu covers everything Thai, and there's a Japanese sushi stand at the back. There's also live music.

**Gallery** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 8601; 25-29 Th Charoenrat; dishes 70-300B; ☎ 11am-midnight) This elegant eatery, in a converted 100-year-old teak Chinese shophouse that's half gallery/shop, half restaurant, has a colonial feel. The quality of the food and service goes up and down, but the setting remains the primary attraction.

On the west bank of the river, Heuan Soonthreee (p301) serves a mix of northern, northeastern and central Thai dishes.

### Night Markets

Chiang Mai is full of interesting day and night markets stocked with inexpensive and tasty foods.

**■Anusan Night Market** (Map pp280-1; btwn Th Chang Khlan & Th Charoen Prathet; ☎ 6pm-midnight) In Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, this buzzing food market is best known for its seafood and its lively atmosphere. Stalls surround a large cluster of tables where each 'restaurant' has a section allocated with its own waiters – head to the parts that look most crowded. Most have English menus.

**Talat Somphet** (Somphet Market; Map pp280-1; Th Moon Muang; ☎ 6am-6pm) North of the Th Ratwithi intersection, this market sells cheap takeaway curries, *yam*, *lâap* (spicy minced-meat salad), *thâwt man* (fried fish cakes), sweets and seafood.

**Chiang Mai Gate Night Market** (Map pp280-1; Th Bamrungburi; ☎ 6pm-5am) Another good hunting ground is this very large and popular night market near Pratu Chiang Mai. People tend to take their time here, making an evening of eating and drinking – there's no hustle to vacate tables for more customers.

**Talat Warorot** (Map pp276-7; cr Th Chang Moi & Th Praisani; ☎ 6am-5pm) In the upstairs section are a number of basic stalls for *khào tòm* (rice soup), *khào man kài* (chicken rice), *khào mûu daeng* ('red' pork with rice), *jôhk* (thick rice soup) and *khào sawy*, with tables overlooking the market floor. It's not the best cooking in Chiang Mai by a long shot, but it's cheap. A set of vendors on the ground floor specialise in inexpensive noodles – this area is particularly popular.

## Food Centres

The food centres at **Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre** (Map pp276-7; Th Huay Kaew) and **Central Airport Plaza** (Map pp276-7; Th Mahidon) have vendors selling Thai and Chinese dishes at reasonable prices.

There's a big indoor/outdoor cluster of permanent vendors at **Galare Food Centre** (Map pp280-1; Th Chang Khlan), opposite the main Chiangmai Night Bazaar building. Free Thai classical dancing is featured nightly.

## DRINKING

**The Glass Onion** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 8479; Th Nimmanhaemin; ☎ 8.30pm-late) Tucked at the far end of the 'Room – boutique mall' (an open-air walkway with shops and cafés) is this small, glamorous, James Bondesque lounge bar. Drink decent cocktails at the black lacquer bar, relax in the '60s-style red chairs and listen to the jazz pianist, or the DJ spinning housey jazz. There's an extensive wine list.

**Drunken Flower** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 2081; Th Nimmanhaemin, 295/1 Soi 1) This cosy indoor/outdoor bar and restaurant has a mixed Thai and expat crowd, including local NGO staffers. There's plenty to nosh on while drinking (the pumpkin curry is delicious). Live bands perform folk music most nights.

**NimMahn Bar** (Map pp276-7; Th Nimmanhaemin) A good place to start before heading over to Warm-Up (opposite), this new bar is typical of the places popping up in the area. Catering for trendy Thais and foreigners, it has a cavernous industrial-looking interior, softened with smart leather poufs and sofas. A DJ plays nightly and there's a seating area outside. Food is available.

**Writer's Club & Wine Bar** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 4187; 141/3 Th Ratthadamnoen) Run by an ex-foreign correspondent, this simple shopfront bar and restaurant attracts a steady stream of expats and tourists, including a few resident writers. The mainly Australian and Italian house wines change weekly. Also good for watching the Walking Street hubbub on Sunday evenings.

**Mix Bar** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5399 9999; D2 Hotel, 100 Th Chang Klan) You could be in London or Paris here but if you fancy a chic, minimalist bar to sup cocktails in, head to D2 Hotel's slinky Mix Bar. It's right by the night market.

**Monkey Club** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 6997; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 9) This stylish all-white bar is popular among Thai students. It turns into a club later in the evening (see opposite).

**Pinte Blues Pub** (Map pp280-1; 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 the blues music format the whole time.

**UN Irish Pub** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 4554; 24/1 Th Ratwithi) This is a comfortable place with the food area downstairs and the bar upstairs. There's nothing particularly Irish here other than some kitsch on the walls and a dark-green décor. Heineken, Carlsberg and Thai-brewed beers are on tap, and the Guinness is bottled. There's live music on Tuesday and Friday, plus quiz nights and a TV for watching football.

**John's Place** (Place on the Corner; Map pp280-1; Th Ratthamankha, cr Th Moon Muang & Soi 2) This open-air bar is always heaving of an evening due to its proximity to the many backpacker digs nearby.

**Kafé** (Map pp280-1; Th Moon Muang, btwn Soi 5 & Soi 6) The daily happy hour here is popular among both expats and Thais.

**Yoy Pocket** (Map pp280-1; Th Ratwithi) This is a funky spot, reminiscent of some of the homier café-pubs along Th Phra Athit in Bangkok.

**Darling Wine Pub** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 7427; 49/21 Th Huay Kaew) Darling serves fine wines by the glass or bottle in a sophisticated but relaxed atmosphere.

**The Pub** (☎ 0 5321 1550; 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 is popular.

Behind the building that houses the Yoy Pocket is a cluster of rustic outdoor bars catering to backpackers and expats. **Rasta Kafé** (Map pp280-1), the first one to open in this area (and still the largest), plays recorded reggae, dub, African and Latin music, and is quite popular in the high season. In the same area, the similarly rustic **Heaven Beach** (Map pp280-1) and **Life House** (Map pp280-1) often feature live local bands.

## ENTERTAINMENT

### Live Music

**Riverside Bar & Restaurant** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 3239; 9-11 Th Charoenrat; ☎ doses 2am-3am) In a twinkly setting on Mae Nam Ping, this is one of the longest-running live music venues in Chiang Mai. Two cover bands play at either end of the rambling wooden buildings nightly. It's usually packed with both foreigners and Thais on weekends, so arrive early to get a table on the veranda overlooking the river. There are two indoor bars, both full of regulars, and the food is reliably good (see p305).

**Le Brasserie** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 1665; 37 Th Charoenrat; ☎ 11.15pm-1am) A block or so north of the riverside Gallery restaurant, Le Brasserie is a popular late-night spot to listen to live bands play rock and blues. Expect to hear Hendrix, Cream, Dylan, Marley, and other 1960s and '70s classics. Food service is available inside the bar or out the back by the river.

**Tha Chang Gallery** (Map pp280-1; Th Charoenrat) Next door to the Gallery restaurant, this tiny music venue has great live jazz and blues nights.

**Warm-Up** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 9993 2963; Th Nimmanhaemin) Warm-Up occasionally hosts nationally known Thai bands. On other nights bands

play covers and Thai pop. DJs also play their decks.

**Good View** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 1866; 13 Th Charoenrat) Next door to Riverside, Good View changes bands more frequently than Riverside and is quite popular. It also has a restaurant (see p305).

## Clubs

**Warm-Up** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 9993 2963; Th Nimmanhaemin; ☎ 6pm-1am) This relaxed place is filled with Thai trendsters and a smattering of Westerners. Hang out in the pretty decked courtyard area with lots of seating and various bars, or dance manically to the latest tunes in the two glass enclosed dance floors. Regular live music is a feature here too.

**Bubbles** (Map pp280-1; Pornping Tower Hotel; ☎ 9pm-2am) The newly renovated Bubbles is as popular as ever. The dance floor heaves with a mix of tourists remembering how to do rave moves, locals, some expats and pros. The 100B entry ticket exchanges for a beer or a scarily sweet cocktail.

**Monkey Club** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 6997; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 9; ☎ 6pm-12.30am) Although the first thing you see when you walk in is the restaurant, head instead for the glassed-in, trendy looking, all-white bar with sofas and chairs. The furniture is shifted when things get going later. Nightly DJs plus live music attract young Thais and some foreigners.

**Spicy** (Map pp280-1; Th Chaiyaphum; ☎ 9pm-5am) Near Pratu Tha Phae, people pile into Spicy when everything else has shut. Not the most salubrious place, it is nevertheless fun after 2am – don't go before, it is seediness central.

**Fashion House** (Map pp276-7; Ground fl, Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre; ☎ 9pm-2am) Students fill this two-room club. The hip-hop room is always full, the techno one is quieter. The bands are pretty dodgy but the DJ is good.

**Smooth** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5330 2340-1; Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun) East of Mae Nam Ping, Smooth is packed full with young Thais dancing to techno.

## Cinemas

**Major Cineplex** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5328 3939; Central Airport Plaza, 2 Th Mahidon; tickets 80-160B) This theatre complex boasts a state-of-the-art sound system and the option of 'honeymoon seats', pairs of seats without a middle armrest for romantic couples. Along with the latest Thai

films, first-run foreign films with English soundtracks are shown.

**Chiang Mai University** (Map pp276-7) Every Sunday at 3pm there are showings of different foreign films – usually art films of the Bergman and Buñuel variety – at the main auditorium of the Art & Culture Center. Admission is free.

Two other cinemas showing first-run foreign as well as Thai films are the **Vista** (Map pp276-7; Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre, Th Huay Kaew) and **Vista 12 Huay Kaew** (Map pp276-7; Th Huay Kaew).

## SHOPPING

Chiang Mai is Thailand's handicraft centre, ringed by small cottage factories and workshops. Most of the time the products you see in the outskirts can be bought cheaper in Chiang Mai itself unless you are buying wholesale.

There are numerous shops throughout the city but the main areas to head for are the Night Bazaar and the Walking Streets, which have a huge selection of handicrafts and souvenirs.

There's also Th Thae Pae, with its mix of antiques, jewellery, homewares and clothes, and Warorot Market, which is best for inexpensive fabrics.

If you want to shop where the trendy Thais shop, head to Th Nimmanhaemin, especially the section of the road by the Amari Rincome Hotel, and in Soi 1, which is full of contemporary Thai design.

JJ Market, northeast of town, is the newcomer to the shopping scene. It is not filled with crowds yet, but its mix of fresh new designers and more established Thai names make it worth a visit.

Within 15km of the city, Hang Dong (p336), and San Kampaeng and Bo Sang (p334) are the places to go and see factories and show-rooms for antiques, woodcarving, furniture, ceramics, silks and paper umbrellas.

## Antiques

Burmese antiques are becoming more common than Thai, as most of the Thai stuff has been bought by collectors, and you can get some great buys on antique Burmese furniture from the British colonial period.

**Chiang Mai Night Bazaar** (Map pp280-1; Th Chang Khlan). The best place to look for 'copy' antiques is around the bazaar. Inside the Night Bazaar building, towards the back on the 2nd floor, are a few small shops with real antiques.

**Lost Heavens** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 8185; Stall 2, 2nd fl, Chiang Mai Night Bazaar Bldg, Th Chang Khlan; ☎

5325 1557) Among the best of the Night Bazaar's antique shops, Lost Heavens specialises in Mien tribal artefacts. It's in the 'antiques corner' towards the back left of the Night Bazaar building. There's a second store at 234 Th Tha Phae, opposite Wat Bupparam

**Under the Bo** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 8831; Stall 22-23, Chiang Mai Night Bazaar) Carries many unique pieces, in the form of furniture, antique bronze and wood figures, old doors, wood-carvings and weaving from Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. It isn't cheap, but many of the items are one-of-a-kind. There's another shop out on the road to Hang Dong, about 5km southwest of Th Mahidon.

