



Pha That Phanom

amazing
THAILAND

I-San Upper Northeast

Udon Thani • Nong Khai • Roi Et • Kalasin
Nakhon Phanom • Loei • Khon Kaen • Maha Sarakham
Mukdahan • Sakon Nakhon • Nong Bua Lam Phu





Phu Kradueng National Park

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Front Cover : Phrathat Phanom, Nakhon Phanom



I-San Upper Northeast

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- Nakhon Phanom
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- Roi Et
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|---|-----------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | Main Highway |  | Changwat (Province) |
|  | Provincial Highway |  | Amphoe (District) |
|  | Road |  | Tourist Attraction |
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Phra Phutthabhat Bua Bok

Udon Thani

The city itself is a bustling market centre for the surrounding agricultural areas, and a transport hub for travelling to neighbouring provinces.

The upper Northeastern Region (I-san) is crested by Lao P.D.R. and bordered by the Mekong River along its northern and eastern limits. Like the rest of the Northeast, it is the most traditional part of the country, preserving time-honoured customs, folk arts and festivals as part of daily life. It is also an intensely rural area although a number of cities serve as regional centres; Udon Thani being one of the largest.

The province of Udon Thani covers an area of 11,730 sq. km., with the provincial capital situated slightly over 560 km. northeast of Bangkok. The city itself is a bustling market centre for the surrounding agricultural areas, and a transport hub for travelling to neighbouring provinces. While Udon has its own city sights, the big attraction beyond is the World Heritage Site of Ban Chiang, an important archaeological find attesting to a prehistoric civilisation. Website: www.udonthani.go.th

City Attractions

San Lak Mueang

The City Pillar, located at the northeast corner of the Thung Si Mueang (City Field), commemorates the founding of the city and is also where its guardian spirit resides. People make offerings of flowers, candles and incense at the ornate shrine, which is located next to a smaller shrine housing a Buddhist stela. Nearby is a sacred banyan tree which, as is the custom, is a repository for broken or discarded spirit houses.

Nongprachak Park

Located in the northwest of the city, this landscaped dam and park is a popular recreation area, and with its rich variety of trees and tropical flowers, is an ideal place to escape the bustle of the city.

Wat Matchimawat

The temple was restored in the late 19th century, during the reign of King Rama V, and is notable for the white rock Buddha image it enshrines.

Ban Chiang Archaeological Site



San Chao Pu-Ya

Located near Nong Bua Market, this large and beautiful Chinese-style shrine, set next to a pond, houses a huge model of a golden dragon that is featured in the annual Thung Si Mueang Festival held in December.

Udon Sunshine Orchid Garden

Located in Soi Kamon Watthana on Highway No. 2024 (Udon Thani-Nong Samrong), the garden grows and offers for sale a new species of Thai scented orchid called “Udon Sunshine” or “Udon Saeng Tawan”. This is the only known vanda hybrid which is fragrant between early morning and early afternoon, making it the first orchid in the world to be used in the making of perfume.

Out-Of-City-Attractions

Ban Na Kha

Situated about 16 km. from town on the road to Nong Khai, this is a notable centre for cotton and silk trading. This village is the symbol of Udon Thani. Khit cloth is the most famous product for its beauty and reasonable price.

Ban Chiang Archaeological Site

Lying some 55 km. from Udon Thani, at Amphoe Nong Han off Highway No. 22 (Udon Thani-Sakon Nakhon) at the 50-km. marker, Ban Chiang is the region's most important historical site of such archaeological significance that it was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992. Excavations here in the 1970s produced evidence of a Bronze Age civilisation that flourished more than 5,000 years ago. Today the site comprises two parts: on the left hand side is the Ban Chiang National Museum displaying prehistoric artefacts, including Ban Chiang's highly distinctive pottery, and on the right hand side is an open excavation pit with bones and other finds left where they lay, which are in the compound of Wat Pho Si Nai. The museum is open daily from 8.30 a.m.-5.00 p.m. On the way to Ban Chiang, visitors can visit several villages where handicrafts are made. For example, Ban Kham O, located along the Udon Thani-Sakon Nakhon route produces Ban Chiang-style pottery, while Ban Pu Lu is a centre for pottery painting. Open from 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. daily. Tel. 0 4220 8340.

Phu Phrabat Historical Park

This is accessed via Highway No. 2 (Udon Thani-Nong Khai), taking a left turn at the 13-km. marker onto Highway No. 2021

to Amphoe Ban Phue for 42 km. and then along Highway No. 2348 for a further 12 km. The landscape is dotted with rocks of different sizes and shapes. There are also caves and cliffs with traces of prehistoric paintings.

Phra Phutthabat Bua Bok

This revered Buddha footprint is enshrined at the foot of Khao Phu Phan 12 km. south of Phu Phrabat Historical Park. Celebrations are held each year between 11-15 March to pay respect at the 40-metre tall pagoda that houses the footprint and a holy relic.

Special Event

Thung Si Mueang Festival

Held annually during 1-15 December, the Festival showcases local products, while golden dragon dancing is also featured in the celebrations.

How To Get There

By Air

- *Thai Airways* operates three flights a day between Bangkok and Udon Thani (one hour).
Tel. 0 2356 1111 Website: www.thaiairways.com
- *Air Asia* also has flights from Bangkok to Udon Thani.
Tel. 0 2515 9999 Website: www.airasia.com

By Rail

Trains to Udon Thani depart from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Railway Station daily.
Tel: 0 2220 4444, Railway Station Hotline: 1690
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Bangkok-Udon Thani buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road daily, with the journey taking around 8 hours. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605,611
Website: www.transport.co.th.

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi and then onto Highway No. 2 to Udon Thani via Nakhon Ratchasima and Khon Kaen, a total distance of 564 km.

Shopping

Popular among Udon Thani's best local buys are handmade cotton,



Wat Tham Erawan

Nong Bua Lam Phu

Nong Bua Lam Phu was once the site of an ancient city dating back more than 900 years ago...

Located 559 km. from Bangkok and 46 km. from Udon Thani and covering an area of 3,859 sq. km., Nong Bua Lam Phu was once the site of an ancient city dating back more than 900 years ago (ancient artefacts from the area can now be seen in the Khon Kaen Museum).

Nong Bua Lam Phu previously formed a part of Udon Thani but was made a province in its own right on 1 December 1993. Website: www.nongbualamphu.go.th

City Attractions

King Naresuan the Great Shrine

Set in Nong Bua Public Park opposite the Provincial Hall, the Shrine commemorates the occasion when, in 1574, King Naresuan the Great of Ayutthaya led his troops to Nong Bua Lam Phu on the way to help the King of Hongsawadi in his fight against the city of Si Sattana Khanahut. From 25 January to 3 February, the city will hold its annual celebration to pay homage to the statue of King Naresuan the Great.

San Phra Wo Phra Ta

Standing beside Highway No. 210 (Nong Bua Lam Phu-Udon Thani), the shrine was built to honour Nong Bua Lam Phu's founder.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Namtok Thao To Forest Park

Located 3 km. from town on the way to Udon Thani, these small but attractive falls are set in a leafy grove. Nearby is the Chao Pu Lup Shrine, at which local people commonly worship.

150-Million-Year-Old Shell Fossils

In Ban Huai Duea, approximately 10 km. from town on the Nong Bua Lam Phu-Udon Thani route, 140-150-million-year-old mollusc fossils have been found buried in sandstone and some weigh half a kilogramme.

King Naresuan the Great Shrine





Statue of Luang Pu Khao Ananyo



Luang Pu Khao Ananyo's Museum

Wat Tham Klong Phen

Located at the foot of the Phu Phan mountain range, 15 km. from town on Highway No. 210 and then 2 km. off to the right, this once deserted ancient Khmer temple was, in 1958, turned into a meditation centre by Luang Pu Khao Ananyo. After his death in 1983, a museum was opened in his honour, displaying a wax figure of him as well as his personal effects. The temple itself stands in a picturesque and peaceful setting that is conducive to meditation.

Pottery Making at Ban Khong Sawan

Lying 17 km. from town on the way to Udon Thani, the village of Ban Khong Sawan is noted for its local pottery made using traditional techniques with designs similar to those of Ban Chiang pottery.

Phu Kao-Phu Phan Kham National Park

The park covers 322 sq. km. and comprises Phu Phan Kham, part of the Phu Phan mountain range, and Phu Kao, a range of nine hills with interesting rock formations, a waterfall and prehistoric cave drawings. To get there from Nong Bua Lam Phu, take Highway No. 2146 (Nong Bua Lam Phu-Non Sang) for about 40 km. to the intersection at Ban Sok Chan, then turn left onto the Ban Sok Chan-Khuean Ubolratana route for about 14 km. For more information, contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department.

Tel. 0 2562 0760

Website: www.dnp.go.th

Tham Erawan

The cave is located 45 km. from town and is reached via Highway No. 210 to beyond Amphoe Na Klang and King Amphoe Na Wang to the 13-km. marker, then take a right turn for 2 km. At the entrance, reached by a long flight of over 600 steps, is situated a large Buddha image clearly visible from a distance. Inside is a large space with stalactites and stalagmites.

