



Northern Thailand

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Best Places to Eat

- » nahm (p379)
- » Lung Eed Local Food (p409)
- » Bao Phradit (p428)
- » Palaad Tawanron (p394)
- » MBK Food Court (p378)

Best Places to Stay

- » Siam Heritage (p375)
- » Riverside Guest House (p401)
- » Villa Duang Champa (p393)
- » Poonsawasdi Hotel (p433)
- » Kham Pia Homestay (p429)

Why Go?

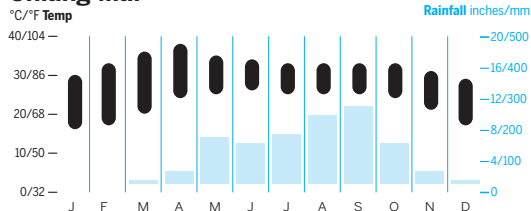
Thailand is arguably the 'safest' introduction to Southeast Asia, but this doesn't mean that it represents any sort of compromise. In fact, we suspect that the secret of Thailand's popularity is rooted in the fact that it packs a bit of everything.

Bangkok is one of the most vibrant cities in Southeast Asia, yet if contemporary Thai living is not your thing, you can delve into the country's past at historical parks such as Sukhothai or Phanom Rung. Similarly, fresh air fiends will be satiated by upcountry expeditions ranging from a rafting trip in Nan to the cliff-top views from Ubon Ratchathani's Pha Taem National Park. And culture junkies can get their fix at a homestay in the country's northeast or via a trek in northern Thailand.

And lest we forget that Thailand also functions as a convenient gateway to Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar (Burma). What's not to love?

When to Go

Chiang Mai



Nov–Feb Thailand's 'winter' is the best time to visit.

Mar–Jun The least desirable time to visit is during Thailand's hot season.

Late Jun–Oct Monsoon rains, although storms are usually confined to an hour's downpour.

Connections

Bangkok is one of Southeast Asia's most important air hubs, and has frequent air links to multiple destinations in Cambodia, southern China, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Bus, minivan and train links to eastern, northern and northeastern Thailand lead to numerous land (or sometimes river) border crossings with Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

Infrequent river and overland links connect northern Thailand and southern China.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Bangkok is the most likely place to land after a long-haul international flight and the easiest place to book onward travel. Give yourself a couple of days to adjust by exploring the old royal district of **Ko Ratanakosin** and taking a **Thai cooking course**. Experience the urban side of northern Thailand in **Chiang Mai** or **Chiang Rai** before escaping cities altogether with a side trip to the 'Golden Triangle' town of **Mae Salong**. At this point, you'll be in prime position to cross to Laos at **Chiang Khong**.

Two Weeks

With more time, you can really dive into Thailand's north via a trek in the mountains surrounding **Chiang Rai** or **Nan**. Alternatively, head to **northeast Thailand**, the country's most traditional rice-growing region. Visit the Khmer ruins at **Phanom Rung** and **Phimai**. Savour the riverine landscape around the parks that make up the **Emerald Triangle** and follow the river in reverse to laid-back **Nong Khai** before crossing to Cambodia or Laos.

AT A GLANCE

- » **Currency** baht (B)
- » **Language** Thai
- » **Money** ATMs all over; banks open Monday to Friday
- » **Visas** Not required for citizens of the EU, Australia or USA
- » **Mobile phones** Prepay SIM card from 69B

Fast Facts

- » **Area** 514,000 sq km
- » **Population** 66,720,153
- » **Capital** Bangkok
- » **Emergency** 191

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	30.64B
Canada	C\$1	30.13B
Europe	€1	42.22B
Japan	¥100	40.48B
New Zealand	NZ\$1	24.34B
UK	UK£1	48.12B
USA	US\$1	31B

Internet Resources

- » **Bangkok Post** (www.bangkokpost.com) English-language daily covers breaking news and opinion pieces
- » **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/thailand) Country profile and what to do and see
- » **Tourism Authority of Thailand** (TAT; www.tourismthailand.org) National tourism department covers introductory information and special events

Set Your Budget

- » **Budget hotel room** from 200B
- » **Two-course evening meal** from 150B
- » **Museum entrance** from 100B
- » **Beer** from 60B