



# Thailand



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

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## ON THE ROAD

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LOI KRATHONG P31

# Thailand

0 0 150 km  
0 0 90 miles

**Mae Hong Son Province**  
Mountain scenery, trekking and hanging out (p381)

**Chiang Mai**  
Laid-back university town with culture and cuisine (p231)

**MYANMAR (BURMA)**

**Sukhothai Historical Park**  
Cycle around the ruins of this ancient city (p354)

**YANGON (RANGOON)**

**Ayuthaya**  
World Heritage Site with historic ruins (p154)

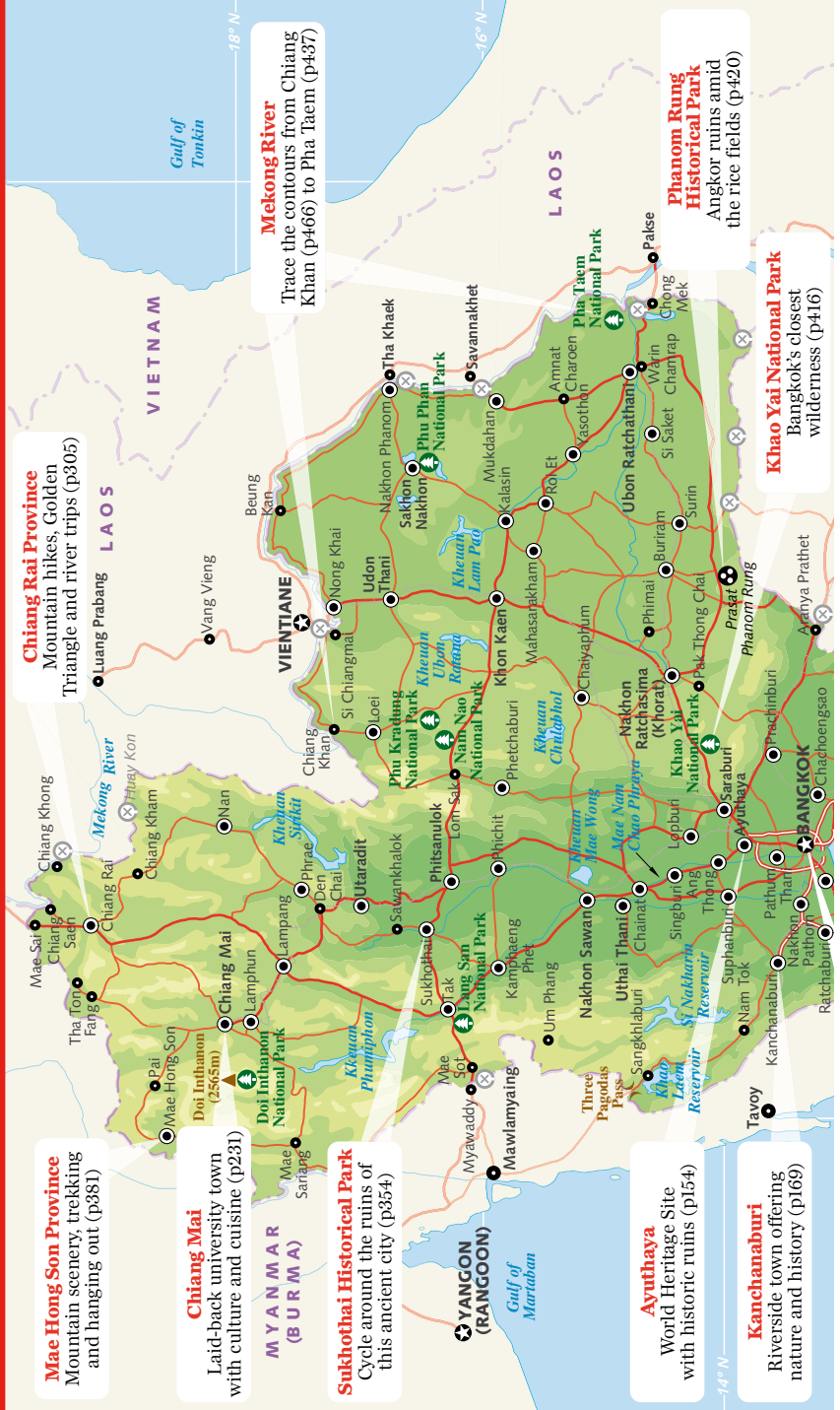
**Kanchanaburi**  
Riverside town offering nature and history (p169)