Wat Tham Suwannakhuha

Located about 5 km. from Amphoe Suwannakhuha Office, the temple enshrines a Buddha image built by Phra Chaiyachetthathirat of Vientiane in 1555.

How To Get There

By Air

Visitors can fly from Bangkok to Udon Thani and then continue the trip by bus to Nong Bua Lam Phu.

- *Thai Airways*
Tel: 0 2356 1111 Website: www.thaiairways.com
- *Air Asia* operates two flights and takes 1 hour.
Tel. 0 2515 9999 Website: www.airasia.com

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Nong Bua Lam Phu. Visitors can take a train to Udon Thani at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Nong Bua Lam Phu.

Tel. 0 2220 4444 or Hotline 1690 Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road to Nong Bua Lam Phu daily, with the journey taking around 8 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi, Highway No. 2 to Udon Thani via Nakhon Ratchasima and Khon Kaen, and then Highway No. 210 to Nong Bua Lam Phu, a total distance of 608 km.

Pottery Making at Ban Khong Sawan





Luang Pho Phra Sai, Wat Pho Chai

Nong Khai

A small leafy town of considerable charm, Nong Khai draws much of its fascination from its riverside location and its role as a frontier post.

Immediately north of Udon Thani and 615 km. from Bangkok, Nong Khai is an attractive tourist destination, both in its scenery and its cultural sights. The province of some 7,332 sq. km. forms a narrow strip strung out along the banks of the Mekong River for 330 km., which here forms the border with Lao P.D.R. This makes the provincial capital, located 51 km. north of Udon Thani, a major gateway to the Lao capital of Vientiane, a mere 24 km. away beyond the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge that spans the river. A small leafy town of considerable charm, Nong Khai draws much of its fascination from its riverside location and its role as a frontier post. However, interest is not limited to a simple matter of geography; there are several venerable temples and other sights, along with a tranquil, almost rural atmosphere, which make Nong Khai a satisfying destination in its own right as well as being a hopping off point for visits to Lao P.D.R. Website: www.nongkhai.go.th.

City Attractions

Wat Pho Chai

Situated off Prachak Road, in the southeastern part of town, the temple is renowned for enshrining the province's most revered Buddha image, Luang Pho Phra Sai, a smallish but stunning statue with a head of gold and a bronze body set on an elaborate altar. The image is believed to have come from Lao P.D.R. and murals in the temple illustrate the story of its being taken across the Mekong River on a raft, capsizing during a storm but miraculously floating ashore. During the Songkran Festival (13-15 April), the statue is taken in a procession around the town.

Prap Ho Monument

Located in front of the Provincial Hall, the Monument honours soldiers who died suppressing the Ho rebellion in 1886.

Tha Sadet Market

This is the landing stage for local people crossing the Mekong

Sala Kaeo Ku





Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge

River to Tha Duea in Lao P.D.R. and is intriguing for its market selling Indochinese products as well as the province's local goods.

Phrathat Nong Khai

This temple collapsed into the Mekong River in 1847 and over the years, its chedi drifted to the centre of the river where it can be seen today when the water is low during the dry season.

Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge

This was the first international bridge to span the Mekong River. Opened on 8 April 1994, it was built as a joint venture by the governments of Australia, Thailand and Lao P.D.R. This bridge, 1.2-km. long and 15-metres wide, is one of the best places to enjoy the beautiful sunsets over the Mekong River.

Sala Kaeo Ku

Located just outside town on the way to Amphoe Phon Phisai, Sala Kaeo Ku (also known as Wat Khaek or Indian Temple) comprises a religious park dotted with weird and wonderful statuary depicting Buddhist and Hindu gods, goddesses, saints, devils, and demons, as well as some secular sculptures. The park was established in 1978 by Luang Pu Lua, an old man who believed all religions should be integrated together and reputedly employed unskilled craftsmen to give his vision graphic realism.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Phrathat Bang Phuan

This venerable Indian-style chedi, located at Ban Don Mu, 11 km. from town on Highway No. 2 (Nong Khai-Udon Thani), and then 10 km. along Highway No. 211 (Nong Khai-Tha Bo), is 34-metres high and houses holy relics of the Lord Buddha. It underwent major renovations in 1976 after it collapsed due to rain, although original structures can be seen in the ruins of the

temple hall, the temple boundary markers and an ancient stone inscription. There is also a small museum.

Luang Pho Phra Chao Ong Tue

Located at Wat Si Chom Phu Ong Tue, Ban Nam Mong on Highway No. 211, about 43 km. from town, this 4-metre high Buddha image is made of gold, bronze and silver. Built by Phra Chaiyachettha of Vientiane in 1562, the image is revered by both Thais and Laos.

Tha Bo

Along the Mekong River and west of Nong Khai town are a number of villages where traditional rural pursuits remain the main source of livelihood. Of these, Tha Bo is an important market centre where visitors can see a wide array of local produce, including tobacco and the area's most famous export, tomatoes.

Si Chiang Mai

Standing on the banks of the Mekong River 57 km. west of Nong Khai, Si Chiang Mai is a pleasant little town notable for its fine views of Vientiane, directly across the river, and for its production of the rice paper used to wrap spring rolls. Nearby attractions include Wat Hin Mak Peng, a meditation temple.

Namtok Than Thip or Namtok Tat Soem

Located at Ban Tat Soem, off Highway No. 211 at the 97-km. marker, the waterfall tumbles over three impressive tiers that are 30, 70 and 100 metres high, respectively. It is at its most beautiful from June to October, during the rainy season.

Nong Khai Horticultural Research Centre

Situated at the 63-km. marker along Highway No. 212 (Nong Khai-Buang Kan) in King Amphoe Rattanawapi, the Centre has a vast variety of native plants as well as herb and flower gardens. Open 8.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m. daily. Tel. 0 4242 1679-80

Wat Phu Thok

Occupying a 200-metre high sandstone mountain isolated in an arid plain, Wat Phu Thok has been established as a meditation centre by constructing wooden stairs from the foot of the mountain and winding along the cliff face to the summit. Along the way, visitors can see an amazing variety of rock formations and caves, as well as breathtaking views. To get to Wat Phu Thok from Nong Khai, take Highway No. 212 past Amphoe Phon Phisai, Amphoe Pak Khat and Amphoe Bueng Kan, and then take a right onto Highway No. 222 to Amphoe Si Wilai and to Wat Phu Thok, a total distance of 185 km.

Phu Wua Wildlife Reserve

Located in Amphoe Bung Khla and covering an area of more than over 180 sq. km. near the Mekong River and the Thai-Lao border, the reserve is known for several waterfalls, best visited during the late rainy season from August to November. These include Namtok Chet Si, Namtok Tham Phra and Namtok Chanaen, the latter two being difficult to reach by road during the late rainy season. Contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department for more information.

Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Travel to Lao P.D.R.

Foreign tourists wishing to visit Lao P.D.R. from Nong Khai need a visa, which can be obtained from the Lao Embassy, 520, 502/1-3 Soi Sahakan Pramoon (at the end of Soi Ramkhamhaeng 39) Pracha Uthit Road, Bangkok, Tel. 0 2539 6667-8, website: www.bkk.laoembassy.com, or the Lao Consulate General, 171/ 102-3 Prachasamoson Road, Amphoe Mueang, Khon Kaen, Tel. 0 4324 2856-8; Fax. 0 4324 4918. Visas are valid for one month and can be extended for an additional two months. Alternatively, visas allowing a stay of up to 15 days and extendable by paying 100 baht per day may be obtained on arrival at the Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge Checkpoint Tel. 0 4242 0242-3; Fax. 0 4242 0244 or 0 4246 7164 for more information about visas. To reach Lao P.D.R. shuttle bus services from Nong Khai cross the Friendship Bridge, and then from the checkpoint on the Lao side of the bridge. Visitors can hire a taxi to Vientiane, which is 20 km. away. The checkpoint is open daily 6.00 a.m.-10.00 p.m. More information and details of package tours may be obtained from any of the tour operators in Nong Khai.

Special Event

Bang Fai Phaya Nak or Naga Fireball Festival

This is a mysterious and unexplained phenomenon in which fireballs are seen rising up from the Mekong River on the night at the end of Buddhist Lent usually in October. What appear as strange floating lights are visible from various riverside districts in Nong Khai, and this presumably natural spectacle attracts a great number of people. The event has become a festive occasion, and a friendship boat race between Thailand and Lao P.D.R. is staged as part of the celebrations.



Illuminated Boat, Naga Fireball Festival

How To Get There

By Air

- Visitors can fly from Bangkok to Udon Thani by Thai Airways and then continue the trip by bus to Nong Khai. Tel: 0 2356 1111 Website: www.thaiairways.com
- *Air Asia*
Tel. 0 2515 9999 Website: www.airasia.com

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Nong Khai. Visitors can take a train to Udon Thani at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Nong Khai. Tel. 0 2220 4444 Hotline. 1690
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Daily buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal, with the journey taking around 9 hours.
Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi and then onto Highway No. 2 to Nong Khai via Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen and Udon Thani, a total distance of 615 km.

