

Thailand Travel Guide (1 Month)

Complete Google Maps List

We recommend creating a Google Maps list before your trip and saving everything below. It made it much easier to keep track of restaurants, activities, viewpoints, hikes, and places we wanted to visit.

Suggested Route

Bangkok → Koh Samui → Koh Phangan → Koh Tao → Khao Sok → Chiang Mai → Mae Hong Son Loop → Chiang Mai → Chiang Rai → Bangkok

We visited Thailand over about a month timeframe, with **4 days in Bangkok in July** before starting the rest of our trip in the country in August.

This route gave us a little bit of everything: beaches, islands, jungle, national parks, temples, food, markets, mountains, and some of the lesser-visited areas of northern Thailand.

Suggested Time Breakdown

Destination	Time We Spent	Recommended Time
 Bangkok	4 Days + 1 Night	4–5 Days
 Koh Samui	2 Days	2 Days
 Koh Phangan	4.5 Days	4 Days
 Koh Tao	4.5 Days	4-5 Days
 Khao Sok Town	1 Night	1 Night
 Khao Sok National Park	1 Day / 1 Night	1 Day / 1 Night

 Chiang Mai	7 Days Total	5–7 Days
 Mae Hong Son Loop	6 Days	5–7 Days
 Chiang Rai	4 Days	3 Days

Total Time: Approximately **1 Month**

★ Our Thailand Highlights

If we could narrow down our favorite parts of Thailand, these would be at the top:

-  **Stay overnight on Cheow Lan Lake in Khao Sok National Park**
-  **Explore Chiang Mai's Old City, night markets, & spend time with elephants**
-  **Visit Pai Canyon**
-  **Drive the Mae Hong Son Loop**
-  **Visit Mae Wang National Park**
-  **Explore the mountains around northern Thailand**
-  **Spend time at the beaches of Koh Tao, Koh Phangan & Koh Samui**
-  **Take a food tour in Bangkok's Chinatown**
-  **Visit the pug café in Bangkok**
-  **Visit Doi Inthanon, the highest point in Thailand**

Local Foods & Drinks to Try

Thailand is one of those countries where eating is a huge part of the experience. Don't be afraid to order from small local restaurants and street vendors.

Must-Try Foods

-  **Khao Soi** – A northern Thai yellow curry noodle dish and one of our favorites.
-  **Pad Kra Pao** – Stir-fried basil and meat, usually served with a fried egg.
-  **Mango Sticky Rice**
-  **Pad Thai**
-  **Moo Ping** – Grilled pork skewers.
-  **Thai Coconut Pancakes**
-  **Som Tam** – Green papaya salad.
-  **Panang & Green Curry**

-  **Coconut Ice Cream**
-  **Fresh Fruit Smoothies**
-  **Chang Beer**

Bangkok (4 Days + Final Night)

We spent our first four days in Bangkok in July and returned for one final night at the end of our Thailand trip.

Bangkok is huge and can feel overwhelming at first, but we loved the combination of incredible food, temples, shopping, nightlife, and unique experiences.

Where we stayed: Casa Nithra Bangkok

Google Maps address: Baan Panthom, 176 Sam Sen Rd, Khwaeng Ban Phan Thom, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand AND

Visit The Wrinkles Pug House

Spend some time hanging out with adorable pugs while enjoying a drink or snack. It was such a fun break from sightseeing.

Google maps address: 759 โครงการ Naplab ซอยจุฬา 6 Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Explore Chinatown

Bangkok's Chinatown is a must for food lovers.

We recommend doing a **food tour** early in your trip. You'll get to try a variety of local dishes and, more importantly, get recommendations for restaurants and street food vendors you can return to for the rest of your stay.

Explore Bangkok's Giant Malls

Even if you're not a huge shopper, Bangkok's malls are worth seeing simply because of their size.

ICONSIAM

One of our favorites.

You can even take a **water taxi/river boat** to and from the mall, making the journey part of the experience.

Google maps address: 299 Charoen Nakhon Rd, Khlong Ton Sai, Khlong San, Bangkok 10600, Thailand

Siam Paragon

Another massive mall with tons of restaurants, shops, and food options.

Google maps address: 991/1 Rama I Rd, Khwaeng Pathum Wan, Pathum Wan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Lumphini Park (not a mall but close to them)

Explore this lush park in the heart of Bangkok, it was a good breakup to the malls. Plus we got to see giant water monitor lizards.

