



Wat Si Chum

amazing
THAILAND

Sukhothai

Uttaradit • Phitsanulok • Phetchabun





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Sukhothai

Uttaradit
Phitsanulok
Phetchabun

- Main Highway
- Provincial Highway
- Road
- ++++ Railway
- - - - Country Boundary Line

- Changwat (Province)
- Amphoe (District)
- ▲ Tourist Attraction









Wat Si Chum

Sukhothai

The province covers 6,596 sq. km. and is above all noted as the centre of the old Thai kingdom of Sukhothai, with major historical remains at Sukhothai and Si Satchanalai.

Sukhothai is located on the lower edge of the northern region, with the provincial capital situated some 450 km. north of Bangkok and some 350 km. south of Chiang Mai. The province covers 6,596 sq. km. and is above all noted as the centre of the old Thai kingdom of Sukhothai, with major historical remains at Sukhothai and Si Satchanalai. Its main natural attraction is Khao Luang mountain park. The provincial capital, sometimes called New Sukhothai, is a small town lying on the Yom River whose main business is serving tourists who visit the nearby Sukhothai Historical Park.

City Attractions

Phra Mae Ya Shrine

Situated in front of the City Hall, the Shrine houses the Phra Mae Ya figure, in ancient queen's dress, said to have been made by King Ramkhamhaeng as a dedication to his late mother Nang Sueang.

Sangkhalok Museum

The Museum displays Sangkhalok (Sawankhalok) ceramics of the kind produced in old Sukhothai and ceramics produced in the old Lanna Kingdom (now northern Thailand). Located 1 km. from town on the Phitsanulok Road; open daily 8 a.m.-5 p.m.; admission : 100 baht adults, 20 baht children.

Fish Museum

Located in Rama IV Park on the Phitsanulok Road, the Museum displays a variety of freshwater fish mentioned in Thai literature. Open daily except Tuesdays 9 a.m.-5 p.m., admission free.

Phra Mae Ya Shrine



Old Sukhothai

Founded in the 13th century, Sukhothai was the first truly independent Thai kingdom, and it enjoyed a golden age under the great King Ramkhamhaeng. Abandoned and overgrown for many centuries, the superb temples and monuments of this splendid city have been restored in Sukhothai Historical Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. A must-see for all travellers, Sukhothai is one of the most important historical sites in Southeast Asia.

Historical Background

Sukhothai, which means “Dawn of Happiness”, was the first kingdom of the Thais, formed after Thai forces drove the Khmers out of the city, a major frontier post of the Khmer Empire, and established it as their capital in 1238. The first king’s son, Ramkhamhaeng, ascended the throne in 1278 and reigned for forty years. A fine warrior, King Ramkhamhaeng the Great made Sukhothai a powerful and extensive kingdom which included many parts of what are today neighbouring countries. King Ramkhamhaeng the Great opened direct political relations with China and made two trips there, from which he brought back Chinese artisans who taught the Thai fine pottery techniques, resulting in the famous Sawankhalok ceramics. A major achievement of his reign was the revision of various forms of the Khmer alphabet into a system suitable for the writing of Thai. The alphabet that the king invented in 1283 is essentially the same that is used today.

King Ramkhamhaeng the Great’s reign is noted for prosperity and happiness, as recorded in a stone inscription well-known to Thais.

Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat



Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat

“This realm of Sukhothai is good. In the water there are fish; in the fields there is rice. The ruler does not levy a tax on the people who travel along the road together, leading their oxen on the way to trade and riding their horses on the way to sell. Whoever wants to trade in elephants, so trades. Whoever wants to trade in horses, so trades. Whoever wants to trade in silver and gold, so trades.”

King Ramkhamhaeng the Great also promoted religion and culture, and through his efforts Buddhism progressed among the people. Inspirational faith gave birth to classic forms of Thai religious art. Images of the Buddha sculpted during the Sukhothai era are cultural treasures which impart a feeling of peace and serenity. Eight kings ruled Sukhothai, whose gradual decline occurred during the last two reigns. The end of the first Thai kingdom came in 1365 when it was reduced to a vassal state by Ayutthaya, a young and rising Thai power to the south, which became the capital for four centuries, succeeded by Bangkok.

Sukhothai Historical Park

The Park is located 12 km. from Sukhothai town on the Tak Highway; open daily 6.00 a.m.-9.00 p.m.; admission 40 baht. Bicycles can be rented for touring the ruins. The Park's Tourist Service Centre (Tel: 0 5569 7310) provides information and displays models of historical buildings and structures of the old Sukhothai. Lying over an extensive area, ruins of the royal palaces, Buddhist temples, city gates, walls, moats, dams, ditches, ponds, canals and the water dyke control system are preserved, with major restoration by the Fine Arts Department in cooperation with UNESCO.

Inside the City Walls

The core city was surrounded by walls and earthen ramparts; this forms the centre of the historical park. It was rectangular, 1,300 m. by 1,800 m., with four gates. A stone inscription records that King Ramkhamhaeng the Great set up a bell at one of the gates. If his subjects needed help, they could ring the bell and the king would come out to settle disputes and dispense justice. Within the walls are the remains of 35 structures. The most notable are described as follows:

Royal Palace and Wat Mahathat

The Royal Palace lies in the centre of the city, surrounded by a moat and contains two main compounds: the royal residence and the royal sanctuary. Here, the famous stone inscription of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great was found by King Mongkut (Rama IV) in the 19th century together with part of the stone throne called Manangkhasila-at. King Ramkhamhaeng the Great set up a throne in the midst of a sugar-palm grove where, at his request, a monk preached on Buddhist holy days and the king

Wat Mahathat



Wat Mahathat

Wat Mahathat

conducted the affairs of state on other days. This throne was later installed in Bangkok's Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

