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Introduction

Founded in 1296, Chiang Mai was the seat of the once independent Lanna Kingdom until 1558. The city is located in mountainous northern Thailand and has a population of around 110,000 people. It is the fourth most populous city in Thailand and welcomes thousands of tourists each year. The Old City includes the remains of its old walls and moats from its past as a cultural and religious center.

Due to its history as the former Lanna Kingdom, northern Thailand is markedly different from other regions of the country. Lanna culture, language, and food is unique. The Chiang Mai area is also home to several ethnic minority groups that have their own customs and languages.

Chiang Mai is a laid-back place to live and explore, and is a popular place for expats looking for a home away from home. There is a large community of expats that often work as teachers, in NGOs, as freelancers, or who are retired. The city is favoured for many reasons - Northern Thai people are extremely friendly, Thailand’s healthcare system is one of the best in the world, the variety of food options is uncomparable, and the cost of living is very low. Due to the low cost of living, it’s possible to live on around 800 USD per month.

We look forward to welcoming you to our office. Welcome to Chiang Mai!

- The Child’s Dream Team
Accommodation

There are unlimited accommodation possibilities in Chiang Mai. We recommend that you book a few days in a guest house close to the office while looking for a long-term place to stay. We recommend staying close to the office if you are uneasy about using a bicycle or motorbike to get here. Popular areas include Nimman, Santitham, and other neighborhoods close to the old city. Accommodation options farther away from the old city can be less expensive but are less exciting for visitors.

Guesthouses
There are many guesthouses in Chiang Mai, which vary widely in terms of cost and available amenities. Most cost very little and are usually the most cost-effective option if staying for a short period. All suggestions below are close to Child’s Dream.

- Tiptop Thai House
- Ma Guesthouse
- Baba Pim Guesthouse
- Sakura House
- Mojo House
- Green Tiger House

Serviced Apartments
Serviced apartments offer many services and amenities available at a hotel but the rooms can be rented long-term (at a lower cost than a hotel room) and are often more like condos. They are generally much nicer but much more expensive than other long-term options.

- The Xym – near Child’s Dream
- Airport Resident – near Child’s Dream
- VC Suan Paak – near Child’s Dream
- Smith Residence – near Child’s Dream
• Sangserene House
• Vanilla Residence
• Studio 99
• Frangipani

**Rooms for Rent**

In general, Thai apartments are modestly furnished studio rooms. They usually do not include separate living and sleeping areas or kitchen facilities. Condos are more expensive but will often include separate kitchen and living areas. You can rent a room if you are staying for a month.

Many apartment buildings are not listed online, so it is best to walk around an area you’re interested in and inquire about available rooms in person. This can be difficult at times if the landlord doesn’t speak English, but many people do. Be sure to check all available rooms in a building, as they can be very different. Beds can be hard, so check the mattresses and try to rent a room with a bed you find comfortable.

Renting a room is the most cost-effective option if staying for at least a month. Landlords often give a good discount for renting for several months. Apartments generally cost 2,000 to 7,000 THB per month. Condos generally cost 5,000 to 15,000 THB per month.

**Apartments:**

- **My Place Apartment** – 5,000/month, near Child’s Dream
- **Fu Residence** – 6,000/month, near Child’s Dream
- **Noble House** – 5,000-7,000/month, near Child’s Dream
- **Chiang Mai View Place 2** – 5,000/month, near Child’s Dream
- **Baan39** – 5,500/month, near Child’s Dream
- **Baan Thai** – 5,700/month
- **Sriruk Apartment** – 3,500- 4,500/month
- **View Doi Mansion** - 5,000/month
- **Anchan 2** - 4,500/month
Condos:
- **Sereno Airport Condo** – 6,500/month, near Child’s Dream
- **Tree Boutique Condo** – 8,500/month, near Child’s Dream
- **Ping Condominium** – 8,000/month, near Child’s Dream
- **D’Vieng Santitham** – 10,000-15,000/month
- **Punna Residence** – 15,000-20,000/month
- **The Nimman by Palm Springs** – 15,000-20,000/month
- **Hillside Condo 2** – 5,000-10,000/month
- **Hillside Condo 3** – 6,000-11,000/month

**Accommodation Resources**
- Hipflat
- RentHub
- Perfect Homes
- **House for Rent & Sale in Chiang Mai Facebook Group**
- Chiang Mai Real Estate – Rent, Buy Sell Facebook Group
- Rent Buy House Apartment Condo Chiang Mai Facebook Group
- **Farang Chiang Mai Real Estate Facebook Group**
- Airbnb.com – Chiang Mai
- Agoda.com – Chiang Mai
- Booking.com – Chiang Mai
**Transportation**

