



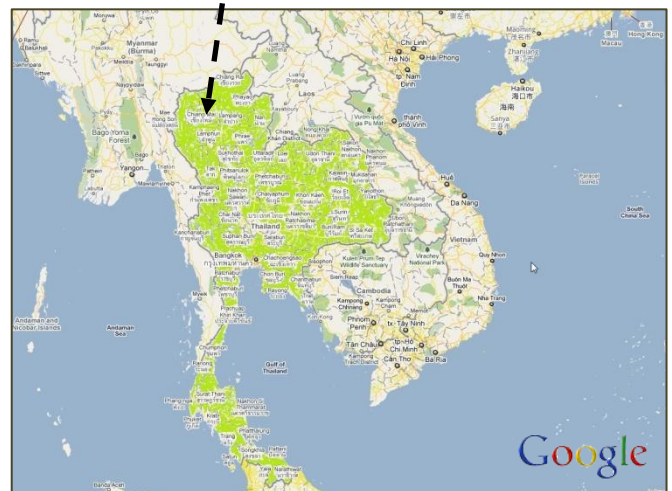
Trekking the Planet

Discovering the Cultural and Natural Significance of the World



Where are we now?

- Darren and Sandy are in Chiang Mai, Thailand, located at 18° N and 99° E.
- We have traveled approximately 22,173 miles (35,684 kilometers) from our starting point in California.





Ayutthaya (sources: Wikimedia.org,
Flickr.com/Russ Bowling)

Did you know?

A typical Thai meal is meant to include a balance of four taste senses: hot (spicy), sour, sweet and salty. The cuisine was influenced by the Chinese, who brought noodles to the region, as well as Indians who introduced spices, such as green, red and yellow curries. . This, combined with local basil and lemongrass, results in the complex tastes of Thai dishes.

Thai Green Curry
(sources:

Thaifood.about.com,
Allasianfood.com)



People and Culture

- Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country that was not colonized by Europeans.
- During the early centuries AD various Khmer, Malay and Mon kingdoms populated the area now known as Thailand. The Ayutthaya Kingdom eventually grew to be the most powerful, controlling most of central and southern Thailand. It also was a major trading center with Europe.
- In 1767 Ayutthaya was overthrown by a Burmese army and the kingdom was divided. The capital was moved to Bangkok in 1782 and the Chakri dynasty was established, which rules Thailand today. Thailand was known as Siam until 1939.
- Chiang Mai was the capital of the Lanna Kingdom and a rival of the Ayutthaya Kingdom and the Burmese. It was under Burmese rule for over 200 years (1558 - 1774) before eventually being integrated into Thailand in the 19th century.
- Thailand's population of 67 million is about 80% Thai and 14% Chinese. Northern mountain tribes such as Hmong, Karen and Akha, comprise about 800,000 people.
- Over 90% of the inhabitants are Buddhist, with Muslims, totaling about 5% of the population, living mainly in the southern portion of the country.

Nature and Environment

- Thailand is the 50th largest country in the world in area. It is about the size of France and slightly bigger than the state of California.
- The country has a variety of terrain, ranging from mountains, with rich soil, in the north to the Khorat Plateau in the east, consisting of sandstone and poor soil. In the south the land is hilly and forested.
- Thailand contains more than 100 national parks, including over 20 marine reserves. The first park, Khao Yai National Park, was established in 1962. There are over 900 bird species that migrate or are indigenous to the country.
- There are many freshwater fish, amphibians and reptiles only found in Thailand. In 2008 a new species of frog was discovered in the country. This frog, known as the Khorat big-mouthed, has enlarged fangs and is known to eat birds.



*Haeo Suawt Waterfall in Khao Yai National Park
(source: Asiaexplorers.com)*

Thai Beaches and Islands

Thailand is famous for its beaches and islands, which are a major tourist attraction. Found in the southern portion of the country, these include Phuket, Koh Samui, Krabi and Koh Phi Phi. In 2004 the Indian Ocean tsunami damaged many of the tourist areas on the Andaman Sea side of the country, which have since recovered.



*Left: Phuket, Right: Ko Samui
(sources: Penangkstream.blogspot.com,
Tourismthailand.org,
Flickr.com/yeowatzup)*

Our Plans

- Before arriving in Chiang Mai we stayed in Ayutthaya for a couple of days. We toured the temple ruins while we were there. In Chiang Mai we will take a walking tour around the city to see its temples and also visit the famous night market.
- Our next stop will be Laos. It will take us two days to travel from Chiang Mai to Luang Namtha in Laos. From there we will begin our first Asian trek through the villages in the hills.
- We look forward to hearing what questions you have as we continue our visit to Southeast Asia.

More Information

- <http://asianhistory.about.com/od/thailand/p/ThailandProfile.htm>
- <http://worldinfozone.com/facts.php?country=Thailand>
- <http://famouswonders.com/ayutthaya/>
- <http://www.tourismthailand.org/about-thailand/fast-facts/#5>
- <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Ayutthaya.aspx>
- http://www.chiangmai-thai.com/chiangmai_700_years_history.htm
- <http://www.tourismthailand.org/about-thailand/nature/national-parks/>
- <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/countries/thailand-facts/>
- <http://famouswonders.com/chiang-mai/>

To Market

One of the major attractions in Chiang Mai is the night bazaar. The Royal Market, or "Kud Luang" as called by the locals, sets up every night from about 6pm to midnight. Shops sell crafts, clothes and food.



sources: Discoverythailand.com,
Visit-Chiang-Mai-online.com

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