

Sangkhla Buri

# Kanchanaburi

Samut Sakhon • Samut Songkhram • Nakhon Pathom









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The River Kwai Bridge

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# Kanchanaburi

The province boasts some of the country's most beautiful waterfalls and caves in its national parks, as well as the historic bridge over the River Kwai...

Located 130 km. west of Bangkok, just a two-hour drive away, the small town of Kanchanaburi is the capital of Thailand's third-largest province, which covers almost 20,000 square kilometres and stretches as far west as the border with Myanmar The province boasts some of the country's most beautiful waterfalls and caves in its national parks, as well as the historic bridge over the River Kwai and exciting activities like rafting trips. Thus, it is an ideal spot to explore the Thai countryside without travelling too far from Bangkok. Kanchanaburi has lots of character, and is a great place to stay in raft houses on the river. There are many places worth visiting around town, but top of most people's list are the bridge and the war museums that chronicle the building of the infamous "Death Railway" across the River Kwai and on Myanmar during World War II. The hills and valleys are scattered with intriguing temples and historical sites, and the lush wooded landscapes are ideal for cycling, trekking, raft trips or elephant rides.

### **City Attractions**

#### The Bridge over the River Kwai

Situated just to the north of the town, this bridge was made famous by the 1957 film "Bridge over the River Kwai" by David Lean, though in fact the movie portrayed a wooden bridge that was constructed earlier. Both bridges were badly damaged by Allied plane attacks in 1944 and 1945, but several arches of the metal bridge stood throughout and it was repaired after the war. The bridge was the key point in the so-called "Death Railway" that connected Thailand and Myanmar,

Tham Daowadueng



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#### Kanchanaburi War Cemetery

intended to provide a supply line for Japanese troops in Myanmar, though the work was completed only at the loss of countless lives of prisoners-of-war and local labourers supervised by Japanese troops. The railway line was only used a few times before the Japanese surrender, after which the British tore up part of the track, making it inoperative. These days it is possible to cross the bridge on foot or by train on the way to the waterfall, about 100 km. to the northwest. Steam train enthusiasts will be delighted to see a few World War II era machines displayed beside the bridge. Those with a particular interest in the history of the area should time their visit to coincide with the River Kwai Bridge Festival, in late November each year.

#### JEATH War Museum



#### World War II Museum

#### JEATH War Museum

"JEATH" refers to the six countries involved in the building of the railway-Japan, England, America, Australia, Thailand and Holland - and this museum located to the south of the town centre next to Wat Chaichumphon gives a vivid picture of the terrible conditions in which the Allied prisoners-of-war lived. The museum building is a copy of the long thatched bamboo huts that were used to house the prisoners during the war. On display are paintings, photographs and newspaper articles from the period, detailing the cruel torture methods used by the Japanese. The museum is open from 8.30 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.

#### World War II Museum

This museum, located just south of the bridge, contains war memorabilia in the form of bomb shells, photos and sketches from the period, statues of important war leaders, and over 100 skeletons of Asian labourers found in a mass grave. In a separate building there are displays of Buddha images, Thai weaponry from the Ayutthaya period and portraits of the kings of Thailand. The museum is open from 8.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.

#### Kanchanaburi War Cemetery

Perhaps even more moving than the bridge or museums are the lines of identical gravestones in the cemetery located just near the train station. The remains of almost 7,000 Allied prisoners are buried here; many of the memorial slabs are unidentified, but several give details of the soldiers, showing that the great majority were very young indeed. A memorial service is held each year on Anzac Day, 25 April.

#### Wat Tham Mangkon Thong

The main attraction of this temple, located about 5 km. east of the town centre, is the "Floating Nun", a Buddhist nun who regularly meditates while floating in a pond. The temple is located on a hillside, and there are caves above the temple that offer fine views of the area.

#### Ban Kao National Museum

8 kilometres from Prasat Mueang Sing, and 35 kilometres from town, this also overlooks the Kwai Noi River. The museum was constructed beside a Neolithic burial site discovered by an Allied prisoner-of-war during the construction of the Death Railway. Some 4,000 years ago. Neolithic man lived, roamed and hunted beside the Kwai Rivers, sheltering beneath rock overhangs or in nearby caves. The Ban Kao Museum houses skeletal remains, pots, axe heads, jewellery made from animal bones, and other artefacts dating from that era.