**Chiang Rai Province**  
Mountain hikes, Golden Triangle and river trips (p305)

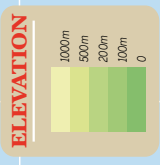
**Mekong River**  
Trace the contours from Chiang Khan (p466) to Pha Taem (p437)

**Phanom Rung Historical Park**  
Angkor ruins amid the rice fields (p420)

**Khao Yai National Park**  
Bangkok's closest wilderness (p416)







**Bangkok**  
Megacity for mega fun (p54)

**Hua Hin**  
Beaches fit for a king (p502)

**Khao Sok National Park**  
Land-before-time jungle (p606)

**Surin & Similan Islands Marine National Parks**  
Famed Andaman diving (p611)

**Phuket**  
International beach resort (p617)

**Ko Lipe**  
White sands, healthy coral, buzzing reggae pubs (p680)

**Ko Kut**  
Quiet beach paradise without the holiday distractions (p228)

**Ko Tao**  
The dive-master's island (p565)

**Ko Pha-Ngan**  
Hammock-hangers' beach (p549)

**Ko Samui**  
Beach resort for holiday pop-ins (p527)

106° E  
104° E  
58° E

V I E T N A M

C A M B O D I A

S O U T H  
C H I N A  
S E A

M A L A Y S I A

G U L F O F T H A I L A N D

A N D A M A N S E A

I N D I A N  
O C E A N

Mekong River

Tonlé Sap

Angkor Wat

PHNOM PENH

HO CHI MINH CITY (SAIGON)

Samut Sakhon  
Samut Prakan  
Songkhro  
Phetchaburi  
Chonburi  
Si Racha  
Pattaya  
Rayong  
Chanthaburi  
Satohip  
Ko Samet  
Ko Chang  
Ko Kut

Chumphon  
Thap Sakae  
Bang Saphan  
Khiri Khan  
Prachuap  
Hua Hin  
Cha-am  
Samut Sakhon  
Phetchaburi  
Chonburi

Surin Islands  
Ranong  
Kra  
Ang Thong Marine National Park  
Ko Pha-Ngan  
Ko Samui

Chalya  
Sri Trang  
Ko Samui  
Nakhon Si Thammarat  
Thung Song  
Ranot  
Pattalung  
Thaleh Luang

Phu Phi  
Ko Lanta  
Thaleh Ban Hatt  
Songkhla  
Yala  
Sadao

Ko Lipe  
Ko Tarutao Marine National Park  
Satun  
Alor Setar  
Sungai Kolok  
Narathiwat

Phuket  
Ko Samui  
Ko Pha-Ngan  
Ko Kut  
Ko Lipe

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Phuket  
Ko Samui  
Ko Pha-Ngan  
Ko Kut  
Ko Lipe

## Plan Your Trip

# Itineraries



**2**  
WEEKS

### Thailand's Highlights

Thanks to expanded domestic air travel, you can do a highlights tour of Thailand, sampling the beaches, mountains and cities. And remember that there are plenty of 'hidden' spots in the midst of crowded tourist centres.

Start off in **Bangkok**, where you can master the public transit system, visit the gleaming temples of Wat Phra Kaew and Wat Pho, explore the shopping malls and party like a rock star. Getting lost in Bangkok is an under-appreciated attraction and neighbourhoods like Chinatown have

people-packed streets where you'll see the weird and the wonderful.

Fly up to **Chiang Mai**, which can keep you busy for several days with Thai cooking classes, temple-spotting, monk chats and fabulous food. Then there is the surrounding countryside explored on road trips through the mountains, trekking to hill-tribe villages, elephant encounters and ziplining through the forest. Don't forget to visit the cool highlands of Doi Suthep or Doi Inthanon, two famous northern mountains.







Elephant ride, Chiang Mai (p230)

Reward all of your hard work getting to know Thai culture with a getaway to the tropical island of **Ko Samui**, an international resort jam-packed with package tourists, hotels and even traffic. But there are quiet corners and a buffet of beaches to suit every sand hunter. Bangkok Airways runs at least one direct flight between Chiang Mai and Samui per day, but book way in advance for a cheaper fare. While there, spend a day exploring the uninhabited Ang Thong National Marine Park.

Dial down your vacation with a stop in **Ko Pha-Ngan**, an easy boat trip from Ko Samui. Head to one of its overblown

rave parties or time your visit to miss the crowded and sloppy event for some laid-back hammock hanging or diving instead. Next door is little **Ko Tao**, the Gulf of Thailand's dive certification centre; there are also near-shore reefs if you need to greet the fishes after breakfast.

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





4  
WEEKS

## Essential Thailand

The classic Thailand trip meanders through almost every corner of the kingdom. If you need to save time, hop on a flight – planes go everywhere.

