

**Web source: [www.lifeevents.org](http://www.lifeevents.org)**

## **Chiang Mai Tourist Information**

### **High Tourist Season**

October to February is the high travel season for those that visit Chiang Mai from abroad. Almost 25% of Chiang Mai's more than 2 million yearly visitors, however, come from within Thailand all throughout the year. Locals call Chiang Mai 'the Rose of the North' ~ a reference to its natural beauty and plentiful surrounding agricultural lands.

Just about any time is a good time to visit with regard to activities and weather. March and April represent the hottest and most dry period so fewer people are around until the beginning of the big water festival in mid-April.

### **Chiang Mai's Biggest Festivals and Holidays**

Holidays are one of the best ways to experience Thai culture, meet people and enjoy Chiang Mai. A city-wide festival means that the price you pay for food and locally made goods is the same as for locals. Your tourist dollar will go further than any other time in Thailand even if you have to spend a little more on your hotel.

### **Northern Thailand's 3 Biggest Festivals**

#### **Songkran: Street Fair and Water Festival**

Starts 2nd week in April for 3 - 5 days

Chiang Mai's central city area is surrounded by a 2km x 2km water-filled moat. This 700 year old water feature is part of the original design as a fortified city. During the most dry season of the year, people gather around the moat and use their most precious seasonal resource, water, for fun (sanuk in Thai) and games.



Picture 200,000 people partaking in the largest water fight you can imagine. Kid-filled cars, trucks and flatbeds circle the road around the moat for hours and hours. Everyone is armed with a water gun, water hose or bucket to douse the nearest stranger. It's all smiles and fun and lasts from sun-up to sun-down.

Tourists are warned well in advance: stay out of the city for an entire week unless you are wearing your fastest drying clothing, have your camera tucked away in a water-proof bag and carry a loaded water canon.

Each evening, everyone dries off and makes their way to the main city gate for a street fair with food, music, beauty contests and entertainment.

Our personal experience with Songkran is one of complete awe for the culture of Thailand. As westerners, we could never imagine 200,000 partying people of our own countries staying calm, cool and happy through a 5 day water fight.



## **Loy Krathong: Festival of Lights on the Water and Parade**

3 days of the Full-moon day of the twelve lunar month (November)

Chiang Mai was founded near the banks of the Mai Ping river. On the 3 nights of the Loy Krathong festival, 10,000's of people gather at the riverside to pay homage to the goddess of the waters by releasing handmade floats (Krathongs) of banana leaf, flowers, incense, candles and offerings.

One bank of the river is lined with restaurants that make a great viewing area of the release of the 20,000 Krathongs and fireworks. Book reservations early as places fill up in advance. You may also talk a stroll through the inner city to see temples and homes lit with earthen lamps, candles and Christmas lights.



The festivities, also called Yi Peng, may have evolved from Brahmanic rites to honor the dead as well as local rites to bring an end to the monsoon rains. Activities include a nightly parade made up of back-lit floats (like the one shown on the right), bands and beautiful maidens in traditional dress.

Join kids and gown-up kids at Thae Pae gate to release flame fed hot-air balloon-like lanterns into the sky. This is one of our favorite Chiang Mai activities. When you look out across the sky and see all the floating lanterns, you'll be sure we're being visited by friends from the stars.

## **Flower Parade and Carnival**

1st weekend of February - 2 days, early morning to evening

Our personal favorite holiday is the Saturday morning of the Flower Parade. Crowds are much smaller than the festivals mentioned above but the wonderful things to see and experience are numerous. Thai people are very talented at creating works of beauty and the flower festival is just the ticket for them to really shine.



20 Floats are created and paraded around the city. Picture the Rose Parade in Pasadena, California but you are close enough to smell the flowers or reach out and touch them. There is a contest for the most beautiful species for each Thai flower, decorative plant, orchid and float.



The flower floats on parade end their journey at Chiang Mai's most wonderful inner-city nature location (a great place for Thai Chi, Chi Kung and Yoga in the early morning), Buag Haad City Park and Playground. Local food vendors, plant growers and farmers are present with one of the best collections of local goods that Chiang Mai has to offer.

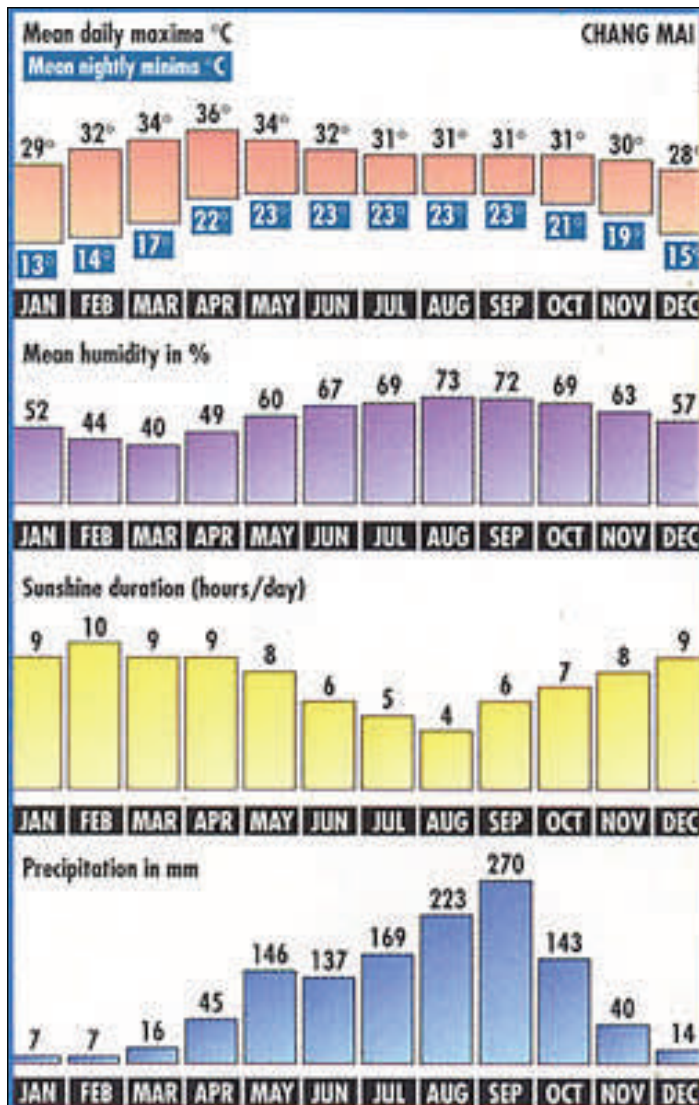
## Chiang Mai's Weather: Rainfall and Temperature

Seasonal changes in Northern Thailand are reflected in the graph below.

Note that March and April are dry and hot. Things cool off when the rain shows up in May and everything becomes really green and lush.

By September, monsoon should be in full swing. Note that this is not necessarily a float-through-the-streets monsoon like in Bangladesh and other parts of Asia. Usually there will be some sun every day.

October through January sees the rain taper off and the average temperature drop a couple of degrees. Evenings become cool so you'll need a jacket if you are on a motor scooter (popular mode of transport) or travel up to the hills around the city after sunset.



## Chiang Mai Visit: What to Do

Go to this website <http://www.tourismthailand.org> and select Chiang Mai for things of interest in and around Chiang Mai. For news about tourism related topics visit <http://www.tatnews.org>



Elephant riding and bamboo raft safari are two of the most famous adventurous activities for tourists visiting Northern Thailand.