



retreat | recreate
Thailand and Laos 2026

Useful Information

as at September 2026

PLEASE NOTE: *This information is the result of many hours of research and is made exclusively available to our tour participants as an additional resource. We would appreciate it if you would **please refrain from sharing it.***

Refer also to the Trip Notes for details of currency, weather, mobile phone and Wifi communication (sims/roaming/data etc), general health, vaccination, safety etc.

GENERAL

The northern regions of **Thailand and Laos** are known for their many culturally diverse, ethnic minority groups, providing a fascinating array of textiles and handcrafts for us to explore. From Hmong embroidery, batik and hemp weaving, to the applique and patchwork of the Lisu, to the intricate weaving of the Tai Lue, the metallic embellishments of the Akha and the backstrap weaving of the Karen and Dara Ang, we can't wait to share the kaleidoscope of motifs, materials, techniques and colours of this fascinating part of the textile and handcraft world with you!

The largest group of **Thailand's** population are ethnic Thais (approximately 75%), with more than 85% of the population speaking a Tai language and sharing a common culture. This core population includes the central Thai (33.7% of the population), northeastern Thai or Isan (34.2%) which is more similar to Lao, northern Thai or Lanna (18.8%), and southern Thai (13.3%). There are also more than 30 ethnic groups in Thailand encompassing a wide variety of languages and cultures.

Depending on who does the counting, there are 68 to 119 different ethnic groups found in **Laos**. In 2005, a total of 49 different ethnic groups were declared as a result of ethnic group reclassification. The majority of Laos' population is Lao (55% of the whole population), about 11% are Khmu, 8% are Hmong, and the rest are other ethnic

groups including Akha, Singsil, Lue, Lamed, Tai, Katu, Triang and Harak, Oy and Brao (Laos population census 2005, National Statistics Centre).

Approximately 95% of people in Thailand and 65% in Laos are Buddhist. However, with Luang Prabang being the Buddhist capital of Laos and Buddhism's obvious visual presence (saffron clad monks everywhere and 34 temples within the city) it may seem that the influence of Buddhism is more dominant. The concept of reincarnation is almost universally accepted in Thailand and much of Laos even by non-Buddhists. A good person can improve their lot in life today and in future lives by making merit - offering food and donations to the monks and performing regular worship at the local wat (temple). Merit making can also result in success in business, academic tests, finding love, pregnancy and more.

Through the practice of Buddhism, behaviour and consequences interact to improve the life of the individual. Within this framework, the way one's life is lived is constantly questioned. Generosity and friendliness are often cited as examples of the Buddhist influence. As such, we're in for a treat while we spend time in Thailand and Laos where generosity and friendliness permeate the cultural personality of these two beautiful countries.

TIME ZONE

UTC+7 for both Thailand and Laos
(Indochina ICT time)

USEFUL CONTACTS

The retreat|recreate host on this trip is Susan Keeble. The Whatsapp number for Susan is +61 407 835 922.

For the duration of the tour, we will be accompanied by our local guide, Ms. Lalada (Katie) Kaewpim. Her WhatsApp number will be added to the WhatsApp group on day 1.

In Laos, we are required to have a local Laos government accredited guide. Mr Sach will join us once we cross the border into Laos.

Our **tour operator's** emergency number is: +66 898 103 722
(Omit +66 if calling from within Thailand)

Emergency numbers in Thailand

Thailand country code 66

Thailand police & general emergency 191

Tourist police 1155

Thailand fire and rescue services 199

Thailand medical emergencies and rescue services 1669

Emergency numbers in Laos

Laos country code 856

Laos Ambulance 1195

Laos Police 1191

Laos Tourist Police 1192

Laos Fire 1190

PASSPORTS AND VISAS

You must carry your passport at all times. Under local law, it's illegal not to carry an identity document. Passports must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the duration of your trip. We also recommend that you carry proof of Covid vaccination with you at all times, particularly at immigration/border entry points.

Thailand Visa: At the time of writing, the visa exemption for a single entry into Thailand (for arrival by air) applies to nationals of Australia, UK and USA. Please check and re-check with your nearest Thai consulate to confirm visa requirements for your nationality and specific entry requirements (single/multiple, place of entry and departure, by air/land etc). If you're returning to Thailand (and leaving the airport) you should apply for a multi-entry visa.

Laos Visa: A reminder that we will be obtaining these as a group upon arrival at the Thai-Laos border on day 7 (as per the Trip Notes). Please ensure:

- your passport is valid for at least 6 months beyond the duration of your trip,
- you have 2 blank pages (after Thai immigration has added your arrival/departure stamps),
- you carry at least one passport photo (preferably 2+) and
- up to US\$45 for the visa fee (payable in cash only and preferably in US dollars)

HEALTH

- Take sensible precautions with foods you are unused to, to avoid travellers' diarrhoea.
- If you suffer from motion sickness, consider bringing ginger tablets/TravaCalm/Kwell for our bus and boat journeys.
- Do not drink tap water or use it to brush your teeth. Please bring and carry a reusable water bottle and refill it as we travel. Stay hydrated.
- Carry and wear insect repellent, particularly in the evenings.
- Carry and wear sunscreen, sunhat and sunglasses every day.
- Carry your own medical kit at all times (refer to the Packing List)

ETIQUETTE

- A greeting is made with a smile, a bow and prayer-like, palms-together gesture (called a '*wai*' in Thailand and '*Nop*' in Laos). The higher you hold your hands, the more respect you show.
- From a spiritual standpoint, the head is regarded as the highest and most sacred part of the body and the feet as the dirtiest and lowest.
- Shoes are not worn in temple building and private homes as a sign of respect and for sanitary reasons. Easy to remove shoes are recommended.
- Don't touch anyone with your feet
- Never point your feet or toes towards a Buddha image. If sitting at a religious site, sit in 'mermaid' position with your legs folded to one side.

