



## Information on Chiangmai and the North

**Chiangmai** is Thailand's second city, fondly known as "the Rose of the North". Home for many festivals and events, there is always something going on in this charming city. Famous for the beauty and the gentle nature of its people, Chiangmai offers breathtaking scenery, colourful hilltribes, exquisite arts and crafts and more. Shopping is a delight in the cool evenings and amongst the many bargains to be had are Thai silk, laquerware, silverware, bronzeware, woodcarvings and furniture, hand made paper, umbrellas, plus many different crafts and items not found elsewhere. Chiangmai has a rich and glorious history reaching back to the Lanna Kingdom established by King Mengrai in 1298. Modern Chiangmai probably has one of the best infrastructures in Thailand there are 4 universities, numerous colleges and schools, around 30 hospitals, an efficient ring-road system, plus an International Airport only minutes from the Town Centre.

**The Chiangmai Orchid** (formally Hyatt Orchid) is our preferred Hotel in Chiangmai; our guests are always made welcome in this traditional and charming hotel. It has an excellent location only 10 minutes from Chiangmai International Airport, near the centre of town and with easy access to the Superhighway for quick transfers to golf and for excursions.

**Kad Suan Kaew** – this large shopping mall is located right next door to the hotel. With two multiplex cinemas, two bowling rinks, a department store, many restaurants, a bank and foreign exchange apart from a multitude of shops and stalls this is an excellent facility and extremely convenient.

**Night Bazaar** – Chiangmai is famous for its Night Bazaar, which gets bigger and offers more variety every year. Open from around 5.00pm until 11.00pm if you can't find what you are looking for in the Night Bazaar it probably doesn't exist. The Night Bazaar is located between the Thapae Gate on the Eastern Wall of the city and the River Ping. It is about a 10 minute Tuk Tuk ride from the hotel – Thai shopping at its best and bargains galore.

**Sunday Market** – held within the moat starting from Tapae Gate its getting bigger and bigger, definitely worth a visit, and one of Chiangmai's most popular events. Best time to go between 16:00 to 21:00

**The City** – Chiangmai was originally a square walled city with a moat protecting the town. Each of the 4 walls is around one mile long and now the inner road of the wall takes traffic anticlockwise while the road outside the moat and the wall takes traffic clockwise. The Northern wall holds one of the most important gates the Chang Puak

(Albino Elephant) Gate, the Eastern Wall is home to the Thapae Gate – probably the busiest section of the moat, many concerts and events are held around the Thapae Gate. The Southern Wall has 2 gates, the Chiangmai Gate towards the Eastern corner and the Suan Proong Gate towards the Western corner, midway along the Western wall there is the Suandork Gate. Within the confines of the city walls there are many temples and it is worth taking a guided tour of the inner city

**Doi Suthep** – Doi Suthep (Suthep Mountain) houses one of the most important Buddhist temples in Thailand, amazingly perched two thirds of the way up one of Thailand's tallest peaks a visit is a must. Can be done by Songtaew (pick up truck taxi) or with a guide in our minibus. There are stunning panoramic views of the town and the countryside when you walk around the perimeter of this magnificent temple.

**Mai Rim and Chang Dao** – one of the most popular excursions is to the Chang Dao Elephant Camp. Chang Dao is well known (it's been on the BBC wildlife program) very humane towards the Elephants this is a great way to see them at work and at play. Our excursion includes a one hour ride through the jungle (for most trips quoted locally the actual elephant ride is an extra 500 baht) lunch and a raft trip. On the full day trip we also visit an orchid farm and other places of interest. Chang Dao is near Mae Rim to the north of Chiangmai.

**Sankhampaeng and Hang Dong** – these are the two places famous for their handicrafts. Sankhampaeng is the main tourist route and prices can be a bit high, most Tuk Tuk drivers and Taxi Drivers will try to take you there as they get paid to even just pull in to a factory and park. It is still worth a look but bargain hard if you see something you really like. The Umbrella Village at Borsang is good value as are the vast selection of hand made papers available in the Sa Paper Village. Sankhampaeng is to the East of Chiangmai. Ban Tawai is the craft and woodcarving village situated on the outskirts of Hang Dong to the South of Chiangmai. There are no commissions for the touts so there are real bargains to be had amongst the huge selection of hand made products. Trips out to either or both areas are easily organised, please ask and it will be done.

**Wieng Kum Kam** – King Mengrai's buried city is only 5 km south from Chiangmai. Still in the early stages of excavation it is set to be one of the provinces major attractions. It is possible to take Elephant rides around the ruins and archeological sites from a pick up point at Wat Kan Thom in the centre of the medieval city. The tour meanders through the green lanes and excavated temples in the western half of the "Wieng" (fortified city) before returning to the first complete temple built by Lanna's uniting King. Still a lot to be done before the site is finished, but a trip worth considering if you have seen most of the other attractions in Chiangmai.