Start off in **Bangkok**, and then take a train north to the ancient capital of **Ayuthaya**. Make a brief detour to the monkey town of **Lopburi**. From here, follow the culture trail north to **Sukhothai**, where you can cycle through the historic and crumbling ruins of another ancient capital. Hightail it to **Chiang Mai**, the laid-back 'lady' of the north. Then switchback into the mountains to the party scene of **Pai**. Climb deeper into the hills to the Myanmar-influenced town of **Mae Hong Son**. Loop back to Chiang Mai.

By now the beach is calling, so fly to the Gulf of Thailand and thread through **Ko Samui** for air connections, **Ko Pha-Ngan** for beach bumming and partying, and **Ko Tao** for diving and snorkelling.

Bus over to the Andaman Coast and its limestone mountains jutting out of the sea. **Ko Phi-Phi** is the prettiest, priciest and partiest of them all. Little **Ko Jum** holds tight to a fast-disappearing beach-shack, hippie vibe. **Ko Lanta** has gentrified into a package-tour destination, but the dive scene is the real attraction. Rock climbers opt for nearby **Krabi**.

If you've got the itch for more sand then continue down the peninsula to the **Trang Islands**, another collection of limestone sea mountains and gin-clear water. Or opt for the islands offshore from Satun. There's emerging and mid-range **Ko Bulon Leh**, rustic **Ko Taru-tao** or overblown but still well-loved **Ko Lipe**.

Or you could skip the beaches south of Krabi and instead take a cultural antidote to the northeast, the agricultural heartland. Transit through Bangkok and then crawl through the jungles of **Khao Yai National Park**. From here, head to **Nakhon Ratchasima (Khorat)**, a transit point for trips to the Angkor ruins at **Phimai**. 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 ambience.



Top: View from Ko Phi-Phi Don (p654)  
Bottom: Diving in Ko Tao (p565)

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## Off the Beaten Track: Thailand



### THA TON

Come to this remote-feeling riverside town for the scenic long-tail boat to Chiang Rai, but stay for hill-tribe trekking and frontier exploration. (p284)

### PHAYAO

Break up your journey to Chiang Rai with a detour to this little-visited northern town. The mountain-framed lake provides sunset views and evening dining. (p332)

### YANGON (RANGOON)

### SANGKHLABURI

Mapping along Thailand's western border with Myanmar, Sangkhlaburi is everything an end-of-the-roader seeks, with a cultural stew of ethnicities (Thai, Burmese, Mon and Karen) and a palpable frontier feel. (p184)

### PHRAE

Reminiscent of Luang Prabang and Chiang Mai without the tourists (or the tourist infrastructure), this northern town is a wanderer's best friend. Antique teak houses, tasty food and totally tout free. (p335)