- Never step over someone or their personal belongings.
- Don't touch the head of another person or a child.
- Always dress modestly. Cover below knees through to shoulders as a minimum. No shorts, short skirts or plunging necklines please. Basically, avoid clothing that's tight-fitting, see-through or reveals too much skin.
- For temple visits cover elbows to ankles and always remove your shoes when entering any building containing a Buddha image. Don't pose for a photo in front of a Buddha image.
- As part of their ascetic vows, monks are not supposed to touch or be touched by women. Women shouldn't sit next to a monk on public transport and generally should cross out of the way on the street to avoid an accidental brush.
- Agreement and harmony are considered the most important social graces. Saving face, avoiding confrontation and avoiding embarrassment (to yourself or others) are culturally appropriate behaviours. Smile and stay cool. Showing strong emotions and losing your temper are big no-no's.
- ALWAYS ask and receive permission before taking photos of people, including children. If in doubt, desist and keep the image in memory.
- Photographing military sites and government buildings is prohibited.
- In Laos and Thailand, public displays of affection are taboo.

USEFUL PHRASES

Note: While Thai and Lao languages have similar sounds and some words in common, they are not the same.

THAI

If the speaker is female, you should end sentences with the word (ka/kap) as indicated in the phrases below. Similarly, men end sentences with the word (khrup/krap). This is used to make your sentence or question polite and respectful.

Hello / Goodbye	Sawadee ka
Yes	Chai ka
No	Mai ka
Please	kor
Thank you	khop khun ka
Excuse me	Khor a pai ka
Sorry	khor thoat ka
Where is the restroom	Hong nam yoo tee nai ka
No worries/oh well	Mai pen rai
Delicious / very delicious	Aroy ka / Aroy mak ka
Do you speak English?	Khun pood paa-saa ang-grit dai mai

LAO

Hello	Sabai-dee
Goodbye/Stay well	La gon
Yes	maan / do
No	bor
Please	ga-lu-nah
Thank you	korp jai
Thank you very much	korp jai lai lai
Excuse me/ sorry	khor toht
Where are the toilets?	Horng nam yoo sai
Delicious / very delicious	Sep / Sep lai
Do you speak English?	Jow bahk pah-sah ang-kit dai bor

PRE AND POST-TOUR SUGGESTIONS

Venues marked with an * are included in our itinerary.

Please check venue websites for changes to opening times and entrance fees BEFORE you visit

CHIANG MAI MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

- **Chiang Mai National Museum:** Chang Phueak, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai 50300. Ph: +66 53 221 308. Open WED-SUN, 9am-4pm. Admission THB200. Showcasing Lanna history and culture in a two-story museum, resembling a grand Lanna house. <http://www.virtualmuseum.finearts.go.th/chiangmai/index.php/th/>
- **Kalm Village Chiang Mai:** 14 Soi 4, Phrapokklao Rd. Muang Chiang Mai. Open THU-TUE 9:30 am- 6:30pm. Admission = free. A centre for craft, art and culture. Recommended. <https://www.kalmvillage.com/>
- **Lanna Folklife museum:** Prapokkloa Rd, Tambon Si Phum, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Mai, Chang Wat Chiang Mai. Open WED-SUN, 8.30am-4.30pm. Admission THB 90. Showcases the Northern Thai lifestyle and art with artifacts and explanations on Lanna Buddhist worship; mural paintings, lacquerware, and pottery from Lanna artisans; and beautiful textiles from Northern Thai weavers. The exhibits are intended to demonstrate the harmony between Lanna lifestyle, religion, and nature. Recommended. <https://cmocity.com/lanna-folklife-museum/>
- **Highland People Discovery Museum** (formerly known as the Hilltribe Museum or Tribal Museum): 9 Chotana Rd, Tambon Chang Phueak, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Mai. Ph: +66 53 210 872. Open MON-FRI, 8.30am-12pm and 1-4pm. An ethnographic museum showing the life and lifestyles of Thailand's minority hill tribes including the Karen, Hmong, Yao, Akha, Lisu, Lahu, Khmu, Lua, Tin, and Mlabri peoples. <https://www.museumthailand.com/museum/the-highland-people-discovery-museum>
- **MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum:** 122, Moo 7 Tonpao Amphoe San Kamphaeng, Chang Wat Chiang Mai. Ph: +66 52 081 737. Open FRI-MON, 10 am- 6 pm. Admission: THB200. This warehouse-turned-museum represents the personal collection of the Beurdeley–Bunnag family's perspective on the best of contemporary Thai creativity. It houses over 200 paintings, sculptures, and multi-media work in their permanent collections, plus seasonal exhibitions from Thai contemporary artists. Located in the historic Sankampang crafts district (a 30-minute drive east of the Old City, easily accessible by both public transport and taxi), with a mirrored exterior that takes inspiration from the mirror tiles used in traditional Thai temples. <http://www.maiiam.com/>

CHIANG MAI MARKETS

Note: *Good-natured haggling is a part of daily life in Asia. Most prices are 'padded' because a little negotiation is expected. Once the vendor suggests their price, offer half and then work your way up from there until both buyer and seller are in agreement. Keep a smile on your face and stay calm - it's supposed to be fun!*