More antique shops can be found along Th Tha Phae. Kesorn (Map pp280-1) has a good reputation. Th Loi Kroh is another good spot for antique shops. **Art Deco** (☎ 0 5320 6878; 51 Th Loi Kroh) has an interesting collection of hill-tribe art – particularly Akha.

Hang Dong, 15km south of Chiang Mai, is even better for antique furniture of all kinds; see p336.

## Celadon Ceramics

Celadon ceramics have beautiful deep-crackle glaze finishes in translucent colours of green, blue, white or yellow. Thought to have been developed in China around 907, the celadon you'll find in Chiang Mai are mainly inspired by the Sawankhalok pottery styles that were made hundreds of years ago at Sukhothai and exported all over the region.

**Ceramthai** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5382 0390; 2nd fl, Chiang Mai Night Bazaar Bldg) Head to the shop in Chiang Mai Night Bazaar building to see some refined examples of celadon, in lovely blue, green or off-white hues. If you want to see more, go to the main workshops in Soi 5, Th Chedi Liam and get some customised pieces.

**Mengrai Kilns** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 2063; www.mengraikilns.com; 79/2 Th Arak) In the southwestern corner of the inner moat area, Mengrai Kilns are particularly focused on keeping the old Thai celadon traditions alive.

**Siam Celadon** (Map pp280-1; 0 5324 3518; 158 Th Tha Pae) In a lovely teak building, this established celadon company sells its ceramics here plus silk home accessories. There is a pretty garden café out back.

**Deco Moda** (☎ 0 5321 9576; www.deco-moda.com; Soi 1, Th Nimmanhaemin) Has modern, funky ceramics –

(Continued from page 308)

mainly cups and mugs – as well as brightly coloured homeware accessories.

Other homeware shops down Soi 1 are also worth checking out for ceramics.

## Clothing & Accessories

All sorts of shirts, blouses and dresses, plain and embroidered, are available at low prices, but make sure that you check on the quality carefully. The Chiang Mai Night Bazaar and shops along Th Tha Phae and Th Loi Kroh have good selections.

Lanes off the north side of Th Tha Phae, near Talat Warorot, boast dozens of shops (signed in Thai only) that offer excellent deals on ready-made Thai cotton and silk clothing, both traditional and modern.

**Sri Sanpanmai** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5389 4372; G-59 Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre, Th Huay Kaew) Sells good ready-made clothing made from northern Thai textiles.

**Ginger** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 5635; 6/21 Th Nimmanhaemin) For something more night-on-the-townish, check out the shimmery dresses, sparkly mules, fabulous jewellery and colourful accessories. Not cheap though. There

is another shop attached to House restaurant at 199 Th Moon Muang.

**Chabaa** (Map pp276-7; www.atchabaa.com; 14/32 Th Nimmanhaemin) Offers a similar style to Ginger, but a bit more hippy. In this funky shop you'll find brightly coloured embroidered tops and skirts plus big-statement jewellery.

**Elements** (Red Ruby; Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4277; 400-402 Th Tha Pae) Located next to Roon Ruang Hotel, Elements stocks embroidered bags, a diverse collection of fun jewellery and other trinkets.

## TAILORS

There are a number of good tailors off Th Kotchasan near Aroon (Rai) Restaurant, including Florida, Chao Khun, Chaiyo and Progress. Also down Soi 1 off Th Ratchadarnoen, Chok Dee Tailor, next to Herb Garden restaurant, is well-priced.

Another strip for tailors is Th Chang Khlan in the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar area, as well as along Th Tha Phae. However, some of these overcharge. Make sure you shop around first and ask to see some finished work before choosing a shop.

**City Silk** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 4388; 336 Th Tha Phae) More or less opposite Wat Mahawan, City Silk

## CHIANG MAI NIGHT BAZAAR

Whether you find it tantalising or tourist tat, Chiang Mai's Night Bazaar (Map pp280-1) is one of the city's main attractions and definitely worth experiencing. This buzzing market 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 epicentre of the outdoor market is at the Th Chang Khlan and Th Loi Kroh junction. It spreads all the way up to Th Tha Phae, down to Th Si Donchai and east to Th Charoen Prathet. It opens from sunset till midnight every night of the year, rain or dry, holiday or no.

Made up of hundreds of street vendors, several different roofed areas and ordinary glass-fronted shops, the market offers a huge variety of Thai and northern Thai products, as well as designer goods (both fake and licensed, so look carefully) at very low prices – if you bargain well. The fact that there are so many different stalls selling the same merchandise means that competition effectively keeps prices low. Look over the whole bazaar before you begin getting down to haggling.

Popular buys include hill-tribe crafts like hand-woven fabrics and embroidered bags; lacquerware; silver jewellery; woodcarvings; iron and bronze Buddhas; simple cotton clothes; silk cushion covers and scarfs; and other knick-knacks. If the outdoor stalls are looking a bit samey or too busy, head to one of the covered markets. The helpfully named Chiang Mai Night Bazaar building is the best. Inside you will find some shops with more original designs, including fashion, jewellery, textile and ceramic outlets (see p308). On the second floor near the back there are some interesting shops with Thai and Burmese antiques.

If you're not into shopping, the night market still makes an entertaining stroll. Alternatively, head to the outdoor Anusan food market (p305) where you can sit, drink a beer and take in the lively atmosphere of the market surrounding you.

(Continued on page 317)

## MARKETS

### Talat Warorot

Locally called *kàat lüang* (northern Thai for 'great market'), this is the oldest and most famous market (Map pp280-1; off Th Chang Moi; ☎ 5am-6pm) in Chiang Mai. Although the huge enclosure is quite dilapidated (ignore the scary looking escalators, which haven't functioned for years), it's an especially good market for fabrics and cooking implements, as well as inexpensive cosmetics, clothing, handicrafts and prepared foods (especially northern Thai food).

Across from Talat Warorot is the similar Talat Lamyai, which has the same opening hours.

### JJ Market

At the north end of Th Atsadathorn, 200m from the Superhighway, the brand new **JJ Market** (Map pp276-7; Th Atsadathorn) is a street lined with designer shops of various descriptions, from small outlets selling unique jewellery and kitschy homewares, to bigger Thai names selling contemporary furniture and mod-Thai fashion.

### Chiang Mai Gate Night Market

Near Pratu Chiang Mai, this **fresh-food market** (Talat Pratu Chiang Mai; Map pp280-1; Th Bamrungburi) is particularly busy with locals shopping for takeaway Thai and northern Thai food. The indoor area is open from 4am until around noon, while outside vendors continue to sell until nightfall. A night food market then sets up next to the moat across the street, and stays open past midnight.

### Flower Market

Locally called *tàlàat dàwk mái*, this **market** (Map pp280-1; Th Praisani; ☎ daily) is a quick stop for flowers only, especially fresh *phuang má-lai* (jasmine garlands).

### Talat Kamthieng

East of JJ Market, this picturesque **plant and flower market** (Map pp276-7; Hwy 11/Th Superhighway) is the perfect place to pick up some greenery to feather your Chiang Mai nest if you're settling in long term.

### Talat Thanin

North of Pratu Chang Pheuk, this clean and well-run **market** (Map pp280-1; off Th Chotana; ☎ 5am-early evening) is the best spot for prepared foods.

### Talat Ton Phayom

Across from Chiang Mai University, this **market** (Map pp276-7; Th Suthep) features all manner of fresh produce and cooked foods. Because CMU students make up a good portion of the clientele, prices tend to be low. Talat Ton Phayom is slated to be demolished to make room for an expanded road system in the near future.

**Talat San Pa Khoi** (Map pp276-7; off Th Charoen Muang) and **Talat Thiphanet** (Map pp276-7; Th Thiphanet) are large municipal markets that offer all manner of goods and see few tourists. San Pa Khoi opens around 4am and does a brisk trade until around 10am, then slows until an hour before nightfall.

specialises in silk tailoring for women. English is spoken here, and the service is friendly and professional.

## Contemporary Art

Outside of Bangkok, Chiang Mai is Thailand's leading art centre and there are dozens of small galleries offering fine Thai

contemporary art in the city. Among the better ones:

**Aka Wilai** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5330 6521; www.akawalai.com; 35 Th Ratanakosin)

**Galerie Panisa** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 2779; 189 Th Mahidon)

**Gongdee Gallery** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 5032; www.gongdee.com; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 1; ☎ 9am-7pm)

**HQ Gallery** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 4717; www.hqartgallery.com; 3/31 Th Samlan)

**La Luna Gallery** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5330 6678; www.lalunagallery.com; 190 Th Charoenrat)

**Semi-apply** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5870 6262; olarrn\_p@hotmail.com; Th Nimmanhaemin, 24 Soi 1; ☎ 9am-7pm)

## Essential Oils & Spa Products

Several shops around town specialise in extracting oils from local herbs such as lemongrass and Thai bergamot to create essential oils, massage oil, herbal cosmetics and natural toiletries.

**Laan Pai Lin** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 2036; Nantawan Arcade, 6/12 Th Nimmanhaemin; ☎ 10am-8pm) This is one of the better shops, selling products like Thai herbal compresses, essential oils and body scrubs. Good sizes for travelling and also for gifts.

**Herb Basics** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 8289; Th Ratchadamnoen; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-9pm Sun) Sells aromatherapy products like lip balm and soaps, all made in Chiang Mai.

## Lacquerware

Decorated plates, containers, utensils and other items are made by building up layers of lacquer over a wooden or woven bamboo base. Burmese lacquerware, smuggled into the north, can often be seen, especially at Mae Sai, the northernmost point of Thailand. There are several lacquerware factories in San Kamphaeng, southeast of Chiang Mai. A lot of stalls and shops also sell lacquerware in the Night Market.

For a contemporary angle on lacquerware **Living Space** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4156; www.livingspacedesigns.com; 276-278 Th Tha Pae) does some beautiful, brightly coloured boxes, trays and other accessories.

## Local Handicrafts

The Saturday and Sunday **Walking Street** markets on Th Wualai and Th Ratchadamnoen, respectively, offer a great selection of handicrafts in a fun setting; see p284.

**Thai Tribal Crafts** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 1043; 208 Th Bamrungrat) Near the McCormick Hospital, this place is run by two church groups on a nonprofit basis and has a good selection of quality handicrafts.

**Hill-Tribe Products Promotion Centre** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5327 7743; 21/17 Th Suthep) This royally sponsored project is near Wat Suan Dok; all the

profits from sales go to hill-tribe welfare programmes.

The two commercial markets with the widest selections of northern Thai folk crafts are **Talat Warorot** (opposite) and the **Chiang Mai Night Bazaar** (p317).

## Rattan

**Hangdong Rattan** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 8167; 54-55 Th Loi Kroh) For better-quality furniture and accessories made from this jungle vine, check out the many items on display. Custom orders are also taken.

Two cheaper rattan shops can be found along the northern side of Th Chang Moi Kao, two blocks east of the moat. These are the places to buy chairs, small tables, chaise longues, planters, floor screens, settees, bookshelves and other everyday household items.

## Shopping Centres & Department Stores

Chiang Mai has more than 15 shopping complexes with department stores. **Central Airport Plaza** (Map pp276-7; Th Mahidon), centred around a branch of Bangkok's Central Department Store, is the best, with **Kad Suan Kaew Shopping Centre** (Map pp276-7; Th Huay Kaew) a close second. There are several luxury shops in both complexes.

**Computer Plaza** (Map pp280-1; Th Mani Nopharat) and **Pantip Plaza** (Map pp280-1; Th Chang Khlan) are the places to go for computer supplies. Computer Plaza is cheaper by far.