Lying west of the Royal Palace compound is Wat Mahathat, the royal sanctuary, which is Sukhothai's largest temple with a customary main chedi (bell-shaped stupa) in a lotus-bud shape and ruined vihara (image hall). At the base of the chedi are Buddhist disciples sitting in adoration, and on the pedestal are sitting Buddha images. In front of this reliquary is a large vihara formerly containing a remarkable sitting bronze Buddha image of the Sukhothai style, which was cast and installed by King Lithai of Sukhothai in 1362. In the late 18th century, the image was moved to the Vihara Luang of Wat Suthat in Bangkok by the order of King Rama I and has since been named Phra Si Sakaya Muni. In front of the large vihara, is another smaller vihara which was probably built during the Ayutthaya period. Its main Buddha image (8 m. high) was installed inside a separate building. In front of the southern image, a sculpture called Khom Dam Din was found, now kept in the Mae Ya Shrine near the Sukhothai City Hall. To the south stands a pedestal of a large stepped chedi, whose lowest platform is adorned with beautiful stucco figures of demons, elephants, and lions with angels riding on their backs. A mural painting adorns this chedi.

Wat Mahathat



King Ramkhamhaeng

King Ramkhamhaeng the Great Monument

Situated to the north of Wat Mahathat, the bronze statue of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great sits on a throne with a bas-relief at the base depicting the king's life.

Wat Si Sawai

Situated amid magnificent scenery southwest of Wat Mahathat is Wat Si Sawai, with three prangs surrounded by a laterite wall. Inside the wall, the vihara in the west, built of laterite, is separated from the main prang (Khmer-style pagoda) which was constructed in the Lop Buri or Hindu-style. A trace of the Hindu sculpture Sayomphu was found here, indicating this was originally a Hindu shrine, later converted into a Buddhist temple.

Wat Traphang Ngoen

Situated to the west of Wat Mahathat is Wat Traphang Ngoen with its square pedestal, main sanctuary and stucco standing Buddha image in four niches. There is a vihara in front, and to the east of the pond there is an island with an ubosot (consecrated assembly hall). This edifice has crumbled and only its pedestal and laterite columns remain. Many monuments and magnificent scenery are visible from this location.

Wat Chana Songkhram

Situated to the north of Wat Mahathat is Wat Chana Songkhram. Its main sanctuary is a round Singhalese-style chedi. In front of the chedi is the base of a vihara and behind the chedi stands an ubosot. Bases of twelve small chedi are also visible. Near Charot Withithong Road is a strange chedi with three bases, one on top of the other.

San Ta Pha Daeng or Deity Shrine

Situated to the north of Wat Mahathat is San Ta Pha Daeng. This monument consists of a single laterite prang with a staircase in front. Sandstone Hindu divine objects (Lop Buri style) were found here.

Wat Mai

Situated to the north of Wat Mahathat is Wat Mai, with an Ayutthaya-style brick vihara as the main sanctuary, its columns made of laterite. A bronze image of Buddha under a Naga (a Lop Buri-style image) was found here and is now preserved in the Ramkhamhaeng National Museum.

Wat Si Sawai



Wat Traphang Thong

Situated to the east of Wat Mahathat is Wat Traphang Thong. The temple is located on an island in the middle of the large pond. There is a ruined laterite Singhalese-style chedi and a new mondop containing the Lord Buddha's Footprint slab that was created by King Lithai in 1390. An annual fair to worship this sacred footprint takes place during the Loi Krathong Festival.

Ramkhamheang National Museum

The museum offers an outstanding introduction to the arts and crafts of Sukhothai and its vassal cities, displaying objects unearthed or collected from Sukhothai and nearby provinces. Inside the spacious building are Khmer statues, Sukhothai Buddha, Sawankhalok ceramics and other archaeological artefacts gathered from the area. Open daily 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.; admission 30 baht. For more information, call 0 5569 7367.

Outside the City Walls

The Sites to the North

Wat Phra Phai Luang

This temple lies 500 m. north of San Luang Gate (northern gate). This sanctuary, formerly a Khmer-Hindu Shrine but later converted into a Buddhist temple, is surrounded by a moat. It is second in importance to Wat Mahathat. Inside, there are three prangs like Wat Si Sawai, but the southern and the central ones have crumbled leaving only the northern one decorated with stucco figures. In front of these prangs are a vihara and

Wat Phra Phai Luang



a crumbled chedi; the latter has a pedestal decorated with stucco sitting Buddha images. A mondop contains ruined Buddha images in four postures: sitting, reclining, standing and walking. A Sivalinga (phallic emblem of Hindu gods) was unearthed in the compound of this sanctuary.

Ruins of the Old Celadon Factory (Thuriang Kiln)

Thuriang Kiln is a site where Sukhothai celadons were made. Kilns exist in an area measuring 100 m. by 700 m. Each kiln is divided into three sections; the fire area, the baking oven and the flue. The pottery found here mostly has three painted designs on the bottom: a disc, a fish and a flower. Forty-nine kilns and small edifices are visible. To the north, a pond has been dug into the stone.

Wat Si Chum

This lies about 1,500 m. north of Wat Mahathat and was originally surrounded by a moat. A square mondop (an edifice which is square in plan, cubicle in form, with a pyramidal superstructure for roofing), the main sanctuary, contains a monumental stucco-over-brick Buddha image in the attitude of Subduing Mara, called Phra Achana. This Buddha measures 11.3 m. from knee to knee. The mondop is 32 m. square and 15 m. high, and the walls are 3 m. thick. There is a passageway in the left inner wall itself which leads to the above crossbeam. On the ceiling of the passageway are more than fifty engraved slate slabs illustrating Jataka scenes.

The Sites to the West

Wat Saphan Hin

Situated on a 200 m. hill, the sanctuary is approached by a pathway of slate slabs.