Shopping

Local buys include hand-woven clothes, basketry, silverware, foodstuffs, and imports from Lao P.D.R.



Phu Kradueng National Park

Loei

Because of the province's geographical and climatic distinctions, the natural scenery is exceptional and much of it is preserved in a number of splendid national parks, which are major tourism attractions.

Lying directly west of Udon Thani and Nong Khai, Loei is especially scenic. Forming a border between the North and Northeast regions, it is typical of other I-san provinces in being mountainous and having a climate with a wide annual range, hotter than elsewhere in summer and cooler, even cold, in winter. It has, however, one similarity with Nong Khai in that most of its northern border is formed by the Mekong River. Because of the province's geographical and climatic distinctions, the natural scenery is exceptional and much of it is preserved in a number of splendid national parks, which are major tourism attractions. Culturally, Loei blends Northern and Northeastern influences, while its comparative remoteness has allowed for the preservation to a large extend of traditional lifestyles. In size, Loei covers an area of about 11,426 sq. km., and the provincial capital is 520 km. from Bangkok.

City Attractions

The city of Loei has little to hold the traveller's interest, although the Chao Pho Kut Pong Shrine, next to the City Pillar, and Chaloeam Phra Kiat Public Park, set beside the Loei River, are popular spots for, respectively, worship and relaxation and as such afford an insight into local life.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Chiang Khan

Located on the banks of the Mekong River 48 km. north of

Phu Kradueng National Park



Loei, Chiang Khan is a pleasant little town, which draws distinction from its charming riverside setting. Among the sights are two temples of particular note: Wat Si Khun Mueang, which has a northern Thai-style chapel with mural paintings, and Wat Tha Khaek, an ancient temple on the bank of the Mekong River enshrining three granite Buddha images. Also of interest is Kaeng Khut Khu, an islet in the middle of the Mekong River, which makes a picturesque sight in the February to May low-water season.

Phu Kradueng National Park

Situated about 70 km. southeast of Loei on the Loei-Khon Kaen route, Phu Kradueng is one of the province's top attractions. The highest point in the area at 1,325 metres comprises a bell-shaped mountain topped by an extensive plateau. With a temperate-clime pine forest, grassy meadows, abundance of wild flowers and waterfalls, this is a nature trekker's dream. Please note that the park is open from October to May but closed during the rainy season to preserve the flora and fauna.

Suan Hin Pha Ngam

Located south of Loei town off Highway No. 201 (Loei-Phu Kradueng) some 20 km. from King Amphoe Nong Hin, this limestone mountain has eroded over time to form a fascinating landscape. A path winds through the rocks and also passes two waterfalls, Namtok Suan Hom and Namtok Phiang Din.

Phu Ruea National Park

Rising to 1,365 metres above sea level, this is another picturesque mountain topped by a pine-covered plateau. Other features include viewpoints, waterfalls, rock gardens, caves and several resorts, as well as the huge Chateau de Loei vineyard

Suan Hin Pha Ngam



Phrathat Si Song Rak

and winery. Phu Ruea is situated 60 km. west of Loei along Highway No. 203. Contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department for more information. Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Phrathat Si Song Rak

Located at Amphoe Dan Sai on the bank of the Mun River, 83 km. from Loei town, this Chedi was built in 1560 to enshrine holy relics of the Lord Buddha. It is distinguished by its Lao architectural design, and was erected as a gesture of friendship between Ayutthaya and the Lao kingdom of Vientiane.

Phu Luang Wildlife Reserve

Covering 897 sq. km., this is a jungle-clad plateau with a cool climate all year round. Some parts are open to visitors who can follow a 6-km. trail that passes through a pine forest, grass fields, and flower meadows along a rocky plateau. The best time for trekking is from October to May. Visitors must be accompanied by an official guide and prior contact must be made with the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department Tel: 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th.

Wat Pho Chai

The temple, at Ban Na Phueng, Amphoe Na Haeo, houses the Phra Chao Ong Saen image (also known as Fon Saen Ha image), which is widely believed to ensure sufficient rains. Also of interest is the chapel itself, which is over 400 years old and its interior is adorned with murals depicting events from the life of the Lord Buddha.

Namtok Tat Huang

Also known as Namtok Thai-Lao, these large falls are located 10



Phu Ruea National Park

km. off the Na Haeo-Rom Klao route on the way to Bo Mueang Noi. The waterfall originates from the Hueang River, a tributary of the Mekong River, and is set in an area of dense jungle.

Phrathat Satcha

This Lao-style, 33-metre high Stupa lies a few kilometres from the Tha Li Market. It is also worth noting that Amphoe Tha Li as a whole is one of the most beautiful parts of Loei.

Special Events

Dok Fai Ban Makham Wan Mueang Loei Fair

The Fair is held annually in front of the Provincial Hall during Chinese New Year (usually January/February) and is highlighted by a colourful procession in which local cotton products are featured.

Phi Ta Khon Festival

Celebrated in June at Amphoe Dan Sai, this is one of I-san's most intriguing annual events. Essentially, it comprises a merit-making celebration, a sermon and a procession bearing Phra Uppakhut, a rain-inducing Buddha image. However, the real fun and excitement comes from young men and boys re-enacting a local legend, dressed up in colourful ghost masks, and playing pranks.

Dok Mai Mueang Nao Fair

The Fair is held from 30 December to 2 January at Amphoe Phu Ruea and features pageants and stalls selling decorative plants, flowers and agricultural produce.

How To Get There

By Air

Thai Airways and Air Asia have flights from Bangkok to Udon Thani. However, visitors will have to continue the trip by bus to Loei.

- *Thai Airways*
Tel. 0 2356 1111
Website: www.thaiairways.com
- *Air Asia*
Tel. 0 2515 9999 Website: www.airasia.com

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Loei. Visitors can take a train to Khon Kaen at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Loei.
Tel. 0 2220 4444 Hotline 1690 Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Bangkok-Loei buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal daily, with the journey taking around 8 hours.
Tel: 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

The road journey from Bangkok follows Highway No.1 to Saraburi, then Highway No. 21 via Phetchabun and continues along Highway No. 203 through Amphoe Lom Sak, Amphoe Dan Sai and Amphoe Phu Ruea and on to Loei, a total distance of 536 km. and takes a 7-to-8- hour-drive. Alternatively, Highway No. 2 can be taken from Saraburi via Nakhon Ratchasima to Khon Kaen, and then Highway No. 12 via Chum Phae before turning right onto Highway No. 201 which leads to Loei via Amphoe Wang Saphung, a total distance of 540 km.

Shopping

Products for which Loei is famous are down blankets, sweet coconuts from Amphoe Chiang Khan, and golden oranges, sweet tamarind and fresh mushrooms from Amphoe Na Haeo. In addition, there are the beautiful flowers of Amphoe Phu Ruea.

Phi Ta Khon Festival





Wat Phrathat Choeng Chum

Sakon Nakhon

Ancient customs and traditions, such as the Wax Castle Festival held in October, are well preserved in Sakon Nakhon and add a further dimension to interest the traveller.

Lying east of Udon Thani, Sakon Nakhon is 647 km. from Bangkok and the province covers an area of 9,605 sq. km. Like Udon Thani, the provincial capital serves largely as a market centre for the surrounding agricultural communities. Geographically, the province encompasses the Phu Phan mountain range, where several forest temple meditation retreats are located. Some of these temples are famous for having in the past been the residences of revered monks well known for their lofty achievements in meditation practices. Ancient customs and traditions, such as the Wax Castle Festival held in October, are well preserved in Sakon Nakhon and add a further dimension to interest the traveller.

Website: www.sakonnakhon.go.th

City Attractions

Nong Han

This is a large freshwater lake with an area of 123 sq. km. It is where many waterways converge and is also a major agricultural and fishery centre, while the shoreline has been developed into a public park. In addition, there is Sa Phang Thong, an ancient pool believed to have been constructed during the Ayutthaya period.

Wat Phrathat Choeng Chum

This major religious monument is situated next to Nong Han and features a 24-metre high Lao-style Stupa built during the Ayutthaya period over a smaller 11th-century Khmer pagoda. The temple's main chapel enshrines the revered image of Luang Pho Ong Saen.

I-san Freshwater Fishery Aquarium

Located at the Sakon Nakhon Fishery Station on Sai Sawang Road, the centre has displays of freshwater fish and typical animal species found in the Northeast.

Phra Achan Man Phurithatto Museum

At Wat Pa Sutthawat, opposite the Provincial Hall on Suk Kasem Road, the museum has exhibits of the personal effects and biographical details relating to the famous monk Phra Achan Man.

Sakon Nakhon Cultural Centre

Located at Rajabhat Sakon Nakhon University, on the Sakon Nakhon-Udon Thani route, the Centre has displays of artefacts relating to the various tribespeople in the province, as well as information on the history of Sakon Nakhon.