## Silverwork

Just south of Pratu Chiang Mai, historic Th Wualai is known for its silversmiths; there have been **silver workshops** (Map pp280-1) here for centuries (see Saturday Walking Street p284).

**Sipsong Panna** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 6096; Nantawan Arcade, 6/19 Th Nimmanhaemin) Opposite the Amari Rincome Hotel, this upmarket shop is the place for jewellery collected in Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and southwestern China. The chunky hill-tribe jewellery is very nice.

**Nova** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 3058; www.nova-collection.com; 201 Th Tha Phae) For contemporary jewellery. This place does fantastic rings, pendants and earrings using silver, some gold and precious stones. Pieces can be custom made, or you can learn to do it yourself at Nova's jewellery workshops (see p293).

**Angel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 2651; 370 Th Tha Phae) Also has some original and modern silver designs.

## Textiles

Thai silk, with its lush colours and pleasantly rough texture, is a good bargain and is usually cheaper in Chiang Mai than in Bangkok. Talat Warorot is one of the best and least expensive places to look for fabrics, but take care, as many polyester items are passed off as silk.

If you want to see where and how local cloth is made, go to the nearby town of San Kamphaeng for Thai silk, or to Pasang, south of Lamphun, for cotton.

**Studio Naenna** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5322 6042; Th Nimmanhaemin, 22 Soi 1) Operated by Patricia Cheeseman, an expert on Thai-Lao textiles who has written extensively on the subject. You can see the production process, using natural dyes, at the **studio** (Map pp276-7 ☎ 0 5322 6042; www.studio-naenna.com; 138/8 Soi Chang Khian, Th Huay Kaew).

**Kachama** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 8495; www.kachama.com; Th Nimmanhaemin, Soi 1) If you're interested in textiles as works of art, visit Kachama. The wall hangings have been created using traditional weaving techniques, mixed with innovative design using natural materials. Even if you can't afford to buy, it's worth coming for a look. Simpler textiles and cushions are also available.

**Vila Cini** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5324 6246; www.vilacini.com; 30-34 Th Charoenrat) In a couple of beautiful teak houses surrounding a small courtyard garden, Villa Cini sells unique, handmade silks and cotton in an atmospheric setting. You can purchase material by the metre or buy ready-made cushions, wall hangings and other accessories. Antiques are also available.

**KukWan Gallery** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 6747; 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.

## Umbrellas

At Bo Sang, the 'umbrella village' 9km east of Chiang Mai, you will find hand-painted paper umbrellas of all kinds, from simple traditional brown ones to giant rainbow-hued parasols. You'll also find textured *sa* paper, made from mulberry tree bark. See p334 for more details about the village.

## Woodcarving

Many types of wood carvings are available in Chiang Mai, including countless elephants. Teak salad-bowls are good, and usually cheap. Numerous shops along Th Tha Phae and near

the Chiang Mai Night Bazaar stock wood crafts, or you can go to the source – Hang Dong (p336) and Ban Thawai (p336).

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

#### INTERNATIONAL

Regularly scheduled international flights fly into **Chiang Mai International Airport** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5327 0222) from the following cities:

**Kuala Lumpur** (Air Asia; ☎ 0 2515 9999; www.airasia.com)

**Kunming** (THAI Airways; ☎ 0 5321 1021; www.thaiair.com)

**Singapore** (Silk Air; ☎ 0 5327 6459; www.silkair.com)

**Taipei** (Mandarin Airlines; ☎ 0 5320 1268; www.mandarin-airlines.com)

**Vientiane, Luang Prabang** (Lao Airlines; ☎ 0 5322 3401; www.laoairlines.com)

**Yangon, Mandalay** (Air Mandalay; ☎ 0 5381 8049; www.air-mandalay.com)

#### DOMESTIC

Since 2003 Thailand has been going through a period of air route deregulation which has resulted in several low-fare, no-frills airline start-ups. Fares range from as low as 899B one way from Bangkok to Chiang Mai with Air Asia to as high as 4740B for the same sector on THAI (more in business class). Prices constantly vary depending on factors like season and various promotions. The following have counters at Chiang Mai International Airport; tickets can be booked online.

**Air Asia** (☎ 0 2515 9999; www.airasia.com) Has four flights between Bangkok and Chiang Mai daily.

**Bangkok Airways** (☎ 0 5321 0043/4) Has two flights a day to Bangkok, one of which goes via Sukhothai.

**Nok Air** (☎ 1318; www.nokair.com) A subsidiary of THAI; has the most frequent daily departures to Bangkok. It also flies to Mae Hong Son from Chiang Mai twice a day for 900B.

**One-Two-Go** (☎ 0 5392 2159; www.fly12go.com) Has five flights a day between Chiang Mai and Bangkok at a fixed price of 1700B.

**Siam GA** (☎ 0 2664 6099, 0 2641 4190; www.sga.aero) 35-minute flights to and from Chiang Mai and Pai. At the time of writing the fare was one way/return 1450/2900B.

**Thai Airways International** (☎ 0 5321 1044/7; www.thaiair.com) Operates around eight one-hour flights between Bangkok and Chiang Mai daily, plus four flights a day between Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son.

### Bus

Departing from Bangkok's newer Northern and Northeastern bus terminal (also known

## BUS DESTINATIONS FROM CHIANG MAI

| Destination                    | Fare (B) | Duration (hr) | Destination       | Fare (B) | Duration (hr) |
|--------------------------------|----------|---------------|-------------------|----------|---------------|
| Chiang Dao*                    | 40       | 1½            | Mae Sai           | 126      | 5             |
| Chiang Khong                   | 161      | 6½            | air-con           | 176      | 5             |
| air-con                        | 225      | 6             | 1st class air-con | 227      | 5             |
| 1st class air-con              | 290      | 6             | VIP               | 350      | 5             |
| Chiang Rai                     | 100      | 4             | Mae Sariang       | 100      | 4-5           |
| air-con                        | 140      | 3             | 1st class air-con | 180      | 4-5           |
| 1st class                      | 180      | 3             | Mae Sot           | 253      | 6½            |
| VIP                            | 280      | 3             | 1st class air-con | 326      | 6             |
| Chiang Saen                    | 126      | 4             | Nan               | 158      | 6             |
| 1st class air-con              | 227      | 3½            | air-con           | 221      | 6             |
| Chom Thong*                    | 34       | 2             | 1st class air-con | 284      | 6             |
| Fang*                          | 80       | 3             | VIP               | 440      | 6             |
| van                            | 120      | 3             | Pai               | 80       | 4             |
| Hang Dong*                     | 14       | ½             | air-con           | 142      | 4             |
| Khon Kaen (via Tak)            | 335      | 12            | Phayao            | 87       | 3             |
| air-con                        | 469      | 12            | air-con           | 122      | 2½            |
| 1st class air-con              | 542      | 12            | 1st class air-con | 157      | 2½            |
| Khon Kaen (via Utaradit)       | 267      | 11            | Phrae             | 115      | 4             |
| air-con                        | 421      | 11            | air-con           | 147      | 3½            |
| 1st class air-con              | 542      | 11            | 1st class air-con | 189      | 3½            |
| Khorat                         | 468      | 12            | VIP               | 290      | 3½            |
| 1st class air-con              | 601      | 12            | Phitsanulok       | 227      | 5-6           |
| VIP                            | 701      | 12            | air-con           | 292      | 5             |
| Lampang                        | 51       | 2             | Sukhothai         | 167      | 6             |
| air-con                        | 71       | 2             | air-con           | 234      | 5             |
| 1st class air-con              | 92       | 2             | 1st class air-con | 301      | 5             |
| Lamphun                        | 32       | 1             | Tha Ton*          | 90       | 4             |
| Mae Hong Son (via Mae Sariang) | 187      | 8             | Udon Thani        | 313      | 12            |
| air-con                        | 337      | 8             | air-con           | 438      | 12            |
| Mae Hong Son (via Pai)         | 112      | 7             | 1st class air-con | 563      | 12            |
| air-con                        | 199      | 7             | VIP               | 657      | 12            |

\*Leaves from Chang Phueak bus terminal. All other buses leave from the Chiang Mai Arcade bus terminal (also called New Terminal) off Th Kaew Nawarat.

as Moh Chit) there are 12 2nd-class air-con buses a day (434B, 10 to 11 hours), but note that the air-con doesn't always work.

More comfortable 1st-class air-con buses with toilets and 42 seats leave every half hour from 6.45am to 9pm (558B, 10 hours).

The government VIP buses, with seats that recline a bit more than the seats in 1st-class air-con, have about six departures each day, from either Bangkok or Chiang Mai, between 7pm and 9pm plus one in the morning at around 9am (24/32 seat bus 651/863B, 10 hours).

Ten or more private tour companies run air-con buses between Bangkok and Chiang

Mai, departing from various points throughout both cities. Return tickets are always cheaper than one-way tickets. The fares cost 400B to 500B, depending on the bus. The government buses from the Northern and Northeastern bus terminal in Bangkok are generally more reliable and on schedule than the private ones booked in Banglamphu and other tourist-oriented places.

Travel agencies in Bangkok are notorious for promising services they can't deliver, such as reclining seats or air-con that works. Several Th Khao San agencies offer bus tickets to Chiang Mai for as little as 300B, including

a night's free stay at a guesthouse in Chiang Mai. Sometimes this works out well, but the buses can be substandard and the 'free' guesthouse may charge 50B to 60B for electricity or hot water, or apply heavy pressure on you to sign up for one of its treks before you can get a room. Besides, riding in a bus or minivan stuffed full of foreigners and their bulky backpacks may not be the best cultural experience.

Several readers have complained of purchasing tickets for large air-con or even VIP buses from Th Khao San and at the last minute being shunted into cramped minivans. We recommend avoiding these buses altogether; use public buses from Bangkok's Northern and Northeastern bus terminal instead.

Government buses between Chiang Mai and other northern towns depart frequently throughout the day (at least hourly), except for the Mae Sai, Khon Kaen, Udon, Ubon and Khorat buses, which have only morning and evening departures.

For buses to destinations within Chiang Mai Province use the **Chang Pheuk bus terminal** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 1586; Th Chotana). For buses outside the province use the **Chiang Mai Arcade bus terminal** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5324 2664), also called New Terminal. From the town centre, a túk-túk or chartered sǎwngthǎew to the Chiang Mai Arcade terminal should cost 50B to 60B; to the Chang Pheuk terminal you should be able to get a sǎwngthǎew at the normal 20B per person rate.

## Train

Chiang Mai-bound trains leave Bangkok's Hualamphong station daily. To check the most up-to-date timetables and prices call the **State Railway of Thailand** (www.railway.co.th/www.thailandrailway.com; ☎ 0 2220 4334, free hotline 1690; ⌚ 24hr) or visit its website.

Rapid trains leave Hualamphong station in Bangkok at 5.50am (2nd/3rd class 391/231B) and 2.30pm (2nd/3rd class 391/231B, 2nd-class sleeper lower/upper 541/491B) arriving at 7.45pm and 5.35am, respectively.

An express train leaves Bangkok at 10pm and arrives in Chiang Mai at 12.25pm (2nd/3rd class 431/271B, 2nd-class air-con 541B, 2nd-class sleeper lower/upper 581/531B, 2nd-class air-con sleeper lower/upper 821/751B).

Sprinter trains leave Bangkok at 8.30am and 7.20pm, arriving in Chiang Mai at 8.20pm and 7.30am respectively (2nd-class air-con 611B).

Special Express trains leave at 6pm and 7.35pm, arriving at 6.30am and 9.20am (1st-class air-con sleeper 1353B, 2nd-class air-con sleeper lower/upper 881/791B).