**Golf** – not so many courses as Bangkok and Pattaya, but getting busier, two new courses opened in 2004, 2 more in 2005 and one in 2006. There are 9 excellent golfing venues in Chiangmai and one more within range at Lampang. **Lanna Golf Club** is part of a comprehensive sporting facility. Lanna has 27 holes – 9 of which date back to the early 1900's. The 3 nines offer different golfing styles, particularly the nine running around and through the racetrack is stunning with scenic mountain backdrops. The Clubhouse and changing facilities are more basic than some of the modern developments, but it's conveniently near to town and in good shape, a most enjoyable example of Thai style golf. **Royal Chiangmai** is one of the best-conditioned courses in

Thailand and one of the few “pay and plays” – though its standard belies that. No memberships have been sold and it is a golf resort and hotel. Designed in 1995 by Peter Thomson and Michael Wolveridge it really has reached prime condition, this course becomes the favourite of many of our guests. **Chiangmai Green Valley** is only 20 minutes from town, 10 minutes past Lanna GC. Designed in 1990 by Dennis Griffiths this course is grand and quite photogenic, we use the view from the clubhouse for many of our brochures. The greenkeeping is nearly completely organic. 7,200 yards long this is a test of golf, wide-open fairways but water hazards on every hole, plus plenty of trees and bunkers. The clubhouse is huge and also houses the excellent Angsana Spa. **Chiangmai Lamphun Golf Club** is quite a way out to the south-east of Chiangmai. Designed in 1990 by Dr Sukapanpotharam it is a tough challenge – with narrow fairways and long water carries. This course is also known as Golden Teak Valley – which aptly describes the location. Home to the Heritage Spa and a hotel this is a pretty comprehensive golf facility. This course is in excellent condition at the moment and really worth a visit. **Mae Jo Golf Club** opened November 2004 though still young it is in excellent condition and an enjoyable course only about 25 minutes from town, last season (2006-7) Mae Jo has become even more popular with our guests and is the most frequently requested course for extra golf. Mae Jo is highly rated as a golf course. **Gassan Khuntan Golf and Resort** also opened in November 2005, initially it was owned built and designed by Gassan Construction, who over the past 12 years have built many of the better known courses in Bangkok and Pattaya. Set in a large plot of land adjacent to Khuntan National Park and with a river running through it is a spectacular development. The signature Par 3 has the backdrop of Khuntan Railway Bridge built nearly 100 years ago. Rather uniquely the 18<sup>th</sup> is also a Par 3, very difficult and long, it is a stunning golf hole. Rated number one by some sources in Thailand, Gassan Khuntan is around 60 minutes from Chiangmai. Gassan Construction opened a second course in 2005 aptly called **Gassan Lake City**, as its name suggests there is a lot of water, a very difficult course, with superb facilities this is another top course in the making. As we begin 2007 this course has matured and is developing into a top course, very challenging with some excellent holes. The third Gassan course opened late 2006 and is called **Gassan Marina**, plenty of water as there is at all these courses, still very young, we would not recommended to play this course until autumn 2007. **Chiangmai Highlands** opened in December 2005, this will become one of the top courses in Thailand, located around 40 minutes from town, this is a stunning golf course, very scenic and it is the flagship course for the designers from the USA. Lastly we have **Mae Moh Golf Course** in Lampang. This is a really excellent course and well worth the long drive from Chiangmai (about 85 minutes). Owned and managed by EGAT (Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand) this lovely course winds around the open faced lignite mines of Lampang, a unique experience we are beginning to play this course quite frequently it does tend also to be less busy as not many people can find it! EGAT have many courses in Thailand, generally near to their Dams and Power Stations – all are excellently maintained and a pleasure to play. There are several 9 hole courses, the oldest course in Thailand is the 9 hole Gymkhana, a good practice course at Hang Dong GC, and best of all the revived Wing 41 course near to the airport, full length and designed by Lee Schmidt, Star Dome comprises the excellent full length par 36 9 holes plus an excellent modern driving range

**TAILORS** – Thailand is renowned for good value and quality tailoring, though you do need to be careful to pick a reliable one. Chiangmai has many good tailors, our

recommended tailor is MAX FASHIONS, and we have had 100% good reports from our guests that have used him. We will be pleased to give you directions to his shop, or one of our drivers can drop you there.

**GOLF SHOP** - There are several good golf shops in Chiangmai we recommend Songvilai Golf conveniently located opposite Lanna Golf Club and on the return route from 3 of the courses Green Valley, Royal and Mae Jo. We have been buying all our clubs and accessories from this shop for the past 5 years, particularly recommended are his golf shoes.