- ***Chiang Mai Hmong Market:** QXQX+MR8, Tambon Chang Moi, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai. Open daily 7am-5pm. At the southwest corner of Warorot, a small laneway opens up and takes you directly to the Hmong Market. Less permanent than Warorot, the Hmong Market consists mostly of tarpaulin-covered stalls and bins loaded with cloth. Antique notions, fabric swatches, Akha hats, batik and embroidered skirts, quilts and antique fabric panels of all shapes and sizes (once used for different costume purposes) and rolls of raw and indigo-coloured hemp fabric may be found here.
- ***Night Bazaar:** 41 Changklan Rd, Tambon Chang Khlan, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Mai, Chang Wat Chiang Mai. Ph: +66 53 283 250. Chiang Mai's night bazaar is one of the most famous as well as one of the oldest evening markets in Thailand. Known for its lively atmosphere and array of handicrafts, jewellery, clothing, art and more, you will need to haggle to find a bargain. The nearly one-mile stretch also includes side streets packed with stalls as well as the chance to sample some of

Chiang Mai's famous street food.
<https://www.nightbazaarplace.com/>

- ***Tha Phae Gate Sunday Walking Street Market:** 1km down the full length of Rachadamnoen Rd, Tambon Si Phum, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai (in the centre of the old walled city). Open: SUN, 5pm-midnight. The Sunday Market showcases the art and craftsmanship of the Northern Thai people. On Saturday evenings, a live band performs on a semi-permanent stage in front of the brick gate and food vendors pop up all over the place.
- ***Warorot Market:** Wichayanon Rd, Tambon Chang Moi, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai. Open daily 7am-5pm. This multi-level indoor market is located outside the old city near Thanon Chang Moi and Tapae Road, about a 20-minute walk outside Tapae Gate. You'll find fewer tourists and much lower prices on local goods. On the top floor, the shops around the northern balcony have the best clothing, mainly cut from indigo cloth. One shop on this floor sells umbrellas, drums, woodwind instruments, temple bells and wood carvings plus an assortment of curios.

CHIANG MAI - TEXTILES & HANDCRAFTS

- **Adorn with Studio Naenna:** 22 Nimmana Haeminda Rd Lane 1, Tambon Su Thep, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chang Wat Chiang Mai. Open daily 10am-6pm. Shop selling fair trade, locally made hand woven, hand dyed products.
<https://studio-naenna.com/>
- **Ban Tawai Wood Carving village:** 90 Moo 2 Ban Tawai, Khun Khong, Hang Dong District, Chiang Mai. The pride of the Thai Government's "One Tambon, One Product" (OTOP) program, where communities benefit from official incentives to nurture local handicrafts. Drawing from both traditional and modern inspirations, the artisans create gorgeous hand-carved works from teakwood. By buying here, you cut out the middleman, ensuring you get the real thing and profits go directly to the source. <http://www.ban-tawai.com/>
- **Bo Sang Umbrella Village and Handicraft Centre:** Located 9km east of Chiang Mai at Sankampaeng Road, this village specializes in the age-old trade of creating handmade paper umbrellas. These painstakingly constructed umbrellas come in all sizes, from cocktail umbrellas to giant parasols, mostly created using paper made from mulberry-tree pulp. <https://bosang-umbrella.com/>
- **Cotton Farm @ Tea House:** 2nd floor (Raming Tea House Siam Celadon): 158 Thapae Rd, Tambon Chang Moi, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Mai, Chang

Wat Chiang Mai.
<https://cottonfarm.co.th/>

- **Cotton Farm @ Thai Craft:** 95 Charoen Prathet Rd, Tambon Chang Khlan, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Mai, Chang Wat, Chiang Mai Ph: +66 818846484. Indigo shibori (tie dye) and weaving workshops by appointment. Workshops range from 2 hours to multiple days.
<https://cottonfarm.co.th/>
- **Kesorn:** 154-156, Thapae Road, Chang Klan, Mueang Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai, 50300. Open daily, 10am - 4.30pm. This cluttered shop has been trading old bric-a-brac from the local ethnic groups for years. It is always fully packed with goods and specialises mainly in textiles, lacquerware and jewellery.
- **Pan Dao Wa Nish Shop:** 44/5 Chang Moy St. Lane 1. Great selection of Hmong embroidered trims and panels as well as some finished garments.
- **Pakeryaw Basket and Textile:** Loi Khor Road, Chang Klan, Mueang Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai (in between the Riverside and the Night Bazaar district). Set in a traditional Thai wooden house - a step back in time. It's dusty and quite haphazard, but it's possible to find jewel headgear, embroidered belts, musical instruments, and tribal clothes.
- **Rada loom:** 266/2 Moo 3, San Pak Wan, Chiang Mai. Email: CNXradahostel@gmail.com. Open MON-SAT 10am-6.30pm Weaving school. They also make and sell weaving equipment and accessories and specialise in Eri silk goods.
<https://www.facebook.com/radaloom>

