



Phanom Rung Historical Park

amazing
THAILAND

I-San Lower Northeast

Nakhon Ratchasima • Buri Ram • Surin • Ubon Ratchathani
Yasothon • Si sa Ket • Chaiyaphum • Amnat Charoen





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I-San Lower Northeast

Nakhon Ratchasima

Buri Ram

Surin

Ubon Ratchathani

Yasothon

Si Sa Ket

Chaiyaphum

Amnat Charoen

- | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|---------------------|
|  | Main Highway |  | Changwat (Province) |
|  | Provincial Highway |  | Amphoe (District) |
|  | Road |  | Tourist Attraction |
|  | Railway | | |
|  | Country Boundary Line | | |



Lao PDR

Kingdom of Cambodia







Phrathat Kong Khao Noi, Yasothon

I-San Lower Northeast

Thailand as its most traditional, friendly, charming, and endlessly fascinating. From tranquil villages to awesome temple ruins, it's a world of discovery.

Northeast Thailand, or I-san as it is called in Thai, covers roughly one-third of the Kingdom's land area, and for ease of travellers' orientation it is best divided into upper and lower regions.

All of the Northeast is exceptional in its rural landscapes, history and folk culture, while the upper and lower regions have their own distinct attractions, the latter most notably has the finest Khmer ruins to be seen in Thailand, as well as towns and villages with individual character and sights.

Namtok Heo Suwat, Nakhon Ratchasima





Thao Suranari Monument

Nakhon Ratchasima

Historic importance is witnessed in a number of superb ancient Khmer ruins, while scenically the province is rich in nature's bounty with forests, hills, and waterfalls...

Gateway to the Lower Northeast is Nakhon Ratchasima, also known as Khorat. This is I-san's largest province, covering an area of 20,494 sq. km., with the provincial capital of the same name located 259 km. northeast of Bangkok. The city has since ancient times been a key administrative centre and remains the main transportation hub and economic heart of the Lower Northeast. Historic importance is witnessed in a number of superb ancient Khmer ruins, while scenically the province is rich in nature's bounty with forests, hills, and waterfalls, the best scenery being preserved and readily accessible in Khao Yai National Park. Furthermore, the area is well known for a variety of quality handicrafts.

City Attractions

Thao Suranari Monument

Erected in 1933 and located in the centre of Nakhon Ratchasima, the monument honours the Thai heroine known locally as Ya Mo. Khunying Mo, to give the lady her original title, was the wife of the assistant governor of Nakhon Ratchasima who, in 1826, rallied villagers to repel an invading army from Vientiane. After the battle, King Rama III promoted Khunying Mo with the title Thao Suranari. Every year a festival is held between 23 March and 3 April to honour her bravery, while people regularly pay homage to the 1.85 metre statue and ask for blessings.

Chumphon Gate

Behind Thao Suranari Monument, this old city gate dates from

Chumphon Gate



the 17th-century reign of King Narai the Great, who commanded a strong city wall to be built. The only one of four original gates remaining (the other three are reconstructions), Chumphon Gate is constructed of stone and brick covered with plaster, and is topped by a wooden watchtower with a tiled roof and decorated in Thai style.

City Pillar Shrine

Standing at the corner of Chumphon and Prachak Roads, this Chinese-style shrine houses the City Pillar, erected in the reign of King Narai the Great (1656-1688). The inner eastern wall is covered with fired clay tiles with raised designs depicting Thao Suranari in battle and scenes of daily life in ancient times.

Wat Phra Narai

The temple, on Prachak Road, houses a sandstone statue of the Hindu God Vishnu, which is considered to be Nakhon Ratchasima's most sacred object.

Chang Phueak Shrine

This small shrine by the northern part of the city moat at the corner of Manat and Phon Saen Roads contains a Takhian Hin tree stump, which was where the people of Phu Khiao tied elephants for inspection before presenting them to King Rama I.

Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University Arts and Cultural Centre

Upon entering Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University, on Suranari Road, turn left at the sign to reach the wooden two-storey Khorat House. It's a rich repository of information about the region's history, culture and traditional way of life. Tel: 0 4424 2158, 0 4425 3097 ext. 1216

Maha Wirawong National Museum

At Wat Sutthachinda, opposite the City Hall, the museum's exhibits include woodcarvings, ceramics and sandstone images from the Khmer and Ayutthaya periods. Open Wednesday to Sunday from 9.00 a.m.-4.00 p.m. Closed on public holidays. Tel: 0 4424 2958

Wat Sala Loi

In the northeast of the city, 500 metres from Rop Mueang Road, the temple is most notable for its preaching hall designed in the shape of a sailing junk, which was awarded the prize as the best avant-garde religious building from the Siam Architects Society in 1973. Enshrined here is a large standing white Buddha image. On the front of the door is a plaster sculpture of Thao Suranari sitting and praying in the middle of a pond.