Wat Chang Rop

This temple, situated in the Aranyik area, has a chedi decorated with an elephant emerging from the base, in front of which is a vihara base and laterite columns.

Phra Ruang Dam

This earthwork dam was built to hold back water in a dam between the Phra Bat Yai and Kio-Ai-Ma hills and was restored by the Irrigation Department. The dam is referred to in the famous Sukhothai stone inscription.



Wat Saphan Hin

The Site to the South

Wat Chetuphon

A mondop enshrines four Buddha images in different postures: sitting, standing, walking, and reclining. The outer walls of the mondop still retain a section in the form of a slate pillar balustraded window. There is an entrance to the mondop to the north. Just behind the mondop is a small sanctuary which contains a Buddha image known locally as Phra Si Ariya Maitreya, the Lord Buddha of the Future.

The Sites to the East

Wat Chang Lom

This temple is located to the north of Charot Withithong Road with a bell-shaped chedi of Ceylonese influence standing at the centre. The chedi is situated on a three-tiered square base with a platform decorated with rows of elephants. This type of elephant - decorated chedi is to be seen in many ancient towns of the Sukhothai period; for example, Kamphaeng Phet and Si Satchanalai.

Wat Traphang Thonglang

A square mondop is the main sanctuary. In front of the mondop to the east is a vihara and beyond the vihara stands an ubosot. The outer wall of the mondop is beautifully decorated with stucco figures in niches. The southern side portrays the Lord

Buddha flanked by angels descending from Tavatimsa Heaven (the second heaven in Buddhist six heavens). The west side portrays the Lord Buddha preaching to his father and relatives. The north side depicts the episode when the Lord Buddha returned to preach to his wife. These stucco figures, especially those on the south side, are masterpieces of Sukhothai art.

Ramkhamhaeng National Park (Khao Luang Sukhothai)

This exquisite national park with a combined natural and historical background covers an area of 341 sq. km. of high hills and steep cliffs, some over 1,200 m. high, together with waterfalls, varied vegetation and wildlife are the natural attractions alongside archaeological remains.

This park is accessed via Highway 101 south from Sukhothai for about 20 km. then west via a 16 km. laterite road. Trekkers must bring food and essential equipment with them. Bungalows and tents are available. For more information in Bangkok, contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department Tel. 0 2562 0760.

Wat Chang Lom



Si Satchanalai Historical Park



Sawankhalok

Sawankhaworanayok National Museum

Located at Sawankhalok town, 38 km. north of Sukhothai via Highway 101, the Museum features sculptural art from various periods and Sangkhalok (Sawankhalok) pottery from the Sukhothai era, some of it retrieved from sunken vessels in the Gulf of Thailand. Open daily 8.30 a.m.- 4.30 p.m.; except Monday, Tuesday and public holidays.; admission 30 baht. For more information, call 0 5564 3166, 0 5564 1571.

Si Satchanalai

Si Satchanalai was a city of the Sukhothai kingdom, located close to the modern town of Si Satchanalai, which is 67 km. north of new Sukhothai via Highway 101.

Si Satchanalai Historical Park

Si Satchanalai Historical Park contains the remains of Sukhothai-era Structures in a park and setting similar to Sukhothai Historical Park. The 13th to 15th century ruins are located beside the Yom River among hills and are less restored than those of Sukhothai. Open daily 8.00 a.m.- 5.00 p.m. The ancient site was the kingdom's second city and the residence of the crown prince. It enjoyed great importance, as demonstrated by the size of its remains. Ruins of 134 structures have been discovered within the park area. For more information; call 0 5567 9211.

Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat

This temple, also called Wat Phra Borommathat Mueang Chaliang or Wat Phra Prang, is situated 3 km. to the south of ancient Si Satchanalai's walls. An immense laterite prang on a square base marks the centre of the temple. A steep staircase in front of the huge prang leads to a room where a reliquary is enshrined.

Wat Chedi Chet Thaeo



Wat Khao Phanom Phloeng

This is a hilltop temple within the old town of Si Satchanalai. A laterite chedi in the centre, a large vihara or image hall in front and a small sanctuary behind all lie in ruins. Some laterite pillars and a damaged Buddha image constructed of laterite slabs and coated with mortar are seen.

Wat Khao Suwan Khiri

The hilltop temple is situated 200 m. from Phanom Phloeng Hill. A huge bell-shaped chedi on a five-tiered base marks the centre of the temple. Ruins of a vihara, chedi and fragments of huge stucco figures lie scattered on the ground. The similarity between some figures here and those at Sukhothai's Wat Chang Lom lead to the belief that King Ramkhamhaeng the Great had this temple constructed.

Wat Chang Lom

A huge bell-shaped chedi supported by 39 elephants, with four at the cardinal points elaborately decorated marks the centre of the temple. Above the chedi's base there are niches enshrining images in the attitude of Subduing Mara (demon).

Wat Chedi Chet Thaeo

This is one of the most beautiful temples in Sukhothai Province. Stupa of different artistic styles and influence were built here. Remnants of old mural paintings can still be seen in some stupa.

Wat Nang Phaya



Wat Suan Kaeo Utthayan Yai

Located near Wat Chedi Chet Thaeo, across a dirt road, this temple has the ruins of a large image hall. It is also called Wat Kao Hong, the Nine-Roomed Temple.

Wat Nang Phaya

This temple is famous for its delicate stucco reliefs on the remains of the northwestern wall of the seven-roomed vihara. The pillars are decorated with unglazed ceramic designs. The central laterite stupa is surrounded by lamp-posts and accessible by a set of narrow stairs.

Wat Suan Kaeo Utthayan Noi

This temple's ruins consist of a frontal vihara housing a Buddha, complete with a laterite roof.