- **Rare Earth Tribal Art and Textiles Gallery:** 24/28 Kampangdin Rd, Tambon Chang Moi, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai (next to Kong Court GuestHouse). Ph: +66-87179 2880. Open daily 3-9pm. Tribal and Asian art gallery and museum, antique textiles, ethnic traditional costume <https://www.facebook.com/rarearthart/>
- **Slow Stitch (Shibori) Studio:** 13/18 Moo 2, Tambon San Klang, Sankamphang, Chang Wat Chiang Mai (15-20 minute drive from the Old City near the Wat Seemaram temple). Open SAT-SUN 10am - 5pm. Founded by Serge & Ann in 2015 after studying under the same indigo dyeing craftsman in rural Japan. Their shared fascination for the handmade approach to textiles quickly developed into a passion to share their work with others. Shibori is an ancient method of creating patterns on cloth by manipulating and compressing the fabric before dyeing it. <https://slowstitchstudio.com/>
- ***Studio Naenna:** main gallery 138/8 Soi Chang khian, T. Changpeuak, A. Muang Chiang Mai. Open MON-FRI 9am – 5pm. In the Main Gallery showroom, you'll find ethical garments for women and men, soft silk stoles, modern cotton scarves, shawls and home furnishings, wall hangings etc. Young weavers are trained, master weavers are provided with ethical working conditions and handcraft traditions are handed down to ensure the continuity of handcraft and textile traditions and heritage. <https://studio-naenna.com/>
- **Sop Moei Arts:** 150, Watgate, 10 Charoen Rajd Rd, Tambon Chang Moi, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai. Open MON-FRI 10am-5pm. Ph: +66 53 306 123 A not-for-profit organization collaborating with local Karen weavers and aiming to provide a sustainable source of income to the weavers and to keep traditional craft skills alive. High quality hand-woven textiles, baskets and home decor. <http://sopmoeiarts.com/>
- **San Kampaeng Home industries and Handicraft Centre** (close to Bo Sang Umbrella village). 13km east of Chiang Mai. Best known for its Lanna-style silk and cotton products. Explore an array of beautiful handmade textiles, woodcrafts, clay pottery, silverware and more.
- **Siam Celadon:** 38 Moo 10, Ton Pao Subdistrict, San Kamphaeng 50130 (Close to MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum). Open MON-FRI 8am-5pm. Celadon pottery is known for its pale grey-green glaze derived from a combination of local clay and wood ash. Watch ceramicists at work and buy if you wish. <https://www.siamceladon.com/> Also the location of a lovely tea house. See also Raming Tea House (cafe and gallery).

CHIANG MAI - OTHER ACTIVITIES

- **Elephant Jungle Sanctuary:** 119/10 Thapae Rd Chang Klan, Muang, Chiang Mai A sustainable and ethical elephant reserve in Chiang Mai offering visitors a range of tour option. The trained English-speaking guides give visitors insight into the behaviour and personal history of the elephants. The elephant mahouts help people realize incredible life experiences such as feeding the elephants by hand or bathing elephants. The money raised from visits and donations contributes to elephant rescue, welfare, food and veterinary care as well as land acquisition, maintenance and infrastructure. Free pickup/drop off service from within 5km radius of Chiang Mai's old city. Transfers take approximately 1.5 hours. <https://elephantjunglesanctuary.com/chiang-mai/>
- **Lila Thai Massage** – there are seven branches within Chiang Mai old city. <http://www.chiangmaithaimassage.com/>
This great organisation provides training and careful screening for women inmates prior to their release from prison, allowing them to make a dignified transition into society, earn a living, contribute to society and be accepted into the community. By providing employment opportunities and reducing discrimination, the program aims to reduce the likelihood of the women returning to the cycle of crime.
- **Mae Sa Waterfall:** Soi Namtok Mae Sa 4, Mae Raem, Mae Rim District, Chiang Mai. Open daily 8.30am-4.30pm Picturesque 10-level waterfall with a small plunge pool for swimming, a hiking trail & food stalls. About a 40 minute drive from Chiang Mai city.
- **Monk Chat** programs offer tourists the opportunity to talk to a Buddhist monk about any topic of their choice. The benefits flow both ways: the monks get some practice in the English language, and the tourists gain insight into Buddhism and its practice. Most of Chiang Mai's prominent Buddhist temples have monk chat schedules. eg. Wat Chedi Luang in the Old City hosts daily monk chats on the north side of the stupa from 9am to 6pm. Remember to avoid sensitive topics like politics, and observe temple etiquette (dress modestly, shoes off, turn off your phone, don't point, don't smoke, don't photograph monks, don't touch or photograph Buddha). <https://thailandinsider.com/experience/monk-chats>
- **Royal Park Rajapruek:** 334, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai. Open daily 8am-6pm. Expansive, landscaped, picturesque grounds featuring flowers, plants & sculptures, plus an elegant commemorative chapel. Bike rentals and an elective bus are available transport options within the park. <https://www.royalparkrajapruek.org/>

- **Samlor tours** of Chiang Mai Old City. The samlor (meaning 'three wheels') is a bicycle taxi. In the old days, before the age of the automobile, there were hundreds of samlors in Chiang Mai. Now there are fewer than 70. There are a range of themed tours on offer - temples, handcrafts, markets etc. By joining these tours you will directly support the samlor drivers and contribute to the preservation of the samlor as a means of transportation. <https://www.chiangmai-alacarte.com/product-category/samlor-tours/>

CHIANG MAI COOKING CLASSES AND FOODIE TOURS

- **Thai Akha Kitchen** is the first and only cooking school in Thailand where you can learn to cook Akha food and learn about the history, culture and lifestyle of the Akha people. TAK also offer morning tours of the local fresh market. <https://www.thaiakhakitchen.com/>
- **Smile Organic Farm Cooking School:** Cooking courses include pick up/drop off within a 3 km radius of Chiang Mai old city as the cooking school is located 45 minutes away from Chiang Mai (near San Kamphaeng Hot Springs). Enroute to the school, you'll stop at a local market and observe the traditional way of life. The school has their own organic garden/farm where they grow the ingredients for the healthy Thai dishes you learn to cook. <https://www.smileorganicfarmcooking-school.com/>
- **Chiang Mai Street Food tours:** 2-3 hour Chiang Mai tours around the historic city, learning about the main national street food dishes, stopping at markets, food stalls and small local restaurants on the way and learn enough basic Thai language to order your favourite dishes. <https://www.chiangmaistreetfoodtours.com/>
- **Chiang Mai Foodie Tours:** experiencing the sights, smells, and tastes of Northern Thailand to fully experience local culture. while taking in the narrative of the past 700 years. CMF tours give back to the community by providing employment opportunities and funding to The Jasper Kids Foundation is a non-profit organization providing comprehensive, long-term primary care and funding for kindergarten to university education, to the poorest children, to break the cycles of poverty. <https://chiangmaifoodietours.com/>
- **Taste of Thailand:** Experience the cultural and culinary treasures of Chiang Mai, as you cruise along in your private songtiew – the city's infamous red taxis! Tour the old walled city and learn about the history of the ancient Northern Lanna Capital, all while tasting the amazing food specialties for which this city is famous! The local insiders have carefully chosen the most interesting monuments and tastiest spots for your enjoyment! Street food, markets and local favourite eateries. <https://tasteofthailand.org/events/>