Wat Sala Loi



Phimai Historical Park

Out-Of-City Attractions

Wat Sala Thong

About 1 km. southeast of the city, this is the temple of the Dhamayuti sect. The surrounding area was originally a dense forest where a stone Buddha image was found in a clearing and later covered by a temple hall. The large pagoda was built over a smaller one that enshrines holy relics of the Lord Buddha brought from Myanmar.

Bun Luea Memorial

Situated at Bun Luea Witthayanuson School, 12.5 km. from the town on Nakhon Ratchasima-Chaiyaphum Road, the 175 cm. bronze monument honours the heroism of Bun Luea, who gave her life when, in 1826, she and others defeated invaders by throwing lighted coals into a wagon carrying gunpowder.

Prasat Hin Phanom Wan

Located 20 km. northeast of Nakhon Ratchasima, this 12th-century sanctuary is the closest to town of the province's major ancient Khmer monuments. Although small, the ruins are impressive for both the architecture and the air of serenity.

Phimai Historical Park

Some 60 km. north of town, the ancient sanctuary of Phimai ranks among the grandest and the most important Khmer historical sites in Thailand, and one of the finest to be seen outside Cambodia. The principal sight in what is an extensive historical park is the main sanctuary set in a walled compound and once connected by road to Angkor. Dating from between the late 11th and mid-12th century, the sandstone sanctuary comprises a 28-metre-high tower with adjoining antechambers and porticoes on three sides, all finely proportioned and decorated with intricate stone carving. Other impressive remains at the site include the Prasat (Khmer towers) of flanking sanctuaries in the inner courtyard, and four corner ceremonial ponds in the outer courtyard.

Phimai National Museum

Located close by the bridge over the Mun River, just before you enter Phimai, the museum contains an interesting collection of ancient artefacts, including important Khmer carved sandstone lintels. Open daily from 9.00 a.m.-4.00 p.m. Tel: 0 4447 1167, 0 4448 1269.

Sai Ngam

This recreation area, 2 km. from Phimai on the banks of the Mun River, is named for its abundance of banyan trees, providing 1,500 sq. m. of shade and believed to have originated from a single tree. Nearby there are souvenir shops and several restaurants, serving the popular dish of Phimai noodles.

Petrified Wood Park

Located at Ban Krok Duean Ha, Tambon Suranari, the area has a collection of over 10,000 pieces of petrified wood varying in sizes from pebbles to rocks with a diameter of over 50 centimetres, and some are more than a metre long. They are from 1 million to 70 million years old. The zoological gardens are located 1 km. from the provincial capital, on Nakhon Ratchasima-Pak Thong Chai Road. The zoo extends over more than 200 acres and houses a large variety of Asian mammals, reptiles and birds kept in largely natural surroundings. Open daily from 8.00 a.m.-4.30 p.m.

Khao Yai National Park

The first national park in Thailand, opened in 1962, and still one of the best, Khao Yai has been named a World Heritage Site because of its variety of flora and fauna. It covers an area of 2,168 sq. km. in the Dong Rak mountain range and spreads over four provinces; Nakhon Ratchasima, Nakhon Nayok, Saraburi and Prachin Buri, forming a divide between the

Central and the Northeast regions. The main access is via Pak Chong, 87 km. southwest of Nakhon Ratchasima's provincial capital. The habitats of Khao Yai range from mixed forests to rainforests and grassland, while there are several mountains with peaks between 800 and 3,000 metres above sea level, as well as many splendid waterfalls. In addition to a wealth of flora, the park is home to at least 25 species of larger mammals, including elephants, tigers, leopards, Asiatic black bears, Malayan sun bears, barking deer and sambar deer. Also, more than 300 species of birds have been spotted, while butterflies are numerous. To experience nature close up, there is a score of trekking trails. For more information, please contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department Tel: 0 2562 0760 or contact the park office at P.O. Box 9, Amphoe Pak Chong, Nakhon Ratchasima 30130. Tourist Service Center Tel: 08 1877 3127.

Wat Thep Phithak Punnaram

Located at Khao Si Siat A, in Tambon Klang Dong, the temple houses a huge sitting Buddha image, 27-metres wide and 45-metres high, sited majestically on a mountaintop and reached by a flight of 1,250 steps, signifying the number of monks that gathered spontaneously to hear the Lord Buddha's sermon, the occasion being celebrated on Magha Puja Day.