Google maps address: Lumphini, Pathum Wan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

Check Out Bangkok's Coffee Scene

Bangkok has an incredible local coffee scene. We recommend working a few independent cafés into your itinerary rather than only sticking to the major chains.

Gulf Islands

Koh Samui (2 Days)

Our first stop in the Gulf Islands.

We spent two days here enjoying the beaches and getting into island mode.

Where we stayed: Leelawadee Bungalow & Restaurant

Google maps address: 81, Tambon Mae Nam, Maenam, Surat Thani 84330, Thailand

Fisherman's Village Night Market

Worth seeing while you're on Koh Samui. It's a fun market to wander through with tons of food, shopping, souvenirs, and live entertainment.

Our tip: The prices here were noticeably higher than some of the smaller, more local markets we visited elsewhere on the island. It's still worth checking out for the experience, but don't feel like you need to do all your shopping here!

Free Wave Night Market

Another market worth checking out while you're on the island. It is directly next to Fisherman's Village, so you can do both in one night.

Restaurant to Try

Mama's Thai Home Cooking

If you're looking for authentic Thai food, add **Mama's Thai Home Cooking** to your list. It's a great spot to try traditional local dishes in a more casual setting. Order the crispy pork & green curry and you won't be disappointed.

Beaches to Visit

Crystal Beach

The water was beautiful and clear, making it a great spot to spend a few hours swimming and relaxing.

Coral Cove Beach

This smaller beach felt like a great escape from the busier parts of the island. Beautiful scenery, clear water, and a perfect spot for a relaxing beach day.

Koh Phangan (4.5 Days)

We spent about four and a half days exploring Koh Phangan and soaking up the island atmosphere.

Where we stayed: Boonya Swiss Home - [Google Maps – Boonya Swiss Home](#)

We loved our stay here so much! We stayed in one of their private villas, which had a full kitchen—perfect for having the option to cook some of our own meals during a longer stay. The property is tucked away in a peaceful tropical garden in Chaloklum, while still being just a short walk from the beach and local restaurants.

Favorite Beaches

Haad Yao

One of our favorite beaches on the island. Beautiful water, soft sand, and a great spot to spend a few relaxing hours.

Bottle Beach

A gorgeous, more secluded beach that feels like a little escape from the busier parts of the island. Definitely worth the trip but it is quite the trek down to the beach! We recommend getting a water taxi instead or wearing sneakers to walk down.

Bottle Beach Viewpoint

If you're up for a hike, make sure to do the Bottle Beach Viewpoint hike while you're there. The climb is worth it for the views overlooking the beach and surrounding coastline.

Secret Beach

One of our favorite places to catch sunset. It's a beautiful spot to end the day and watch the sun go down over the water.

Mae Haad Beach

A beautiful beach with clear water and a relaxed atmosphere. Great for swimming and spending a few hours by the water.

Thong Nai Pan Yai Beach

A beach with a more laid-back feel. Great for a relaxing beach day and exploring a different part of Koh Phangan.

Favorite Gyms

If you want to keep up with workouts while on the island, these were our two favorites:

Chaloklum Bay Gym Koh Phangan

A great option if you're staying around Chaloklum. It's modern, fully air-conditioned, and has a large selection of equipment. The upstairs cardio area also has beautiful views, which makes working out here a little more enjoyable!

Podium Gym

Another favorite, especially if you're staying closer to Thong Sala. It's a modern, air-conditioned gym with great equipment and workout classes you can take.

Koh Tao (4.5 Days)

Koh Tao was another highlight of our island portion of the trip.

We stayed at: Summer Guesthouse & Hostel [Google Maps – Summer Guesthouse & Hostel](#)

We stayed here during our time on Koh Tao and really liked it. It's in the Sairee area, making it a convenient base for exploring the island, getting to restaurants, and heading to the beach.

Favorite Beaches

Ao Tanote Beach

It's tucked along the island's east coast and has beautiful clear water surrounded by dramatic rocks. It's also a popular spot for snorkeling and cliff jumping.

Freedom Beach & Freedom Beach 2

These beaches are small but worth a visit. They are surrounded by trees and clear water so there is plenty of shade and free lounge chairs. Freedom Beach is especially nice in the morning before it gets busier.