### **Out-Of-City Attractions**

#### Erawan National Park

Thailand has over 100 national parks, and the most visited of them all is Erawan, 65 km. or an hour and a half drive northwest of Kanchanaburi. Flocks of visitors come to see the seven-tiered waterfall that gives the 550-square-kilometre park its name. The top level of the falls is thought to resemble a three-headed elephant, called "Erawan" in Thai, that is ridden by Indra in Hindu mythology. With milky turquoise waters tumbling over various cascades, the falls are wonderfully photogenic and

Srinagarindra Dam



#### Namtok Erawan

thought by many to be Thailand's most beautiful. Several of the pools below the falls are ideal for bathing in, especially level two, and they are much less crowded on weekdays. About 10 km. beyond the park headquarters is Tham Phrathat, a large cave adorned with beautiful stalactites. Tel: 0 2562 0760

#### Srinagarindra National Park

Located just north of Erawan National Park, this park covers over 1,500 square kilometres. Since it is more difficult to get to than Erawan, it is less frequently visited, but nonetheless has some very special attractions, including Namtok Huai Mae Khamin, which also has seven levels and is a close contender to Namtok Erawan for sheer beauty. As at Erawan, the water is

Namtok Huai Mae Khamin



generally a lovely pale green, but here it runs over a caramelcoloured rockface, and there is a superb viewing spot directly in front. The easiest way to get to the falls is by a two-hour boat journey across the Srinagarindra Dam, a unique landscape of gesturing treetops rising from mirror-like waters. Tel: 0 2562 0760

#### Bo Phloi

Located 40 km. north of Kanchanaburi, the small village of Bo Phloi has a Jewellery Handicraft Centre, where blue sapphires mined locally are fashioned into beautiful rings and pendants.

#### Kanchanaburi Safari Park

Just near Bo Phloi village, this safari park has a diverse collection of large African and Asian mammals, such as lions, tigers, bears, giraffes and zebras. It is open from 9.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m. Tel: 0 3462 8270-1

#### Chaloem Rattanakosin National Park

This tiny national park, situated just under 100 km. north of Kanchanaburi, covers just 59 square kilometres, but has two large caves and several waterfalls connected by a trail that begins at the visitor centre. Accommodation is available. Tel: 0 2562 0760

#### Prasat Mueang Sing Historical Park

Built around the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, this place was once the westernmost outpost of the Khmer Empire, strategically located on the banks of Kwai Noi River 43 km. west of Kanchanaburi.

Prasat Mueang Sing





Death Railway

The shrine complex at the heart of the site has been restored to give an idea of the structure's original size, and a few remnants of the original stucco ornamentation can still be seen. It is open from 9.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.

#### Rail Journey to the Waterfall

One of the best ways to see the countryside around town is to take the two-hour journey by train from Kanchanaburi to the waterfall which operates three times a day. The train stops regularly at attractive village stations, and the views from the left side are particularly impressive as the route passes through steep gorges and round sheer cliff faces. The most popular attraction is Namtok Sai Yok Noi, located a few kilometres north of town, but boat operators also offer trips up and down the river before the train returns.

#### **Boat Trips**

Another relaxing way to enjoy Kanchanaburi's surroundings is to take a raft trip, which typically includes several of the nearby attractions, a leisurely lunch, and an overnight stay on the raft. For those with less time to spare, long-tail boats can be hired to visit a variety of riverside places. For more information, contact any hotel or guest house, or the TAT office in Kanchanaburi. Tel: 0 3451 1200.

#### Sai Yok National Park

The caves, waterfalls and teak forests of this 500 squarekilometre park, situated just over 100 km. northwest of Kanchanaburi, make it a popular destination, and it also has comfortable accommodation in rafts on the river. One of the park's most impressive sights is Namtok Sai Yok Yai, which pours dramatically into the Kwai Noi River. The falls can be viewed from a nearby suspension bridge, or you can get right underneath them for a vigorous shower. A little further upstream is Tham Daowadueng which is full of stalactites. Both the falls and cave are best approached by boat, which can be rented at the park. Though you are unlikely to catch sight of one, the park is home to the world's smallest mammal- the hog-nosed bat, which weighs less than two grammes. Tel: 0 2562 0760

#### Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum

About 80 km. northwest of Kanchanaburi, the most difficult terrain met in the construction of the Death Railway was dubbed "Hellfire Pass" by those who worked there, hacking away at solid rock with the most basic of tools. The Memorial Museum here, open from 9.00 a.m - 4.00 p.m., is perhaps the best of all those in the region, combining maps, war relics, models, photos and accounts by survivors. A four-kilometre trail from the museum leads along part of the railway's former route, where a section of the track has now been relaid.