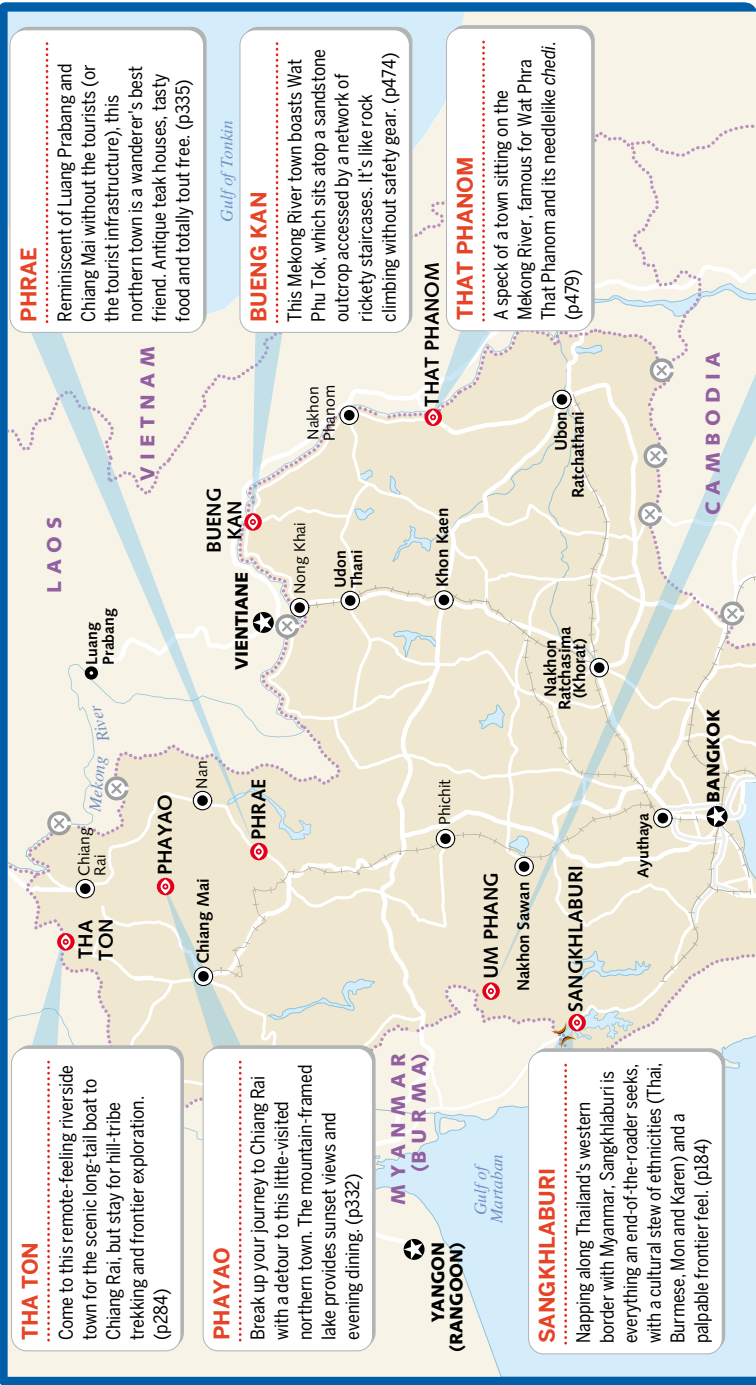
### BUENG KAN

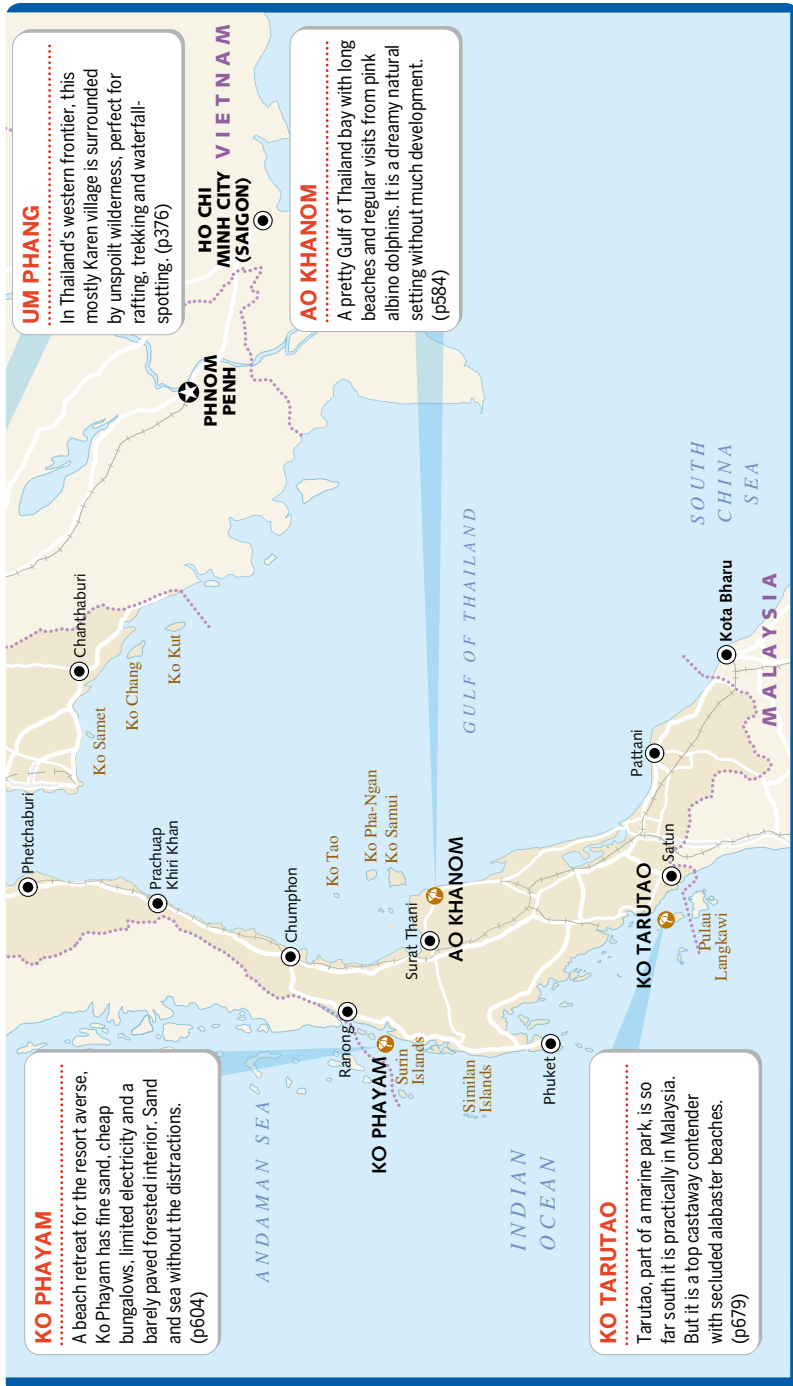
This Mekong River town boasts Wat Phu Tok, which sits atop a sandstone outcrop accessed by a network of rickety staircases. It's like rock climbing without safety gear. (p474)

