

PAGE  
**2**

# PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions  
 to help you put together your perfect trip

Welcome to Thailand ..... **2**

20 Top Experiences ..... 6

Need to Know ..... **18**

What’s New ..... 20

If You Like ..... 21

Month by Month ..... 23

Itineraries ..... **27**

Responsible Travel ..... 34

Islands & Beaches ..... 40

Culture & Cuisine ..... 42

Travel with Children ..... 45

Regions at a Glance ..... 48



### need to know

**When to Go**

**High Season**  
 Nov-Mar  
 Hot and sunny with little rain. Best time to visit if you don't mind the heat.

**Shoulder**  
 Apr-Jun  
 Hot and sunny with some rain. Good time to visit if you don't mind the heat and some rain.

**Low Season**  
 Jul-Oct  
 Hot and sunny with a lot of rain. Best time to visit if you don't mind the heat and a lot of rain.

**Yearly Daily Budget**  
 Budget-Low: **1500B**  
 Budget-Mid: **2000B**  
 Budget-High: **3000B**

**Language**  
 Thai

**Electricity**  
 230V, 50Hz

**Internet**  
 Available in major cities and tourist areas.

**Time Zone**  
 GMT+7

**Time**  
 01:00

**Time**  
 01:00

**Time**  
 01:00



PAGE  
**695**

# UNDERSTAND THAILAND

GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you  
 can make sense of what you see

Thailand Today ..... **696**

History & Politics ..... **699**

The People & Culture ..... 721

Eating in Thailand ..... 738

The Sex Industry in  
 Thailand ..... 746

Environment & Wildlife ..... 749

### History

In 1892, a group of young military officers and businessmen led a revolution that overthrew the absolute monarchy. The leaders of the group were executed, but their ideas were not. The country was transformed into a constitutional monarchy. The Thai people are known for their warm hospitality and friendly nature. The country is a paradise for nature lovers, with its diverse flora and fauna.

**1890**  
 The Thai people are known for their warm hospitality and friendly nature. The country is a paradise for nature lovers, with its diverse flora and fauna.

**1895**  
 The Thai people are known for their warm hospitality and friendly nature. The country is a paradise for nature lovers, with its diverse flora and fauna.

Wat Arun, Bangkok

### population per sq km

THAILAND USA UK

32 people

ISBN 978-1-74179-714-5



9 781741 797145

5 2 7 9 9





Directory A–Z .....	756
Transport .....	768
Health .....	777
Language .....	784
Index .....	801
Map Legend .....	814



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**China Williams,**  
**Mark Beales, Tim Bower, Celeste Brush, Austin Bush,**  
**Alan Murphy, Brandon Presser**

➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option

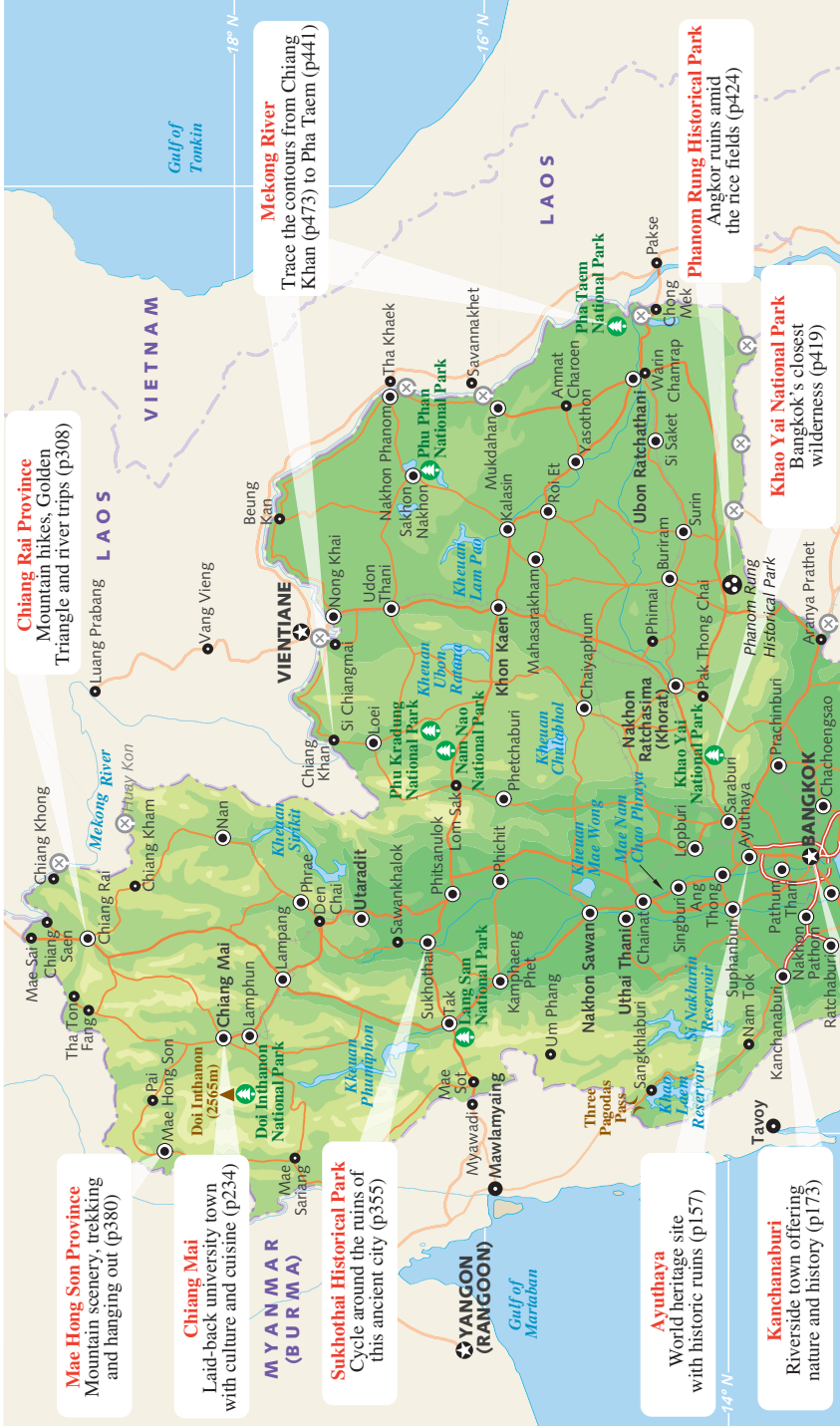


No payment required

<b>BANGKOK</b> . . . . .	<b>54</b>	SOUTHERN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE	290	Mae Sariang	402
AROUND BANGKOK	152	Bo Sang & San Kamphaeng	290	<b>NORTHEASTERN THAILAND</b>	<b>406</b>
Amphawa	153	Mae Kamphong	290	Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat)	410
Nakhon Pathom	155	Doi Inthanon National Park	291	Phimai	417
<b>CENTRAL THAILAND</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>NORTHERN THAILAND</b>	<b>294</b>	Khao Yai National Park	419
Ayuthaya	157	Lamphun	298	BURIRAM PROVINCE	423
Lopburi	168	Lampang	300	Nang Rong	423
Kanchanaburi	173	Around Lampang	306	Phanom Rung Historical Park	424
Thong Pha Phum	187	Chiang Rai	308	SURIN & SI SAKET PROVINCE	427
Sangkhlaburi	188	Mae Salong (Santikhiri)	317	Surin	427
<b>KO CHANG &amp; EASTERN SEABOARD</b>	<b>191</b>	Mae Sai	320	Si Saket	431
Si Racha	194	Chiang Saen	325	UBON RATCHATHANI PROVINCE	433
Ko Si Chang	196	Sop Ruak	328	Ubon Ratchathani	433
Pattaya	197	Chiang Khong	330	CHAIYAPHUM PROVINCE	443
Rayong & Ban Phe	204	Phayao	334	Chaiyaphum	443
Ko Samet	205	Phrae	336	KHON KAEN PROVINCE	445
Chanthaburi	210	Nan	341	Khon Kaen	446
Trat	213	Phitsanulok	348	UDON THANI PROVINCE	454
Ko Chang	216	Sukhothai	355	Udon Thani	454
Ko Wai	228	Kamphaeng Phet	366	NONG KHAI PROVINCE	461
Ko Mak	228	TAK PROVINCE	370	Nong Khai	462
Ko Kut	230	Mae Sot	370	West of Nong Khai	468
<b>CHIANG MAI PROVINCE</b>	<b>232</b>	Mae Sot to Um Phang	375	LOEI PROVINCE	470
CHIANG MAI	234	Um Phang & Around	375	Loei	471
NORTHERN CHIANG MAI PROVINCE	284	Mae Sot to Mae Sariang	379	Chiang Khan	473
Mae Sa Valley & Samoeng	284	MAE HONG SON PROVINCE	380	Phu Reua National Park	476
Chiang Dao	284	Mae Hong Son	380	Dan Sai	476
Doi Ang Khang	286	Pai	388		
Fang & Tha Ton	287	Soppong	398		
		Khun Yuam	401		