Berths on sleepers to Chiang Mai are increasingly hard to reserve without booking well in advance; tour groups sometimes book entire cars. The return trip from Chiang Mai to Bangkok doesn't seem to be as difficult, except during the Songkran (mid-April) and Chinese New Year (late February to early March) holiday periods.

Try and book as well in advance as possible and at least a day in advance for seats (rather than sleepers). To book, either go to Bangkok's Hualamphong station, Chiang Mai station or any major train station in person. Alternatively, email the **State Railway of Thailand** (passenger-ser@railway.co.th) at least two weeks before your journey. You will receive an email confirming the booking. Pick up and pay for tickets an hour before leaving at the scheduled departure train station.

Chiang Mai's neat and tidy **train station** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5324 5364; Th Charoen Muang) has an ATM and two advance booking offices: one at the regular ticket windows outdoors (open 24 hours), the other in a more comfortable air-con office (open 6am to 6pm). These booking offices have a computerised reservation system through which you can book train seats for anywhere in Thailand up to 60 days in advance. It's advisable to check out current timetables and prices on www.railway.co.th/www.thailandrailway.com or by calling ☎ 0 2220 4334 or ☎ 1690, but it's not possible to book on the websites or over the phone.

There is a left-luggage facility in the station that is open 4.50am to 8.45pm. The cost is 10B per piece for the first five days and 15B per piece thereafter, with a 20-day maximum.

## GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

There is only one licensed airport taxi service, charging 120B per car. Pick up a ticket at the taxi kiosk just outside the baggage-claim area, then present your ticket to the taxi drivers outside by the main arrival area exit. The airport is only two to three kilometres from the city centre. Public buses number 4 (red sǎwngthǎew, 15B) and number 10 (white bus, 10B) run from the airport to Th Tha Pae from 6am to 9pm daily.

You can charter a túk-túk or red sǎwngthǎew from the centre of Chiang Mai to the airport for 60B or 70B.

## Bicycle

Cycling is a good way to get around Chiang Mai if you don't mind a little traffic and, at the denser intersections, vehicular fumes. The city is small enough so that everywhere is accessible by bicycle, including Chiang Mai University, Wat U Mong, Wat Suan Dok and the Chiang Mai National Museum on the outskirts of town.

If you have your own bicycle with you and need repairs or hard-to-find parts, your best bet is a Canadian-owned **Top Gear Bike Shop** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5323 3450; topgearbike@hotmail.com; 173 Th Chang Mai), near Soi 2.

Basic Chinese- or Thai-manufactured bicycles can be rented for around 30B to 50B a day from some guesthouses or from various places along the east moat:

**Contact Travel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5381 2444; www.activethailand.com; 73/7 Th Charoen Prathet) Rents rugged 21-speed mountain bikes for 200B a day. Also operates cycling tours around the province.

**Velocity** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5341 0665; velocity@thaimail.com; 177 Th Chang Pheuk) Rents mountain and racing bikes, offers guided tours and carries all kinds of cycling accessories.

## Bus

After much protracted talk and studies concerning a Mass Transit System to alleviate Chiang Mai's traffic congestion (see p324), a bus system has finally emerged. There are four new routes – numbers 2, 4, 6 and 8 – in addition to number 10, an existing bus route.

White air-con buses ply routes 2, 6 and 10. Numbered red sǎwngthǎew follow routes 4 and 8. The air-con buses cost 10B per person and the sǎwngthǎew (on these routes) charge 15B. With no number allotted, yellow sǎwngthǎew (or the purple line on the map) run from Th Praisani (the road running along Mae Ping River near Warorot Market), stop at Chang Pheuk bus station, Rajabhat University and finally, Mae Rim.

Maps of these routes can be found in most free publications around Chiang Mai, or pick one up at TAT. These services run every 15 minutes from 6am to 9pm daily.

## BUS ROUTES

### No 2 white air-con bus (10B fixed price)

Starts from the Chiang Mai Nong Hoi Area Office; Th Chiang Mai-Lamphun; Th Charoenrat; Th Superhighway 11; Th Chotana; 7th Field Artillery Battalion (Mae Rim).

### No 4 red sǎwngthǎew (15B fixed price)

Starts from Carrefour supermarket; Arcade Bus Station, Th Kaew Nawarat; Th Thung Hotel; Th Charoen Muang; Railway Station; Th Chang Moi; Warorot Market; Th Moon Muang; Pratu Tha Pae; Th Bamrungburi; Pratu Chiang Mai; Thanon Wualai; Old Cultural Centre; Central Airport Plaza; Airport.

### No 6 white air-con bus (10B fixed price)

Starts from Chiang Mai Nong Hoi Area Office; Th Superhighway 11; Arcade Bus Station; Th Superhighway 11; Th Chotana; Rajabhat University; Th Chang Pheuk, Chang Pheuk Bus Station; Th Superhighway 11; Th Huay Kaew; Chiang Mai University; Th Suthep; Th Arak; Pratu Suan Prung; Th Om Muang; Th Mahidon; Airport; Th Superhighway 11; Th Charoen Prathet; Alliance Française; Th Tha Pae; Th Chang Klan; Chiang Mai Nong Hoi Area Office.

### No 8 red sǎwngthǎew (15B fixed price)

Starts from Chiang Mai International Airport; Th Mahidon; Th Bunreuangrit; Th Mani Nopparat; Computer Plaza; Th Cheung Pheuk; Cheung Pheuk bus station; Th Chotana; City Hall.

### No 10 white air-con bus (10B fixed price)

Starts from Kwan Wieng Village; Th Wualai; Th Sri Donchai; Th Chang Khlan; Th Tha Phae; Th Chang Moi; Th Moon Muang; Th Ratchawithi; Th Phra Pokklao; Th Mani Nopparat; Th Bunreuangrit; Th Mahidol; Airport; Kwan Wieng Village.

At the time of writing this seemed to be a fledgling service. Most Chiang Mai residents still take the regular *sǎwngthǎew* and many also own their own bicycles or motorcycles.

### Cars & Trucks

Rental cars, 4WDs and minivans are available at several locations throughout the city. Be sure that the vehicle you rent has insurance (liability) coverage – ask to see the documents and carry a photocopy with you while driving. Petrol is always extra.

It's important to choose a car-rental agency carefully, by reputation rather than what's on paper. Whatever happens, you're still responsible for personal injury and medical payments of anyone injured in connection with a traffic accident.

Two of the most well-regarded agencies are **North Wheels** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5387 4478; www.northwheels.com; 70/4-8 Th Chaiyaphum) opposite Talat Somphet, and **Journey** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5320 8787; www.journeycnx.com; 283 Th Tha Phae), near Pratu Tha Phae. Both offer hotel pick-up and delivery as well as 24-hour emergency road service, along with insurance. Sample rentals at North Wheels include a Toyota Soluna for 1000B a day and 4WD pick-up trucks from 1300B a day (plus an extra 500B for driver). Journey rents 4WD Suzuki Caribians for 800B per day.

Both companies offer discounted weekly and monthly rates.

The good-value and highly recommended **Alternative Travel** (☎ 08 1784 4856, 08 9632 6556; noree9000@hotmail.com; 56 Mu, 9 Th Mea Faek Mai) offers customised tours, with English-speaking drivers, in Toyota sedans, 4WD trucks or vans (1500B to 2000B a day). Contact Winai to discuss car or itinerary options.

Other car-rental agencies in town include the following:

**Avis Royal Princess Hotel** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5328 1033; 122 Th Chang Khlan); **Chiang Mai International Airport** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5320 1798-9)

**Budget** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5320 2871; Chiang Mai International Airport)

**National Car Rental** (Map pp276-7; ☎ 0 5321 0118; Amari Rincome Hotel, 1 Th Nimmanhaemin)

### MOTORCYCLES

If you are planning to hire a motorcycle, Honda Dream 100cc step-throughs can be rented for about 150B a day, depending on the season, the condition of the motorcycle and the length of rental. Slightly larger bikes are also available. The 125cc to 150cc Hondas or Yamahas rent for 200B to 250B a day. Motorcycles bigger than 150cc are less ubiquitous but you can usually find 250cc Japanese off-road motorcycles (600B) or 400cc motorcy-

cles (700B to 800B) at agencies specialising in larger motorcycles.

Prices are very competitive in Chiang Mai because there's a real glut of motorcycles. For two people, it's cheaper to rent a small motorcycle for the day to visit Doi Suthep than to go up and back in a *sǎwngthǎew*.

Motorcycle rental places come and go with the seasons. Many of them are lined up along the eastern side of the moat on Th Moon Muang and Th Kotchasan. Among the more established and more reliable are the following:

**Dang Bike Hire** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 1524; 23 Th Kotchasan)

**Mr Mechanic** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5321 4708; Th Moon Muang, 4 Soi 5)

**Pop Rent-A-Car** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 0 5327 6014; Th Kotchasan, near Soi 2)

**Tony's Big Bikes** (Map pp280-1; ☎ 08 6730 1088; cookyboy9@yahoo.com; 17 Th Rachamanka) Rents 125-400cc motorbikes. Also offers motorcycle lessons and tours (see p289).

The motorcycle rental agencies offer motorcycle insurance for around 50B a day, not a bad investment considering you could face a 25,000B to 60,000B liability if your bike is stolen. Most policies have a high deductible (excess), so in cases of theft you're usually responsible for a third to half of the motorcycle's value – even with insurance.

More casual rental places that specialise in quick, easy and cheap rentals of 100cc bikes can be found along Th Moon Muang.

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).

### Metered Taxi

Fares start at 40B for the first 2km, plus 5B for each additional kilometre. However, it is very rare to see a metered taxi to flag down in Chiang Mai. Call for a pick-up instead on **Taxi Meter** (☎ 0 5327 1242/9291).

### Sǎwngthǎew, Túk-Túk & Sǎamlǎw

Hordes of red *sǎwngthǎew* ply the streets of Chiang Mai looking for passengers. Flag one down, state your destination and if it is going that way you can ride for 15B to 20B. It's best to board one that already has passengers if you're worried about getting overcharged. If you're going, say, from Pratu Tha Phae to

Talat Warorot – a relatively short and well-travelled distance – you shouldn't have to pay more than the normal 15B fare. You can charter (*mǎo*) a *sǎwngthǎew* anywhere in the city for 700B or less.

Túk-túk work only on a charter or taxi basis, at 30B for short trips and 40B to 60B for longer ones. After midnight in entertainment areas such as along Th Charoenrat near the Riverside Bar & Restaurant and Le Brasserie, or down towards Smooth, most túk-túk charge a flat 60B for any trip back across the river.

Chiang Mai still has loads of *sǎamlǎw* (pedicabs), especially in the old city around Talat Warorot. *Sǎamlǎw* cost around 20B to 30B for most trips.

## NORTHERN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE

The north of Chiang Mai province is packed with interesting attractions, most of which are within a half day's travel of the city. Among the highlights are the sacred Doi Suthep and its surrounding national park; the beautiful Ma Sa Valley and the many scenic options dotted along its route; and the impressive cave and forest trekking around Chiang Dao.

### DOI SUTHEP-PUI NATIONAL PARK

ดอยสุเทพ

Sixteen kilometres northwest of Chiang Mai is Doi Suthep (1676m), a peak named after the hermit Sudeva, who lived on the mountain's slopes for many years. Near its summit is **Wat Phra That Doi Suthep** (entrance fee 30B, tram fee 20B); first established in 1383 under King Kue Naone, it is one of the north's most sacred temples. At the end of the winding road up the mountain, a staircase of 306 steps leads to the wat. You also have the option of riding a tram from the parking lot to the wat grounds.

