

Chiang Rai



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Chiang Rai is the northernmost province in Thailand bordering Myanmar (Burma) to its northwest and Laos and the Mekong River to the northeast. With rugged hills, spectacular mountains and enchanting rural villages, Chiang Rai is an ideal adventure playground. Chiang Rai City boasts some fabulous food, unique temples and a great little night market.

Chiang Rai



Full Day

Hilltribe Hike & Jungle Lunch

Journey into the mountain range that straddles the Thai-Myanmar border where we'll visit a traditional Lahu hilltribe village nestled in an idyllic valley. There we will be greeted by community leaders donning their finest handmade tribal costumes, who will take us on a stroll through their village. You'll learn about Lahu architecture, spiritual practices, music, and daily life.

Then, it's into the jungle! A short hike from the village will take us to a small clearing by a stream where we'll have a hands-on opportunity to prepare a Lahu feast using locally procured ingredients and tools.

The afternoon will be spent hiking through forests and orchards, and along the gentle streams that dissect the hilly landscape. The hike will take us to a small but beautiful, multi-tiered waterfall. Feel free to take a dip and cool off!



Full Day

Doi Mae Salong

This dramatic mountain region was first settled by indigenous hilltribe groups such as the Ahka and Lahu peoples, and more recently by Chinese settlers who fled the Communist Revolution in China in 1949. We'll drive roughly 75 kilometers up and over spectacular jungle-covered mountains en route to this highland retreat. We'll arrive early enough for a pleasant nature hike through terraced tea and rice plantations, taking in hill tribe villages and rolling mountains around the Doi Mae Salong area.

By lunchtime we will have built up an appetite and we'll treat ourselves to some delicious southern Chinese (Yunnanese) food for which the village of Doi Mae Salong is renowned.

Doi Mae Salong is also home to Thailand's premier Oolong tea production. We will have a tea tasting set up to try some of the many varieties and learn all about the process and importance of tea growing in Northern Thailand.



Full Day

The Famed Golden Triangle

Today we'll make our way to the Mekong River. We'll get started with a drive to Doi Tung Royal Project and a visit to this renowned development center for hilltribe groups in northern Thailand. We'll continue to Doi Chaang Mub, one of the province's highest mountains along a spectacular road that skirts the Thai-Myanmar border, and then travel on towards the Golden Triangle into the open farmland of eastern Chiang Rai province and the confluence of the Mekong River. A highlight will be a thrilling longtail boat ride down river between three countries to Chiang Sean where we can visit a local market and explore the ancient city wall.



Full Day

Bikes, Boats, Villages & Caves

Get ready for a full day of exploring a large swath of what the scenic countryside surrounding Chiang Rai has to offer. And we'll do it in the best way we know how: on bicycles with the breeze in our faces! The day will begin with a drive to a cave temple, Wat Tham Phra, where our mountain bikes will be waiting for us. We'll pedal along the Kok River, through fertile farmland, creaking bamboo stands, and to a hilltribe village surrounded by limestone mountains.

Here we'll have a local lunch, and then carry on through small back roads up and over some medium-grade mountains, passing by further Ahka and Lisu settlements. When we've had enough biking, we'll board a private longtail boat waiting for us on the river and head back down the river to Chiang Rai town. Sit back, relax, and take in the scenery unfolding along the shores as you reflect on this epic day.



Full Day

Biking the Mighty Mekong!

This morning, we'll venture out to a nearby town and begin cycling one of the nicest roads in the north. This route along the Mekong provides scenery of village life, as well as the wide bends and cool air of the river. Cycling is mostly flat, with a few manageable hills.

We'll have a lunch of local delicacies under the shade overlooking the Mekong River. We can pop by the ancient capital of Chiang Saen Ruins, once the center of power of the mighty Lanna Kingdom beginning some 1,400 years ago, and Chiang Sean Lake, a nature reserve and a favorite for bird watchers. There is no shortage of fascinating sights in this remote corner of Northern Thailand; a day of adventure, nature, and history all in one!



Full Day

Heli-Hiking at Doi Mae Salong

The highlands of northern Thailand provides some of the most memorable characters and magnificent scenery in the country. We'll charter a luxury helicopter for a spectacular 20-minute trip up to one of the Kingdom's most stunning destinations – Doi Mae Salong. This region was settled first by indigenous hilltribe groups such as the Akha, and more recently by Chinese who fled the Communist Revolution in China in 1949. Once opium country, Doi Mae Salong is now home to Thailand's premier Oolong tea production. We'll sample some tea at a family tea house then hike through terraced plantations and hilltribe footpaths. Lunch on local dishes near an Akha settlement, an intimate setting to learn about their way of life over a meal.

A finale in the highlands is a visit to the spectacular mountain shrine dedicated to HRH the Princess Mother. This granite, gilded shrine is a resplendent example of Thai-Burmese temple architecture.



