



Chiang Mai Province

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Best Places to Eat

- SP Chicken (p340)
- Talat Pratu Chiang Mai (p341)
- Ginger & Kafe @ The House (p342)
- Tengoku (p344)
- Chiang Dao Nest (p357)

Best Places to Stay

- Anantara Resort & Spa (p338)
- Rachamankha (p336)
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Why Go?

Thailand's northern capital is an overnight train ride and light years away from the bustle and bombast of Bangkok. Wrestled from Burmese control by the kingdom of Siam, the former capital of the Lanna people is a captivating collection of glimmering monasteries, manic markets, modern shopping centres, and quiet residential streets that would not look amiss in a country village.

Chiang Mai is more country retreat than mega-metropolis, but this historic city has evolved into a major traveller centre, luring everyone from backpacking teenagers to young families, round-the-world retirees and a huge contingent of youthful tourists from China, who are redefining the travel experience in the city.

Historic monasteries and cooking courses are just part of the picture. The surrounding province is a jumble of forested hills, and thrill seekers flock here for rafting, hiking, mountain biking and other adrenaline-charged activities, while less energetic visitors interact with elephants, soak in hot springs and wander around experimental farms and lush botanic gardens.

When to Go

- Chiang Mai is at its best during the cool season, roughly from November to February, when temperatures are mild and rain is scarce.
- The hot season runs from March until June, and the mercury regularly climbs above 35°C; pick a hotel with a pool!
- Songkran in April is Chiang Mai's biggest festival – and biggest party – but book well ahead for transport and accommodation.