At the top, weather permitting, there are some fine views of Chiang Mai. Inside the cloister is an exquisite Lanna-style, copper-plated *chedi* topped by a five-tiered gold umbrella – one of the holiest *chedi* in Thailand.

Within the monastery compound, the **International Buddhism Center** (IBC; ☎ 0 5329 5012; www.fivethousandyears.org; admission free, donations appreciated) offers informal chats and discussion (1pm to

### MASS TRANSIT FOR CHIANG MAI?

Ever since Chiang Mai's original four-line city bus system was closed down in 1997, both residents and visitors have lamented the lack of regular public transport in the city. In the meantime private vehicle use has grown tremendously, with concomitant traffic jams and noxious auto emissions.

In 2004, the municipal government hired experts at Chiang Mai University to carry out a feasibility study for Chiang Mai mass transit, to be funded in part at the national level. The main objective was to establish a light electric rail system, supplemented by air-conditioned buses and private metered taxis.

The biggest roadblock standing in the way of the plan is the powerful red *sǎwngthǎew* mafia, who have bribed, cajoled and physically threatened all newcomers who have tried to provide other forms of local transport. As is obvious to everyone who lives in Chiang Mai, the over-abundant *sǎwngthǎew* tend to exacerbate, rather than relieve, local traffic congestion.

In 2006, a new bus system did finally materialise, with five lines running from 6am to 9pm (see p323). Three of these lines are run by sparkling, white air-con buses. However, the *sǎwngthǎew* mafia managed to muscle in again, claiming the two other lines for themselves, charging 5B more, and managing to get subsidised by City Hall for doing it! At the time of writing this bus service seemed rather unconvincing and sporadic, and most people were still using their private transport or the usual red *sǎwngthǎew* to get around.

There is still no sign or real news of the proposed 25 electric trams or 300 metered taxis on the streets of Chiang Mai. But with the pesky reds still with such control over transport in the city it is not a surprise.



3pm daily) as well as chanting (6pm). It is possible to do a three-day meditation retreat here but it is preferred that meditators start with the 21-day Vipassana foundation course.

About 4km beyond Wat Phra That Doi Suthep is **Phra Tamnak Phu Phing**, a winter palace for the royal family with **palace gardens** (admission 50B; ☎ 8.30am-11.30am & 1-3.30pm). It closes if the royal family are visiting.

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 paved market selling Hmong crafts and other souvenirs, and there are some Nepalese stalls. There is a tiny

**museum** (10B) giving some information about hill tribes and opium production.

Most visitors do a quick tour of the temple, the Hmong village and perhaps the winter palace grounds, altogether missing the surrounding park. This 265-sq-km **reserve** (adult/child under 14 yrs 200/100B; ☎ 8am-sunset) is home to more than 300 bird species and nearly 2000 species of ferns and flowering plants. Because of its proximity to urban Chiang Mai, development of the park has become a very sensitive issue. The western side of the park has been severely disturbed by poachers and land encroachers, including around 500 hill-tribe families, and the Night Safari (see p289) has caused controversy by taking over parts of national park land.

There are extensive hiking trails in the park, including one that climbs the 1685m Doi Pui; the summit is a favourite picnic spot. If you're cycling or driving to the summit, you can stop off along the way at **Nam Tok Monthathon** (admission adult/child 400/200B; ☎ 8am-sunset), 2.5km off the paved road to Doi Suthep. The trail is well marked; if you're interested in checking the waterfalls out, have the *sǎwngthǎew* driver drop you off on the way up the mountain. Pools beneath the falls hold water year-round, although swimming is best during or just after the annual monsoon. The falls can be a little crowded on weekends. The 200B fee allows you to visit other waterfalls on the road to Suthep.

Other trails pass Hmong villages that rarely get foreign visitors. For a less commercialised Hmong village than Doi Pui, instead of going left on the road past the palace head right. Look out for the sign saying 'Kun Chang Kian Mong Village – 7km'. The road is paved until you hit the Doi Pui camp ground, and from there it is dirt track for 3km to the village (difficult to travel along in the rainy season). In between the camp ground and the village is a **coffee plantation** where you can stop and have a cup of coffee or stay the night in basic accommodation (room 150B) with fantastic views.

Accommodation in the national park includes smart **bungalows** (☎ 0 5329 5014; doisuthep\_pui@hotmail.com; r from 500B) about 1km north of the wat by the park headquarters. From here a 4km trail leads to the scenic and more isolated Nam Tok Sai Yai (Sai Yai waterfalls), and connects with a trail that leads to Nam Tok Monthathon. There is also the **Doi Pui camp ground** (☎ 0 5329 5014; doisuthep\_pui@hotmail.com; 2/4/7 person tent 150/225/300B). Sleeping bags, gas fires, pots and pans are also available to hire. There's a good information centre at the camp ground, with an exhibition of the flora and fauna of the park, and the agricultural calendar of the hill tribes. Mountain bikes (200B) can be hired here for some fat-tired fun.

### Getting There & Away

Sǎwngthǎew to Doi Suthep leave Chiang Mai throughout the day from the western end of Th Huay Kaew in front of Chiang Mai University. Doi Suthep sǎwngthǎew fares are 50B there and 40B back, per person. Sǎwngthǎew also depart from Pratu Chang Pheuk and the Chiang Mai Zoo. To Phra Tamnak Phu Phing

and Doi Pui add 30B in each direction. It is worth hiring a motorbike to get up to the wat and explore the surrounding park.

### HUAY TEUNG THAO RESERVOIR

อ่างเก็บน้ำห้วยตึงเตา

Head for this sizeable **reservoir** (admission free; ☎ 8am-sunset), about 12km northwest of the city, if you're in the mood for an all-day swim and picnic, especially during the hotter months. Windsurfing equipment can be rented for around 150B an hour.

If you don't bring your own, food is available from vendors at the lake, who maintain small bamboo-thatch huts over the water's edge for people to sit in. The local speciality is *kǎng tǎn* (dancing shrimp), freshwater shrimp served live in a piquant sauce of lime juice and *phrik laap* (a northern Thai blend of spicy herbs and chillies). Fishing is permitted if you'd like to try your luck at hooking lunch.

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.

Cyclists would do best to pedal to the reservoir via Th Khan Khlong Chonlaprathan. Head west on Th Huay Kaew, then turn right just before the canal. Follow Th Khan Khlong Chonlaprathan north until it ends at a smaller road between the reservoir and the highway; turn left here and you'll reach the lake after another kilometre or so of pedalling. From the northwestern corner of the moat, the 12km bicycle ride takes about an hour.

### MAE SA VALLEY & SAMOENG

น้ำตกแม่สา/สะเมิง

This forested loop northwest of Chiang Mai via Mae Rim and/or Hang Dong makes a good day or overnight trip. Although dotted with tourist developments – resorts, orchid farms, butterfly parks, elephant camps, snake farms, botanic gardens, antique and handicraft shops – the Rte 1096/1269 loop through the Mae Sa Valley is very scenic in spots.

The two orchid farms you'll see along this route are the **Mae Rim Orchid Farm** (☎ 0 5329 8801; entrance 40B; ☎ 7am-5pm) and **Sai Namphung Orchid Nursery** (☎ 0 5329 8771; entrance 40B; ☎ 7am-5pm). Both have butterfly enclosures. Mae Rim Orchid Farm is rather run down but sells pretty orchid leaf jewellery at good prices. Sai Namphung is better kept and has more beautiful



orchid displays, but the focus here is more onselling the (overpriced) jewellery rather than giving information on orchids.

**Mae Sa Waterfall** (Nam Tok Mae Sa; entrance 200B) is only 6km from the Mae Rim turn-off from Rte 107, which in turn is 12km north of Chiang Mai. Further along the loop are several Hmong villages.

There are at least four places along the loop that call themselves elephant 'camp', 'farm' or 'village'. Best of the bunch is the **Maesa Elephant Camp** (☎ 0 5320 6247; www.maesaelephantcamp.com; show adult/child 120/80B), near Mae Sa Waterfall, where the elephants seem to be treated well. One hour shows (8am and 9.40am daily, plus 1.30pm during high season) feature elephants playing musical instruments, painting pictures, kicking footballs and stacking logs. Fun for kids but for adults we found it uncomfortable to watch the elephants perform. Feed the elephants sugar cane and bananas afterwards, and visit the baby elephants in their nursery and training school. Elephant rides in the forest (for two people, 30 minutes/1hour 800/1200B) and mahout courses are also available.

Two kilometres past the elephant camp is the **Queen Sirikit Botanical Gardens** (☎ 0 5384 1000; www.qsbg.org; admission 20B, car 100B (excluding individual admission); ☎ 8.30am-5pm). There are some lovely walks here, such as the Thai Plants and Medicinal Herbs Trail or the Climber Trail. It's a nice place to have a picnic too. The glasshouses and gardens feature an impressive array of plants and flowers. Take the provided bus (30B) or your own car to get around the whole facility. Motorbikes are not allowed in the gardens.

Top-end resorts dot this route (see p300).

The drive to Samoeng – at the westernmost extension of the loop (35km from Mae Rim) – is a beautiful one. If you want to stay here before following the loop back down to Chiang Mai, **Samoeng Resort** (☎ 08 9955 6811; r 200-400B; 🍽️), about 2.5km outside Samoeng village itself, has 15 basic bungalows in a garden setting.

## Getting There & Away

You can get a sawngthäew to Samoeng from the Chang Pheuk bus terminal in Chiang Mai for 50B. There are two daily departures, one that leaves around 9am and another at 11am. It takes 2¾ hours to reach Samoeng from Chiang Mai. In Samoeng the vehicles stop near the market, across from Samoeng Hospital.

Since it's paved all the way, the winding loop road makes a good ride by bicycle or motorcycle. From Samoeng you can take a northwest detour along Rte 1265 to Rte 1095 for Pai and Mae Hong Son; the 148km road breaks north at the Karen village of Wat Chan, where fuel is available. The road passes by a few Hmong and Karen villages.

## MAE TAENG

แม่แตง

The mountainous area around Mae Taeng – especially southwest of the junction of Rtes 107 and 1095 – has become a major trekking area because of the variety of Lisu, Lahu, Karen and Hmong villages in the region. **White-water rafting** along Mae Taeng is popular. It is often easier to arrange a trip from Chiang Mai through a company like **Chiang Mai Adventure** (☎ 0 5341 8197; www.chiangmaiadventure.co.th; 13/1 Th Sriphoom), who specialise in white-water rafting along this river.

## CHIANG DAO

เชียงดาว

Best known for its cave complex, Chiang Dao is also a good base to explore the trekking and bird-watching opportunities of Doi Chiang Dao. The area surrounding Chiang Dao town is scenic and largely unspoiled. From the summit of Doi Chiang Dao (also called Doi Luang; 2195m), allegedly Thailand's highest limestone mountain, there are spectacular views.

There is a market every day at the northern end on the main street through Chiang Dao. It is worth coming into town to see the colourful **Tuesday morning market** (7am-12am), when hill tribes come to sell their wares. Most accommodation is in the vicinity of Tham Chiang Dao, 5km west of town. There is an ATM machine at the 7-Eleven near the bus stop for Fang.

From the main four-way junction at Chiang Dao, those with their own wheels – preferably a mountain bike, motorcycle or truck – can head east 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.

## Sights

### ELEPHANT TRAINING CENTRE CHIANG DAO

The **Elephant Training Centre** (☎ 0 5386 2037; Km 56, Rte 107; show adult/child 60/30B), off Rte 107 be-

tween Mae Taeng and Chiang Dao, is one of several training centres in the area that puts on elephant shows (9am and 10am daily) for tourists. It is in a beautiful spot and feels more intimate than the Maesa Elephant Camp. Elephant rides in the forest (2 people, 30 minutes/1 hour 800/1200B) and bamboo rafting (up to three people, one hour, 400B per person) are also offered. If you haven't seen the elephant training center in Lampang Province (in Thung Kwian), this is a reasonable alternative.