#### Sangkhla Buri

This small town which lies 224 km. northwest of Kanchanaburi and near to the Myanmar border is home to an ethnic mix of Thais, Mons and Karens. It sits at the north end of the Vajiralongkorn or Khao Laem Dam, a huge expanse of water that stretches over 70 km. south. Due to its remoteness it receives few visitors, but those who make it here can enjoy relaxing boat trips around the dam, organised by the few resorts and guest houses in town.

Namtok Sai Yok Noi

#### Wat Wang Wiwekaram

This extensive temple located on the southern outskirts of Sangkhla Buri edges on Vajiralongkorn or Khao Laem Dam. The complex is constructed in an unusual mix of Thai, Indian, and Burmese Buddhist architectural styles, and the abbot "Luangpho Uttama" is highly revered among local people, including tribal folk and Burmese.

#### Mon Bridge

Another name is "Uttamanuson Bridge". Linking Sangkhla Buri and Mon villages, the 850-metre-long wooden bridge across the Songkaria River is a famous viewpoint overlooking the merging point of the three rivers: Songkaria, Bikhli and Ranti.

#### Three Pagodas Pass

This border crossing point between Thailand and Myanmar is named after three small but historically significant pagodas built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as a gesture of peace between these frequently warring neighbours. The pass is about 1,400 metres above sea level, and is often shrouded in mist.

### Special Event

### River Kwai Bridge Festival

Late November-Early December

The bridge over the River Kwai at Kanchanaburi is the scene of a spectacular, hour-long light and sound presentation every evening that portrays the region's role in the war. This festival is very popular, so it is advisable to book hotels and transport well in advance.

Wat Wang Wiwekaram



## Special Interest

There are several glorious golf courses in Kanchanaburi; in some cases, they are part of a resort or sports club that offer many other facilities such as swimming pool, fitness centre and luxurious accommodation. While they are not usually busy on weekdays, bookings are advised during weekends and public holidays. Details are as follows:

• *Evergreen Hill Golf Club*, 152 Mu 5, Amphoe Tha Muang Tel: 0 2941 2801-5, 08 1928 1992, 08 1829 7512 Fax: 08 1210 3828, 0 2941 2810

 Grand Garden Resort and Golf Club, Kanchanaburi-Ban Kao Road, Amphoe Mueang, Reservations Tel: 0 2243 0742-3, 0 2241 5562 Fax: 0 2243 5819

• Green World Hot Spring Hotel Resort and Golf Club, Route 323, Km. 107 Amphoe Thong Pha Phum Tel: 0 3453 1382-3 Reservations Tel: 0 2539 4613-6, 0 2539 2865-6 Fax: 0 2539 1946

• *Home Phu Toey*, 118 Mu 8, Ban Phu Toei, Amphoe Sai Yok Tel: 0 2955 1425, Reservations Tel: 0 2621 1510-3 Fax: 0 2621 1514

• *Khao Laem Golf Course*, Amphoe Thong Pha Phum Tel: 0 3459 9077 (EGAT)

• *Milford Golf and Country Club*, Ban Wang Mai, Amphoe Sai Yok Tel: 0 3457 2441

River Kwai Bridge Festival





Golfing in Kanchanaburi

• *Mission Hills Golf Club and Resort*, 27/7 Mu 7, Tambon Phang Tru, Amphoe Tha Muang Tel: 0 3464 4147-8 Reservations Tel: 0 2226 3390-3

Nichigo Resort and Country Club, 106 Mu 4, Tambon Wang Dong, Amphoe Mueang Tel & Fax: 0 3458 4000-16, 0 3451 8518, Reservations Tel: 0 2231 2681-3
Fax: 0 2231 2320

• *Srinagarindra Golf Course*, Amphoe Si Sawat Tel: 0 3457 4001-2 Fax: 0 3457 4001-2 Ext. 2502

## How To Get There

Follow Highway 4 heading west from Bangkok, then shortly after Nakhon Pathom, branch right on to Highway 323, which leads to Kanchanaburi.