**Motorbike**
Motorbikes are the most popular method of transportation in Chiang Mai, but are also the most dangerous. The number one cause of death in Thailand is motorbike accidents. Thailand has the second highest death toll globally in traffic accidents. Many Thais often drive recklessly or when drunk, so be careful when driving, especially at night. Always, always wear a helmet! Just because you sometimes don’t see Thai people wearing a helmet doesn’t mean you should do the same. Driving a motorbike can be really fun and an efficient way to travel if you exercise caution. Driving in Thailand requires an international driver’s license or a Thai license, otherwise you may be fined 500 B each time you are stopped; there are often checkpoints on major roads.

**Buy:**
If staying in Chiang Mai for several months and intend to ride a motorbike, buying one is the most cost-effective option. Go to a Honda shop and purchase a Honda Wave or Dream (100cc or 125cc); these are standard models and are easy to re-sell. You can also often find second-hand bikes for sale on Facebook at good prices; older models can easily be found for 10,000 THB.

- Honda BigWing Chiang Mai (New)
- Farang – Chiang Mai Motorcycle and Car Facebook Group (Used)
- Chiang Mai Motorcycle Buy and Sell Facebook Group (Used)

**Rent:**
If you are staying for a short period of time and don’t have the funds to buy a bike, then rent one. Rental prices vary depending on the shop and bike. Child’s Dream has a motorbike to rent to volunteers - ask Gene! The below rental outfits are popular; they are owned and operated by foreigners who can give you advice if needed.

- Mango Bikes *will not rent to first-time drivers
- Zippy Motorbikes
Bicycle
Child's Dream has a bicycle you can borrow for free – ask Gene! You can also rent or purchase a bicycle from one of the many shops in town, or a second hand one through someone on Facebook. Always wear a helmet, even when riding a bicycle.

- Secondhand Bicycles & Used Parts Chiang Mai Facebook Group (Used)
- Tippanete Bicycle (New)

Songthaews
Red shared taxis pick up and drop off multiple passengers. To hail one, put your arm out with your hand flat and move your fingers towards you. It’s helpful to tell the driver the name of a well-known temple or landmark close to where you are going and walk from there. The driver will stop when you reach your destination to let you off. If you want to stop earlier, press the button on the ceiling of the truck. Songthaews usually cost 20-30 THB for central areas, but can cost more at night or if going far from the old city. Always have the correct change, as the driver may not be able to change a large bill.

Tuk tuk
Tuk tuks are famous in Thailand and are quite fun to ride in once or twice, but are generally not good value. Drivers usually charge foreigners high amounts.

Grab
Grab is a ride-hailing service that functions through the use of an app, which you can download here. It is the #1 ride-hailing app in Southeast Asia. You can order a car or motorbike to pick you up and take you to a designated location. Pay for your ride with cash or connect your credit card to the app.

RTC Chiang Mai Smart Buses
Chiang Mai has several city buses that operate from 6.30 AM to 8.45 PM and cost 20 THB regardless of distance. Information in English about routes and departure times can be found here.
Other

**Phone Service**
You can purchase a local SIM card and a prepaid phone package through True or AIS at 7-11 with your passport. You can also visit True or AIS stores at major shopping centers (Maya, Central Festival, Tesco Lotus, etc.) to set up your phone service. SIM cards and phone plans are very inexpensive, usually costing only 300 THB per month.

**Internet**
Thailand generally has very fast internet access. Many guesthouses and apartment buildings will offer free Wi-Fi, but it may be slow. If your apartment has slow or no internet access, you can contact Sinet at Maya mall to set up personal Wi-Fi in your room.

**Electricity**
The style of plugs and sockets varies in Thailand, so be sure to bring a power adapter. The standard voltage is 220 V and the standard frequency is 50 Hz.

**Thai Language Lessons**
- Language Institute, Chiang Mai University
- Pro Language School
- Private Lessons with Ajarn Lah

**Doctors and Hospitals**
There are excellent medical and dental facilities in Chiang Mai. Many doctors and dentists are trained in Western countries or are experts in Thailand and speak English. Costs for medical and dental services in Thailand are much less expensive than in Western countries. Be sure to bring your passport with you.

- Chiang Mai Ram Hospital
- Sriphat Medical Center
- Dental4U
Community

Getting Connected
Follow the links below to request to be added to the Facebook groups to find events, meet people in town, and learn about Chiang Mai businesses.