# On the Road

Tham Erawan . . . . .	479	Prachuap Khiri Khan . . . . .	526	Ko Yao . . . . .	620
Phu Kradueng National Park . . . . .	479	Ban Krut & Bang Saphan Yai . . . . .	530	PHUKET ISLAND . . . . .	622
BUENG KAN PROVINCE . . . . .	479	Chumphon . . . . .	531	Phuket Town . . . . .	627
Bueng Kan . . . . .	479	<b>KO SAMUI &amp; THE LOWER GULF . . . 535</b>		Ko Sireh . . . . .	633
Ban Ahong . . . . .	480	Ko Samui . . . . .	538	Rawai . . . . .	633
Wat Phu Tok . . . . .	480	Ko Pha-Ngan . . . . .	556	Hat Kata . . . . .	634
Ban Kham Pia . . . . .	481	Ko Tao . . . . .	571	Hat Karon . . . . .	637
NAKHON PHANOM PROVINCE . . . . .	481	Ang Thong Marine National Park . . . . .	586	Hat Patong . . . . .	638
Nakhon Phanom . . . . .	481	Surat Thani . . . . .	587	Hat Kamala . . . . .	644
Renu Nakhon . . . . .	485	Ao Khanom . . . . .	589	Hat Surin . . . . .	645
That Phanom . . . . .	485	Nakhon Si Thammarat . . . . .	591	Ao Bang Thao . . . . .	646
SAKON NAKHON PROVINCE . . . . .	487	Songkhla & Around . . . . .	593	Sirinat National Park . . . . .	648
Sakon Nakhon . . . . .	487	Hat Yai . . . . .	594	Khao Phra Taew Royal Wildlife & Forest Reserve . . . . .	649
Phu Phan Mountains . . . . .	491	DEEP SOUTH . . . . .	595	Thalang District . . . . .	650
MUKDAHAN PROVINCE . . . . .	492	Yala . . . . .	595	KRABI PROVINCE . . . . .	650
Mukdahan . . . . .	492	Pattani . . . . .	598	Krabi Town . . . . .	650
YASOTHON & ROI ET PROVINCES . . . . .	496	Narathiwat . . . . .	599	Ao Nang . . . . .	653
Yasothon . . . . .	496	Sungai Kolok . . . . .	600	Railay . . . . .	657
Roi Et . . . . .	498	<b>PHUKET &amp; THE ANDAMAN COAST . . . 602</b>		Ko Phi-Phi Don . . . . .	662
SA KAEW PROVINCE . . . . .	502	Ranong Town . . . . .	603	Ko Phi-Phi Leh . . . . .	668
Aranya Prathet . . . . .	501	Ko Chang . . . . .	607	Ko Jum & Ko Si Boya . . . . .	668
Sa Kaew . . . . .	502	Ko Phayam . . . . .	608	Ko Lanta . . . . .	669
<b>HUA HIN &amp; THE SOUTHERN GULF . . . 503</b>		Laem Son National Park . . . . .	609	TRANG PROVINCE . . . . .	676
Phetchaburi (Phetburi) . . . . .	505	Khao Sok National Park . . . . .	611	Trang Town . . . . .	676
Cha-am . . . . .	510	Khao Lak & Around . . . . .	612	Trang Beaches . . . . .	679
Hua Hin . . . . .	512	Surin Islands Marine National Park . . . . .	616	Trang Islands . . . . .	680
Pranburi & Around . . . . .	522	Similan Islands Marine National Park . . . . .	617	SATUN PROVINCE . . . . .	684
Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park . . . . .	524	Phang-Nga Town & Ao Phang-Nga . . . . .	618	Pak Bara . . . . .	684
				Ko Bulon Leh . . . . .	685
				Ko Tarutao Marine National Park . . . . .	686
				Ko Adang & Ko Rawi . . . . .	692
				Satun . . . . .	692