CHIANG MAI - WATS/TEMPLES

Note: *There are group tours and samlor tours available which include several temples if that's your thing.*

- **Wat Chedi Luang Varavihara:** 103 Phra Pok Klao Road Phra Singh, Chiang Mai. Built about 600 years ago, this impressive temple once housed the precious Emerald Buddha. Today the expansive grounds of this working temple and complex includes the famous ruins of a much earlier temple, several chapels, gardens, etc.
- **Wat Phra Singh:** 2 Sam Lan Road Mueang Chiang Mai. Built in 1345, the temple houses the North's most revered Buddha statue, Phra Phuttha Sihing which is enshrined in Vihan Lai Kham, a chapel that features exquisite woodcarvings and northern style murals.
- **Wat Phra That Doi Kham** (commonly known as Doi Kham Pagoda or Golden Temple): Mae Hia, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Ma. This wat is located on a forested hill in the southwest of Chiang Mai city and features ornate gold carvings and a 17m sitting Buddha statue. The oldest structure is the Stupa which was built in 687 and houses a sacred relic of Buddha. A local legend tells of two cannibal giants living in the Doi Kham region five hundred years ago. When Buddha visited the area, he persuaded the giants to stop eating people and convert to Buddhism. Buddha gave them a relic of his hair, which is now housed in the Stupa and worshiped.

CHIANG MAI - WHERE TO EAT

There are many local restaurants offering great, fresh food at very reasonable prices including:

- **Chit Chat cafe:** QXJJ+X5V Old City Phra Sing, Mueang Chiang Mai District – good coffee TUE-FRI 8.30am-4pm
- **Its Good Kitchen:** 175/6 Rachadamnoen Road, Phra Singh Subdistrict - Asian, Thai.
- **Baan Lanna Thai Cuisine** (opposite Its Good Kitchen) 100/1 Rachadamnoen Rd. – Thai
- **Baan Buri Cafe:** 102, Rachadamnoen Road Si Phum
- **Cha-da Vegetarian restaurant:** 36/5 Ratchapakhinai Rd, Chiang Mai.
- **Mix Restaurant and Bar:** Nimmanhaemin Soi 1, Chiang Mai - Asian, Thai
- **Fai Bakery:** 106 Intrawarorot Road - Cafe, Thai, Asian
- **Hug Smoothies:** 3 Phra Sing, Mueang Chiang Mai District - Thai fruit, shake and smoothie parlour
- **Thorphan Coffee Roaster:** 109 Intrawarorot Rd - Cafe with good coffee, matcha etc
- **Manao Garden Bistro/ Roof 69:** 69/9 Intrawarorot Rd Phra Sing, Chiang Mai - Thai, French
- **Tree Sis Coffee:** 10 Intrawarowot Road Phra Sing Intersection - Good traditional Thai food and café

AND ALSO:

- **Blackitch Artisan Kitchen:** 27/1 Nimmanhemini Soi 7, Suthep, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai. Ph: +66 93 695 6464. One of Chiang Mai's most highly regarded (and most exclusive) dining experiences. The menu is designed to raise awareness of Chiang Mai's indigenous cultures; each nine-course meal comes with stories of how the dishes are cooked in their home setting, along with the reassurance that only local produce is used in the kitchen. Dishes change with seasonal availability of ingredients. The restaurant seats a maximum of 18 diners, so reservations are essential. Prices are high relative to other dining experiences in Chiang Mai but worth the amazing dining experience. <http://www.blackitch.com/>
- **Bodhi Tree Cafe:** Located off the beaten path at 11 Rachadamnoen Rd Soi 5, Tambon Si Phum, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Mai, Chang Wat Chiang Mai. The place can be a little hard to find, given its location in a back alley in Chiang Mai Old City, but worth it for devoted vegans and vegetarians. The menu consists of vegetarian Thai, fusion Western, and raw food; you'll enjoy your meal in a homey, rustic setting, with a choice of outdoor and indoor seating. All ingredients are certified organic and either grown in-house or purchased at the organic Jing Jai Farmers Market. Bodhi Tree also offers vegetarian cooking classes which include a market tour. <https://bodhitreechiangmai.weebly.com/>
- **Café de Nimman:** 13 Siri Mangkalajarn Rd Lane 13, Tambon Su Thep, Mueang Chiang Mai District Open TUE-SUN 11am-9pm. A popular Thai restaurant with all the greatest hits, including papaya salad, coconut curries, khao soi, and tom yam goong, among others. https://cafedenimman.business.site/?utm_source=gmb&utm_medium=referral
- **Faces Gallery and Gastro Bar:** 33 ถนน Ratchamanka Soi 6, Phra Sing, Chiang Mai Open daily 1pm-10pm. Charming, leafy terracotta garden, art gallery & gastro bar serving Thai cuisine, pizza & cocktails.
- **Ginger Farm Kitchen:** One Nimman, Nimmanahaeminda Road, Suthep, Mueang Chiang Mai District. Open daily 11am-10pm. A farm-to-kitchen restaurant with food straight from local organic farmers. Meat is on the menu, but GFK also offers a separate "veggie-friendly" menu. <https://www.gingerfarmkitchen.com/>
- **Goodsouls Kitchen:** 52 Sinharat Rd Lane 3, Si Phum Sub-district, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai. Open daily 8am-10pm. Serves plant-based food that satisfies your appetite, supports a healthy lifestyle and nurtures your soul. The extensive menu is filled with delicious and healthy Western and Thai influences appealing to all food lovers. <https://goodsoulskitchen.com/>