**A Day at the Races** – on Saturdays the racetrack nine at Lanna GC is closed for Horse Racing. There are generally 10 races and it is one of only four legal gambling venues in Thailand – the other three racetracks being in Bangkok (2) and Udon Thani. The facility is run by the Army; there is a big Military presence in Chiangmai. Horseracing at Lanna can turn into a fun and maybe profitable afternoon out, the betting is Tote style plus there are daily doubles. It is only 100 baht admittance to the air-conditioned Members Enclosure where food and drink is incredibly good value.

**Restaurants** – Chiangmai is a town full of restaurants – hundreds, and it would be harder to find a bad one than a good one. Our main advice would be avoid the extremely expensive International Restaurants they are generally not worth it, also the hotel restaurants are pricey and pretty average. There follows a list of ones that we regularly use. **Mai Muen** (Wooden City) recently opened on Chotana Road a few hundred metres before Lanna Golf Course, excellent Thai food and live music, this restaurant is quite small and can get busy, price wise this is about as good value as you will find. **Pasta Café** not that far from the Chiangmai Orchid, but you would still need a Tuk-Tuk or transport to get there, very well run Pasta Restaurant in pleasant surroundings, both indoor and outdoor seating, great food and very low prices. The Lasagne sells out everyday, its just that good and the home made Ice Cream is amazing. **Sila-Aat** - this basic street restaurant is situated in Galare Centre just a short distance from the central part end of the Night Bazaar, their Pad Thai is out of this world, either with prawn, mixed seafood or chicken this famous Thai one plate dish is cooked to perfection here, also the Khao Soi (Northern Thai Curry with crispy noodle) is very good. **The Riverside**, opened since 1987 this riverside venue is a must visit, excellent entertainment beginning with a superb acoustic guitarist who plays from 8.00pm till 9.00 then several different style talented bands who play through to the early hours. The food is excellent – make your choice from a huge menu of Thai and International dishes, average price for a meal here is as little as 300 baht per head with drinks. Other good riverside restaurants are the **Good View** and the **Gallery** (to the north of the Riverside) and the **Cottage** and the **Antique House 2** to the south. Chiangmai is famous for its **Noodle Stalls**, they are situated all around the City and a great meal can be sampled at any of these for between 15 and 30 baht per person, look out for the vendors with the big yellow signs. Chiangmai also has some of the best Foodmarkets in Thailand; at a Foodmarket you buy vouchers at a booth and exchange them for delicacies from the many different food stalls in the market. A very fair way of doing business, the stallholders cash the vouchers in later; less a % for their rent. Unused vouchers can be refunded after you have had your meal. Foodmarkets are a great way to try out the many flavours of Thailand. There are many Foodmarkets in Chiangmai, our favourite is the one at Central Airport Shopping Plaza but they are all good – and if the stalls aren't good they can't survive. If you are feeling that a steak is

required try the **German Hofbrauhaus** near to Macdonalds in the Night Bazaar, two other expat style restaurants adjoin **Haus Munchen** and the **Red Lion**. The Irish Pub **O'Malley's** in Anusarn Market is probably the best of the bunch, excellent breakfasts, roasts and other great meals. Other International Restaurants worth a mention are **The Pub**, set in a large plot in Huay Kaew road, a visit here is like going to an English Country Pub – except it's a lot cheaper, nice ambience and good food, turn left out of the hotel, across 2 sets of lights and its on your left just past a large open air market. Under new management its becoming very popular. New additions to our recommended list serving fine cuisine are **The House**, inside the moat on Moon Muang Road 200 yards North of Tapae Gate, excellent International and Nouveau Fusion Cuisine. Newly opened by the river, a superb restaurant serving the very best Thai / Fusion cuisine is the **Mahanaga**, this is the most elegant Thai Restaurant visited, beautiful tasteful surroundings, a real touch of class – with excellent food, need to be booked transport can be laid on. **Pumpui's** is the oldest Italian Restaurant in Chiangmai and now under Franco's care it provides excellent Italian food from a substantial menu. **Buenissimo** on the river near to Mahanaga is a huge Italian restaurant with a high class Italian delicatessen and wine cellar, choose from the best selection of wines in Chiangmai, excellent restaurant and Sergio is a good host. Last but not least **Yoy's River Bar**, excellent Thai food, good music and cheap prices, best value in Chiangmai. **BEWARE** – some restaurants offer big commissions to guides and Tuk Tuk drivers, so be firm with where you want to go. One restaurant in particular offering high commissions is the overpriced Piccolo Roma (Italian) – quite often a Tuk Tuk will attempt to take you there even when you have asked for one of the better quality and value Italian Restaurants in Chiangmai.