- Chiang Mai Events – events and activities around town
- Chiang Mai Hangouts – events and activities around town
- Chiang Mai Nomad Girls – events and information for women in town
- Music & Art Events South East Asia – events in Chiang Mai and elsewhere in Asia
- Stupid Questions Chiang Mai – questions about Chiang Mai
- Expats and Locals Living in Chiang Mai – information for those living in Chiang Mai
- Chiang Mai Eats – reviews of food in town
- Vegetarian & Vegan Chiang Mai – information for vegetarians and vegans in town
- Language Exchange Chiang Mai – meet people for language exchange
- Chiang Mai Conscious Community – events and information for artistic Chiang Mai expats

Behavior in Thailand

- Don’t point your fingers or feet at others; don’t use your feet to move things
- Don’t touch anyone’s head, even those of children
- Dress conservatively; cover your shoulders and knees if entering a temple
- Don’t walk in the streets barefoot
- Never make comments about the King or royal family. Thai people worship him and don’t understand any form of drawings, jokes, or comments about him. It is a very sensitive subject.
- It’s helpful to know a little about Buddhism before arriving in Thailand
- Thai people will be grateful if you can speak in Thai; learn enough to understand the basics
- Drugs are highly illegal in Thailand and if caught with any, you may serve a long prison sentence
- Buddha’s image must be respected
- Women should not touch monks or hand anything to them
- Don’t be afraid to bargain for things except at restaurants and in large stores
Restaurants

Vegetarian & Vegan
- **Goodsouls Kitchen** – very good, inventive vegan food, bit on the pricier side
- **Free Bird Cafe** – lovely restaurant with charity and zero waste shops, all proceeds are donated
- **Pun Pun Market** – outdoor establishment that serves organic food from their farm
- **Bird’s Nest Cafe** – small cafe in the old city with a relaxing space and good breakfast
- **ImmAim Cafe** – popular restaurant in Santitham with Thai and Western dishes

Thai
- **TongTemToh** – modern Northern Thai restaurant that is very popular; go early to avoid the line
- **Huen Phen** – longstanding Northern Thai restaurant
- **Tikky Café** – great, inexpensive Thai food and drinks
- **Khao Soi Mae Sai** – popular khao soi restaurant
- **Riverside** – Thai food on the river, good view, nice atmosphere
- **Ginger Farm Kitchen** – modern, fresh Thai restaurant; great cocktails too!
- **Aroon Rai** – famous Thai curry restaurant that’s been in business since the 1950’s

Japanese
- **Sushi Jiro** – awesome, inexpensive sushi; very popular
- **Kitchen Hush** – most authentic Japanese in town, requires a reservation
- **Tsunami Sushi** – very good sushi and tempura at low prices
- **Musashi** – innovative sushi rolls
- **Ninja Ramen** – good selection of Japanese ramen noodle dishes

Other Asian
- **The Burmese Restaurant** – fantastic Burmese food, very cheap
- **The Grill of India** – one of the best Indian restaurants in town
- **Miss Liangpi** – authentic chinese noodles in Nimman
- **Dara Vietnamese Restaurant** – Vietnamese in a teak Thai building
Western & Fusion
- Blue Diamond – popular breakfast spot in the old city
- Rustic & Blue – beautiful organic food, good place for brunch
- Bake & Bite – extensive breakfast menu, great food
- Bagel House Café – large selection of bagels and bagel sandwiches
- Lone Star BBQ – amazing American BBQ restaurant run by guy from Texas
- Mark Burger & Steak – good, cheap burgers made very well
- Why Not? – popular Italian restaurant with pasta and pizzas
- The Hideout – great variety of Western-style sandwiches
- By Hand Pizza – restaurant with pizza oven in the old city
- Cat House – Asian/Western fusion, very popular with expats and tourists
- Rosy Cheeks – fresh Asian fusion near CMU

Bakery & Coffee
- Baan Bakery – best bakery in town!
- Nana Café & Bakery – amazing selection of fresh bread
- Forest Bake – beautiful gourmet desserts
- Akha Ama Coffee – best coffee in Chiang Mai; friend of Child’s Dream

Night Food Markets
- Chiang Mai Gate Market
- Chang Phuek Market
- Hussadhisawee Road Market
- Ploen Ruedee Market
Bars & Clubs

Rooftop Bars
- Oasis Rooftop Garden Bar – very relaxed rooftop bar; good place for a beer
- Bar at Hotel YaYee – upscale bar with an excellent view of Doi Suthep and great cocktails
- Parallel Universe – trendy rooftop bar in Nimman offering a rotating selection of craft beer
- John’s Place – restaurant with a rooftop bar; good view of the old city