Phrathat Narai Cheng Weng

Lying about 5 km. from town on the way to Udon Thani, these are the ruins of an ancient Khmer Hindu shrine. Ornate designs adorn the pagoda, of particular note being the carvings on the lintels over the porticos.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Pan Mo Pottery Village

At Ban Chiang Khrua, 15 km. from town on the way to Nakhon Phanom, visitors can buy locally produced pottery jars, containers and flowerpots.

Namtok Pricha Suksan

Sliding down the side of a rock plateau and with a pool suitable for swimming, the falls are in the Phu Phan mountain range, 17 km. from town on the Sakon Nakhon-Udon Thani route and a further 10 km. along a turn on the left.

Phu Phan Ratchaniwet Palace

Also in the Phu Phan mountain range on the Sakon Nakhon-Kalasin route, 13 km. from the district office, this is the residence of Their Majesties the King and Queen when they visit the Northeast.

Phu Phan National Park

Covering a wide expanse of jungle, the Park, with its headquarters on Highway No. 213 on the way to Kalasin, 25 km. from the district office, features Pha Nang Moen, an observation point 700 metres by foot from the Park office, and Lan Sao E, a natural rock plateau on a cliff 2 km. away. Contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department for more information. Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Wat Tham Kham

Situated at Amphoe Phanna Nikhom, this was where the famous monks Achan Fan and Luang Pu Thet meditated. A pagoda housing the relics of the latter is located here.

Wat Kham Pramong

The temple is the meditation centre of the famous monk Luang Pu Sim and is located at Ban Kham Pramong in Tambon Sawang, 40 km. from town on Highway No. 22 and then Highway No. 2355 to Amphoe Akat Amnuai.

Achan Fan Acharo Museum

At Wat Pa Udom Somphon in Tambon Phanna Nikhom, en route to Udon Thani, the museum is dedicated to the famous monk Achan Fan and contains a wax figure of him, as well as displays of his personal effects and biographical details.

Phrathat Si Mongkhon

In Tambon Ban That, 2 km. from Amphoe Phang Khon Office, this pagoda has a square base and is decorated with fired clay designs. The present structure encases an ancient pagoda made of laterite.

Ban Phanna Khmer Sanctuary

Located 70 km. from Sakon Nakhon town on the Sakon Nakhon-Udon Thani route, this is an ancient Khmer laterite sanctuary set on a rectangular base and with a laterite pool nearby.

Kut Na Kham Arts and Crafts Centre

Located 120 km. from Sakon Nakhon town on Highway No. 22 and then Highway No. 2280, the Centre produces earthenware home utensils and decor items. The designs are varied and are of excellent craftsmanship.

Huai Huat National Park

The Park can be accessed by taking either the Sakon Nakhon-Kalasin route for 5 km. and then Highway No. 2339 on the left for 35 km., or taking the Sakon Nakhon-Na Kae route for 14 km. and then a road on the right for 18 km. The Park is noted for its picturesque dam, waterfall and rock plateau which is covered with flowers at the end of the rainy season. There are also prehistoric cave drawings. For more information, please contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department. Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Special Event

Wax Castle Procession

The procession is held annually at Sakon Nakhon town over 3 nights at the end of the Buddhist Lent in October. The second night features a beautiful procession, a folk play indigenous to Sakon Nakhon, and boat races.

How To Get There

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Sakon Nakhon. Visitors can take a train to Udon Thani at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Sakon Nakhon. Tel. 0 2220 4444 Hotline 1690 Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Bangkok-Sakon Nakhon buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal daily, with the journey taking around 10 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi and then Highway No. 2 via Nakhon Ratchasima to Ban Phai, which connects with Highway No. 23 to Maha Sarakham, and then continue along Highway No. 213 via Kalasin to Sakon Nakhon, a total distance of 647 km.

Shopping

Sakon Nakhon handicrafts include earthenware, woodcarving, cotton and silk products, and hand-woven Khit cloth.



Phrathat Phanom

Nakhon Phanom

This accounts for some magnificent scenery, including views across the river to the mountains of Lao P.D.R. from which the provincial capital gets its name “City of the Mountains”.

Covering a total area of 5,512 sq. km. and lying directly east of Sakon Nakhon and 740 km. northeast of Bangkok, the province of Nakhon Phanom borders the Mekong River. This accounts for some magnificent scenery, including views across the river to the mountains of Lao P.D.R. from which the provincial capital gets its name “City of the Mountains”. Indeed, the Lao influence over the customs, architecture and cuisine of Nakhon Phanom, add to the fascination of travelling in the area. Many unique folk dances are performed on special occasions, while the custom of extending a generous welcome to guests can be seen at the Bai Si Su Khwan ceremony.

Website: www.nakhonphanom.go.th

City Attractions

Wat Okat Si Bua Ban

Standing on the bank of the Mekong River on Sunthon Wichit Road, the temple is as old as the province and enshrines two highly revered and ancient Buddha images, while the temple’s interior walls are decorated with beautiful mural paintings.

Wat Si Thep Pradittharam

Also on Sunthon Wichit Road, this temple is noteworthy for the exquisite mural paintings in its ordination hall, as well as for the highly revered Phra Saeng image.

Wat Mahathat

Again on Sunthon Wichit Road, the temple compound includes Phrathat Nakhon, a sacred pagoda worshipped by Buddhists everywhere. With a square base and measuring 5.8-metres wide by 24-metres high, it was constructed by Phramaha-ammatt Pom, the army commander-in-chief from Vientiane who built Nakhon Phanom city.

Riverside Promenade

This provides a clear view across the Mekong River to the Lao town of Tha Khaek and its mountain backdrop, which is especially scenic at sunrise and during the late afternoon. Please note that visitors holding valid Lao visas may cross to Tha Khaek.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Renu Nakhon

This small settlement is located 52 km. south of Nakhon Phanom town, via Highway No. 212 to the 44-km. marker and then along Highway No. 2031. The place is best known for the Phu Thai ethnic minority who retains their traditional culture,

especially in the form of dances and the custom of the Bai Si Su Khwan ceremony. Many local products, including woven cotton, can be bought here.

Phrathat Renu Nakhon

This 35-metre high pagoda was built in 1918 and is a smaller replica of Phrathat Phanom. It houses sacred scriptures along with a gold Buddha image.

Phrathat Phanom

This important Buddhist site is located 50 km. south of Nakhon Phanom town on Highway No. 212. The temple is believed to date back more than 12 centuries and is dominated by a square-shaped Lao-style Stupa, which is 53-metres high and enshrines the holy relics of the Lord Buddha. On 11 August 1975, the entire pagoda collapsed after days of a massive downpour and was rebuilt from public donations, as it is one of the most revered shrines in the Northeast.

Phrathat Tha Uthen

Located 26 km. north of Nakhon Phanom on Highway No. 212, the 66-metre high stupa is similar to Phrathat Phanom. It was constructed in 1912 to house the relics of a disciple of the Lord Buddha, which were brought from Rangoon in Myanmar.

Wat Triphum

This riverside temple in Amphoe Tha Uthen contains the 15th century 80-inch tall Phra Bang Buddha image which, according to local lore, can ensure plentiful rains.

Namtok Tat Kham Forest Park

Set in the Phu Lanka mountain range, 6 km. from Amphoe Ban Phaeng on Highway No. 212, this four-tier waterfall is an ideal spot for relaxation. For more information, please contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department. Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Namtok Tat Pho

Lying 5 km. from Tat Kham, these falls are equally beautiful and best seen during the rainy season. Because they are inaccessible by car, visitors must walk a little over one hour to reach the falls.

Phrathat Maha Chai

Located at Wat Khositaram, 40 km. from Nakhon Phanom town on the Nakhon Phanom-Sakon Nakhon route (Highway No. 22), the Stupa contains a relic of the Lord Buddha. Also of interest is the temple's ordination hall which has the largest wooden Buddha image in Thailand, as well as some especially fine mural paintings depicting the life of the Lord Buddha.

Special Events

Phrathat Phanom Fair

This 7-day festival takes place during the full moon period of the third lunar month (usually late February to early March), when thousands of people flock to the temple to pay homage. Religious merit-making, folk entertainment and market stalls are among the activities.

Lai Ruea Fai (Illuminated Boats Procession)

Celebrated annually at the end of Buddhist Lent (usually in October), the event features a parade of illuminated boats with colourful lights along the Mekong River to pay homage to the Lord Buddha. Also organised are dragon-boat races featuring Thai and Lao teams.

How To Get There

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Nakhon Phanom. Visitors can take a train to Udon Thani at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Nakhon Phanom. Tel. 0 2220 4444 or Hotline 1690
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Daily buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal, with the journey taking around 11 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611
Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi, then Highway No. 2 to Ban Phai via Nakhon Ratchasima and Khon Kaen, from where Highway No. 23 and No. 213 lead via Maha Sarakham and Kalasin to Sakon Nakhon and from here Highway No. 22 goes to Nakhon Phanom, a total distance of 740 km.