Freedom Beach is also right next to the trail for John-Suwan Viewpoint, so it's easy to combine the beach and hike into one outing.

Chalok Baan Kao Bay Beach

We also really liked **Chalok Baan Kao Bay**. It's a much more laid-back part of the island with some of the clearest & bluest water we saw in Thailand. It's quieter and has a more local feel. It's a great beach to visit when you want something more relaxed than the busier areas around Sairee.

Hike John-Suwan Viewpoint

Go First Thing in the Morning!

The hike is short but steep in places, and the views at the top are incredible, overlooking Chalok Baan Kao Bay on one side and Shark Bay on the other.

Going early was definitely the right move—it was cooler, quieter, and made the hike much more enjoyable. **Do this early and then head down to Freedom Beach afterward for a boardwalk stroll.**

Gym

Koh Tao Gym and Fitness

Koh Tao Gym and Fitness

[Web](#)

If you're looking for a proper gym while you're on the island, this was our go-to. It's a large, air-conditioned gym with plenty of equipment, which is especially nice when you're trying to work out in Koh Tao's heat.

Restaurant to Try

995 Roasted Duck

995 Roasted Duck

[Web](#)

We ate here every single day. 😂

The roasted duck Pad Thai was **the best we've ever had**, and we're pretty sure we'll be dreaming about it for the foreseeable future. If you only try one restaurant on Koh Tao, **GO HERE**. The restaurant is simple and no-frills, but the food is what matters—and that roasted duck is seriously incredible.

Our order: roasted duck Pad Thai

Khao Sok (2 Days / 2 Nights)

★ Our Favorite Place in Thailand

If you only take one piece of advice from this guide:

STAY OVERNIGHT ON THE LAKE.

Khao Sok National Park was easily our favorite place in Thailand.

Khao Sok Town

We spent one night in town before heading into the national park.

It's a good place to get settled before your lake trip and stock up on anything you need.

Khao Sok National Park

The highlight was spending the night **on Cheow Lan Lake**.

The limestone cliffs, jungle-covered mountains, and incredibly clear water made this feel completely different from anywhere else we visited in Thailand.

We stayed at: Panvaree The Greenery

Don't Miss:

- Longtail boat rides through the lake, Overnight stay at a floating hotel, Coral Cave, Jungle hikes, Wildlife spotting, and Swimming in the lake

We also saw a **wild elephant** during our time in the park, which made the experience even more incredible.

Our Biggest Tip

Do not just visit Khao Sok as a day trip. Stay overnight on the lake.

It was one of the most memorable experiences of our entire Thailand trip.

Chiang Mai (5 Days + 2 Days After the Loop)

★ Our Favorite City in Thailand

We spent seven days in Chiang Mai total, split before and after the Mae Hong Son Loop.

We loved how walkable the Old City was, especially inside the ancient walls. Chiang Mai also has an amazing food scene, night markets, cafés, cooking classes, and easy access to outdoor adventures.

We stayed at: Goldenbell Hotel Chiangmai and Maison Dang Boutique Hotel (we loved our stay at this hotel, Mr. Dang is a wonderful host and booked a lot of our activities for us).



Explore the Old City

Spend time wandering around the historic walls and exploring the temples and small streets inside the Old City.

The area is very walkable and easy to explore at your own pace.



Explore the Markets

Chiang Mai has some of the best night markets we visited in Thailand.

They're perfect for:

- Street food, Souvenirs, Clothing, Local crafts, & Desserts

Our favorite markets include:

- Jing Jai Market, Sunday Walking Street, Coconut Market, Lannatique Market, Baan Kang Wat, and Chiang Mai Gate Market



Take a Thai Cooking Class

A cooking class is one of our favorite ways to experience Thai food.

You'll get to learn how some of your favorite dishes are actually made and, of course, eat everything afterward.



Spend Time With Elephants

Chiang Mai is one of the best places in Thailand to experience elephants responsibly.

Look for **ethical sanctuaries** that prioritize observation and care rather than elephant riding or performances.

Hike the Monk's Trail to Doi Suthep

For a little adventure outside the Old City, hike the **Monk's Trail** toward Doi Suthep. The trail winds through the jungle and leads to **Wat Pha Lat**, a beautiful temple tucked into the hillside. You can continue higher toward Doi Suthep if you're up for the longer hike, or turn around after exploring Wat Pha Lat. It's a great way to combine hiking, nature, and temples in one outing.