- **Huen Phen:** 112 Rachamunka Rd. Phrasing, Chiang Mai, Thailand, Chiang Mai. Open daily 8.30am-4.30pm. A 40-year-old restaurant widely known for serving the best khao soi in Chiang Mai, Huen Phen is famous for its deliciously good-value Lanna specialties; the dishes are made using old family recipes, so you know this is the real deal. Don't expect five-star interiors; the restaurant looks like an ordinary home from the street, and the inside is homey and a bit messy. The food, though, is absolutely authentic and relatively inexpensive.
- **Kilim coffee house:** 51 Chang Moi Kao Rd Soi 1, Tambon Chang Moi, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai Open Thurs-TUES 9am-5pm.
Turkish style coffee house.
<https://www.facebook.com/kilimcoffee/>
- **Raming Tea House:** 158, 162 Tha Phae Road, Tambon Chang Moi, Mueang Chiang Mai District. Open daily 8.30am-5pm. Set in a beautiful old house, the front section is a gallery for local Celadon pottery, while the back part of the house is an elegant cafe that extends out into a lush tropical garden.<https://www.facebook.com/people/Raming-Tea-House-Siam-Celadon/100063469812703/>
- **Woo Cafe Art Gallery & Lifestyle Shop:** 80 Charoenrat Rd. Wat Gate, Chiang Mai. Open THU-TUE 10am-6pm. Describes itself as 'A true fancy restaurant' and 'more than just a place to drink coffee and enjoy beautiful art'.

LUANG PRABANG TEXTILES & HANDCRAFTS

- **Ban Cha Pottery Village:** 15 Minutes by boat downstream from Luang Prabang. Watch the artisans in action or with advance notice, you can participate and make your own pieces from natural clay for a truly original souvenir. Take the local car ferry across for 5,000 kip and follow the path heading southwest for a kilometre or charter a boat to take you directly there for about 20,000 kip. If you drop in one day, you may be able to arrange a hands-on pottery class for the following day.
- **Caruso Lao Handcraft:** 60 Sakarine Rd, Wat Sene Village, Luang Prabang Ph: 856-71-254574. Located on the main street across from the Primary School. All products are designed and crafted in Laos. Specialises in home accessories but also has superb (and pricey) hand-woven silks and brocades. Also has a showroom in Vientiane.
<https://carusocreations.com/en/>
- **Hemp Fabric Hmong shop:** V4WR+MVQ, Kounxoau Rd, Luang Prabang, Ph: +856 3091 98095. Open 8am-8pm daily.
- **Hill tribe Heritage Ethnic Arts:** Ban Xieng Thong, Luang Prabang. Ph: +856 20 91 437 232. Quality, beautiful and unique products made from ethnic textiles. The owner is friendly and speaks great English.
- **Kin Thong Lao Silk:** 1/2 Sathouyaith Rd, Ban Vat Nong, Luang Prabang. Ph +856 20 55 546 184. Open daily 10am-9pm. Look for the shop on Sisavangvong Road, a few blocks north of the market

on the right side of the street and opposite the school. A large collection of high-quality silk produced by Red-Tai ethnic weavers in Houaphanh province, north-eastern Laos. Be prepared for a visual feast, outstanding quality and knowledgeable, helpful owners.

- **Kopnoi:** 3 Th Kingkitsarat ban Aphay, Luang Prabang (near Ma Te Sai). East meets west designer. Natural dyes and fabrics. Good quality designer jewellery, homewares, handcrafts, teas and local art.
- **Indigo Fabric:** Ban aphay (NamKhan side), King Kitsarath Rd, Luang Prabang. Authentic Lao handmade and natural dyed products from organic cotton, silk and hemp from many different ethnic groups around the country. <https://indigo-fabric.com/>
- **Le Pavillon de Jade:** 41 Sakkaline Road, Ban Wat Sene, Luang Prabang (on the main street across from Primary School). In addition to stunning Asian antiques, you'll find exquisite, high quality silks in tones that you won't see anywhere else in town.
- **Lao Antique Textiles Collection:** 24/6 Ban Xieng Moune, Sisavangvong Road (Old quarter), Luang Prabang. A great collection of high quality interesting pieces. The owner, Dr Keomontree Duangbupha, is a knowledgeable specialist in Lao textiles.
- **Luang Prabang Artisans Handcrafts Cafe:** Open Mon-SAT 9am-6pm. Located in a 100-year-old wooden home on a narrow lane (linking Sisavangvong Rd to Choumkhong Temple and Xiengmouane Temple), this great little shop sells handicrafts

like naturally dyed cushions, soft toys, and silk purses and scarves. There is a small on-site cafe with great juices and Lao food and a pretty shaded terrace where you can eat and relax. <https://www.facebook.com/luangprabangartisanscafe/>

- **Ma Te Sai:** Th Kingkitsarat, Ban Aphai, Luang Prabang (opposite Aussie Bar). Open: daily 8.30am – 8.30pm. Founded by Australian Emi Weir, this fair-trade organisation handpicks and designs beautiful gifts, textiles and homewares which have been handmade by people from villages across Laos. Some of their artisans are from remote and rural Laos, making traditional handicraft; some are farmers growing local produce; and some are disadvantaged, working in workshops in villages of Vientiane, where they are developing new skills and a better life. <https://matesai.com/>
- ***Ock Pop Tok - Living crafts Centre:** 73/5 Ban Wat Nong, Luang Prabang. Ph: 020 570148. Award winning social enterprise and textiles fair trade shop (in town) and textiles workshop (outside of town). Aims to bring the world of traditional Lao textiles and handicrafts alive to visitors. Lengths of fabric can also be purchased. Offers half day, full day and 2-3 day workshops in cloth weaving, bamboo weaving, dyeing and batik. <https://www.ockpoptok.com/>
- **Ock Pop Tok Boutique:** 07 Ban Phonheung Phayalaungmuengchan Rd, Luang Prabang. Open daily 8am-8pm. Products are made using traditional Lao weaving techniques, but feature designs, colours and patterns that

make them perfect for contemporary style. Stylish clothing, intricate wall hangings, silk scarves and a full range of home decor