#### By Bus

Both regular and airconditioned buses leave from the Southern Bus Terminal on Boromratchachonnani Road to Kanchanaburi daily. Tel: 0 2894 6122 www.transport.co.th

#### By Rail

Trains leave from Thonburi Station daily on the three-hour journey to Kanchanaburi. Tel: 0 2411 3102 or Hotline 1690 www.railway.co.th



Standing Buddha Image at Phra Pathom Chedi

## Nakhon Pathom

Apart from the magnetic attraction of the huge stupa, the province has some fascinating museums, a royal country retreat...

Home to Thailand's most famous stupa, the Phra Pathom Chedi, Nakhon Pathom lies 56 km. west of Bangkok and is capital of a small province of the same name. It is thought by many to be the country's oldest town. Apart from the magnetic attraction of the huge stupa, the province has some fascinating museums, a royal country retreat a delightful rose garden and elephant shows.

## **City Attractions**

### Phra Pathom Chedi

Soaring up 120 metres from the ground and stretching over 230 metres in diameter, this is both the world's largest stupa and one of Thailand's most sacred Buddhist monument. As such it attracts visitors from far and wide to wonder at its magnificent proportions and the aura of reverence that prevails. It was originally built around the 6<sup>th</sup> century and gradually added to over the centuries, until King Mongkut found the structure overgrown during his wanderings as a monk during the 1850s. He laid plans for the magnificent structure we see today, which was completed early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The towering stupa, which shelters a tall, standing Buddha, is covered with glazed, orange tiles and is surrounded by ceremonial halls, Buddha images, holy trees and meditation chambers.

#### National Museum of Phra Pathom Chedi

Just to the south of the stupa, this museum has some wonderful artefacts from the Dvaravati period (6-11th centuries), including stone Wheels of Law and stuccoed panels. It is open from 9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m. on Wednesday-Sunday.

Phra Pathom Chedi







Sanam Chan Palace

#### Sanam Chan Palace

Built in 1907 as a country retreat for King Vajiravudh, this palace is an unusual mix of English and Thai architectural styles. The enormous compound contains various halls and rooms, some made of teak, surrounded by an extensive garden, where visitors are welcome to wander. Opening times are Thursday-Sunday, 9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

### **Out-Of-City Attractions**

#### Buddhamonthon

Located southeast of Nakhon Pathom on the road towards Bangkok, this huge site of 2,500 rai (about 1,000 acres) was dedicated as a Buddhist site in 1957 to commemorate 2,500

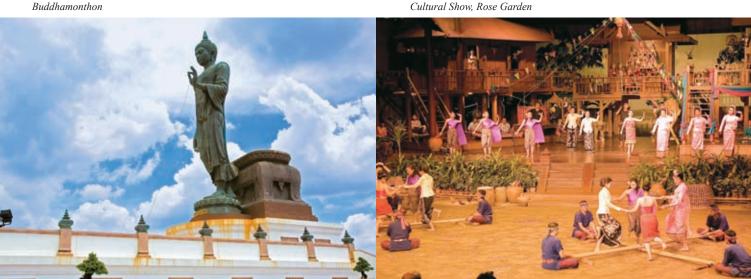
Buddhamonthon

The Thai Human Imagery Museum

years of Buddhism. Its main feature is a 16-metre walking Buddha image in the Sukhothai style, but its ample grounds also contain flower gardens, a Buddhist museum and meditation halls.

#### The Thai Human Imagery Museum

The life-like figures on display here made out of fibreglass include famous monks and kings of the Chakri Dynasty, while other figures depict aspects of Thai lifestyle. It is also on the way to Bangkok, about 9 km. from Nakhon Pathom. The museum is open on weekdays from 9.00 a.m. - 5.30 p.m., weekends 8.30 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.



#### Rose Garden

The immaculately kept lawns and flower beds at the Rose Garden Country Resort, situated between Bangkok and Nakhon Pathom, draw in crowds of visitors every day, not only to appreciate the flowers but also to witness one of the best cultural shows in the country. The show, which takes place each afternoon, includes Thai dancing, ancient sword fighting, a Thai ordination and Thai boxing. There is also a model village where visitors can watch handicrafts being made. The gardens are open from 8.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.