Eat at Khao-Sō-i

Khao-Sō-i

Google Maps Address: 430 4 ถนน เจริญราษฎร์ Tambon Wat Ket, Mueang Chiang Mai District, Chiang Mai 50000, Thailand

Phone: +66 61 515 4529

This is a little more expensive than your typical local khao soi spot, but **it's worth the extra cost for the experience and quality**. Their take on khao soi is delicious.

Our tip: Save room for ice cream! Their soft-serve is the perfect way to finish the meal.

InCome Gym

One of our favorite gyms in Chiang Mai! Good equipment and a great place to get a solid workout in while traveling.

Pump Fitness 2.0

Another gym we really liked. Plenty of equipment and a good atmosphere for a solid workout.

1101 Health Club & Co.

We took a **Pilates class here** and really enjoyed it! A great option if you want to switch things up from traditional gym workouts.

Giving Tree Massage

We got **Thai massages here and loved it!** Be prepared—they're definitely on the **more intense side**, but in the best way.

ชาวนาหอดอฟฟี่ (SAAO BAHTs COFFEE)

We **loved this little coffee shop!** Paul, the owner, and his family were incredibly friendly and welcoming. The coffee was amazing, and the prices were **so good**—definitely a place we'd recommend supporting while in Chiang Mai.

Praewa's Beauty Salon ร้านเสริมสวยแพรวา

I also got my haircut here and had a **great experience!** I was so happy with the cut, especially for only **\$12 USD**.

Mae Hong Son Loop (6 Days)

The Mae Hong Son Loop was one of our favorite parts of Northern Thailand because it gave us a chance to see a completely different side of the country.

The drive itself is part of the experience—mountain roads, viewpoints, small towns, caves, villages, and national parks.

Our Route

Chiang Mai → Chiang Dao → Pai → (Baan Rak Thai) Mae Hong Son → Chom Thong (Doi Inthanton) → (Mae Wang National Park) Chiang Mai

Chiang Dao

Our first overnight stop on the loop.

Things to See

- Chiang Dao Cave, Mountain scenery, & Small-town northern Thailand

Pai

We spent one full day in Pai.

Our Must-Sees

Bamboo Bridge

A peaceful walk through rice fields and countryside.

Pai Canyon

One of the most popular sunset spots in the area.

Memorial Bridge

A quick but interesting historical stop.

Pai Walking Street

End the day with street food, shopping, and plenty of local snacks.

Mae Hong Son

A quieter mountain town that gave us a glimpse into a less-touristy part of northern Thailand.

Ban Rak Thai

One of our favorite stops on the loop.

This mountain village is surrounded by tea plantations and has a distinctly Chinese-influenced atmosphere.

 **Don't leave without trying the local tea.**

Nam Lod Cave

A massive cave system where you can explore underground chambers and formations with a local guide.

Pro tip: check ahead of time to see how many caves are open (can depend on if it is rainy season).

Thai-Japanese Friendship Memorial

A small but interesting historical stop along the route that gives some insight into Thailand's history during World War II.

Doi Inthanon National Park

One of the major highlights of the loop.

Highest Point in Thailand

Stop at the **highest point in Thailand** while you're in the area.

The elevation makes the climate noticeably cooler than much of the country.

Mae Wong National Park

Another opportunity to get off the typical tourist route and experience more of northern Thailand's mountains and forests.

Chiang Rai (4 Days)

Chiang Rai felt similar to Chiang Mai but **slower and quieter**.

It's a great place to spend a few days exploring temples, cafés, markets, and the surrounding countryside.

We recommend giving yourself several days rather than treating it as just a quick day trip from Chiang Mai.

We stayed at: Parawee Boutique Hotel

Google Maps address: 113/3 ม.4 ต.ริมกก อ.เมืองเชียงราย, 57100 Chiang Rai, Thailand

We loved our stay here, its walking distance to the Blue Temple and a short drive into town.

Getting to Chiang Rai

VIP Bus from Chiang Mai

We took a **VIP bus from Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai**. It was about **3.5 hours**, extremely comfortable, and only **\$11 USD per person**.

Temples to Visit

Wat Rong Suea Ten (Blue Temple)

Go first thing in the morning! We had minimal crowds and loved seeing the incredible blue details without the chaos.