**Mae Hong Son Province**  
Mountain scenery, trekking with culture and cuisine (p380)

**Chiang Mai**  
Laid-back university town with culture and cuisine (p234)

**MYANMAR (BURMA)**

**Sukhothai Historical Park**  
Cycle around the ruins of this ancient city (p355)

**YANGON (RANGOON)**

**Ayutthaya**  
World heritage site with historic ruins (p157)

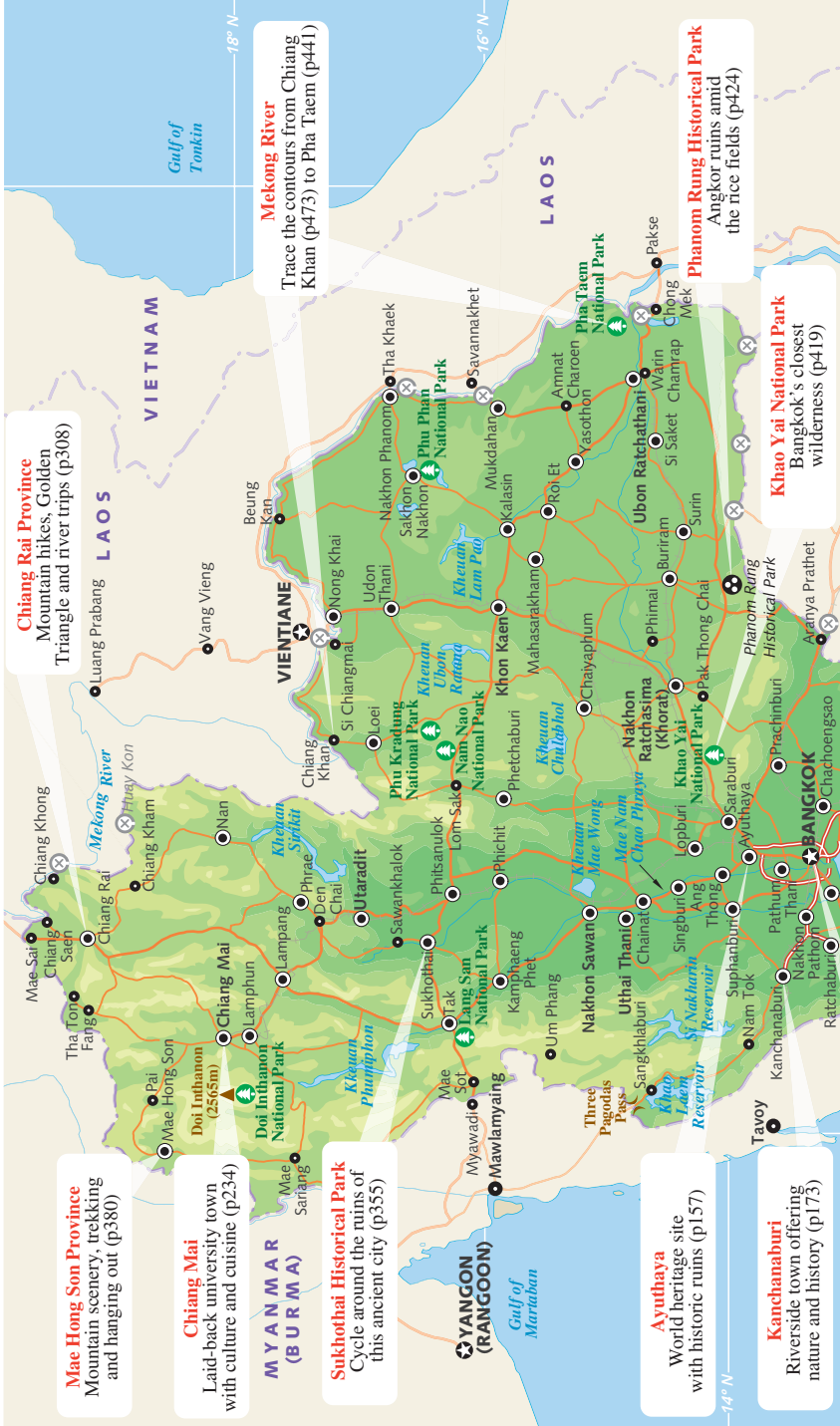
**Kanchanaburi**  
Riverside town offering nature and history (p173)