Sangkhlok Kiln Site Study and Conservation Centre

At one time, hundreds of huge pottery kilns lined the Yom River in this area. Several have been carefully excavated and one, oval with a curved roof and 7-8 m. wide, can be viewed within the centre, while at another site a short distance away, there is a large outdoor kiln prepared for viewing. The centre displays pottery and potsherds, found in the area and information on the evolution of ancient ceramics. Located some 4 km. north of Si Satchanalai; open daily 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. To get there, drive 6.5 km. north of Si Satchanalai Historical Park to Ban Ko Noi, or take Highway 1201 from Si Satchanalai.

Si Satchanalai National Park

This forest and mountain park (213 sq. km.) offers trekking routes to waterfalls, caves and a hot spring. The park is about 100 km. from Sukhothai via Highways 1113 and 1294 and can be reached by a local bus (once daily, 50 mins) from Si Satchanalai where there is accommodation. For reservations and more information in Bangkok, call 0 2579 5734, 0 2579 7223 or 0 5561 9214-5.

Festivals

Si Satchanalai Ordination Celebration

April

Locally called Buat Chang Hat Siao, this event is held at Hat Sieo, Si Satchanalai, arranged by the local Thai Phuan people. It features a spectacular procession of ordination candidates (men about to become Buddhist monks) in colourful costumes on the backs of some 20-30 decorated elephants.



Loi Krathong and Candle Festival

Songkran Festival

13-15 April

This is the traditional Thai New Year celebration, also known as the Water Festival. Songkran was mentioned in the famous stone inscription dating from the reign of King Ramkhamhaeng the Great.

Loi Krathong and Candle Festival

October/ November

A grand Loi Krathong celebration is held at the Sukhothai Historical Park. The Festival is held over five days to celebrate Loi Krathong, which falls on the full moon night of the 12th lunar month. The highlights include a gorgeously costumed light and sound show in a historical setting. Activities include *krathong* floating, a fireworks display, local games and spectacular performances.

Local Products

Sangkhalok Pottery

A variety of products are available including: Thung Luang terra cotta of Khiri Mat, with unique patterns; ancient-style gold and silver products of Si Satchanalai, hand-made by skilled workers; fried peanuts of Si Samrong, also called “200-year fried peanuts” following an old recipe; and Hat Siao fabric of Si Satchanalai, made by descendants of Thai Phuan migrants from Lao P.D.R.

How To Get There

• By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway 1 then Highway 32 north to Nakhon Sawan. Highway 32 becomes Highway 1 again, follow all the way to Kamphaeng Phet, then take Highway 101 to Sukhothai.

• By Bus

Air-conditioned buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road for Sukhothai (7-hour journey). For more information, call 0 2936 2852-66 or visit www.transport.co.th, Win Tour (0 2936 3753 or 0 5561 1039), Phitsanulok Yan Yon (0 2936 2924-5, 0 5525 8647).

• By Rail

The nearest railway station is at Phitsanulok, from where there are frequent bus services to Sukhothai, some 50 km. away. Trains depart from Bangkok’s Hua Lamphong Station. Tel.02220 4334 or Hotline 1690 or www.railway.co.th for more information.

• By Air

Bangkok Airways flies from Bangkok to Sukhothai daily (1 hour). Sukhothai Airport is about 40 km. north of the town. For more information, Tel. 0 2265 5555, Hotline 1771 or www.bangkokair.com.

Sangkhalok Pottery





Wat Thammathipatai

Uttaradit

A flourishing port for regional trade, it was renamed Uttaradit, literally the Port of the North, by King Rama V (1868-1910) and made a provincial capital.



Wat Yai Tha Sao

A province in the Lower North, Uttaradit has a long history going back to at least the Sukhothai period (13th century). Today, it is most noted for the cultivation of langsat fruit and for the major lake formed by the Sirikit Dam. The provincial capital is located 491 km. from Bangkok and the province covers an area of 7,838 sq.km. The original town, called Bang Pho Tha It, was located on the right bank of the Nan River. A flourishing port for regional trade, it was renamed Uttaradit, literally the Port of the North, by King Rama V (1868-1910) and made a provincial capital. When the northern railway line was built in the early 20th century with a stop at Uttaradit, the town received a further boost. Unfortunately, the town centre was largely destroyed in a fire in 1967 and was rebuilt in a modern style.

City Attractions

Wat Thammathipatai

At this temple, the door panels of the large and ancient vihara of Wat Phra Fang are kept. The wooden panels are 2.2 m. wide and 5.3 m. tall and are carved in the graceful style of the Late Ayutthaya Period. Only the panels at Wat Suthat in Bangkok are regarded as better.

Wat Tha Thanon

Located beside the Nan River, this temple houses Luang Pho Phet, the principal Buddha statue of the province. It is in the ancient Chiang Saen style and cast in bronze.

Wat Yai Tha Sao

Situated east of the town centre about 3 km. along Samranrun Road, this temple features an old chapel with beautifully carved wood door panels and lintels.

Phaya Phichai Dap Hak Memorial

This statue commemorates a governor who in 1772 valiantly fought the Burmese invaders until one of his swords broke in two. Still he prevailed over them, and is remembered as “Phichai of the Broken Sword”.

Uttaradit Provincial Cultural Hall

Once the official residence of the provincial governor, this late 19th century traditional wooden building houses important historical relics. A major item is the Yan Mat, a carved wooden carrying pole made by Late Ayutthaya period craftsmen.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Wat Klang

Located about 3 km. outside town at Ban Kae, this old temple has beautiful plaster bas-reliefs over the ubosot. Inside are rare wall murals of the Early Rattanakosin period style depicting the Jataka and assemblage of celestial beings.

Wat Phra Boromathat Thung Yang



Wat Phra Thaen Sila At

Wat Phra Boromathat Thung Yang

Located about 3 km. from town on Highway 102, this old temple, once called Wat Mahathat, has a large round Sri Lankan style chedi enshrining a holy relic.