Music Bars
- Good View – lively bar on the river; mix of Thais and Westerners
- North Gate Jazz Co-Op – very popular among expats and jazz fans with live music every night
- Crossroad – very small local bar with live rock/pop music every night
- Manung – popular Thai music bar with live music most nights
- Boy Blues Bar – blues bar with jam nights on Mondays

Cocktail Bars
- Mixology – cocktail bar with food, usually busy
- Nophaburi – very small, hip bar with the best cocktails in Chiang Mai
- Drinksmith – creative cocktails in a classy venue near the airport

Beer Bars
- Namton’s House – trendy bar with a large selection of craft beer
- My BEER Friend Market – bar serving craft beer from Chiang Mai
- BEER Lab - huge bar in Nimman with large offering of beer

Clubs & Shows
- Warm Up – huge nightclub with different areas popular with Thai students
- Sixcret – the best cabaret show in Chiang Mai!
- Zoe in Yellow – most popular nightclub in town with Westerners, mostly a hotspot for tourists; more bearable on weeknights than on the weekend
Shopping

Major Malls
Chiang Mai now has many shopping malls containing a wide range of shops, restaurants, and other services. All malls contain a large department store, supermarket, and multi-screen cinema.

- **Central Airport Plaza** – shopping mall near the airport with large food court and movie theater
- **Central Festival** – largest shopping mall in Chiang Mai with a huge number of stores
- **Maya Mall** – new major mall with slightly higher end shopping options and a nice movie theater, which offers discounted tickets on Wednesday
- **Kad Suan Kaew** – huge complex that includes a hotel, a pool, a bowling alley, karaoke, a supermarket, a department store, a food court, shops, restaurants, and cinema; street vendors often set up in front in the evenings

Markets
- **Saturday / Sunday night markets** – vendors set up booths along Wualai Road on Saturday and Rachadamnoen Road on Sunday; very popular
- **Night Bazaar** – large indoor/outdoor shopping area that operates at night; good for souvenirs
- **Baan Tawai** – famous handicraft and woodcarving market
- **Warorot Market** – also known as “Kad Luang,” huge Chinese/Thai market
- **Siri Wattana (Tanin) Market** – large market offering produce, meat, food, and desserts
- **Jing Jai (JJ) Market** – weekend morning market with range of food, crafts, and organic produce
- **Baan Kang Wat** - weekend morning market with shops, food, crafts, and a small garden
- **Namor (CMU) market** – shopping area popular with Thais across from Chiang Mai University (CMU) campus offering cheap clothes and other goods

Other Areas
- **Wat Ket** – area along the Ping river with historic buildings and trendy shops
- **Thapae Road** – road leading to the river with shops offering local clothes, etc.
Things to Do

Thai Cooking Schools
- May Kaidee – cooking classes focused on vegetarian and vegan dishes
- Mama Noi – cooking classes offered in a lovely garden just outside of town
- Pantawan – school offering different menus each day in a teak house

Spas
- The Oasis Spa – popular, luxurious spa with multiple locations in Thailand
- The Miracle Spa – mid-range spa in town with good services
- Green Bamboo Massage – small, family-owned massage parlor that offers good massages at a low price

Exercise & Dance
- Zumba – classes every Tuesday at Nim City near CD office
- Chiang Mai Swing Dance – established community offers lessons and hosts social dances
- Chiang Mai Latin Dance – established community offers lessons and hosts social dances
- The Yoga Tree – studio offering yoga, meditation, dance, and other classes
- Wild Rose Yoga – studio offering a wide variety of yoga classes
- Hidden House Yoga – studio offering yoga, meditation, and cooking classes

Pools
- Lotus Pang Suan Kaew – pool on the 7th floor allows day access for THB 150
- Buri Siri – hotel in Nimman with beautiful pool allows day access for a THB 200
- Green Hill Place – pool at a housing complex that allows day access for 50 THB, great place to meet people

Temples
There are many, many temples in Chiang Mai you can visit. Be sure to cover shoulders and knees!
Popular temples include Wat Lok Moli, Wat Chedi Luang, Wat Phra Singh, and Wat Sri Suphan
Nearby Excursions

**Mae Rim - Samoeng Road**
- Bai Orchid and Butterfly Farm – garden with variety of flowers and butterflies
- Mae Sa Waterfall – large waterfall with several swimming pools
- Huay Tueng Tao – beautiful lake with huts around it, nice to chill and have food by the lake
- Siam Insect Zoo – garden with a variety of insects and informational displays
- Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden – expansive garden with greenhouses and a canopy walk
- Elephant PooPooPaper Park – organization that makes paper from elephant poop fibers
- Mon Chaem – farming village atop mountain with coffee shops and stunning views