#### Samphran Elephant Ground and Zoo

This place is located just to the north of the Rose Garden and features both crocodile wrestling and elephant rides. It is open from 8.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.

#### Boat Rides on Khlong Mahasawat

One enjoyable way to pass time in this region is by taking a boat trip along Khlong Mahasawat, watching farmers at work in the orchards of pomelo and guava, mango and jackfruit. The trip lasts about two hours.

#### Don Wai Market

Situated in Tambon Bang Kratuek, behind Wat Don Wai is a market that still retains an appearance of a market dating back to the reign of King Rama VI. The old building is made of wood and located on the banks of the Tha Chin River. Agricultural produce are sold daily from 7.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. Boats are available for rent for scenic river trips.

#### Samphran Elephant Ground and Zoo





Don Whai Market

### Special Events Nakhon Pathom Food and Fruits Fair

January/February

This fair is held annually during Chinese New Year, within the grounds of Phra Pathom Chedi to celebrate the abundance of the province's agricultural products. On display are the fruits that are typically grown in Nakhon Pathom, such as pomelo, coconuts, guavas, and bananas. There are contests for the best specimens and a host of other entertainment.

### Elephant Queen Pageant

#### May 1

This unusual competition has become one of the country's most popular annual events. The pageant's aim is to find one plump lady among the many contestants who best interprets and expresses the elephant's gentle character.

### How To Get There

#### By Car

Nakhon Pathom is on Highway 4 directly west of Bangkok.

#### By Bus

There are frequent departures to Nakhon Pathom from the Southern Bus Terminal on Boromratchachonnani Road. Tel: 0 2894 6122 or www.transport.co.th

#### By Rail

Several trains passing through Nakhon Pathom leave Thonburi Station daily. Tel: 0 2411 3102 or Hotline 1690.



Tha Chalom

## Samut Sakhon

... "Sakhon Buri", Samut Sakhon is a trading port located about 30 km. southwest of Bangkok. Established in 1548 under the name "Sakhon Buri", Samut Sakhon is a trading port located about 30 km. southwest of Bangkok. It is the capital of a small province (872 square kilometres) and once played an important role in protecting the national capital, Bangkok, as is evidenced by the fort that still stands there.

### **City Attractions**

### Mahachai Market

Mahachai Market is one of the country's largest fresh seafood markets, but if you're looking for collectables, there are also ceramics, sarongs and wicker furniture on sale here. A ferry across the river from the market leads to Tha Chalom, a large fishing village.

#### Wichian Chodok Fort

Built in 1827 to protect the mouth of the Chao Phraya River from foreign invaders, this fort is a crumbling ruin that brings to mind a bygone era. A cannon from the fort can be seen at the nearby city shrine and city hall.

## Out-Of-City Attraction Salt Farms

Though few visitors make organised trips to salt farms, they are at the roadside throughout the province, and create odd reflections of the gleaming pyramids of salt in the water. Such scenes make fascinating backdrops for photos.

Fresh Seafood





## Shopping

#### Bencharong Ceramics

The area around Samut Sakhon is famed for its production of Bencharong ceramics, in which an intricate patterned glaze is applied by hand using just five colours-red, black, blue, yellow and green. Traditionally used only by members of the aristocracy, these days Bencharong is popular with everybody, and is made in villages like Krathum Baen.

## How To Get There By Car

Follow Highway 35 southwest of Bangkok, via Thon Buri-Pak Tho Road, visitors will arrive at Samut Sakhon.

#### By Bus

Several buses leave for Samut Sakhon daily from the Southern Bus Terminal on Boromratchachonnani Road. Contact 0 2894 6122 or www.transport.co.th for information on airconditioned and regular services.

#### By Rail

Several trains travel between Wongvienyai Station in Bangkok to Mahachai Station in Samut Sakhon daily. Tel: 0 2465 2017, 0 2465 1024 or Hotline 1690 www.railway.co.th

Bencharong Ceramics





Tha Kha Floating Market

## Samut Songkhram

...Thailand's smallest province at 416 square kilometres, and is famed for its fruit, vegetables and seafood. Some 40 km. west along the Gulf coast from Samut Sakhon and 72 km. from Bangkok, this is Thailand's smallest province at 416 square kilometres, and is famed for its fruit, vegetables and seafood. There are some old and interesting temples in town, and nearby is the well-kept Rama II Memorial Park.