**Chiang Rai Province**  
Mountain hikes, Golden Triangle and river trips (p308)

**Mekong River**  
Trace the contours from Chiang Khan (p473) to Pha Taem (p441)

**Phanom Rung Historical Park**  
Angkor ruins amid the rice fields (p424)

**Khao Yai National Park**  
Bangkok's closest wilderness (p419)





**Bangkok**

Mega-city for mega fun (p54)

**Hua Hin**

Beaches fit for a king (p512)

**Khao Sok National Park**

Land-before-time jungle (p611)

**Surin & Similan Islands Marine National Parks**

Famed Andaman diving (p616)

**Phuket**

International beach resort (p622)

**Ko Lanta**

A beach bum's best friend (p669)

**Ko Samet**

Bangkok's beach playground (p205)

**Ko Tao**

The dive-master's island (p571)

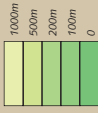
**Ko Pha-Ngan**

Hammock-hangers' beach (p556)

**Ko Samui**

Beach resort for holiday pop ins (p538)

**ELEVATION**



SOUTH CHINA SEA

GULF OF THAILAND

INDIAN OCEAN

CAMBODIA  
VIETNAM

PHNOM PENH  
HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON)

MALAYSIA

6°N

8°N

10°N

12°N

58°E

6°E

104°E

106°E

Angkor Wat

Mekong River

Tonlé Sap

Samut Sakhon  
Samut Prakan  
Phetchaburi  
Si Racha  
Pattaya  
Rayong  
Chonburi  
Sattahip  
Cha-am  
Hua Hin

Prachuap Khiri Khan  
Thap Sakae  
Bang Saphan  
Chumphon

Isthmus of Kra

Surin Islands  
Phang-Nga  
Similan Islands  
Khao Lak  
Khao Sok National Park

Surat Thani  
Ko Pha-Ngan  
Ko Samui  
Nakhon Si Thammarat  
Thung Song  
Krabi  
Ko Yao  
Ko Phi-Phi  
Ko Lanta

Ranong  
Phattalung  
Trang  
Kantang  
Phuket

Songkhla  
Hua Hin  
Tha Mae National Park  
Yala  
Sadao  
Satun  
Ko Tarutao Marine National Park

Pattani  
Narathiwat  
Yala  
Sungai Kolok  
Alor Setar  
Keroh  
Betong  
Kota Bharu



### Celeste Brash

**Phuket & the Andaman Coast** Celeste first arrived in Thailand as a student of Thai language, history and culture at Chiang Mai University. She's come back to the country many times since and has done the gamut from wild nights on Ko Phang-Ngan to weeks of silence at Wat Suanmuk. Her award-winning travel stories have appeared in *Travelers' Tales* books and she's been published in a slew of newspapers and magazines from the *LA Times* to *Islands* magazine. Celeste

has lost count of how many Lonely Planet guides she's contributed to but her heart is irrevocably stuck on Southeast Asia, and Thailand is her first love. When not dragging her husband and two children to exotic places, she and her family live in Portland, Oregon. Find her on the web at [www.celestebrash.com](http://www.celestebrash.com).