**Doi Suthep-Pui National Park**
- Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep – large, famous temple with a beautiful view of the city
- Bhubing Palace – royal home with beautiful grounds and a rose garden
- Hmong Village – minority village on the mountain with handicrafts for sale
- Monk’s Trail – hiking trail up the mountain that leads to Wat Pha Lat
- Waterfalls: Huay Kaew, Monthathan, Wang Bua Ban Pha Ngoep, Huai Rap Sadet

**San Kampaeng Road**
- Umbrella Making Centre – shop and museum with paper umbrella making demonstrations
- Baan Celadon – celadon pottery artisan workshop and showroom
- MAIIAM Contemporary Art Museum – vibrant museum with regional contemporary art
- Thai Silk Village – large complex with silk production area and items for sale

**Other**
- Bua Tong “Sticky” Waterfalls – waterfalls that visitors can walk up due to deposits on rocks
- Elephant Nature Park – one of the many ethical elephant care centers near town
- Ginger Farm – nice farm just outside of town with animals and an on-site restaurant
- Wiang Kum Kam – ruins of an ancient city south of town
- Bamboo rafting on the Mae Wang – inexpensive, relaxing thing to do with a group of people
Weekend Trips

Pai, Thailand
Takes about three to four hours by car, bus or motorbike. Local bus is cheaper but less comfortable (about 72 THB) vs. minibus or minivan (150 THB). They all leave at Arcade Bus Terminal in Chiang Mai; Pai is full of cozy little cafes and bars. Good place to relax and to rent a motorbike to visit the waterfalls and hot springs around Pai. Room prices start at 200 THB.

Chiang Rai, Thailand
Buses leave from Arcade Bus Terminal. Book with Green Bus, tickets are about 300 THB and it takes about 3 hours to get there. Very small town that mostly sees day tourists; ideal to hang out for a few days to see the artistic temples that the area is known for - the white, black, and blue temples.

Chiang Dao, Thailand
Buses leave from Chang Phuak Bus Terminal. The local bus charges 60 THB and it takes about 2 hours to get there. Very relaxing and quiet town; ideal to hang out for a few days. Over the weekend visit the caves, the hot springs, the mountain temple, and take a hike! Stay at Chiang Dao Nest.

Mae Hong Son, Thailand
Buses leave from Arcade Bus Terminal. Minibus or minivan charge 250 THB and it takes about 5.5-6 hours to get there. Very small and quiet town; ideal to hang out for a few days. Highlight there is the small lake. Stay at Fern Resort.

Luang Prabang, Laos
Buy flight ticket at Lao Airlines office (off Huay Kaew road) in Chiang Mai (cheaper than booking online). E-mail: noon-17@windowslive.com. Guest houses can be booked directly in Luang Prabang since the town is very small and supply is large.
Trips with Child’s Dream

Considerations for Trips to Laos

- People in Laos primarily eat sticky rice, which may lead to digestion problems
- Take along appropriate food and medicine to deal with potential digestion problems; the last chance to buy things you may need is the last 7/11 before the Thai-Laos border
- Drink a lot of water (especially when it’s hot!)
- Take along a sleeping bag and camping mat, as you will sometimes sleep in village houses
- Bring a pillow or something to put behind your back on bumpy roads

General Considerations

- Ask about the climate in the region you are travelling to as during the cold season you may need warm layers for the night
- Don’t forget to bring mosquito repellent!
- Tiger Balm works well to reduce itchiness from insect bites
- You should be able to greet people and say “thank you” in Thai; if you visit schools, students or teachers may offer you something and it is a mark of respect to respond in Thai
- Be aware that sanitary facilities are sometimes very simple
Directions to Children’s Medical Fund (CMF)

Address:
9/3 Suthep Road, Tambon Su Thep, Amphoe Mueang Chiang Mai, Chiang Wat Chiang Mai 50200

Directions:
1. Turn right out of Child’s Dream and go towards the main road (Tipanet Road).

2. Turn left onto Tipanet Road. Stay on the road for 1.2 km until you come to the moat. Suan Pung Gate will be in front of you.

3. Turn left onto Chang Lor road and go along the moat.

4. After 350 m, veer right onto Bunrueang Rit Road (merge left) and continue to follow the moat.

5. Veer left after 900 m onto Suthep Road

6. After 500 m, turn left onto the alleyway between the optical shop and 7-11, on your left

7. Follow this alleyway for about 100 m and the CMF building is at the end of the street on the right.

For directions from somewhere else [click here]