## THAM CHIANG DAO

ถ้ำเชียงดาว

The main attraction along the way to Fang and Tha Ton is this **cave complex** (admission 20B), 5km west of Rte 107 and 72km north of Chiang Mai.

The complex is said to extend some 10km to 14km into Doi Chiang Dao; the interconnected caverns that are open to the public include Tham Mah (735m long), Tham Kaew (474m), Tham Phra Non (360m) and Tham Nam (660m).

Tham Phra Non contains religious statuary and is electrically illuminated (and thus easily explored on one's own), while Tham Mah, Tham Kaew and Tham Nam have no light fixtures. A guide with a pressurised gas lantern can be hired for 100B for up to five people. The interior cave formations are quite spectacular in places – more than 100 of them are named.

Local legend says this cave complex was the home of a *reusii* (hermit) for a thousand years. As the legend goes, the sage was on such intimate terms with the deity world that he convinced some *thewádaa* (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. No, you won't find any of the seven wonders; the locals say these are much deeper inside the mountain, beyond the last of the illuminated caverns.

The locals also say that anyone who attempts to remove a piece of rock from the cave will forever lose their way in the cave's eerie passages.

There is a wat complex outside the cavern, and a stream with huge carp and catfish you

can feed. Vendors by the parking lot sell medicinal roots and herbs.

From the summit of the 2195m **Doi Chiang Dao** (also called Doi Luang), allegedly Thailand's highest limestone mountain, there are spectacular views. Beyond Tham Chiang Dao along the same rural road is a smaller sacred cave retreat complex, **Samnak Song Tham Pha Plong** (Tham Pha Plong Monastic Centre), where Buddhist monks sometimes meditate. A long, steep stairway leads to a large *chedi* beautifully framed by forest and limestone cliffs.

## Sleeping

Over the last five years or so, Chiang Dao has enjoyed a surge in popularity among visitors who have discovered there's more to the area than just Tham Chiang Dao.

For arranging activities like hiking and bird-watching, Malee's and Chiang Dao Nest are the most established, although, some of the other guesthouses have better value accommodation.

**Pieng Dao Hotel** (☎ 0 5345 5165; Ban Chiang Dao, Rte 107; r 150-250B) In town, this old-style wooden hotel has basic but clean rooms with shared hot-water showers and 'ensuites' with cold-water showers. It can get noisy being by the road.

☐ **Chiang Dao Rainbow** (☎ 08 4803 8116; www.chiangdao-rainbow.com; r 300-600B) Down a side road, past the market and the wat (on the way to Fang) is a side road to the sign-posted Chiang Dao Rainbow. The two, great value, recycled teak bungalows, with four-poster bed, smart furniture and terraces, look out onto rice fields, a stream and dramatic views of Doi Chiang Dao. There are also spick-and-span cheaper rooms in the house at the back. Run by an ex-Oxford professor and partner, they do cycle and car tours of the area, with an educational bent. The restaurant here has had great reviews.

**Chiang Dao Inn Hotel** (☎ 0 5345 5134; 20 Mu 6, Rte 107; r 500-650B, ste 1500B) If you need to stay in the middle of town, this Thai business hotel (an older wooden wing, plus a modern L-shaped wing) is old-fashioned but comfortable, clean and friendly.

☐ **Chiang Dao Nest** (☎ 0 6017 1985; www.chiangdao.com; bungalows 695B; 🍽️) About 2km past the entrance to the Tham Chiang Dao, the setting for the ten A-frame bungalows here delivers excellent forest and mountain views. The

friendly owners, an Englishman and his Thai wife, can arrange trekking and bird-watching. Even if you don't stay here, pop over for a meal at the award-winning restaurant.

**Chiang Dao Nest 2** (☎ 0 5345 6242; www.chiangdao.com; bungalows 695B; 📍) A slightly newer branch, with the same owners as Chiang Dao Nest, this is a cluster of five bungalows with great views, about 600m past the cave turn-off on the left side of the road. The restaurant at Chiang Dao Nest 2 focuses on Thai cuisine.

**Nature Guest House** (☎ 08 9955 9074; r 400-700B) The nearest guesthouse to town and 3km from the cave, this quiet place is set in a neat garden with mountain views. The four A-frame wooden bungalows with terraces are simple yet stylish. Breakfast is available.

**Malee's Nature Lovers Bungalows** (☎ 0 1961 8387; r 250-1100B) The pioneer of eco-friendly tourism in the area, Malee's is about 1.3km past the entrance to Tham Chiang Dao (heading towards the mountains). Friendly and knowledgeable Thai owner Malee has a range of thatch-and-brick bungalows, as well as a restaurant on site. The cheaper rooms could do with a spruce up. Malee can arrange trekking, rafting and bird-watching. Mountain bikes are available for rent.

## Eating

You wouldn't have thought it a few years ago – but Chiang Dao is fast becoming a spot for foodies.

**Baan Krating Chiang Dao** (☎ 0 5345 5577; km 63, Rte 107; dishes 50-110B) Located 9km before the town of Chiang Dao on Rte 107 (coming from Chiang Mai), this is a good place to stop en route. The restaurant overlooks manicured gardens, pomelo trees and a stream. Dishes like deep-fried chicken in pandanus leaves are served, as well as sandwiches and salads.

**Café-café** (☎ 08 6179 6300; Ban Chiang Dao; dishes 40-135B). Next to the bus stop for Chiang Mai (and opposite the bus stop for Fang), this café is run by a Thai-French couple. If you crave some Western food, this new modern place has large breakfasts, good coffee, great baguettes and burgers, yummy ice cream, and some Thai food. There is a TV for big sports games, and motorbikes to rent.

**Chiang Dao Rainbow** (☎ 08 4803 8116; www.chiangdao-rainbow.com; dishes 50-230B) This highly recommended restaurant offers two menus – northern Thai and Greek/Mediterranean. Its Shan pork stew and banana flower salad has

been raved about, and gourmet dishes like stuffed squid and baked prawns with goat cheese work well. There are plenty of vegetarian options too.

**Mon and Kurt Restaurant** (dishes 40-280B) On the main road near the turn-off for Chiang Dao Rainbow, this place is good for big breakfasts, as well as Thai and Western food.

**Chiang Dao Nest** (☎ 0 6017 1985; www.chiangdao.com; dishes 95-375B) Included in Thailand Tatler's best restaurant list 2006, Chiang Dao Nest serves sophisticated European food in a relaxed setting. The lunch and dinner menu changes every three to four days, reflecting what's best to be found locally. Dishes like pork tenderloin wrapped in bacon with a roasted shallot sauce are delicious.

Across the main road from Pieng Dao Hotel in Chiang Dao town is **Pon Pen** (dishes 20-25B). Choose from the tasty dishes on display, like chicken and ginger with bamboo shoots, as well as various other curries and salads.

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.

## Getting Around

From town you can easily charter săwngthăew (120B) or motorbike taxis (50B) to guesthouses like Malee's or Chiang Dao Nest. To get to the cave from town costs around 100B with a săwngthăew or 30B on a motorbike taxi.

## Getting There & Away

Buses to Chiang Dao from Chiang Mai's Chang Pheuk terminal depart every 30 minutes between 6am and 6pm (40B, 1½ hours). From Chiang Dao, departures are the same and leave from next to Café-café. Almost opposite the same café you can catch a bus to Fang (50B).

## DOI ANG KHANG

ดอยอ่างขาง

About 20km before Fang is the turn-off for Rte 1249 to Doi Ang Khang, Thailand's 'Little Switzerland'. Twenty-five kilometres from the highway, this 1300m peak has a cool climate year-round and supports the cultivation of flowers, fruits and vegetables that are usually found only in more temperate climates.

A few hill-tribe villages such as Ban Luang, Ban Khum, Ban Pang Ma, Nor Lae and Kob

Dong can be visited on the slopes. Many of these villages are supported by royal agricultural projects. TAT in Chiang Mai has a basic map of Doi Ang Khang outlining cycling routes and treks to villages. A good source of information on Doi Ang Khang is Mr Macku, who runs the eco-friendly Angkhang Nature Resort (see below) and can arrange cycling, mule riding and trekking to hill-tribe villages in the area.

Nineteen kilometres before the turn-off to Doi Ang Khang, you can make a 12km detour west off Rte 107 onto a dirt road to visit Ban Mai Nong Bua, a Kuomintang (KMT) village with an old-fashioned Yunnanese feel.

A more scenic route is the 'back road' to Doi Ang Khang via Rte 1178, which winds along a ridge to the mountain's western slopes. Along this route, Ban Arunothai was until recently visited regularly by United Wa (Myanmar Special Region 2) State Army soldiers who were moving *yaa baa* (crude amphetamine pills) from across the border in Myanmar to the Thai market. On this road up to Doi Ang Khang, the village of Ban Luang is another interesting stopover for a Yunnanese atmosphere. In the vicinity, you'll see plenty of ponies and mules still used to transport local goods.

Near the summit of Doi Ang Khang and the Yunnanese village of Ban Khum, there are several places to stay.

Part of the Amari Hotel Group, **Angkhang Nature Resort** (☎ 0 5345 0110; www.amari.com/angkhang; 1/1 Mu 5, Ban Khum, Tambon Mae Ngan, Fang; r 3000-3900B; 📍 🚶) is an unexpectedly plush hotel featuring large, tastefully designed bungalows spread over a slope. The huge, attractive lobby boasts stone fireplaces at either end for use in the cool season. There is a good restaurant on the premises that uses organic produce from the nearby Royal Agricultural Project. Mr Macku, who runs the resort, is a great source of information on the area, and arranges trekking to hill tribe villages, mountain-bike and mule-riding trips, and bird-watching. Call to arrange for transfers to the resort.

**Naha Guest House** (☎ 0 5345 0008; Ban Khum, Tambon Mae Ngan, Fang; per person 350B) has large eight-person bungalows with shared hot-water shower and toilet.

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

If not using your own transport to get around Doi Ang Khang, catch a bus heading to Fang from Chiang Mai's Chang Pheuk terminal (every half hour, 8.30am to 4.30pm). About 20km before Fang there is a junction and turn-off for Rte 1249 to Doi Ang Khang. Get off here and take a săwngthăew (50B, or 500B chartered) for the 30 minute/25km trip up to Ban Khum (where the accommodation is) near the summit.

## FANG & THA TON

ฟาง/ท่าตอง

North from Chiang Mai along Rte 107, the city of Fang was originally founded by Phaya Mengrai in the 13th century, although as a human settlement and trading centre for *jiin haw* caravans, the locale dates back at least 1000 years. More recently the surrounding district has become a conduit for *yaa baa* manufactured by the Wa in Myanmar.

Although Fang may not look particularly inviting at first pass, the town's quiet backstreets are lined with some interesting little shops in wooden buildings. The Shan/Burmese-style Wat Jong Paen (near the New Wiang Kaew Hotel) has a very impressive stacked-roof *wihāan*.

There are Mien and Karen villages nearby that you can visit on your own, but for most people Fang is just a road marker on the way to Tha Ton. Most visitors also prefer Tha Ton's more rural setting to stay overnight. It's only half an hour or so by săwngthăew to the river from Fang or vice versa.

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

About 10km west of Fang at Ban Meuang Chom, near the agricultural station, is a system of hot springs that are part of Doi Fang National Park. Just ask for the *bàw nām rawn* (*baw nām hawn* in northern Thai). On weekends there are frequent săwngthăew carrying Thai picnickers from Fang to the hot springs.