Read more about Celeste at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/Celeste](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/Celeste)



### Austin Bush

**Bangkok, Northern Thailand, Deep South section, Eating in Thailand** Austin came to Thailand in 1998 on a language scholarship at Chiang Mai University. The lure of city life and a need for employment and spicy food eventually led Austin to Bangkok. And city life, employment and spicy food have managed to keep him there since. But escaping Bangkok, particularly for the mountains of Northern Thailand, is one of his favourite things about contributing to this par-

ticular guide. A native of Oregon and a freelance writer and photographer who often focuses on food, samples of Austin's work can be seen at [www.austinbushphotography.com](http://www.austinbushphotography.com).

Read more about Austin at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/Austin](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/Austin)



### Alan Murphy

**Chiang Mai Province** Alan discovered Southeast Asia sometime in the mid-1990s when he travelled extensively around the region. Since then he has returned to live and work as a volunteer in Chiang Mai, advocating for the rights of migrant workers around the Mekong region. Among other journalistic endeavours, Alan has written and updated guidebooks for Lonely Planet since 1999, and loves the opportunity to get under the skin of a new destination. This was his first time

working on the *Thailand* guide and he was very happy to be assigned Chiang Mai – a city with a real heart and a fantastic diversity of people. It seems more like home every time he returns.

Read more about Alan at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/Alan](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/Alan)



### Brandon Presser

**Ko Samui & the Lower Gulf, part of Responsible Travel chapter** Growing up in a land where bear hugs are taken literally, this wanderlust-y Canadian always craved swaying palms and golden sand. A trek across Southeast Asia as a teenager was the clincher — he was hooked, returning year after year to scuba dive, suntan, and savour spoonfuls of spicy *sôm-dam* (spicy papaya salad). After leaving his job at the Louvre, Brandon picked up his pen and rucksack, and became a

full-time freelance travel writer. He's since contributed to over 20 Lonely Planet titles from *Iceland* to *Thailand* and many 'lands' in between.

Read more about Brandon at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/Brandon](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/Brandon)



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### China Williams

**Coordinating Author, Hua Hin & the Southern Gulf, Ko Chang & Eastern Sea-**

**board** Oh Thailand, it appears we're growing old together. China first came to Thailand to teach English in Surin way back in 1997, a few months prior to the country's currency crisis. Since then she has shuttled across the Pacific to work on various Thailand guidebooks for nine years. This is her third trip with her son, who is now four years old. Be assured that all the beaches in the upper gulf and

eastern seaboard have been kid-tested and mother-approved, including the wholesome bits of prostitute-city Pattaya. China lives in Catonsville, Maryland (USA) with her husband, Matt, and son, Felix.

Read more about China at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/China](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/China)



### Mark Beales

**Central Thailand** After receiving a scholarship to study journalism, Mark worked as a reporter for 13 years. In 2004 he swapped the chilly shores of England for the sunnier coasts of Thailand. As well as being a freelance writer, Mark has worked as a teacher and TV presenter. Highlights on this trip included waking up to a giant hornbill attempting to prise open the door of his tree-top cabin and meeting an impossibly cute one-day-old elephant in Ayuthaya. When Mark isn't

on the road, he teaches English at an international school in Rayong. For more on Mark's work, visit [www.markbeales.com](http://www.markbeales.com).

Read more about Mark at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/Mark](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/Mark)



### Tim Bower

**Northeastern Thailand** While growing up, Tim didn't travel much except for the obligatory pilgrimage to Disney World and an annual summer week at the lake. He's spent most of his adult life making up for this, and has since visited more than 70 countries, including most of those in Southeast Asia. After university he worked as a legislative assistant before quitting to backpack around West Africa. It was during this trip that he decided to become a freelance travel writer and photographer, and he's been at it ever since. When he isn't shouldering a backpack somewhere he lives in Khon

Kaen, Thailand, where he jointly runs the Isan Explorer ([www.isanexplorer.com](http://www.isanexplorer.com)) tour company.

