



Chiang Mai Province

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Best Places to Eat

- » New Delhi (p266)
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- » Ai Sushi (p271)
- » Chiang Dao Nest (p286)

Best Places to Stay

- » Villa Duang Champa (p258)
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- » Chiang Dao Nest (p285)

Why Go?

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

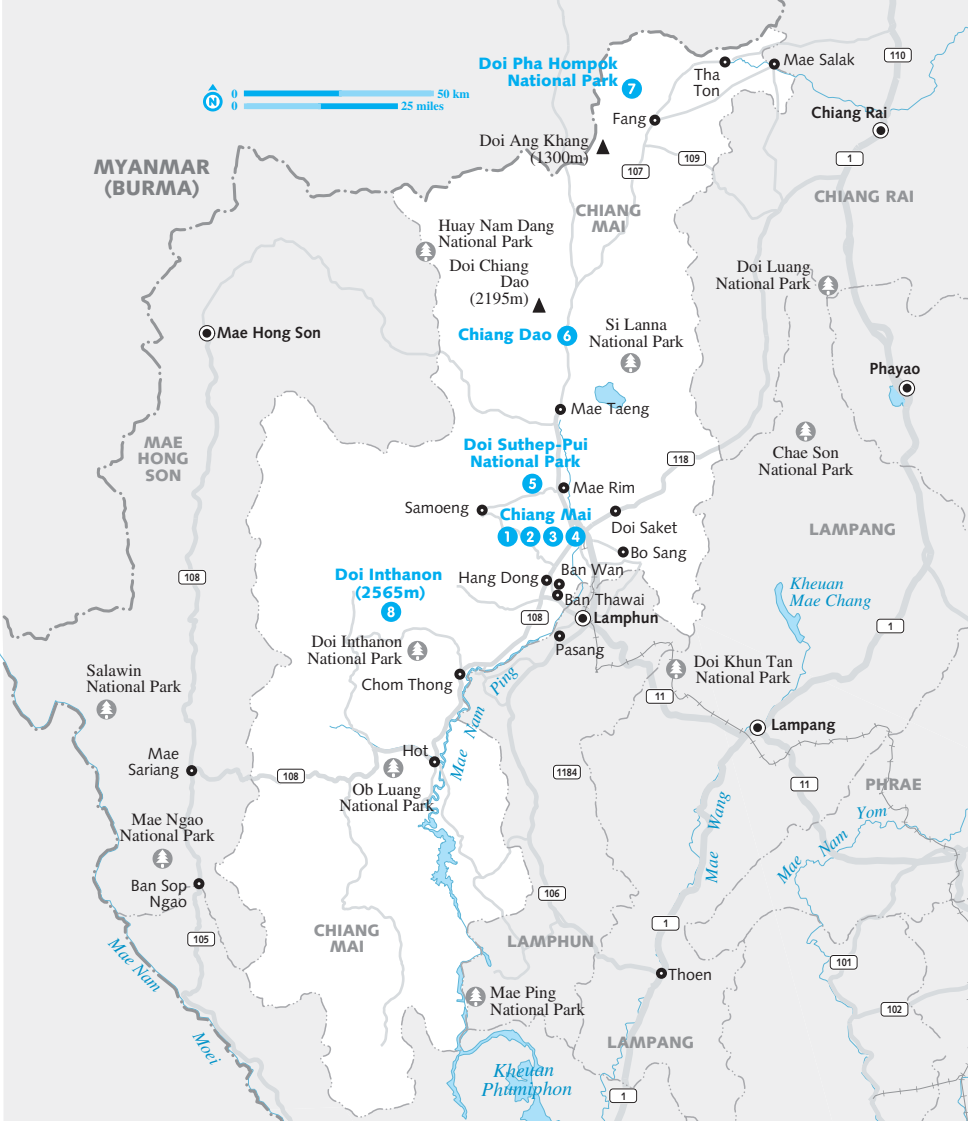
Highlights include the laid-back city of Chiang Mai, with its moated, partially walled old city; its celebrated ancient temples, built with teak money reflecting the aesthetics of an ancient trade dependent on the forest; and a traveller-friendly scene catering for those here to party through to those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

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

When to Go

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

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



Chiang Mai Highlights

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