Wat Rong Khun (White Temple)

Another must-see. Again, **go early**—we were able to enjoy it with very few people around. This one blew us out of the water. The pictures don't do it justice - go see it in person.

Wat Huay Pla Kang (Big Buddha)

The Big Buddha was incredible, especially going **up in an elevator to the inside her head and looking out the windows**.



Cafe to Visit

ABONZO Yama Mitsu อะบอนโซ่ ยามะมิชิ

Go for the **amazing views and sheep roaming around the property!** Grab a coffee, enjoy the scenery, and hang out with the sheep.



Rent a Scooter & Explore

Rent a scooter to explore Chiang Rai and the surrounding countryside. Drive out to the **Golden Triangle**, where Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar meet, and stop at the **Hall of Opium Museum** while you're there.



Baan Dam Museum

The **Baan Dam Museum (Black House)** is a unique collection of dark, traditional-style buildings and unusual artwork. Definitely different from the temples and worth a stop.



Choui Fong Tea Plantation

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Drive out to the **Choui Fong Tea Plantation** to walk through the beautiful rolling tea fields and enjoy the mountain views. Be sure to try some of their tea and treats!

Chiang Rai Night Bazaar

The **Night Bazaar** is a **great place to grab dinner**, with tons of food stalls serving everything from local Thai dishes to snacks and desserts. There's also plenty of shopping nearby, making it an easy place to spend an evening.

Saturday Night Market

If you're in **Chiang Rai on a Saturday**, you **NEED to go!** Amazing food, shopping, and a great local atmosphere. This is also where Kiel got **new prescription glasses in under 30 minutes for only \$30 USD!** 😊

Gym

Gorilla Gym Chiang Rai

We worked out at **Gorilla Gym** during our stay. A solid option if you want to get a workout in while exploring Chiang Rai.

Tips Before You Go

Driving

Driving in Thailand was fairly straightforward, especially once we got outside the major cities.

The **Mae Hong Son Loop** is a different story—expect lots of curves, mountain roads, and elevation changes. Take your time and don't rush the drive.

Scooters

Scooters are extremely common in Thailand and can be convenient on the islands and in smaller towns.

Only ride if you're comfortable and properly licensed. Roads can be busy, some can be filled with police stops, and conditions can change quickly.

Getting Around

Thailand has a great transportation network.

Depending on your route, you'll likely use a combination of:

- Flights, Minivans, Grab (SE Asia version of Uber - make sure to download the app), Ferries, Longtail boats, Scooters, & Rental cars

Cash vs. Card

Credit cards are widely accepted at hotels, larger restaurants, malls, and many businesses.

However, **cash is still king** for:

- Street food, Night markets, Small restaurants, Local shops, Parking, Some tours

Keep Thai baht on you, especially when traveling outside the major cities.

Plan Around the Heat

Thailand can be extremely hot and humid.

We recommend doing outdoor activities and temples **early in the morning**, then saving indoor activities, cafés, or shopping for the hottest part of the day.

Temple Dress Codes

Bring clothing that covers your:

- Shoulders and Knees

A lightweight long skirt or loose pants are perfect for temple days and much more comfortable in the heat than heavier clothing.

You are also asked to remove your shoes before walking into most temples, stores, & homes.

Download Offline Maps

We recommend downloading Google Maps before heading into more remote areas, especially if you're driving the Mae Hong Son Loop.

Look Down & Look Around

Thailand has incredible wildlife outside of the obvious elephant and monkey attractions.

Keep an eye out in national parks for:

- Water monitor lizards, Monkeys, Birds, Reptiles, & Wild elephants



Be Flexible With Weather

Thailand's weather can change quickly, especially in the mountains and during rainy season.

Build some flexibility into your itinerary when possible, particularly for boat trips, hikes, and island travel. And make sure to have a poncho or rain jacket handy.



Final Thoughts

Thailand was one of those countries where we felt like we could have stayed for another month and still had more to see.

The **Gulf Islands** gave us plenty of beach time, **Khao Sok** was our favorite place in the country, **Chiang Mai** was our favorite city, and the **Mae Hong Son Loop** showed us a completely different side of Thailand.

From beaches and jungle to mountains, markets, temples, and incredible food, a month gave us a great introduction—but we definitely left with more places on our list for next time.