### THAT PHANOM

### THAT PHANOM

A speck of a town sitting on the Mekong River, famous for Wat Phra That Phanom and its needlelike chedi. (p479)







**Austin Bush**

[Bangkok, Northern Thailand](#) Austin Bush came to Thailand in 1999 as part of a language study programme hosted by Chiang Mai University. The lure of city life, employment and spicy food eventually led Austin to Bangkok. City life, employment and spicy food have managed to keep him there since. Austin is a native of Oregon and a writer and photographer who often focuses on food. Samples of his work can be seen at [www.austinbushphotography.com](http://www.austinbushphotography.com). Austin also wrote the Eat Like a

Local, Food & Drink and Food Spotter's Guide chapters.



**David Eimer**

[Ko Chang & Eastern Seaboard, Hua Hin & the Upper Gulf, and Ko Samui & the Lower Gulf](#) A decade of visiting Thailand in search of beaches and fine food prompted David to relocate to Bangkok in 2012. Since then, his work as a journalist for a variety of newspapers and magazines has taken him from the far south of Thailand, to its northernmost extremities, with many stops in between. Originally from London, David spent seven years living in Beijing, and another five in LA,

prior to moving to Bangkok. He has contributed to 11 Lonely Planet books.



**Adam Skolnick**

[Phuket & the Andaman Coast](#) Adam Skolnick writes about travel, culture, health, sports, human rights and the environment for Lonely Planet, Outside, Travel & Leisure, Salon.com, BBC.com and ESPN.com. He has authored and co-authored two dozen Lonely Planet guidebooks. On this research trip he drove over 3000 km and hopped more than 50 long-tails. His debut novel, *Middle of Somewhere*, is set to publish in 2014. Read more of his work at [www.adamskolnick.com](http://www.adamskolnick.com), and find him on Twitter and Instagram (@adamskolnick).





## 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, Chiang Mai** Every two years, China Williams leaves her quiet suburban life for a guidebook deployment to Thailand. This time she brought along her one-year old daughter as her research assistant and to boost her cuteness factor. It worked; the Thais were smitten. She first came to Thailand in 1997 to teach English in Surin. Since then she has shuttled across the Pacific for more than a decade working on various Thailand and Southeast Asia

titles. Thailand gets richer and happier with every visit. China lives in Catonsville, Maryland (USA) with her husband, Matt, son, Felix, and daughter, Phoebe.



### Mark Beales

**Central Thailand** After working as a journalist for 13 years, Mark swapped the chilly shores of England for the sunnier coasts of Thailand. Since 2004 he has lived in Thailand, where he has written several books for Lonely Planet, tried his hand at being a TV presenter and is currently Head of English at an international school in Rayong. Highlights on this trip included triumphing in a chilli-eating competition with voluntary workers in Sangkhlaburi. For more on Mark's work,

visit [www.markbeales.com](http://www.markbeales.com).



### 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 over 80 countries, including most in Southeast Asia. After university he worked briefly as a legislative assistant before quitting capitol life to backpack around West Africa. It was during this trip that the idea of becoming a freelance travel writer

and photographer was hatched, and he's been at it ever since. He has lived in Khon Kaen, Thailand since 2007.



### Celeste Brash

**Ko Samui & the Lower Gulf** Celeste first arrived in Thailand as a student of Thai language, history and culture at Chiang Mai University. She's come back countless times since and has done the gamut from wild nights on Ko Pha-Ngan to weeks of silence at a Buddhist Wat. Her writing has appeared in publications ranging from *Islands Magazine* to newspapers and anthologies. She's contributed to around 50 Lonely Planet guides but her heart is irrevocably stuck on

Southeast Asia. When not in exotic places, she and her family live in Portland, Oregon. Find her on the web at [www.celestebrash.com](http://www.celestebrash.com).

OVER MORE  
PAGE WRITERS

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