Shopping

The most popular local products are silk and cotton, produced in Amphoe Renu Nakhon, Amphoe That Phanom, Amphoe Si Songkhram, and Amphoe Na Wa. Reed mats are made at Ban Lao Phatthana. The typically I-san bamboo flute, known as *Khean*, can be found at Ban Tha Ruea, Tambon Na Wa and Ban Phanom.



Mukdahan National Park

Mukdahan

The principal attractions of the province are its tranquil atmosphere, beautiful riverine scenery and the possibility of crossing the river to Sawannakhet, Lao P.D.R.

Directly south of Nakhon Phanom and also bordering the Mekong River, Mukdahan covers an area of 4,339 sq. km., its provincial capital lying 642 km. northeast of Bangkok. The principal attractions of the province are its tranquil atmosphere, beautiful riverine scenery and the possibility of crossing the river to Sawannakhet, Lao P.D.R. There is a lively cross-river trade and together with the intriguing cultural mix of the population, this makes Mukdahan a bustling and fascinating market town. Popular with shoppers is the Indochina Market, which sells goods from Thailand, Lao P.D.R, Vietnam and China. Beyond the town, curious natural rock formations add interest to the landscape. Website: www.mukdahan.go.th

City Attractions

San Chao Pho Chao Fa Mung Mueang

The city shrine, located on Song Nang Sathit Road, was built at the time of the founding of the city, during the Ayutthaya period, and is highly revered by the people of Mukdahan, who believe that it preserves the city's happiness.

San Chao Mae Song Nang Phi Nong

On Samran Chai Khong Road next to the Mukdahan immigration checkpoint, the shrine is regarded as being as sacred as the Mung Mueang Shrine, and a celebration to pay homage to both shrines is held annually in May.

Wat Si Mongkhon Tai

Located near the immigration checkpoint, the temple houses the important Buddha image of Phra Chao Ong Luang, which predates the city's founding and measures 2-metres wide by 3-metres high. According to legend, the first lord of Mukdahan discovered the image while he was overseeing the city's construction.

Phra Phuttha Sing Song

This 1.2-metre high bronze Buddha image, at Wat Si Bun Rueang (Ban Tai) on Samran Chai Khong Road, was brought from Vientiane to Mukdahan when the city was built. A ritual to pay homage to the image takes place in April during the annual Songkran Festival (the traditional Thai New Year).

Ho Kaeo Mukdahan

Located 2 km. outside of town on the Mukdahan-Don Tan route, this 65-metre high tower block features an exhibition on Mukdahan's history on its lower floors, while the top floor has an observation room commanding panoramic views of the Mekong River, Sawannakhet and Mukdahan. Open daily 8.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m. Tel. 0 4263 3211

Excursion to Sawannakhet

This is the second largest city in Lao P.D.R. after the capital Vientiane, and is also a gateway to Danang in Vietnam. It can be visited from Mukdahan if travellers have a valid Lao visa,

obtainable from either the Lao Embassy in Bangkok or the Lao Consulate in Khon Kaen.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Mukdahan National Park (Phu Pha Thoep)

Located 17 km. south of Mukdahan, off Highway No. 2034, the Park has an area of 48.5 sq. km. and comprises hills, caves, rocky plateaux and unusual mushroom-shaped rock formations. The Park's largest peak, Phu Tham Phra, has a waterfall and a cave containing hundreds of small wooden Buddha and animal images. Another cave, Tham Fa Mue Daeng on Phu Pha Thoep, is noted for its prehistoric rock paintings. The Park's hardwood forest is a habitat for barking deer, wild boars, monkeys and civets.

Phu Nang Hong

In the same vicinity as Phu Pha Thoep, about 500 metres before the Park headquarters and along the road to the left, the area features a dwarf forest and a rocky plateau where groups of unusual rock formations surround a huge swan-shaped rock.

Phu Manorum

Reached by taking the Mukdahan-Don Tan route on Highway No. 2034 for 2 km. and then a right turn for 3 km., the hill has a replica of the Lord Buddha's footprint that is one-metre deep. There are also good views of Mukdahan, the Mekong River and Sawannakhet.

Mahorathuek Drum

Housed at Wat Matchimawat (Wat Klang), Amphoe Don Tan, this single-sided bronze drum, 86-cm. in diameter and 90-cm. high, is believed to be more than 3,000 years old and was discovered in 1938 on the banks of the Mekong River at Ban Na Tham in Lao P.D.R. The drum face has a sunrise design, while the casing has drawings of frogs.

Wat Phu Dan Tae

Also known as Wat Phuttho Thammatharo, the temple is in Amphoe Nikhom Kham Soi at the 134-km. marker on Highway No. 212. Situated on a rock plateau, it features a large standing Buddha image with a halo on top.

Phu Mu Forest Park

Reached by taking Highway No. 212 to the 128-129-km. marker and then take a left turn for 12 km., Phu Mu is 353 metres above sea level and has a mountaintop plateau covering 4 sq. km. The summit offers three vantage points at 100 metres, 400 metres and 800 metres, respectively, from the Park office, which affords fine views. Contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department for more details. Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Wat Song Khon Church

One of the largest and most beautiful Catholic churches in Southeast Asia, Wat Song Khon is located beside the Mekong

River 25 km. from Mukdahan town. It was built to honour seven Christians who sacrificed their lives to protect their religion, and contains wax figures of the martyrs along with their ashes.

Wat Manophirom

Located at Tambon Chanot in Amphoe Wan Yai, this old temple was built by architects from Vientiane. It was extensively damaged by fire in 1904, but was fully renovated in 1911. The various buildings in the compound are interesting for their displays of local art.

Special Events

Ruam Phao Thai Mukdahan and Makham Wan Chai Khong Fair
Held during 9 to 17 January in front of the Provincial Hall, the Fair is organised to promote the province's products and tourism attractions. Activities include a procession of people dressed in various tribal costumes, a sweet tamarind contest, the Thida Phao Thai pageant, and folk art performances. There are also stalls selling local products.

Thai-Lao Friendship Boat Races

These are held on the Mekong River at the end of Buddhist Lent in October, with races for small, medium and large boats over a distance of three kilometres.

How To Get There

By Air

Visitors can fly from Bangkok to Udon Thani or Sakon Nakhon or Nakhon Phanom and then continue the trip by bus to Mukdahan.

- *Thai Airways*
Tel. 0 2356 1111
Website: www.thaiairways.com

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Mukdahan. Visitors can take a train to Udon Thani at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Mukdahan. Tel. 0 2220 4444 or Hotline 1690 Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Daily buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal, with the journey taking around 10 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 via Saraburi to Highway No. 2 to Nakhon Ratchasima then Highway No. 207 via Amphoe Prathai, take Highway No. 202 via Amphoe Phutthaisong, Amphoe Phayakkhaphum Phisai to Amphoe Suwannaphum, from here take Highway No. 2169 via Amphoe Sai Mun, Amphoe Kut Chum and Amphoe Loeng Nok Tha before turning onto Highway No. 212 and proceeding to Mukdahan via Nikhom Kham Soi. The total distance is 642 km.



Wat Buraphaphiram

Roi Et

Its vast Thung Kula Rong Hai flatlands, formerly regarded as a wasteland, have been developed into fertile and productive agricultural land that is now one of the country's top sources of high-quality rice.

With its northeast corner bordering Mukdahan and covering an area of about 8,299 sq. km., Roi Et, 512 km. from Bangkok, was once ravaged by floods but is today making a resurgence. Its vast Thung Kula Rong Hai flatlands, formerly regarded as a wasteland, have been developed into fertile and productive agricultural land that is now one of the country's top sources of high-quality rice. The provincial capital is also comparatively new, its focal point being a large artificial lake with a fitness park on an island in the middle. Off the beaten track, Roi Et affords a fresh insight into the life and culture of the Northeast. Website: www.roiet.go.th

City Attractions

Bueng Phalan Chai

This large lake, covering 200 sq.km., is regarded as the symbol of Roi Et, and the park on its central island is the site of the city shrine. It is situated in the heart of Roi Et town as a recreation ground. The lake has several kinds of fish and row-boats for rent.

Roi Et Aquarium

Located near Bueng Phalan Chai, this Aquarium has a fine collection of I-san aquatic animals for research purposes. Open from Wednesday to Sunday 8.30 a.m.-4.30 p.m. Tel. 0 4351 1286

Wat Klang Ming Mueang

Set on a hill in the town, this venerable temple was the place where people swore allegiance to the king. Its ordination hall dates from the late Ayutthaya period, and its outer wall has a mural depicting the life of Lord Buddha.

Wat Sa Thong

The temple enshrines the revered Buddha image of Luang Pho Phra Sangkatchai, which was discovered in 1782 by Phraya Khattiyawongsa, the first ruler of Roi Et, and was designated the province's principal image.