Full Day

Extraordinary Road Trip

Recommended time: 9:00 - 17:00

Drive to Chiang Mai via the scenic route through Fang town. The trip takes about six to seven hours, but we'll break it up with some memorable experiences. This will be no ordinary transfer day and no ordinary meal. We will take the most scenic route, driving along the winding roads that straddle the Thai-Myanmar border. We'll head up to a Lahu hill-tribe village to enjoy a traditionally prepared meal (ingredients are procured locally and made and eaten using bamboo vessels and utensils created on the spot!). Time permitting, we can take a stroll through the village and learn about Lahu ways of life before continuing the picturesque journey onwards.

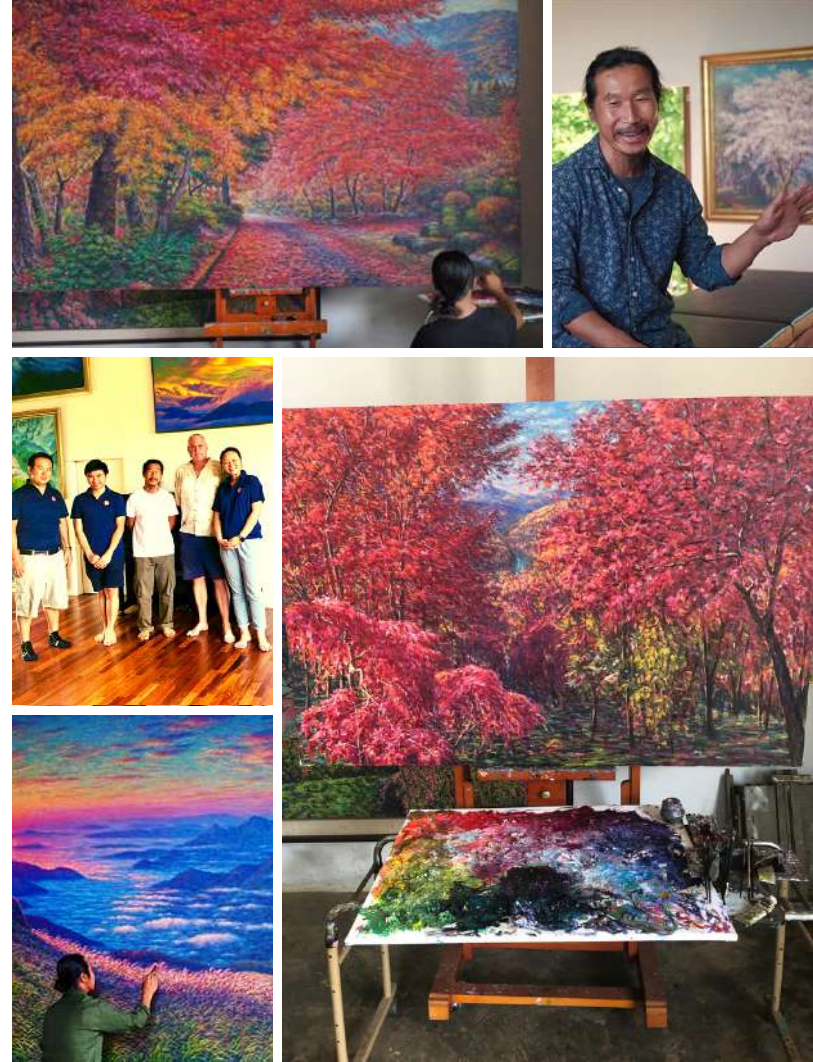


Add-on

Artist's Home-studio Visit

Acclaimed Chiang-Rai artist Sangiam Yarangsee is a master of impressionist painting, drawing inspiration from the vibrancy of nature in Northern Thailand. He has spent well over two decades painting almost every corner of the greater Golden Triangle region, first concentrating on hills, then moving on to cloudscapes, rivers in neighboring provinces and countries (Laos), the ocean in Thailand's far south and even landscapes in Europe and Nepal.

Today, we will have the opportunity to visit Sangiam's hilltop home-studio-gallery, which commands not only terrific views but also a fine collection of his works. Having experienced the rolling hills, valleys, and villages of Northern Thailand yourself, getting a chance to browse through Sangiam's colorful canvases and see these scenes through his eyes will be a delight.



Evening

Chiang Rai Evening Stroll

After checking into your accommodation, we will take you out to dinner at a favorite restaurant specializing in some Chiang Rai classic dishes. Then, we'll drive to the famous golden clock tower, located at the very center of town. If the timing is right, we'll be rewarded with a sound and light show. From here we will walk to Chiang Rai's happening Night Bazaar. We'll stroll through the stalls and stands selling Lanna and hilltribe arts, clothing and crafts before settling in at one of the public dining areas to watch a folk music performance. We can try a few local snacks and enjoy some beverages.



The Smiling Albino Difference

AT SMILING ALBINO WE DON'T JUST CONNECT THE DOTS, WE CREATE THEM, AND DELIVER UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES.

We understand implicitly that a perfect adventure is much more than nice hotels, great meals and hassle-free logistics. For a travel experience to be perfect, all pieces must work together like a symphony. It is the fine details which our guests appreciate most, like cold face towels after a hike, electrolyte beverages for your day cycling, and wine uncorked when the moment is right. From local maps to bottled water and colorful anecdotes on the areas we visit, a Smiling Albino adventure is a thorough, intimately hosted experience.



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