### City Attractions Wat Ban Laem

The original settlers of Samut Songkhram were fleeing an attack by the Burmese on nearby Phetchaburi, and finding themselves safe here, they set about renovating a ruined temple called Wat Si Champa, and gave it a new name -Wat Ban Laem. The locals mostly live from fishing and a standing Buddha image in the temple, called Luang Pho Ban Laem, was the result of a miraculous catch in a fisherman's net. When brought to the surface, the alms bowl had become detached, but now a new one has been put in its place. The Buddha is thought to bring good luck, and this temple is now the most important in the province. There is a small museum in the compound displaying amulets, Buddha images, antiques and a pulpit from the Ayutthaya period.

#### Wat Sattha Tham

Built in 1982, the ordination hall of this temple was made of golden teak, and the inside walls are thick with mother-of-pearl inlay, creating scenes from the life of the Load Buddha and the Ramakian epic.

#### Don Hoi Lot

The region's biggest attraction for visitors are these banks of

Salt Farms





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King Rama II Memorial Park

fossilised shells which make fascinating patterns at the water's edge, and are best seen in April/May when water levels are at their lowest. A string of seafood restaurants has sprung up to cater for curious sightseers.

#### Salt Farms

Along the roadside throughout the province, visitors will see the pyramids of salt creating by local villagers.

## Out-Of-City Attraction King Rama II Memorial Park

King Rama II was born in Amphoe Amphawa, just north of Samut Songkhram, and this museum and memorial park are dedicated to his memory as his birth-place. A local abbot donated over four acres of ground which now has several traditional Thai houses that display items from the early 19th century, including some dolls that depict King Rama II's theatrical works. Behind the house is a botanic garden and a dramatic arts training hall. The park is open daily from 9.00 a.m.- 6.00 p.m., while the museum is open from Wednesday to Sunday, 9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

## Special Event King Rama II Memorial Festival

#### Early February

The memorial park springs to life for this annual fair. Masked dancers, handicraft stalls and demonstrations of Thai-dessert making attract crowds of onlookers.

Wat Bang Khae Noi

### How To Get There

By Car

Follow Highway 35 through Thon Buri and Samut Sakhon to Samut Songkhram.

#### By Bus

Buses for Samut Songkhram leave the Southern Bus Terminal on Boromratchachonnani Road regularly. Contact 0 2894 6122 or www.transport.co.th for information on airconditioned and regular bus services.

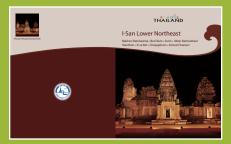
#### By Train

Trains to Samut Songkhram leave from Wongvienyai Station. Tel: 0 2465 2017, 0 2465 1024 or Hotline 1690 www.railway.co.th

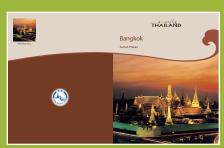
Mural Painting at Wat Chulamani

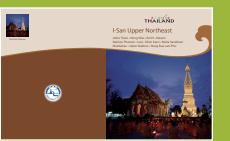










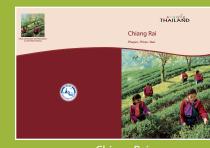






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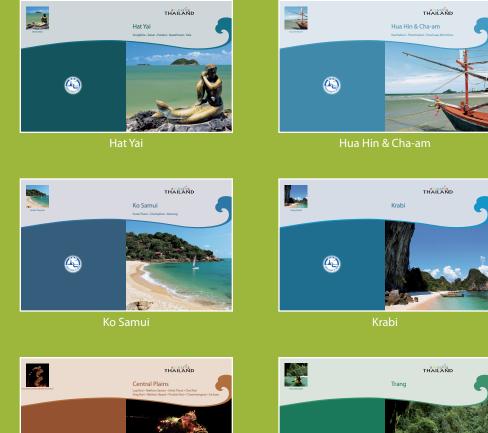


THAN

Ko Chang

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