Wat Buraphaphiram

The temple is distinguished by its Buddha image of Phra Phuttha Rattana Mongkhon Maha Muni (locally known as Luang Pho Yai) which, at 59-metres and 20-cm. high, is Thailand's largest statue of the Buddha depicted in the pose of giving blessing. The image was constructed of reinforced concrete. Under the base are several museum chambers. The side of the temple is adjacent to the ancient city moat, and a pavilion housing the spirit of Chao Pho Maha Sakdanuphap, which is highly revered by the people of Roi Et.



Ku Ka Sing

Out-Of-City Attractions

Prang Ku

Located at Wat Si Ratanaram in Amphoe Thawatburi, 8 km. from town on Highway No. 23, this was a medical centre built by the ancient Khmer. It comprises the ruins of a main pagoda, a wall, a doorway, and a pool outside the wall. Artefacts displayed at the site include a sandstone lintel that was once above the doorway of the main pagoda, door columns and the lotus-shaped top part of the pagoda.

Ban Wai Luem

25 km. from Roi Et town on the Si Sa Ket-Yasothon route, this village in Amphoe Thawatburi is noted for its silk weaving.

Ku Ka Sing

In Amphoe Kaset Wisai, Ku Ka Sing is a large 11th century Khmer structure consisting of three pagodas mounted on the same base, the latter being decorated with elaborate designs. There are rectangular buildings called “Bannalai” situated in the front.

Ku Phra Ko Na

Located 60 km. from town at Tambon Sa Khu in Amphoe Suwannaphum, these are the ruins of an 11th century Khmer shrine with three brick pagodas aligned north to south on a sandstone base and surrounded by a wall with four gateways. Two of the pagodas have been restored, while the middle one was replastered in the early 20th century and a Buddha footprint shrine added.

Pha Nam Yoi

Located at Ban Khok Klang, northeast of Amphoe Nong Phok and 88 km. from Roi Et town, the park is in an area of thick jungle that teems with wildlife. There are various kinds of hardwood in the forest which are valuable. It is also a habitat for wild boars, barking deer, wild cocks and hens.

Phra Maha Chedi Chaimongkhon

Located at Tambon Pha Nam Yoi, Amphoe Nong Phok and 80 km. from Roi Et town, this elaborate Stupa was designed by the Fine Arts Department. White with dazzling gold, it was built in an I-san architectural design.

Special Event

Khao Pun Bun Phawet Fair

Held annually at Bueng Phalan Chai in the first weekend of March, this is a Buddhist merit-making ceremony and activities include a sermon by monks, a procession, cultural performances, and eating Khao Pun (*Khanom Chin* noodles).

How To Get There

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Roi Et. Visitors can take a train to Khon Kaen at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Roi Et. Tel. 0 2220 4444 or Hotline 1690
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Bangkok-Roi Et buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal daily, with the journey taking around 8 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi, Highway No. 2 to Ban Phai and then Highway No. 23 to Roi Et via Maha Sarakham, a total distance of 512 km.

Shopping

Quality and comparatively inexpensive hand-woven silk from Ban Wai Luem, Amphoe Thawatburi, and *Khaen* (typical Northeastern musical instrument of bamboo pipes) from Ban Si Kaeo near to the town are among Roi Et's best buys.



Dinosaur Fossils at Phu Kum Khao

Kalasin

It is the site of the ancient city of Fa Daet Song Yang, and is further distinguished as having yielded one of the largest concentrations of dinosaur fossils in Northeastern Thailand.

Kalasin, the land of Pong Lang music and the famous Phrae Wa silk, is 519 km. from Bangkok. Comparatively small in relation to its sister Northeast provinces, covering an area of 6,946 sq. km, it is the site of the ancient city of Fa Daet Song Yang, and is further distinguished as having yielded one of the largest concentrations of dinosaur fossils in Northeastern Thailand. Otherwise, Kalasin is a busy agricultural province that so far has been little affected by tourism. Website : www.kalasin.go.th

City Attractions

Phraya Chaisunthon Monument

Located in front of the post office, the Monument honours Phraya Chaisunthon, or Chao Pho Somphamit, who evacuated people from the left bank of the Mekong River to settle along the Pao River over 200 years ago.

Wat Klang

The temple enshrines the important Buddha image of Ong Dam Buddha image, a bronze statue 20-inches wide and characterised by especially fine features. It is said that the image can grant seasonal rainfall. The temple also has the Lord Buddha's footprint made from laterite.

Wat Si Bun Rueang

Housed at this temple are some heart-shaped boundary stones that marked the limits of an ancient temple in Fa Daet Song Yang, and they are good examples of traditional Northeastern art in their decoration.

Arts, Culture and Tourism Promotion Centre

Located at Thirawat Hospital, the Centre provides information on the local arts and culture of Kalasin, displays local artefacts, and has local products for sale.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Fa Daet Song Yang

The town, located on Highway No. 214 (Kalasin-Roi Et), a 13-km. drive from Kalasin and then a further 6 km. along a turn to the right, shows evidence of a settlement that flourished during the Dvaravati period (8th to 10th centuries). The temple is surrounded with heart-shaped boundary stones and two rows of moats. Ruins have been found inside and outside the town area, the most complete being the brick pagoda of Phrathat Yakhu. Sandstone temple markers with and without designs have been found here and are now housed at Wat Pho Chai Semaram in the village and in the Khon Kaen Museum. In addition, amulets

and tobacco pipes made of fired clay and bronze have been unearthed here.

Khuean Lam Pao

This is reached by taking Highway No. 209 (Kalasin-Yang Talat) for 10 km., and then turning right for a further 26 km. The earth dam, built across the Pao River and Huai Yang to create a double reservoir, is 33-metre high from the water level and 7.8-km. long covering the area of Amphoe Mueang, Amphoe Nong Kung Si, and Amphoe Talat Yang. The lakeside beach is a popular picnic spot for locals.

Suan Sa-on

This nature and wildlife education centre to the northeast of Khuean Lam Pao has a natural open zoo with plenty of wildlife, including the rare red gaur. Open daily 7.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m. Tel. 0 9920 2969 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Dinosaur Fossils at Phu Kum Khao

Phu Kum Khao has the largest concentration of dinosaur fossils in Thailand, and can be reached by taking Highway No. 227 for 30 km. and then turning right for one km. to Wat Sakkawan. The Department of Mineral Resources has excavated some areas where entire skeletons are now clearly visible. Most are large, long-necked, plant-eating Sauropods that lived about 130 million years ago. Open from 8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. daily. Tel. 0 4387 1014, 0 4387 1394

Phra Phuttha Saiyat Phu Khao

This 17th century reclining Buddha image carved under a cliff is at Wat Phuttha Nimit, 39 km. from Kalasin on Highway No. 227. The reclining Buddha image is unusual in that the head is supported by the left hand rather than the right hand.

Ban Phon

Kalasin's famous *Phrae Wa* silk can be found at this village 70 km. from town. The cloth made of *Mat Mi* silk displays exemplary workmanship. The product, however, is unique and made by the Phu Thai ethnic minority whose ancestors migrated from the city of Thaeng in Vietnam.

Ban Phu Thai Khok Kong

Located in Amphoe Kuchinarai, the Phu Thai village is where the Phu Thai people express their own culture and language. Visitors are allowed to stay in the village, where they can enjoy traditional "monkey dancing" by the children and Phu

Thai music and dances performed by the women of the village. Weaving and handicrafts are also displayed.

Special Event

Pong Lang, Phrae Wa and Red Cross Extravaganza

Held in front of the Provincial Hall by the end of February, the Fair features processions from various districts with people dressed in traditional costumes. In addition, there are a variety of local cultural performances and shops selling a wide range of goods.

How To Get There

By Air

Visitors can fly from Bangkok to Khon Kaen and then continue the trip by bus to Kalasin.

- *Thai Airways*
Tel. 0 2356 1111
Website: www.thaiairways.com
- *Air Asia*
Tel. 0 2515 9999 Website: www.airasia.com

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Kalasin. Visitors can take a train to Khon Kaen at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Kalasin. Tel. 0 2220 4444 or Hotline 1690 Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Daily buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal, with the journey taking around 8 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi, then Highway No. 2 to Nong Phai, Highway No. 23 to Maha Sarakham and Highway No. 209 to Kalasin, a total distance of 519 km.

Shopping

Famous products of Kalasin include *Phrae Wa* silk from Ban Phon, Amphoe Kham Muang, bamboo and cloth bags from Ban Nong Hang, Amphoe Kuchinarai and Pong Lang (I-san musical instrument).



Phrathat Kham Kaen

Khon Kaen

In spite of its modern status, Khon Kaen has an interesting history dating back to prehistoric times, as witnessed in the fact that the first dinosaur fossils in Thailand were discovered here.

Lying in the geographical heart of the Northeast, Khon Kaen is a major regional development and communications centre and a university city. The provincial capital is 449 km. from Bangkok, covering an area of 10,886 sq. km., and the fourth largest in the country. In spite of its modern status, Khon Kaen has an interesting history dating back to prehistoric times, as witnessed in the fact that the first dinosaur fossils in Thailand were discovered here. The city of Khon Kaen, amid its modern amenities, boasts a fascinating cultural heritage, good hotels and restaurants make it an ideal place to take a break from travel through the less developed parts of I-san.