Wat Phra Yun Phutthabat Yukhon

Situated near Wat Phra Boromathat Thung Yang, this temple features a Chiang Saen-style mondop sheltering holy footprints. It also houses a bronze Sukhothai-style Buddha statue.

Laplae

An ancient community dating from the Ayutthaya period, Laplae is an attractive place to visit with old wooden houses, hand-woven textiles and other craft specialities. It is also a major producer of langsat, the province's famous fruit. It lies west of town via Highway 102 for 3 km., then to the right along Highway 1041 for a further 6 km.

Wat Phra Thaen Sila At

Located near Laplae, this temple is believed to be of the Sukhothai Period. Its major feature is the base of a sermon platform built with laterite.

Namtok Mae Phun

Located at Ban Ton Klua, about 20 km. from town, the waterfall features multi-level cascades amid pleasant natural surroundings.



Sak Yai Forest Park

Bo Lek Nam Phi

Sirikit Dam

Situated at Tha Pla some 68 km. from town on the Uttaradit-Tha Pla Road, this is the country's largest earthen dam. Stemming the Nan River, the dam is 800 m. wide. The large lake has beautiful scenery and during the cool season the landscape is covered in a profusion of colourful flowers and blooms. Accommodation and boating services are available.

Sak Yai Forest Park

This park, located in Amphoe Nam Pat about 80 km. from town on Highways 1045, 1146 and 1047, features the largest teak tree in the world. It has a circumference of 9.87 m. and an age of about 1,500 years. Sadly, its top was broken off in a storm, cutting its height from 48.5 m. to 37 m., but it is still alive.

Bo Lek Nam Phi

Here swords and other weapons were forged from high quality steel. There are two mines still in existence, whose ores are believed to have been used to make the king's swords only. This ancient site is reached by going to Thong Saen Khan (42 km. southeast of town), then taking Highway 1245 for 14 km.

Festivals

The Tradition of Buddha Cremation

May

A unique religious ritual, is performed at Wat Phra Boromathat Thung Yang after Visakha Puja Day in May. It features a re-enactment of the Buddha's funeral ceremony.

Langsat Day Fair

Late September

This day celebrates the province's famous fruit. Langsat-growing has long been the main occupation of the local people. The fair features exhibitions, contests and parades of floats decorated with fruits and flowers, as well as entertainment.

Shopping

Interesting items include woven materials with lovely designs and colours, and preserved fruit such as the chewy *Kluai Kuan* made from bananas.

How To Get There

• By Car

1. From Bangkok, take Highway 1 (alternative: Highway 32 after Ayutthaya) to Nakhon Sawan, then Highway 117 to Phitsanulok, then Highways 12 and 11 to Uttaradit.
2. From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Ayutthaya, then Highway 32 to In Buri, then Highway 11 to Uttaradit.

• By Bus

Air-conditioned and non air-conditioned buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road for Uttaradit. For more information, call 0 2936 2852-66 or visit www.transport.co.th, or call Win Tour (0 2936 3753-4) or Cherdchai Tour (0 2936 0199).

• By Rail

Trains depart from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Station for Uttaradit everyday. Tel. 0 2220 4334 or Hotline 1690, www.railway.co.th for more information.

• By Air

Bangkok Airways flies from Bangkok to Sukhothai. For more information, Tel. 0 2265 5555 or Hotline 1771, www.bangkokair.com.



Phra Phuttha Chinnarat

Phitsanulok

The provincial capital is 377 km. north of Bangkok and boasts a nationally important temple. Most of the terrain is flat, contrasted by mountain ranges running along the east where waterfalls and national parks offer opportunities for nature treks.

Phitsanulok is a major province of the Lower North located where the Central Plains begin to rise into the Northern region. The provincial capital is 377 km. north of Bangkok and boasts a nationally important temple. Most of the terrain is flat, contrasted by mountain ranges running along the east where waterfalls and national parks offer opportunities for nature treks. The town of Phitsanulok, situated on the banks of the Nan River, has been a major community since ancient Khmer times and enjoyed great prosperity during the Sukhothai and Ayutthaya periods. During 1463-1487, the city was in effect the royal capital as King Borom Trailokanat of Ayutthaya resided permanently in the province. Regrettably, most of the city was destroyed by a fire in 1955, and today it is built in the modern style.

City Attractions

Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat

This nationally important temple, commonly called Wat Yai, with its origin in the 14th century is on the river's east bank. The vihara houses what is regarded as the most beautiful and graceful Buddha statue in Thailand, the large bronze sitting statue of Phra Phuttha Chinnarat in the Sukhothai style, dating from the 14th century. A celebration honouring the Chinnarat Buddha is held in late January. Other prominent features are the image hall's large pearl-inlaid doors made in 1756 by royal

Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat





Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat

craftsmen and an 8 m. tall standing Buddha image called Phra Attharot, of the same period as the Chinnarat Buddha, originally housed in a large hall which has all but crumbled away. In the centre of the compound is a great Khmer-style pagoda or prang. It is thought the structure was originally a lotus bud-shaped stupa of Sukhothai style, and was altered into a prang during the early Ayutthaya period.

Wat Ratchaburana

Situated on the east bank of the Nan River and south of Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, this temple also survived the fire. The ordination hall features a graceful three-headed Naga (mythical serpent) over its eaves and murals painted in the early 19th century. It was built by King Borom Trailokanat, who played a major role in fostering Buddhism in the province.

Wat Chedi Yot Thong

Located on Phaya Sua Road, this temple has a 15th century lotus bud-shaped chedi of the typical Sukhothai style, the only such structure left in the province.