**Excursions** – our most popular excursions are the full day excursion to Chang Dao (mentioned earlier), Doi Suthep and Doi Pui, City Tour, Handicrafts, Khantoke Dinner (highly recommended – Northern Thai dining experience). Also we run a memorable overnight to Mae Hong Son (“The City of Mists”) stay at the Mountain Inn Resort (location for Air America), stunning scenery on a drive that takes over 1,200 hairpin bends. A new excursion is one to Wieng Kum Kham. Apart for that we can organize any trip you see in the local tourist magazines, so if you see an excursion that you fancy we will match the price.

**Chiangrai** – located about 125 miles to the North East of Chiangmai lies perhaps Thailand's most overlooked city and province - Chiangrai. Little has changed here in the 12 years we have been taking visitors there. Chiangrai has a great climate and is the perfect base for visiting around the Golden Triangle and playing golf at 2 of Thailand's top courses. There are 3 ways to get to Chiangrai from Chiangmai. The quick route through the mountains, this takes about 150 minutes, good roads most of the way, great scenery. The adventurous route, through Mae Rim up to Fang and then down by boat towards Chiangrai. Finally we have the Lampang route, via the historic town of Lampang, through Ngao and then stop at the Lake at Payao; before driving through Pan into Chiangrai.

**The Wiang Inn** – one of our favourite hotels, this seems to get better every visit. Located right in the centre of town only 200 metres from the Night Market, friendly and efficient service, nice clean well appointed rooms, good buffet breakfast and good food in the coffee shop. The hotel foyer is impressive, well designed and spacious with a touch of Northern “class”.

**Chiangrai Nightmarket** – turn right out of the hotel and within minutes you are at the Nightmarket. A fraction of the size of the Chiangmai version this is a great place to shop. Many original souvenirs and everything is very very cheap. Plenty of food stalls and bars around the market. Genuine Hill Tribe crafts, excellent hand made fabrics and much more. For your souvenir of Thailand - this is the place to shop.

**Golf** – it's worth coming to Chiangrai just for the golf. There are only two courses, but they are both top quality and highly rated. **Waterford Valley** is Thailand's northernmost and highest course, also one of the most scenic – it's around 40 minutes North East of town. Generally quiet this course is set in a vast expanse of land; great views, many streams and lakes, and in great condition with a well-designed clubhouse set on the hill. Anywhere else in the World a course of this standard would be packed everyday, but for the moment it is quiet so here we have golf for the privileged few. Saving the best for last we have **Santiburi**, arguably Thailand's (maybe Asia's) best course this 1992 Trent Jones creation takes some beating. The panoramic views from the first class clubhouse are astounding. The course, the clubhouse, the caddies, the food – everything is as good as it gets, even the weather seems to always be perfect at Santiburi. The course is owned by the Singha Brewery so money has been no object – it shows.

**Restaurants** – there are not that many restaurants in Chiangrai, but still some good ones. Here are places that we have visited recently. **Aye's Restaurant**, Khun Aye speaks fluent English and runs a fine establishment, located opposite to the entrance to the Nightmarket. Well-balanced menu from fresh Baguettes, to Steaks and Thai Food, good choice of wines and excellent value, food fresh from the grill is highly recommended. Khun Aye is a busy lady, she also owns an excellent **Pizzeria**, about 6 doors up from her main restaurant towards the hotel. The **Golden Triangle Café & Inn** provides excellent International and Thai Food; the Thai Menu is very interesting as it explains the thinking behind the Thai Cuisine, good food and good value. This is situated about 400 yards from the Nightmarket, turn right as you exit the market walk to the traffic lights, turn right again and it is on the other side of the road around 150 yards down. There are plenty of good food stalls in the **Nightmarket Foodmarket** also a good Thai Restaurant – **Rattanokosin** - full of Thai Antiques you get a great view of the Nightmarket from the upstairs section, well worth a visit.

**Excursions** – Chiangrai is a fascinating area apart from the great golf. If time permits its well worth taking the Golden Triangle excursion. Start by driving to the ancient town of Chiangsaen, a river port that trades with China down the mighty Mekong River, on to the Golden Triangle viewpoint where Laos, Burma and Thailand meet. Then travel to the border town of Mae Sai, which faces its Burmese counterpart Tachilek. The border is open again now so it is possible to enter Burma across the bridge. Plenty of border trade here – many items from China and Burma. Other excursions are available – Hill Tribes, botanical gardens and more please enquire locally.

We hope that this information will be helpful towards making the most of your stay in Thailand – **The Land of Smiles**.