Read more about Tim at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/Tim](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/Tim)

### OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

Published by Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd

ABN 36 005 607 983

14th edition – Feb 2012

ISBN 978 1 74179 714 5

© Lonely Planet 2012 Photographs © as indicated 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in China

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be copied, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, except brief extracts for the purpose of review, and no part of this publication may be sold or hired, without the written permission of the publisher. Lonely Planet and the Lonely Planet logo are trademarks of Lonely Planet and are registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries. Lonely Planet does not allow its name or logo to be appropriated by commercial establishments, such as retailers, restaurants or hotels. Please let us know of any misuses: [lonelyplanet.com/ip](http://lonelyplanet.com/ip).

Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.



# itineraries

*Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.*



## Two Weeks Just A Quickie

Even if you're only doing a Thailand 'pop-in', you can still pack in a full itinerary thanks to the affordability of domestic flights. Start off in **Bangkok** and then fly to the tropical beach resorts of **Ko Samui** or **Phuket**. Although both are international superstars, there are plenty of quiet corners if needed, and beaches with personalities to suit every sand hunter. If you find yourself on a spot that fits like a wet bathing suit, shop around the island before plotting your escape route to the next destination.

Once you've tired of sand and sun, fly up to **Chiang Mai** for a Thai cooking class and temple-spotting. Then explore the surrounding countryside filled with mountainous road trips and hill-tribe trekking. Pay homage to Thailand's highest peak at **Doi Inthanon National Park**.

Return to Bangkok with a tan, a Thai recipe book and lots of travel tales for the water cooler.



## One Month Essential Thailand

If you've got a month to wander through Thailand, spend a few days in **Bangkok**, adjusting to the heat and the chaos, and then take the train north stopping in the ancient capital of **Ayuthaya**, where Thailand built a small regional empire. Make a brief detour to the monkey town of **Lopburi**. And then follow the culture trail north to **Sukhothai**, where you can cycle through the historic and crumbling ruins of one of Thailand's first kingdoms. Hightail it to **Chiang Mai**, made up of a delightful collection of old Lanna architecture, youthful cafes and easygoing living. A week may pass before you get itchy feet. Mountains await in either direction from Chiang Mai. Go northwest for the hippie scene in **Pai**. Follow the mountain ridge through the misty morning to **Mae Hong Son**, for a slice of Shan culture and low-key trekking tours. And follow the loop road through little dusty towns to return to Chiang Mai.

By now the beach is calling so transit back through Bangkok and then on to the classic Gulf of Thailand stops: **Ko Pha-Ngan** for beach bumming and partying and **Ko Tao** for deep-sea diving and snorkelling.

Hop over to the Andaman Coast to see those famous postcard views of limestone mountains jutting out of the sea. **Ko Phi-Phi** is the prettiest (and one of the priciest) of them all but **Ko Lanta** has the quintessential beach vibe and a thriving dive scene. Rock climbers opt for nearby **Krabi**. On the way back north detour through the rainforests of **Khao Sok National Park**.

Transit again through Bangkok to dip your toes into the northeast, the agricultural heartland. Crawl through the jungles of **Khao Yai National Park**. Then head to **Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat)**, a transit point for trips to the Angkor ruins at **Phimai** and the pottery village of **Dan Kwian**. Follow the Khmer trail east to **Phanom Rung**, the most important and visually impressive of the Angkor temples in Thailand. Surrounding Phanom Rung are a handful of smaller more remote temples known for their regal but forgotten ambiance.



Two to Three Weeks

## Southern Islands & Beaches

If your bragging buddies back home have sent you to Thailand with a long list of must-see beaches, then prepare for a marathon beach binge. From Bangkok, dip south into **Hua Hin**, for wide sandy beaches and city amenities, and to **Prachuap Khiri Khan**, a mellow seaside town sheltered from the tourist crowds. Then slide down to **Chumphon** to island hop. Swim with the fishes in **Ko Tao**, howl at the full moon in **Ko Pha-Ngan** or hang-out with the bronzing bodies in **Ko Samui**.