Wat Chula Mani

Located on the east bank of the Nan River, about 5 km. south of the town centre on the Borom Trailokanat Road, this was the site of the original town. King Borom Trailokanat, accompanied by more than 2,000 followers, was ordained as a monk here in 1416. An important ancient structure in the temple is the

hall containing a holy footprint and inscription stone built by King Narai the Great of Ayutthaya. There is also a Khmer-style pagoda (Prang) built with laterite, adorned with intricate swan designs.

King Naresuan the Great Shrine

The Shrine is on the site of the former Chan Palace, the birthplace and residence of King Naresuan the Great, a revered king famous for defending the nation from the Burmese. Located close to the river on the west bank, it features a statue of the king declaring independence from Burma.

Folklore Museum

This museum on Wisutkasat Road is regarded as Thailand's largest and best collection of indigenous arts and utensils, a labour of love by Dr. Thawi. It displays pottery, kitchenware, agricultural tools and musical instruments, all reflecting the lifestyle and creativity of the traditional community. Open Tuesday to Sunday, 8.30 a.m.- 4.30 p.m.; admission is free.

Buddha - Casting Foundry

Situated opposite the Folklore Museum and also created by Dr. Thawi, the Foundry specialises in casting bronze Buddha images and statues, mostly copies of the Chinnarat Buddha in all sizes. Visitors are welcome; open Tuesday to Sunday, 8.30 a.m.- 4.30 p.m.

City Walls

Originally made of clay like those of Sukhothai and built during the Ayutthaya period to deter raids from Lanna and Burma, remnants can be seen to the north and east of town. Part of the old 12 m. wide city moat still exists to the west of town parallel to Phra Ruang Road.

Houseboats

Uniquely situated within a Thai city, many people dwell in houseboats moored on the river.

King Naresuan the Great Shrine





Namtok Wang Nok An

Out-Of-City Attractions

Highway 12 Scenic Route

Cutting through the eastern mountain ranges of Phitsanulok, the route offers a series of attractive forested areas and waterfalls within national parks. To visit these places, transport can be hired in town. Highlights include: Namtok Wang Nok An, within the Sakunothayan Arboretum, which is 1 km. off the main highway at Km.33, with Kaeng Sai Rapids. At Km.45, Kaeng Song Waterfall. At Km.72 and a further 2 km. off the road is an extensive three-level waterfall, Namtok Kang Sopha running over massive rock formations amongst lush vegetation. The best time to visit all waterfalls is from September to December when the water flows are at a maximum.

Thung Salaeng Luang National Park

This protected area of mountain forests and grasslands covers 1,262 sq. km. The park office, where information may be obtained and accommodation booked, is at Km.80 on Highway 12. The grasslands are bright with flowers, particularly during the late rainy season (October). The mountain ranges are

watersheds feeding several streams flowing into the Nan River. A good walking trail starts from the sub-office at Ban Nong Mae Na (Km.100) and leads alternately through forest and savanna. Thung Non Son, a grassy plateau in the heart of the park, abounds with wild flowers in October to December. It lies 16 km. by car and a further 15 km. on foot from Ban Nong Mae Na.

Namtok Chattrakan National Park

This forest and waterfall park lies some 145 km. from town. It is reached via Highway 12, turning left at Km.68 onto Highway 2013 to Nakhon Thai, then taking Highway 1143 to Chattrakan District. The water cascades down seven tiers to a wide pool with a beach. Some cliff faces carry traces of prehistoric carvings. Camping is allowed after contacting park officials.

Phu Soi Dao National Park

This park stretches along the Thai-Lao border in Chattrakan District with the highest peak being 2,102 m. and the climate is cool most of the year. Attractive features of the park are wild flowers in the rainy season, savanna and waterfalls. It is necessary to use guides for access and camping equipment for overnight stays.

Phu Hin Rong Kla National Park

This is an outstanding national park with unique scenic attractions and historical significance. Located where Phitsanulok meets Phetchabun Province, Phu Hin Rong Kla is reached via Highway 12, turning right at Km.68 onto Highway 2013 travelling 28 km. to Nakhon Thai, then taking Highway 2331 for another 31 km. The mountainous area was

Thung Salaeng Luang National Park





Namtok Kang Sopha

a communist guerilla base from 1967 to 1982 and many radical students fled here after the 1976 massacre of students in Bangkok. Reminders of the struggle are living quarters, schools, a hospital and other facilities. There are also beautiful waterfalls and strange rock formations with jagged boulders and deep crevices. The Park has accommodation, campsites and food facilities.

Interesting Activity

Flying Vegetables

Touring Phitsanulok city by tricycle rickshaw (samlor, or trishaw) is recommended, particularly around the river banks where floating restaurants abound with theatrical cooks making “flying vegetables”. The speciality is a dish called *Phak Bung Loi Fa* to which is attached a big performance in which the cooks toss fried water spinach “sky-high”.

Festival

Long Boat Races & Fair

October

These races and fair are held when the Nan River is full at the climax of the rainy season. The Fair is held in front of Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat. Robes are placed over the Phra Phuttha Chinnarat, and there are contests of boat processions and races with scores of boats.

Shopping

Preserved food products are a speciality, notably *Kluai Tak*, which are dried bananas coated with honey. Also popular are items made from pork such as *Nam* (sour sausage) and *Mu Yo*.

How To Get There

• By Car

1. From Bangkok, take Highway 1 and 32 to Nakhon Sawan, then Highway 117 to Phitsanulok (total 337 km.).
2. From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Ayutthaya, then Highway 32 to In Buri, then Highway 11 to Wang Thong, then Highway 12 to Phitsanulok (total 450 km.).

• By Bus

Buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road. For more information call Transport Co., Ltd. on 0 2936 2852-66; Phitsanulok Yan Yon Tour on 0 2936 2924-5; Cherdchai Tour on 0 2936 0199 or Win Tour on 0 2936 3753.