City Attractions

Khon Kaen Museum

Located on Lang Sun Rachakan Road, this major museum has excellent exhibits on ancient civilisations and artefacts found in the Northeast, including the prehistoric civilisation of Ban Chiang, bas-reliefs of the Dvaravati period from Fa Daet Song Yang in Kalasin, and Khmer-period art objects found in the Northeast. It is open daily except public holidays from 9.00 a.m.-4.00 p.m. Tel. 0 4324 6170

Bueng Kaen Nakhon

A city focal point and recreational area, it is especially attractive at sunset and is an excellent place for an evening stroll. A road circling the lake is lined with numerous restaurants, while at the northern end is the Chao Phia Mueang Phaen monument built to honour Khon Kaen's founder.

Wat Chai Si

Located at Mu 8, Ban Sawati, Amphoe Mueang, along Highway No. 2 and 21 km. from Khon Kaen, this is an ancient temple with an I-san architectural style *Sim* or main chapel. Its interior and outer walls have murals illustrating local culture.

Bueng Kaen Nakhon





Phu Wiang National Park

Out-Of-City Attractions

Phrathat Kham Kaen

This is a 19-metre stupa at Wat Chetiyaphum, Amphoe Nam Phong, about 26 km. northeast of Khon Kaen. According to legend, King Moriya, a ruler of Cambodia, ordered revered monks to carry the Lord Buddha's ashes to be enshrined in Phrathat Phanom of Nakhon Phanom Province. On their way stood a dead tamarind tree, the sun was setting, they settled for the night there. In the morning, the monks continued their journey. Unfortunately, when they arrived, Phrathat Phanom had already been built, so they decided to head home. Once again passing the tamarind tree, but this time the tree stood vivaciously alive, sprouting its branches and leaves as if to convey that the ashes should be situated here. Therefore, the monks advised the local villagers to build a stupa on the spot, which was obviously sacred.

Mu Ban Ngu Chong-ang

The villagers of Ban Khok Sa-nga, Amphoe Nam Phong, some 50 km. from town, have traditionally caught cobras for a living and put on occasional shows to supplement their income. There is also a king cobra breeding house at Wat Si Thammasa in the village.

Khuean Ubolratana

Located about 50 km. northwest of Khon Kaen, this is the largest multi-purpose dam in the Northeast, generating electricity for eight neighbouring provinces. A reservoir-side restaurant and opportunities for boat trips make the dam a popular weekend destination. Tel. 0 2436 6046-8, 0 4344 6231

Non Mueang Ancient City

This archaeological site, situated 80 km. from Khon Kaen, is believed to have been inhabited from prehistoric times until the 10th century AD. Human skeletons and 3,000-year-old bronze tools have been discovered at the site.

Tham Pha Phuang Forest Park

Located at Ban Dong Lan, Amphoe Chum Phae, 123 km. from Khon Kaen, this huge limestone cave features a large chimney-shaped rock and lovely stalagmites and stalactites. Contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department for more details. Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Phu Wiang National Park

The park, located some 60 km. northwest of Khon Kaen along Highway No. 2038 and with an area of 325 sq.km., contains a number of important archaeological sites with evidence of I-san's earliest inhabitants seen in prehistoric rock paintings. Fossil remains of a dinosaur may be seen at the park headquarters. For more information, contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department.

Phu Pha Man National Park

Covering an area of 350 sq. km., the Park extends over a verdant forest spanning Khon Kaen and Loei. Features include cliffs, caves and waterfalls. Take Highway No. 12 via Amphoe Chum Phae, then Highway No. 201. Contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department for more information.

Pha Nok Khao

This impressive outcrop of strangely shaped rocks lies 125 km. west of Khon Kaen along Highway No. 201 in a mountainous area that extends into Loei.

Amphoe Chonnabot

Located some 60 km. southwest of Khon Kaen, this district has Sala Pha Mai (Silk Exhibition Hall) and is famous for the excellence of its silk, most notably the distinctive tie-dyed silk known as *Mat Mi*.

Changkra Wild Orchid





Prasat Pueai Noi

Prasat Pueai Noi

Located 76 km. from Khon Kaen, this is the largest Khmer sanctuary in the upper Northeast, comprising three brick pagodas built on the same laterite base and each with carved lintels.

Wat Udom Khongkha Khiri Khet

This extensive hillside forest temple in Amphoe Mancha Khiri, 67 km. from Khon Kaen on Highway No. 2149, is ideal for meditation. Noteworthy among the architecture is a gold-roofed shrine with lavishly decorated doors.

Mu Ban Tao

Take Highway No. 2 from Khon Kaen 10 km. and turn left onto Highway No. 2062 for 54 km. to Ban Kok (2 km. before reaching Amphoe Mancha Khiri), then turn left 50 metres to Ban Tao for a further 50 metres. Visitors will be amazed with the land turtles called “Tao Phek”. They mingle and live with villagers; some are found under the basement and some are wandering along the streets.

Wat Sa Bua Kaeo

Located at Ban Wang Kun, Amphoe Nong Song Hong, along Highways No. 2 and No. 207, the temple is decorated with murals illustrating villagers’ way of life, the Jakata tales, stories of heaven and hell, and local fables. Unlike any other murals in I-san, paintings here are more like western works of the impressionism era.

Wat Ban Lan

Located at Tambon Ban Ban, Amphoe Ban Phai, along Highways No. 2, No. 23, and No. 2301, this temple has a distinguished *Sim* (main chapel) and *Hup Taem*, which are murals painted on the outer wall illustrating the story of Lord Buddha’s tenth incarnation as Vessantara.

Wat Sa Thong Ban Bua

Located in Amphoe Mancha Khiri and one kilometre from town, this temple has a 170-year-old I-san-architectural *Sim*

(main chapel). *Hup Taem* or murals on the outer wall received the 2002 Award of Merit from UNESCO, as they were painted with two natural colours, which were green from leaves and yellow from curcumas.

Special Events

Dok Khun Siang Khaen Festival

Held at Bueng Kaen Nakhon in April and coinciding with Songkran (the Thai New Year), the Festival features merit-making, pouring of holy water over Buddha images, a floral procession, performances of I-san folk music and dances, and shops selling a variety of local products.

Silk Festival and Phuk Siao Tradition

Staged in front of Khon Kaen Provincial Hall in late November, the Festival promotes silk weaving and silkworm culture with displays and contests. Phuk Siao, an I-san tradition promoting close friendship between people of similar ages, is also celebrated at this time.

How To Get There

By Air

- *Thai Airways* operates flights between Bangkok and Khon Kaen (55 minutes).
Tel. 0 2356 1111 Website: www.thaiairways.com
- *Air Asia*
Tel. 0 2515 9999 Website: www.airasia.com

By Rail

Trains to Khon Kaen depart from Bangkok’s Hua Lamphong Railway Station daily. Tel. 0 2220 4444 or Hotline 1690
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

Daily buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal, with the journey taking around 6 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611
Website: www.transport.co.th.

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi and then Highway No. 2 to Khon Kaen via Nakhon Ratchasima, a total distance of 445 km.

Shopping

There are many souvenir shops in Khon Kaen selling quality local products such as silk, cotton, *Khit* pillows and silverware.



Phrathat Na Dun

Maha Sarakham

...a regional education centre and is also notable as the site of the ancient Dvaravati city of Nakhon Champa Si.

Situated in the middle of the northeast region, 470 km. from Bangkok and covering 5,228 sq. km., Maha Sarakham is a regional education centre and is also notable as the site of the ancient Dvaravati city of Nakhon Champa Si.

Website: www.mahasarakham.go.th

City Attractions

I-san Arts and Culture Research Institute

Housed at Maha Sarakham University, the Institute has exhibits of I-san arts and culture including displays of the origin of weaving and the development of local fabrics, basketry, pottery, household items, musical instruments and ancient inscriptions, as well as contemporary art by students.

I-san Arts and Culture Centre

Located in Maha Sarakham Rajabhat University, the Centre has exhibits on I-san arts, palm-leaf manuscripts and handicrafts. Open from 7.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Tel. 0 4372 1686 Website: www.rinac.msu.ac.th

Wat Mahachai Museum

Old boundary stones, ancient Buddha images, door panels, and woodcarvings are among the museum's exhibits.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Chi Long Forest Park

Located at Ban Wang Wa, Amphoe Kantharawichai, 10 km.

Rabam Nakhon Champasi



from town on the way to Amphoe Kosum Phisai, the Park is on an island that was formed by a divergence in the course of the Mun River, the Northeast's main waterway. The island is covered with shady rubber trees. Contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department for more information. Tel. 0 2562 0760 Website: www.dnp.go.th

Ku Mahathat

Some 13 km. from town on Chaeng Sanit Road, this ancient monument dates back to the 13th century. It was built of laterite in the shape of a square tent, whilst the doorways and lintels are of sandstone. Two clay statues are housed inside.