Tha Ton is little more than a săwngthăew stand and a collection of river boats, restaurants and tourist accommodation along a pretty bend in Mae Nam Kok. As a tourist destination, the main focus is the river dock, launching point for Mae Nam Kok trips to Chiang Rai, with treks to the many hill-tribe settlements in the region a distant second place.

There is a **tourist police office** (☎ 1155; www.tourist.police.go.th; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm) near the bridge on the river-boat dock side. Opposite the tourist police is an internet shop and there is also a computer next door in Coffee Cup (opposite). Both charge 30B an hour.

## Sights & Activities

### TREKKING & RAFTING

There are some pleasant walks along Mae Nam Kok. Within 20km of Fang and Tha Ton you can visit local villages inhabited by Palaung (a Karenite tribe that arrived from Myanmar around 16 years ago), Black Lahu, Akha and Yunnanese on foot, mountain bike or motorcycle.

Treks and rafting trips can be arranged through any local guesthouse or hotel in Tha Ton or go to Taton Tours by the boat dock. Typical trips aboard bamboo house-rafts with pilot and cook for three days cost 2500B per person (minimum four people), including all meals, lodging and rafting.

On the first day you'll visit several villages near the river and spend the night in a Lisu village; on the second day rafters visit hot springs and more villages, and then spend the night on the raft; and on the third day you dock in Chiang Rai.

You could get a small group of travellers together and arrange your own house-raft with a guide and cook for a two- or three-day journey down river, stopping off in villages of your choice along the way. A house-raft generally costs 700B per person per day, including simple meals, and takes up to six people – so figure on 1900B for a three-day trip. Police regulations require that an experienced boat navigator accompany each raft – the river has lots of tricky spots and there have been some mishaps.

Near the Tha Ton pier, you can rent inflatable kayaks and do your own paddling in the area. Upstream a few kilometres the river crosses into Myanmar. See opposite for details on organised river trips to Chiang Rai.

### WAT THA TON

Climb the stairs up the hill to **Wat Tha Ton** (☎ 0 5345 9309; www.wat-thaton.org). There are nine different levels of the wat punctuated by shrines, Buddha statues, monks and student living-quarters, and a *chedi*. Each level affords stunning views of the mountainous valley towards Burma, and the plains of Tha Ton. It is 3km

or a 30-minute walk to the 9th level but it's sometimes possible to get a lift by car.

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. Ten-day, silent **Vipassana meditation retreats** are offered, where you stay in your own *kuti* (basic hut) and have one-on-one teaching, as well as doing your own individual practice. At the time of writing retreats started from the 1st to the 19th of each month. Visit the website to check dates and to book. It is also possible to go to the Wat between 9am and 5pm daily, where monks can teach meditation.

## Sleeping

### FANG

**Chok Thani** (☎ 0 5345 2353; r 290-450B; ☎ ) On the main road by the market, this stark looking hotel has large basic rooms with the option of air-con.

**Baan Sa-Bai Hotel** (☎ 0 5345 3453; b-sabai@hotmail.com; 88 Mu 9 Wieng; r 700B; ☎ ) Just before coming into Fang (on the road from Chiang Dao) this new, three-storey hotel looks a bit hospital like. Inside though, the large, comfortable rooms are well furnished with some Thai touches, and have cable TV.

### THA TON

#### BUDGET TO MIDRANGE

**Thaton Garden Riverside** (☎ 0 5345 9286; r 300-500B) Next to Thaton Chalet by the bridge, this spick-and-span place has a choice of air-con and fan rooms. It's worth paying the extra baht for the air-con room as you get a river terrace. There is also a restaurant overlooking the river.

**Apple Guest House** (r 350-500B) Conveniently located opposite the boat landing, the rooms in this two-storey building are spacious, light and well equipped. There's a restaurant on the ground floor.

**Garden Home** (☎ 0 5337 3015; r 300-1500B) A tranquil place along the river, about 150m from the bridge, with thatch-roofed bungalows spaced well apart among lots of litchi trees and bougainvillea. There are also a few stone bungalows, and three larger, more luxurious bungalows on the river with small verandas, a TV and fridge. From the bridge, turn left at the Thaton River View Hotel sign. Motorbikes and mountain bikes are available to rent here.

**Baan Suan Riverside Resort** (☎ 0 5337 3214; fax 0 5337 3215; r incl breakfast 700-800B, bungalow 1200-1500B; ☎ )

Has small cement air-con bungalows with terraces back from the river; fan rooms in a cement building, also back off the river; and a couple of large air-con wooden bungalows with terraces right on the river. With its cheap furniture the bungalows are overpriced. The grounds are beautifully landscaped and an attached restaurant overlooks the river.

### TOP END

**Thaton River View Hotel** (☎ 0 5337 3173; fax 0 5345 9288; r incl breakfast 1530B; ☎ ) Further upstream along the river, this quiet resort hotel has 33 rooms facing the river, joined by wooden walkways lined with frangipani trees. The rooms are stylishly decorated but there are no decent chairs on the terraces. The restaurant at the hotel is the best in the area.

**Thaton Chalet** (☎ 0 5337 3155/7; www.thatonchalet.com; 1400-2200B; ☎ ) A four-storey hotel next to the bridge, with stone façade. The comfortable rooms have a good view of the river and standard 4-star facilities but blankets are bobbly and it feels a little old-fashioned. The hotel features a pleasant beer garden right on the river, as well as an indoor restaurant.

**Maekok River Village Resort** (☎ 0 5345 9355; www.track-of-the-tiger.com; r 2625-4275B; ☎ ) On the boat-dock side, downstream along the river, this sprawling affair offers four-bed family rooms as well as two-bed poolside rooms. On the grounds are a pool and restaurant. A variety of activities including massage, cooking classes, trekking, rafting, mountain biking and caving can be arranged here. It's popular with tour groups.

## Eating

### FANG

The food stalls on the main street market are good places to eat. There are also a few restaurants serving Yunnanese specialities such as *khào sawy*, *man-thoh* (*mantou* in Mandarin; steamed buns) and *khào mòk kài*, plus *küaytiaw* (rice noodles) and other standards.

### THA TON

Most of the top-end hotels have good restaurants, particularly the **Thaton River View Hotel** (mains 60-150B) with its tasty Thai dishes served on a terrace overlooking the river and mountains.

There is a line of basic **Thai/Chinese restaurants** (dishes 20-30B) by the boat dock, and the **Coffee Cup** (dishes 60-90B; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm) – a

funky looking place that sells good breakfasts and sandwiches as well as iced and hot coffee and tea.

## Getting There & Away BUS & SÁWNGTHÁEW

Buses to Fang (80B, 3½ hours) leave from the Chang Pheuk bus terminal in Chiang Mai every 30 minutes between 6am and 6pm. Air-con minivans make the trip to Fang (120B, 3½ hours) every 30 minutes between 8am and 5pm, leaving from behind the Chang Pheuk bus terminal on the corner of Soi Sanam Kila.

From Fang it's about 23km to Tha Ton. Yellow *sáwngtháew* by the market do the 40-minute trip for 20B; the larger orange buses from Fang leave less frequently and cost 20B. Buses and *sáwngtháew* leave from near the market. Both operate from 5.30am to 5pm only.

The river isn't the only way to get to points north of Tha Ton. Yellow *sáwngtháew* leave from the northern side of the river in Tha Ton to Mae Salong in Chiang Rai Province every 90 minutes between 8am and 12.30pm (60B, 1½ hours). From there you can get another bus to Chiang Rai for 40B.

To get to Mai Sai or Chiang Rai directly take the daily 3pm bus from the bridge. It costs 50B to Mai Sai and 90B to Chiang Rai.

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 Ban Mae Malai, the junction of Rte 107 (the Chiang Mai-Fang highway) and Rte 1095, you can pick up a bus to Pai for 55B; 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 Doi Mae Salong and the village of Muang Ngam are very steep and winding – take care, especially in the rainy season. When conditions are good, the trip can be done in 1½ hours.

You can take a motorcycle on most boats to Chiang Rai for an extra charge.

## RIVER TRIP TO CHIANG RAI

From Tha Ton you can make a half-day long-tail boat trip to Chiang Rai down Mae Nam Kok. The regular passenger boat takes up to

12 passengers, leaves at 12.30pm and costs 350B per person. You can also charter a boat all the way for 2200B, which among six people works out to be about 20B more per person but gives you more room to move. A boat can be chartered any time between 8am and 3pm. The trip is a bit of a tourist trap these days as the passengers are all tourists (what local will pay 350B to take the boat when they can catch a bus to Chiang Rai for less than 90B?), and the villages along the way sell cola and souvenirs – but it's still fun. 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 in Fang or Tha Ton, take the boat trip, then stay in Chiang Rai or Chiang Saen before travelling on. You may sometimes have to get off and walk or push the boat if it gets stuck on sand bars.

Some travellers take the boat to Chiang Rai in two or three stages, stopping first in **Mae Salak**, a large Lahu village that is about a third of the distance, or **Ban Ruammit**, a Karen village about two-thirds of the way down. Both villages are well toured these days (charter boat tours stop for photos and elephant rides), but from here you can trek to other Shan, Thai and hill-tribe villages, or do longer treks south of Mae Salak to **Wawi**, a large multiethnic community of *jiin haw*, 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 might also try getting off the boat at one of the smaller villages. You can also make the trip (much more slowly) upriver from Chiang Rai – this is possible despite the rapids.

Near Ban Ruammit, on the opposite river bank (50B, 1½ hours by boat from Chiang Rai) are some pretty **hot springs**. Don't even think about entering the water – it's scalding.

From here you can hike about an hour to **Akha Hill House** (☎ 0 5374 5140, 08 9997 5505; www

#### BOAT FARES FROM THA TON

| Destination  | Fare (B) |
|--------------|----------|
| Ban Mai      | 80       |
| Mae Salak    | 90       |
| Pha Tai      | 100      |
| Jakheu       | 110      |
| Kok Noi      | 120      |
| Pha Kwang    | 140      |
| Pha Khiaw    | 250      |
| Hat Wua Dam  | 250      |
| Pong Man Ron | 300      |
| Ban Ruammit  | 300      |
| Chiang Rai   | 350      |

.akhahill.com; r 120-500B), wholly owned and managed by Akha tribespeople. The rustic guesthouse is in a beautiful setting overlooking a mountain valley; a waterfall and several other villages (Akha, Mien, Lisu, Karen and Lahu) are within walking distance. The guesthouse staff can organise overnight trips into the forest with guides who build banana-palm huts and cook meals using sections of bamboo. All of the profits from the guesthouse and its activities go back into the community and its school. Akha River House (p355) in Chiang Rai is run by the same people and has the same philosophy. Free pick-ups are available from Chiang Rai.

Several of the guesthouses in Tha Ton organise raft trips down the river – see p332.

A boat leaves once daily from **Tha Ton public pier** (☎ 0 5345 9427) at 12.30pm. The table shows boat fares from Tha Ton.

## SOUTHERN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE

Get in some extra shopping in the villages east and south of Chiang Mai, learn Vipassana meditation at the famous Wat in Chom Thong, or enjoy the natural environment of Doi Inthanon.

### BO SANG & SAN KAMPHAENG

บ่อสร้าง/สันกำแพง

Bo Sang (also often spelt 'Baw Sang' or 'Bor Sang'), 9km east of Chiang Mai on Rte 1006, is also known as the Umbrella Village because of its many umbrella manufacturers. Almost

the entire village consists of craft shops selling the painted umbrellas, fans, silverware, straw handiwork, bamboo and teak, statuary, china, celadon and lacquerware. You'll also find the textured *sa* paper, made from mulberry tree bark.