Cross the peninsula to imbibe on the Andaman resort island of **Phuket** or pop over to mellow **Ko Yao** to rock climb the limestone mountains or just smile at the scenery. Scramble up or paddle around **Krabi's** scenic missile-shaped peaks planted in the sea. **Ko Phi-Phi** is a party-hard pretty girl and **Ko Lanta** is a kick-back island idyll. **Ko Jum** has a lot of nothing, a perfect perk these days.

The **Trang Islands** are an up-and-comer with karst scenery and cerulean seas. Time is getting tight but you might be able to squeeze in one last stop at **Ko Lipe**, that last grip of beach party mayhem this side of the Andaman.



## Two to Three Weeks Northern Thailand

Climb into the bosom of lush mountains and the ethnic minority villages that cling to the border of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos.

**Chiang Mai** is an ideal base for northern culture and exploration with a menu of meditation, language and massage courses on offer. Follow the northwest spur to **Pai**, a mountain retreat with daytime strolls and night-time carousing. Next is **Soppong**, a mecca for caving. Continue to **Mae Hong Son** to immerse yourself in a remote region more akin to Burma than Bangkok. The last stop along the route is at **Mae Sariang**, a small riverside town developing a good reputation for sustainable trekking tours.

Return to civilisation in Chiang Mai and plot your next campaign towards Chiang Rai. More mountains await northwards in **Chiang Dao**, a sober alternative to Pai. Then take the backdoor to Chiang Rai through **Fang** and zigzagging up the mountain ridge to **Mae Salong**, a Yunnanese tea settlement. Slide into **Chiang Rai** for a hill-tribe homestay and culturally sensitive treks and continue on to the formerly infamous Golden Triangle towns of **Chiang Saen** and **Sop Ruak**. Bypass the crowds with a stop in **Phayao**, a pleasant northern town for temple-spotting, before returning to Chiang Mai.



## One to Two Weeks Mekong River

There aren't a lot of big-ticket attractions in Thailand's rural northeast (known as Isan) but cultural chameleons will find an old-fashioned way of life, easygoing people and interesting homestays that mix lodging with lounging around the rice fields. The most scenic route through the region is along the Mekong River, which divides Thailand and Laos. The border towns barely recognise the boundary and often share more cultural attributes with their foreign neighbours than with Bangkok.

Start in the charming town of **Nong Khai**, a rock-skipping throw from Laos and an easy border-crossing point. If the pace here is too fast, follow the river road east to **Bueng Kan**, a dusty speck of a town with a nearby temple built on a rocky outcrop and several neighbouring homestays with forays into wild-elephant territory. Pass through **Nakhon Phanom** for its picturesque river promenade and tiny **That Phanom**, with its famous Lao-style temple, honoured with a vibrant 10-day festival in January/February.

For a little urban Isan, check out **Ubon Ratchathani**, surrounded by the **Pha Taem National Park**, river rapids and handicraft villages. From here you can exit into Laos at Pakse or catch an overnight train to Bangkok.



One to Two Weeks

## Bangkok & Around

If you're pressed for time or don't want to waste time travelling, there is an amazing diversity of sites within 150km of Bangkok. Take the backdoor route aboard a scenic commuter rail line out of Bangkok to **Amphawa**, a canal-crossed community that hosts a floating market beloved by foodie Thais. Appreciate history away from the capital's hectic streets in **Phetchaburi**, once a royal retreat with a hilltop palace and fascinating cave shrines. Then rest and recreate in **Hua Hin** and the long and sandy coastline that stretches south all the way to **Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park** with its collection of interior karst mountains and mangrove swamps.

Backtrack north to **Kanchanaburi**, which played a minor but well-memorialised role in WWII. The forested mountains to the northwest are ideal for a variety of outdoor adventures. Skirt around the present-day capital to the once-glorious capital of **Ayuthaya** for a Thai history lesson. Then catch the train to **Khao Yai National Park**, for one last foray into nature's jungle before returning to Bangkok's concrete jungle.



- » (above) Beach scene, Ko Lipe (p687)
- » (left) Elephant trekking, Chiang Mai Province (p232)

© Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'