Phrathat Na Dun

Located in Amphoe Na Dun, this is the site of the major Dvaravati city of Champa Si, which flourished between the 8th and 10th centuries. Artefacts discovered here are now displayed at the museum in Khon Kaen.

Ku Santarat

Located on the way to Amphoe Na Dun, this Bayon-style Khmer sanctuary was built in the late 12th century and comprises a square laterite structure with a fine carved lintel over the front doorway.

Dun Lam Phan Forest

The forest, 56 km. from town, is home to rare plant and animal species, such as Lam Phan plant and Pu Thun Kramom or *Paeng* crab which is orange, purple, yellow, and white and can only be found here.

Yuen Mongkhon and Ming Mueang Buddha Images

These are the province's most important Buddha images, housed at Tambon Khan Than Rat on Highway No. 213, about 14 km. from town. The red sandstone images are in the Dvaravati style and are believed to ensure sufficient rainfall.

Ban Nong Khuean Chang

This village, 12 km. from town off the Maha Sarakham-Kosum Phisai route, is renowned for making quality silk and cotton.

Ban Phaeng

Located in Amphoe Kosum Phisai 38 km. from town along Highway No. 208, the village is famous for making reed mats, which are widely used in Thailand. The village is engaged in extensive reed farming and has set up a reed-mat-making cooperative to demonstrate the making of mats.

Special Event

Bun Boek Fa and Red Cross Fair

The event is held in late January to early February at the Provincial Hall to revive and preserve I-san's cultural heritage. It features the Bun Boek Fa procession, which relates the story about Phra Mae Phosop goddess, folk plays, local music, and many various rituals.

How To Get There

By Air

- *Thai Airways* operates flights from Bangkok to Khon Kaen and then continue the trip by bus to Maha Sarakham. Tel. 0 2356 1111 Website: www.thaiairways.com
- *Air Asia* has one flight daily that flies to Khon Kean. Tel. 0 2515 9999 Website: www.airasia.com

By Rail

There is no direct rail link between Bangkok and Maha Sarakham. Visitors can take a train to Khon Kaen at Hua Lamphong Railway Station and continue the journey by bus to Maha Sarakham. Tel. 0 2220 4444 or Hotline 1690 Website: www.railway.co.th

By Bus

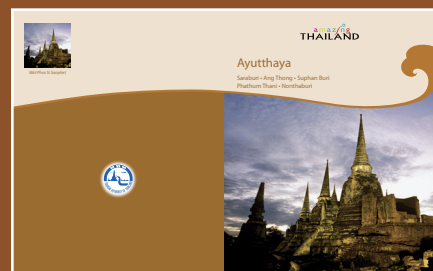
Daily buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal, with the journey taking around 6 hours. Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 ext. 448, 605, 611 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Car

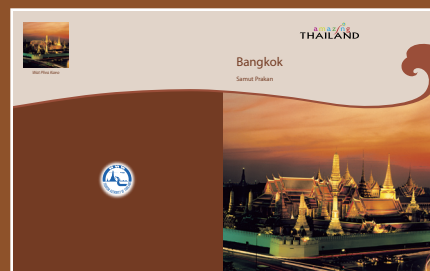
From Bangkok, take Highway No. 1 to Saraburi, and then Highway No. 2 to Nakhon Ratchasima. From there follow Highway No. 226 to Buri Ram and onto Highway No. 219 via Amphoe Satuek, Amphoe Phayakkhaphum Phisai and Amphoe Borabue to Maha Sarakham, a total distance of 470 km.

Shopping

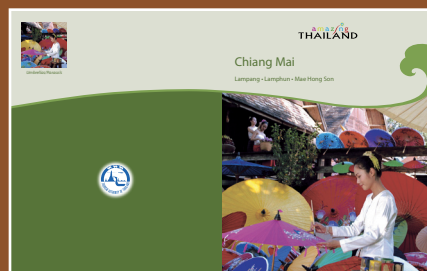
The province's best buys are *Mat Mi* silk, *Khit* fabrics, basketry, reed mats, and reed products.



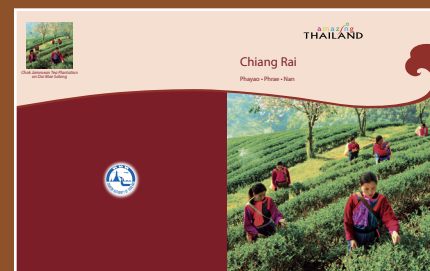
Ayutthaya



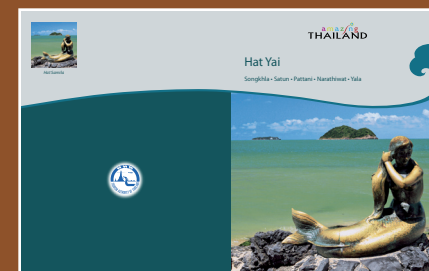
Bangkok



Chiang Mai



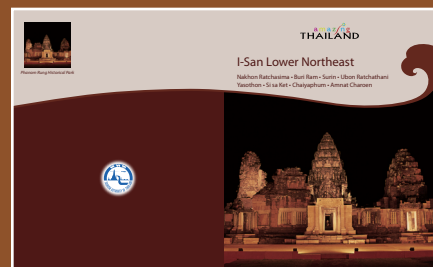
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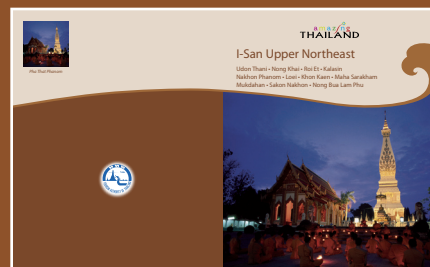
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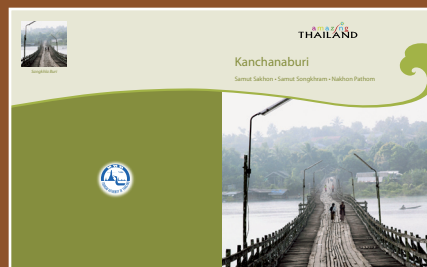
Hua Hin & Cha-am



I-San Lower Northeast



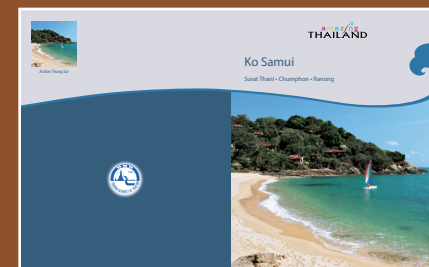
I-San Upper Northeast



Kanchanaburi



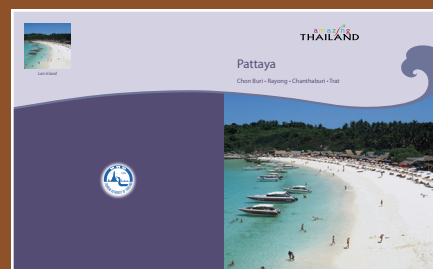
Ko Chang



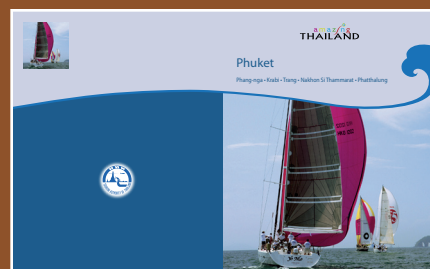
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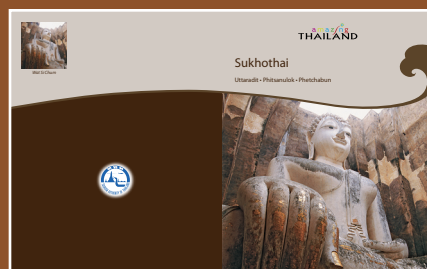
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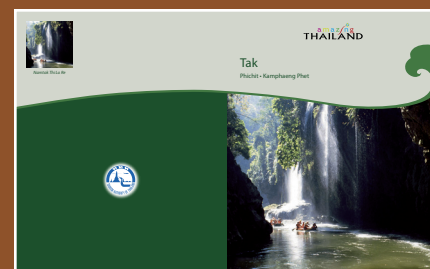
Pattaya



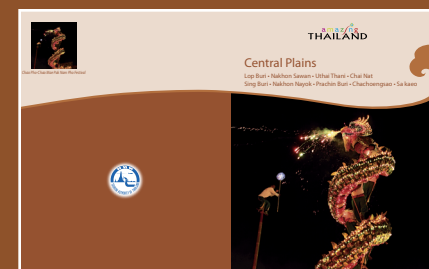
Phuket



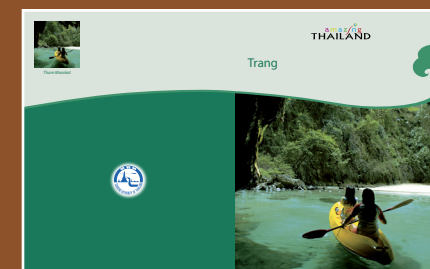
Sukhothai



Tak



Central Plains



Trang

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