• By Rail

Trains depart from Bangkok’s Hua Lamphong Railway Station for Phitsanulok. Call 1690 for more information.

• By Air

Thai Airways operates daily flights (50 mins) from Bangkok to Phitsanulok. In Bangkok call 1566 for more information, or in Phitsanulok call 0 5525 8020.

Long Boat Races





Phu Tab Buek

Phetchabun

Because of the fertility of the soil, Phetchabun has always been a productive area, and its very name means “the land of crops and food”. The province has a long and prosperous history and rich tourism potential. Its climate is attractive due to the mountains and forests.

Situated in the heart of Thailand, with its provincial capital some 346 km. north of Bangkok, Phetchabun is the meeting place of three regions, the North, the Central Plains and the Northeast.

The province centres on the Pa Sak River basin with mountain ranges running along both the western and eastern reaches. Because of the fertility of the soil, Phetchabun has always been a productive area, and its very name means “the land of crops and food”. The province has a long and prosperous history and rich tourism potential. Its climate is attractive due to the mountains and forests.

City Attractions

Wat Mahathat

This temple on Nikon Bamrung Road has several ancient stupas of the Sukhothai style.

Phetchabun City Pillar Shrine

Relocated from the ancient town of Si Thep, this is considered the oldest such structure in Thailand.

Wat Trai Phum

This temple on Phetcharat Road features a Buddha statue called Phra Buddha Maha Dhammaracha cast in the ornamental Lop Buri style. The ritual bathing of the image is performed each September.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Huai Pa Dang Dam

Created by a dam constructed for irrigation purposes, located some 8 km. west of town on Highway 2006, this is a pleasant place with scenic views.

Accommodation in Khao Kho



Tat Mok National Park

This forest park has a huge waterfall fed by streams flowing down mountain crevices, creating twelve beautiful tiers. To reach the park, drive east for some 15 km. to Ban Chaliang Lap, then take a right turn onto Highway 2275, then a left fork, continuing for 20 km.

Si Thep Historical Park

Some 130 km. south of Phetchabun on Highway 21, and another 9 km. after a left turn, lie the ruins of Si Thep. An ancient town where many structures still remain indicative of its past prosperity during the 11th-18th Buddhist Centuries, Si Thep was the centre of contact between the Dvaravati Kingdom in the Central Plains and the Khmer Kingdom in the Northeast. There are widespread remains of laterite buildings and of several ponds. Artefacts found here include elaborate lintels, Sema stones (used to mark out the limits of Buddhist temples) and jewellery.

Khao Kho

Bare 1,000 m. high mountains to the northwest of town, Khao Kho was a base from which communist insurgents conducted their struggle from 1968 to 1982. It is accessible via two routes: off Highway 12 (Phitsanulok-Lom Sak) at Ban Camp Son, and off Highway 21 at Ban Na Ngua, about 13 km. north of town. Both routes wind through steep terrain. Interesting places include various viewing points, remains of guerrilla bases, a war memorial, an arms museum, a stupa containing a holy relic, the Si Dit Falls and a royal palace.

B.N. Farm

This experimental farm grows cold-climate crops, including various flowers which bloom in season and is beautifully scenic. It is situated on the route to Khao Kho 3 km. from Ban Camp Son, off Highway 21 to the north of town. Fruit-based items are on sale.

Phu Hin Rong Kla

Located in the mountains northwest of Lom Sak, in the north of the province, amidst exotic scenery, this was a communist guerrilla base in the 1970s and 1980s. See the Phitsanulok section for more information.

Nam Nao National Park

Its office located some 50 km. east of Lom Sak along Highway 12, this is an immense tract of dry evergreen forest. Spread



Namtok Man Daeng, Phu Hin Rong Kla

over rolling hills and including pineries and grasslands, it is the habitat of many diverse animals, and more than 100 bird species. In December and January, the temperature can drop to as low as 2 degrees Celsius. Points of interest are spread out. Attractions reached by taking Highway 12 include: Tham Pha Hong with stalactites and stalagmites, located 300 m. north from Km.39; Ban Paek Pinery, reached by a 5 km. walk from Km.49; Phu Khum Khao Pinery, 15 km. from Km.53, covering an area of about 10 sq.km. and Heo Sai and Sai Thong Falls, located on the same trail, reached on foot, 1 km. and 1.5 km. respectively off the main road at Km.67. There are also attractions on Highway 2216 (Lom Kao-Huai Sanam Sai) such as Pha Lom-Pha Kong which are 5 km. from Km.40 and Tham Yai Nam Nao near Km.60.

Festivals

Sweet Tamarind Day

January-February

Sweet tamarind is strongly associated with Phetchabun and Sweet Tamarind Day celebrates the harvest of this fruit. During the festival, farmers bring their sweet tamarinds to sell at

reasonable prices at Phetchabun's provincial athletic field where best crop contests are held. In addition, there is a variety of other entertainment.

Um Phra Dam Nam Ceremony

September

Held on the 15th day of the waning moon in the 10th lunar month, or Sat Thai Day, the day in which Thais make merit by proffering *Krayasat*, sticky paste made from rice, bean, sesame and sugar and other offerings to monks. The festival honours Phra Buddha Maha Dhammaracha, a highly revered ancient Buddha image. The image was found in the Pasak River by a group of farmers 400 years ago and taken to Wat Trai Phum. According to legend, the image twice wandered out of the temple and was later found in water, and so the ritual bathing ceremony came about. In the afternoon, the image is carried around town and then put under a tent in Wat Trai Phum, so Buddhists can pay respect by applying gold leaf to the statue. In the evening, prayers are chanted. At night, there are various kinds of entertainment. The next morning, people make merit as it is Sat Thai Day. Food and other necessities are given to monks. The Buddha image is then taken to be immersed in the Pasak River by the governor of Phetchabun and traditional dances are performed to show respect to it. After the ceremony, the water in the river is regarded as sacred, so people swim in it or take the water to drink, and then there are traditional long boat races.