<https://www.ockpoptok.com/visit-us/our-shops/>

- **Passa Paa:** 79 Ban Vat Sene, Luang Prabang. Ph: 020 59239565. Open daily 8am-8pm. A high-end textile studio and shop that merges traditional Hmong handicraft skills with a modern print aesthetic. Each piece is unique, made with care and layers of craft both new and old. The owner has a passion for traditional handmade and is striving to keep Lao's handicrafts alive for the generations to come. <https://www.passa-paa.com/>
- **Pathana Boupna Antique House:** 26/2 Ban Visun, Luang Prabang. Ph: +856 71 212262. Open 8.30am - 5.00pm. Located in an impressive old French mansion, this shop carries antique statuary, jewellery, royal Lao government currency and old photos, mostly from the Lao owner's private collection. They also sell high quality textiles (originals as well as reproductions) from the various ethnic groups around Laos. The late patriarch of the family designed many of the costumes and ornaments used in the former Royal Palace, and until his death he also furnished costuming for the local Miss Pi Mai Lao pageant.
- **Sao Sinh** (TAEC's sister venture,) Second Floor of TAEC Boutique, Sakkaline Rd, Luang Prabang. Open daily 9am-7pm. Experience wearing high quality Lao traditional clothing! <https://saosinh.com/>
- ***Simone Saa Paper:** 52/4 Khamkong, Nong Xay Village, Ban Xang Kong Craft Village, Luang Prabang. Watch the process of mulberry paper making. Has quality, affordable paper products for sale.
- ***Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre (TAEC):** Sakkaline Road across from Villa Santi Hotel. Ph: 856 71 253 364. Open TUE-SUN 9am-6pm. This private museum collects, preserves, and interprets the traditional arts and lifestyles of the country's many and diverse ethnic groups. Also encompasses a fair-trade boutique, museum shop and cafe. Several hands-on workshops are available. <http://www.taec Laos.org/>
- **Weaving Sisters:** Phetsarat Road, Luang Prabang. Ph: +856 30 47 48 088. Open daily 8am-6pm. Two Katu sisters from Salavan Province in Southern Laos, practicing an ancient style of decoration involving glass beads in the warp of the weave. This cloth is traditionally used for special occasions with certain patterns and designs available only from their family. Learn to weave on the backstrap loom which is not used in other parts of Laos. <https://www.facebook.com/Theweaving sisters>

LUANG PRABANG - COOKING CLASSES

- **Bamboo Tree Restaurant and Cooking School:** Kingkitsarath Road, Nam Khan River Side, Ban Watsan. Ph: +856 20 22 425 499. Highly recommended (by Travelfish) as one of the best classes in town—if the group size is small.
- **Tamarind Restaurant and Cooking School:** Ban Wat Nong. Ph: +856 71 213 128. Offers day and evening cooking classes in open air pavilions, overlooking lily ponds just outside of town. Day classes include a visit to the fascinating main market, The sessions end with a sumptuous meal, where you eat the fruits of your labours! Transport to and from Tamarind Restaurant and recipe book all included. Vegetarians welcome. www.tamarindlaos.com

LUANG PRABANG - MARKETS

- ***Night craft market:** Sisavangvong Rd within Luang Prabang old town turns into a pedestrian craft market. Operates every evening 16:30 - 21:30.
- **Talat Dara/Dara Market:** This market is at the corner of Thanon Setthathilat & Thanon Chao Sisuphon. Lonely Planet says: 'Although not enormous by Vientiane standards, it does have an impressive array of hardware, cookware, dried and preserved foodstuffs, textiles and handicrafts.' Be aware that some of the textiles sold here may be cheap knock-offs. The night market is reputed to be better overall for quality and price.

LUANG PRABANG - OTHER ACTIVITIES

- **Big Brother Mouse:** Wat Nong, Phayaluangmeungchan Rd, Luang Prabang In a country where books are an absolute luxury, this Lao organisation publishes children's stories in the Lao language. Here visitors can buy books that will be distributed to villages, or you can sponsor a whole book party for a rural Lao school, an event that gets children excited about reading and learning. Books cost US\$1-3 and are great to have if you're heading into the countryside. Please give books rather than sweets or candies. You are welcome to drop in and converse with locals eager to practise their English and learn about people from around the world. In turn, visitors will gain an insight into life in Laos. Every day (except holidays) from 09:00-11:00 and 17:00-19:00.
<https://www.bigbrothermouse.com/>
- **Elephant Conservation project** – offers minimum 2 day and 3 day programs including accommodation and transport from Luang Prabang. Currently 30 elephants on site. Highly recommended.
<https://www.elephantconservationcenter.com/>
Elephant sanctuary/village: 15km from Luang Prabang. Established in 2001, Elephant Village has been supporting indigenous people in remote areas by giving them employment through the creation of jobs under fair social circumstances. Elephant Village ensures the support and the survival of

elephants living in harmony with nature and the community. They are kept away from abusive work and cared by professional veterinarians.
<http://www.elephantvillage-laos.com/>

