



# Central Thailand

## Includes ➔

Ayuthaya .....	154
Lopburi .....	164
Kanchanburi .....	169
Khao Laem National Park .....	181
Si Nakharin National Park .....	182
Chaloem Ratanakosin National Park .....	182
Thong Pha Phum .....	183
Thong Pha Phum National Park .....	183
Sangkhlaburi .....	184

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Blue Rice (p177)
- ➔ Sai Thong (p161)
- ➔ Baan Mai Rim Nam (p161)
- ➔ Mangosteen (p177)
- ➔ Pae Ban Rim Nam (p168)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Baan Lotus Guest House (p160)
- ➔ Tony's Place (p160)
- ➔ Noom Guesthouse (p167)
- ➔ P Guest House (p185)
- ➔ Sabai@Kan (p176)

## Why Go?

The past is never far behind in Central Thailand. Cycle around the temple ruins in Ayuthaya and you can imagine how this former majestic capital must have once looked. Visit the memorials and Death Railway in Kanchanaburi and you can discover new empathy for the WWII prisoners of war who suffered there.

Central Thailand doesn't just do history, though. Nature is a major player here as the jagged mountain ranges that dominate the horizons host spectacular waterfalls, vast national parks and new adventure resorts.

After a few days exploring the war sites in Kanchanaburi, travellers tend to head north to trek or camp in the national parks and maybe catch a glimpse of wild elephants, gibbons or even tigers. Others cycle around Ayuthaya's fabled ruins or browse for bargains at traditional markets. Lopburi tends to combine both nature and history, as dozens of monkeys scamper among the Khmer-style temples in what was once Thailand's second capital.

Head up to the very north of Kanchanaburi to be within touching distance of Burma (Myanmar). Sleep among the tree tops at Thong Pha Phum National Park or visit remote Sangkhlaburi, where volunteer work to help ethnic groups is hugely rewarding.

## When to Go

- ➔ Central Thailand experiences the country's three seasons in equal measure; Kanchanaburi can have baking sunshine while torrential rain buffets Sangkhlaburi. It is hot in the region from February to June, rainy from June to October, and cool (relatively speaking) from October to January; the one constant is the humidity.
- ➔ Because of altitude, it can be cooler in Sangkhlaburi and surrounding national parks than in other areas. Ayuthaya and Lopburi sit in a wide-open plain that receives similar amounts of rain and heat as Bangkok.

## Central Thailand Highlights

1 Clambering up the seven levels at **Erawan** (p179), one of Thailand's most impressive waterfalls

2 Camping in scenic national parks, such as **Si Nakharin** (p182), to look for elusive tigers, elephants and gibbons

3 Visiting the Death Railway and WWII museums in **Kanchanaburi** (p169)

4 Cycling around the temple and palace ruins in **Ayuthaya** (p154)

5 Doing voluntary work with a charity in laid-back **Sangkhlaburi** (p186) and spending time with ethnic groups there

6 Watching monkeys scurrying around the temple ruins in **Lopburi** (p167)

7 Spending a night up high in a tree house then going trekking in **Thong Pha Phum National Park** (p183)