Resort in Khao Kho



Um Phra Dam Nam Ceremony

Shopping

Makham Wan, sweet tamarind, a crop widely grown in Phetchabun. *Khanom Chin*, a noodle-like dish made from flour, popular in Lom Kao District.

How To Get There

• By Car

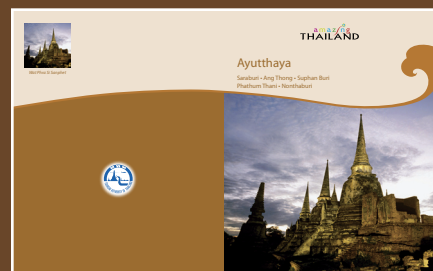
From Bangkok, take Highway 1 via Saraburi to Phu Khae (Km.125), then turn right onto Highway 21.

• By Bus

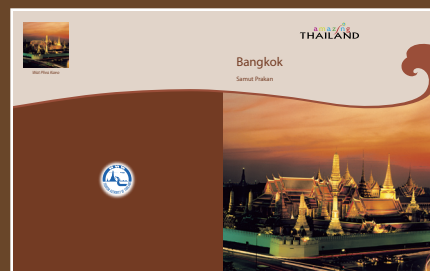
Both air-conditioned and non air-conditioned bus services ply the Bangkok-Phetchabun-Lom Sak route. Buses depart from the Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road. Call 0 2936 2852-66 for more information, or Phet Tour on 0 2936 3230 or Thin Siam Tour on 0 2936 0500.

• By Air

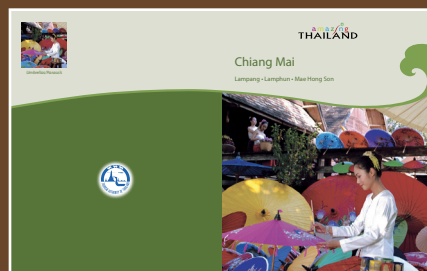
Thai Airways flies from Bangkok to Phetchabun on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Call 1566 or 0 2628 2000, for more information.



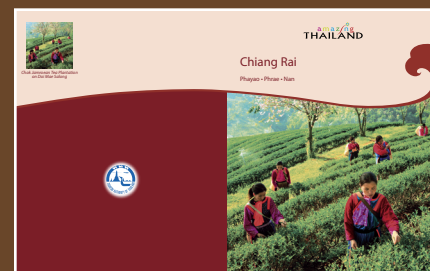
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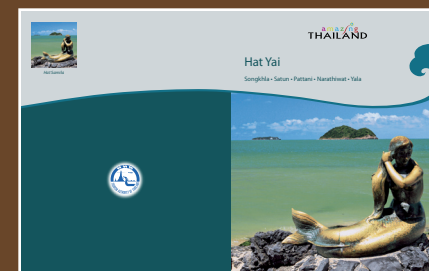
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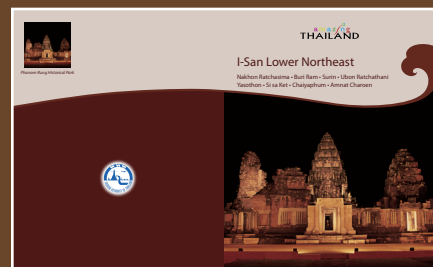
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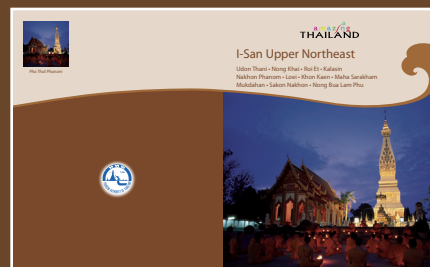
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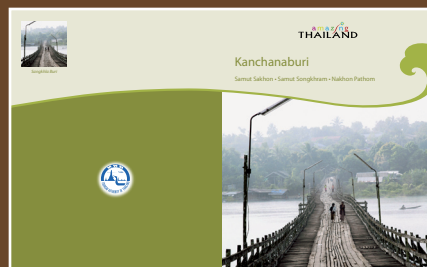
Hua Hin & Cha-am



I-San Lower Northeast



I-San Upper Northeast



Kanchanaburi



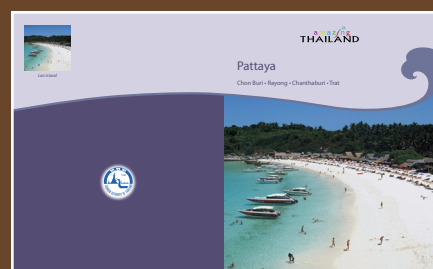
Ko Chang



Ko Samui



Krabi



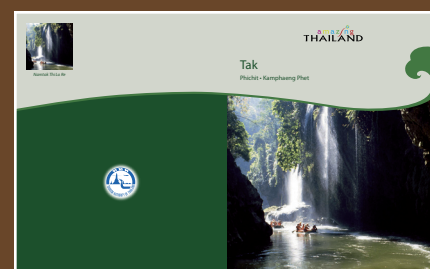
Pattaya



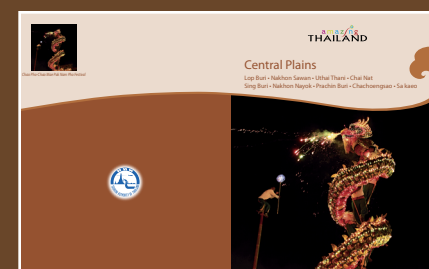
Phuket



Sukhothai



Tak



Central Plains



Trang

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