- **Kuangsi Waterfall:** 30km from Luang Prabang. On the way to the falls, you'll pass through Lao Lum, Khmu and Hmong villages.
- **Laos Buffalo Dairy:** On the way to Kuangsi Waterfall in Ban Muang Khay. Ph: 856 030 9690487. A socially responsible enterprise consisting of a commercial dairy and production facility making products such as yogurt, cheese and ice cream for local and overseas customers. The dairy cooperates with people from villages near Luang Prabang by renting their buffalo, which provides the families with a regular income stream from an underutilised resource - namely female buffalo; male buffalo being sold for meat. The purpose-built facility provides a place for milking the buffalo and keeping them well fed, healthy and safe. Cafe, tours, cooking classes, tastings, picnic hampers.
<http://www.laosbuffalodairy.com/>
- **Luang Prabang Library:** on Sisavangvong Road across from Wat Mai. Those in the developed world think nothing of visiting the library and borrowing books. In Laos it's a foreign concept. There are almost no libraries, not even in schools. The Luang Prabang Library is part of Community Learning International, whose projects include running Learning Centres in rural districts and reaching remote villages on the river with their book boat, loaded with books for children to

borrow for the day. Stop by the library and buy US\$2 Lao books for the book bag. Once it's full, they are given to schools for kids to borrow. You can also donate towards providing a child with a bicycle and uniform, a costly necessity without which a child cannot go to school.

<https://www.luangprabanglibrary.com>

- **Luang Prabang Palace and Museum:** 27 Ounheun Rd, Luang Prabang. Open daily 8:15-11:30 AM, 1:30-3:30 PM. The golden palace was built between 1904-1909 during the French colonial era for King Sisavang Vong and his family and served as the residence for the Lao royal family until 1971. Showcases history, impressive royal artefacts and traditional architecture. Dress code: cover shoulders to knees. www.luangprabang.org/royal-palace/
- **Garavek:** Every evening (6.30-7.30pm), in the heart of Luang Prabang's old town a selection of traditional Lao folktales are told in English, accompanied by live music played on a traditional 'khene' - a handmade bamboo wind instrument. Tickets cost \$5 and can be bought at the theatre from 6pm. <https://garavek.com/>
- **Mt Phou Si and temple** – located in central Luang Prabang. Climb 328 steps to the sacred temple and for great views of the Mekong River. <https://www.tourismluangprabang.org/things-to-do/nature/phou-si-mountain/>

- **Phralak-Phralam theatre**, next to the Royal Palace National Museum (27 Ounheun Rd, Luang Prabang) – music, theatre and dance performance depicting traditional stories of the region. http://phralakphralam.com/phralak_phralam_en/
- **Wat Xieng Thong** – Khem Khong, Luang Prabang. A beautiful Buddhist temple built in 1560's and famous for its mosaics. Arrive just before 6pm to listen to monks chanting.

LUANG PRABANG - WHERE TO EAT

- **Bamboo Tree**: Kingkitsarath Road, Nam Khan River Side, Ban Watsan. PH: +856 20 22 425 499. Delicious, affordable Lao cuisine made with fresh seasonal ingredients.
- **Bouang Asian Eatery**: Ban Xieng Mene, Luang Prabang. Open daily 11.30am-9.30pm. Serving up colourful dishes in a small chic venue. Healthy food and with vegan and vegetarian options <https://www.facebook.com/Bouang.asianeatery/>
- **Café Toui**: 72/6 Ban Xieng Mouane, Sisvongvathana Road, Luang Prabang. Serves some of the best Lao food to be had in town (according to Travel Fish). Coconut milk curries, meat steamed in banana leaves, delicious vegetarian platters. A one-man band in the kitchen and only a few tables, so patience is required. The quality and flavours are worth the wait.
- **Dyen Sabui**: Ban Phan Louang, Luang Prabang (near Vat Phan Louang). Open daily 8am - 11pm. Lao Cuisine, Lao Tasting Platters and Barbeque with vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options and a view of the river! <https://www.facebook.com/Dyensabai>
- **Joy's Restaurant**: Turn Right at Nam Pho Fountain, then walk towards the Mekong River and Joy's is on your right. Home-style so-good, Lao soul-food. The restaurant also showcases Joy's husband's photography. Travel Fish says that this one should be at the top of your list. Booking is recommended.
- **Khaiphen**: 100 Sisavang Vantana Rd, Ban Wat Nong, Luang Prabang: Open 11am-10.30pm Mon-Sat. Run by NGO, Friends International and providing vocational training, work placement, safe housing and language training to marginalised and disadvantaged young people. Has a set lunch menu and 2 for 1 cocktails from 3-6pm.
- **Le Café Ban Vat Sene**: Sakarine Road, Luang Prabang. On the main street across from the primary school. Offering both Asian and French/western fare, this is one of the few cafes with air-con.
- **Rosella Fusion Restaurant**: Kingkitsarath Road, Luang Prabang. Open MON-SAT 9am-10.30pm. Asian-international fusion. Vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options. <https://www.facebook.com/rosellafusion/>
- ***Silk Road Café, Ock Pop Tok**: There's a café at each of OPT's two locations (see textiles section for address). Enjoy amazing views over the Mekong at their Living Crafts Centre location or people-watch in the town centre at the Heritage Shop Garden. East meets West cuisine. We'll have lunch at the

Living Crafts Centre location when we spend a whole day at Ock Pop Tok.

- **Tamarind Restaurant:** Kingkitsarath Rd, opposite Vat Nong. Cooking classes and authentic Lao Pun Pa feasts. Relax with a drink or coffee at 5pm to hear the monks chanting in the temple across the street. Offers tasting platters of Lao specialities for a gentle introduction to Lao cuisine.
- **Xiengthong Noodle Shop:** Sakkaline Rd, Luang Prabang. One of the best for a Lao favourite, khao piak (delicious noodle soup). Often runs out by 2pm.