The larger shops can arrange overseas shipping at reasonable rates. As at Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, discounts are offered for bulk purchases. Some places will also pack and post parasols, apparently quite reliably.

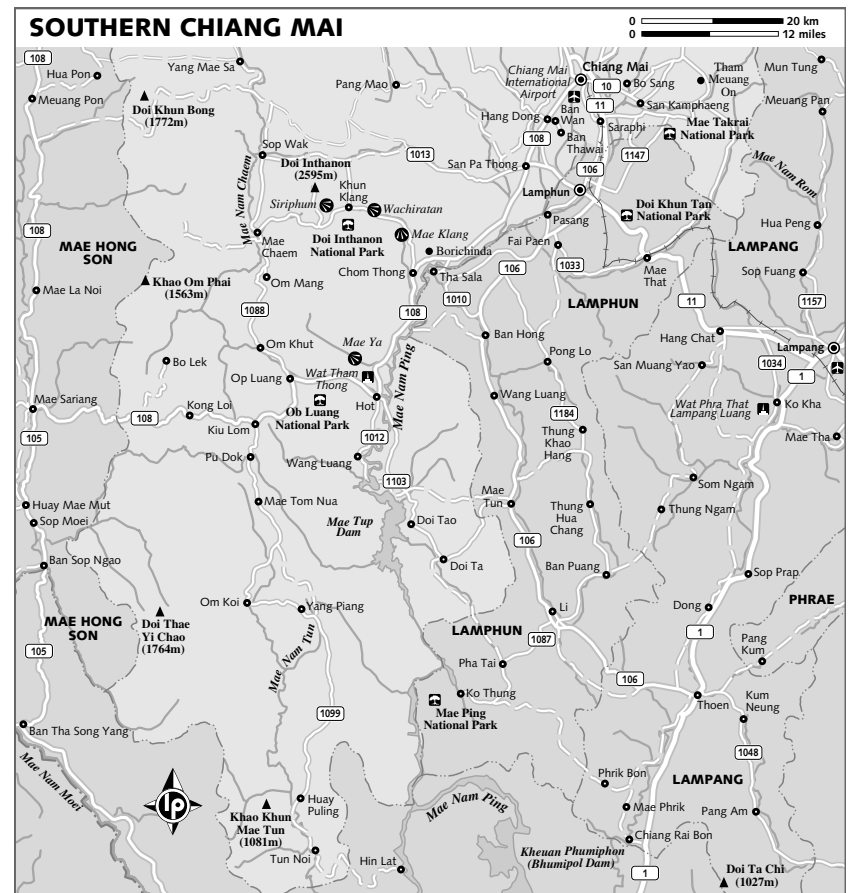
In late January the **Bo Sang Umbrella Festival** (*thètsàkaan rôm*) features a colourful umbrella procession during the day and a night-time lantern procession. Although it sounds touristy, this festival is actually a very Thai affair; a highlight is the many northern-Thai music

ensembles that perform in shopfronts along Bo Sang's main street.

Four or 5km further down Rte 1006 is San Kamphaeng, which flourishes on **cotton and silk weaving**. Shops offering finished products line the main street, although the actual weaving is done in small factories down side streets. There are some good deals to be had here, especially in silk. For cotton, you'd probably do better in Pasang (p343), a lesser-known village near Lamphun, although you may see shirt styles here not available in Pasang.

### Getting There & Away

Sàwngthàew to Bo Sang and San Kamphaeng leave Chiang Mai frequently during the day from the stop by the flower market on Th



Praisani, near the footbridge. The fare is 10B to Bo Sang and 15B to San Kamphaeng. White sawngtháew leave from Chang Pheuk bus terminal and make the trip to either destination for 10B.

## HANG DONG, BAN WAN & BAN THAWAI

ทางดง/บ้านวัน/บ้านถาว

Located 15km south of Chiang Mai on Rte 108, **Hang Dong** is famous for ceramics, wood-carving and antiques. Many of the shops here deal in wholesale as well as retail, so prices are low. Catch a bus from Pratu Chiang Mai to Hang Dong (10B). The shops are actually strung out along Rte 108, starting about 2km before Hang Dong.

Immediately east of Hang Dong there are more antique and furniture shops on Th Thakhilek (the road to Ban Thawai), an area known as **Ban Wan**, and beyond that, in **Ban Thawai**. Ban Wan generally has the best-quality furniture and antiques. Ban Thawai itself is a wood-carving village offering mostly new pieces, though very little is of high quality, as most of the goods churned out are for the tourist or overseas export markets.

A couple of shops in Ban Wan make reproductions of Thai and Burmese antique furniture using salvaged old teak, which can be good buys. **Srithong Thoprasert** (☎ 05343 3112; Th Thakhilek) and **Crossroads Asia** (☎ 05343 4650; 214/7 Th Thakhilek) are two of the better ones. They're about 500m from the main Hang Dong intersection.

**Nakee's Asia Treasures** (☎ 05344 1357; Th Thakhilek), a few hundred metres towards Ban Thawai from Srithong Thoprasert, has contemporary Thai furniture and designer accessories based on older themes, but updated for form and function (including some fusion with Santa Fe styles). It also sells good antiques – all very tasteful and of high quality.

## SAN PA THONG

สันป่าตอง

Further south down Rte 108, this overgrown village is home to a huge and lively weekly **water buffalo and cattle market** (🕒 5.30am-10am Sat). In addition to livestock, the market purveys used motorcycles and bicycles at prices that beat Chiang Mai's. If you want breakfast, there are also plenty of food vendors.

In San Pa Thong, **Kao Mai Lanna Resort Hotel** (☎ 05383 4470; www.kaomailanna.com; Km 29, Th Chiang

Mai-Hot; r 2600-3000B; 🚻 🚿) is almost reason enough to travel this far. As southern China supplanted northern Thailand as a major source of tobacco for the world cigarette industry, many tobacco-curing sheds were either abandoned or destroyed. At Kao Mai Lanna, the sheds have been converted into characterful tourist lodging. Built of brick and bamboo, and following designs imported by British tobacco brokers, each building has two floors divided into two units. All rooms are furnished with antiques or reproductions. There is a new pool and spa, and wellness weekends and tours are available. There's also free transport from the airport, train station or bus stations in Chiang Mai. Even if you don't stay here, the outdoor restaurant serves superb Thai food at very reasonable prices.

You can catch a bus or sawngtháew to San Pa Thong from the bus queue near Pratu Chiang Mai.

## CHOM THONG & AROUND

จอมทอง

Chom Thong (pronounced 'jawm thawng') is a necessary stop between Chiang Mai and Doi Inthanon (Thailand's highest peak) if you're travelling by public transport. The main temple is worth an hour's stop for its ancient *bòt*, or longer if you're interested in meditation.

## Wat Phra That Si Chom Thong

วัดพระธาตุนครจอมทอง

Walk down Chom Thong's main street to Wat Phra That Si Chom Thong. The gilded Lanna *chedi* in the compound was built in 1451 and the Burmese-Lanna-style *bòt*, built in 1516, is one of the most beautiful in northern Thailand. Inside and out it is an integrated work of art, and is well looked after by the local Thais. Fine woodcarving can be seen along the eaves of the roof and inside on the ceiling, which is supported by massive teak columns. The impressive altar is designed like a small *praasàt* (enclosed shrine), in typical Lanna style, and is said to contain a relic from the right side of the Buddha's skull.

Nearby is a glass case containing ancient Thai weaponry. Behind the *praasàt* altar is a room containing religious antiques.

There's a row of small restaurants to the right of the Wat, including **Vegetarian Restaurant** (Watjane; dishes 25B; 🕒 6am-7pm). It serves simple one-plate rice and noodle dishes that

## MEDITATION RETREATS

Under the direction of Ajahn Thong, formerly of Wat Ram Poeng in Chiang Mai, Vipassana meditation retreats in the style of the late Mahasi Sayadaw are held regularly in a lay centre at **Wat Phra That Si Chom Thong** (☎ 05382 6869, 05334 2161; kathryncindaporn@yahoo.com). The many donations given to the wat are evident in the new meditation centre and numerous *kùti* (meditation huts). It is preferred that meditation students stay a minimum of two weeks, with the optimum course lasting 21 days. However, it is sometimes possible to come for shorter periods if room is available. Foreign monks and lay people teach these well-regarded retreats. Students, who dress in white, stay in their own *kùti* at the back of the wat. The schedule is very rigorous.

substitute meat with tofu and gluten. Look for the yellow pennants out the front.

## Doi Inthanon National Park

อุทยานแห่งชาติดอยอินทนนท์

Thailand's highest peak, the 2565m Doi Inthanon (often abbreviated as Doi In) has three impressive waterfalls cascading down its slopes. Starting from the bottom these are **Nam Tok Mae Klang** (adult/child 400/200B, car/motorbike 30/20B; 🕒 8am-sunset), **Nam Tok Wachiratan** and **Nam Tok Siriphum**. Admission prices allow entry to all three sights. The first two have picnic areas and food vendors. Nam Tok Mae Klang is the largest and the easiest to get to; you must stop here to get a bus to the top of Doi Inthanon. It can be climbed nearly to the top, as there is a footbridge leading to rock formations over which the water cascades. Nam Tok Wachiratan is also very pleasant, and less crowded.

The views from Doi Inthanon are best in the cool dry season from November to February. You can expect the air to be quite chilly towards the top, so take a jacket or sweater. For most of the year a mist, formed by the condensation of warm humid air below, hangs around the highest peak. Along the 47km road to the top are terraced rice fields, tremendous valleys and a few small hill-tribe villages. The mountain slopes are home to around 4000 Hmong and Karen tribespeople.

The entire mountain is a national park (482 sq km), despite agriculture and human habitation. 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 varieties, more than any other habitat in Thailand. The mountain is also one of the last habitats of the Asiatic black bear, along with the Assamese macaque,

Phayre's leaf-monkey 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.

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.

Phra Mahathat Naphamethanidon, a *chedi* built by the Royal Thai Air Force to commemorate the king's 60th birthday in 1989, is off the highway between the Km 41 and Km 42 markers, about 4km before reaching the summit of Doi Inthanon. In the base of the octagonal *chedi* is a hall containing a stone Buddha image.

The 400B entry fee collected for Nam Tok Mae Klang near the foot of the mountain is good for all stops on the Doi Inthanon circuit; be sure to keep your receipt.

**Park bungalows** (☎ 05326 8550; bungalow from 1000B), 31km north of Chom Thong, are well-equipped, log-cabin style and can be reserved at the park headquarters or by calling. If you have your own tent camping is 40B a night, or you can hire a tent with sleeping bag for 250B.

## Getting There & Away

Buses to Chom Thong leave regularly from just inside Pratu Chiang Mai at the south moat as well as from the Chang Pheuk bus terminal in Chiang Mai. Some buses go directly to Nam Tok Mae Klang and some go only as far as Hot, although the latter will let you off in Chom Thong. The fare to Chom Thong (58km from Chiang Mai) is 34B.

From Chom Thong there are regular sawngtháew to Mae Klang (20B), about 8km north. Sawngtháew from Mae Klang to Doi Inthanon (per person 30B) leave almost

hourly until late afternoon. Most of the passengers are locals who get off at various points along the road, thus allowing a few stationary views of the valleys below.

For another 15B you can go south from Chom Thong to Hot, where you can get buses

west on to Mae Sariang or Mae Hong Son. However, if you've been to Doi Inthanon and the waterfalls, you probably won't have time to make it all the way to Mae Sariang or Mae Hong Son in one day, so you may want to stay overnight in the park.