Tham Khao Chan Ngam

Located 58 km. southwest of Nakhon Ratchasima, off Highway 2, the cave (actually a series of rock formations) is famous for its prehistoric rock paintings, with figures of people and animals drawn in coarse red paint. It is believed that an agrarian community inhabited the area some 3,000-4,000 years ago.

Khao Yai National Park



Khao Yai National Park





Tham Khao Chan Ngam

Mueang Sema Historical Site

In Tambon Sema, 37 km. from the provincial capital, this is the site of an ancient city, evidenced by moats and earthen walls, which was built in the 7th century and flourished during the Dvaravati period, later coming under Khmer influence. In the area are ruins made of laterite and sandstone and many artefacts have been unearthed here, including a splendid reclining sandstone Buddha image that is now enshrined in Wat Thammachak Semaram.

Wat Ban Rai

The temple, in Tambon Kut Phiman, about 60 km. from the city, is famous as the residence of the revered monk, Luang Pho Khun Parisuttho.

Wat Na Phrathat

Located 4 km. from Pak Thong Chai district office, this old temple was probably built during the reign of King Rama III (1824-51) and is most noteworthy for the early Rattanakosin-period mural paintings that adorn the four walls of the main chapel, and for its elaborately decorated scripture repository.

Khuean Lam Phra Phloeng

Lying some 30 km. southwest of Pak Thong Chai district office, the dam is a recreation area where travellers can take boat trips to scenic waterfalls. For information, please contact the Lam Phra Phloeng Water Supply and Maintenance Project Tel: 0 4437 3184 ext. 114.

Sakaerat Environmental Research Station

This is a research centre for plant species in the northeastern jungles and is open to groups interested in organising eco-tours. It is situated beside Highway 304 (Nakhon Ratchasima-Kabin Buri) 57 km. from the city. The site covers about 78 sq. km. of mainly dry jungle and hardwood forest where the

wildlife includes wild boars, pheasants and a variety of other birds. There are several nature study trails affording walks of between 1 to 3 hours. Tel: 0 4425 8642, 0 4424 2474 Fax: 0 4424 2534.

Dan Kwian Ceramics Village

This village, 15 km. from the city on Highway 224 (Nakhon Ratchasima-Chok Chai), is famous for its tradition of pottery-making using clay from the banks of the Mun River. The village is also fascinating for its collection of ancient carts and farm implements.

Ban Prasat Archaeological Site

Located some 45 km. from the provincial capital on Nakhon Ratchasima-Phimai Road, this is the second prehistoric archaeological site (after Ban Chiang in Udon Thani Province) to be established as an outdoor museum. Findings, including human skeletons and pottery, indicate habitation dating back more than 3,000 years. Today, three excavation pits have been landscaped and opened to the public.

Agro-tourism Destinations

Several centres related to agricultural production are open to the public to offer opportunities for special interest agro-tours. Among the top options are: The National Maize and Wheat Research Centre (Suwan Farm) Tel: 0 4436 1770-4 in Tambon Klang Dong, Amphoe Pak Chong; Chok Chai Farm Tel: 0 4436 1173 ext. 116, one of the largest dairy farms in Asia located on Mittraphap-Pak Chong Road at Km. 159; Mueang Phon Flower Garden Tel: 0 4432 3263 on Highway 2 about 60 km. from the city; and Grape Farms which can be found throughout Nakhon Ratchasima, particularly in Amphoe Pak Thong Chai and Amphoe Pak Chong.

Wat Na Phrathat



Special Events

Thao Suranari Memorial Fair

23 March - 3 April

Held in honour of the heroine Khunying Mo, the fair features arts and culture, shops and exhibitions.

Phimai Festival

2nd Week of November

Highlights of the event include long boat races between teams from Phimai and neighbouring districts, cultural performances, religious processions, and a light-and-sound presentation at Phimai Historical Park.

Shopping

Best buys are earthenware products from Dan Kwian earthenware, silk and *Mut Mi* silk from Pak Thong Chai.

Accommodation

Nakhon Ratchasima offers a full range of accommodation in all price categories. A comprehensive list of hotels may be obtained from the Tourism Authority of Thailand at 2102-2104 Mittraphap Road, Amphoe Mueang, Nakhon Ratchasima 30000 Tel: 0 4421 3666, 0 4421 3030 Fax: 0 4421 3667.

How To Get There

By Car

The main route from Bangkok is via Highway 1 to Saraburi, and from there direct to Nakhon Ratchasima, a total distance of 259 km.

Agro-tourism Destinations



Dan Kwian Ceramics Village



Phimai Festival



Ban Prasat Archaeological Site

By Bus

Both air-conditioned and non air-conditioned buses departing from the Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road daily. Travel time is about 3 hours. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66 Website: www.transport.co.th

By Rail

Trains leave from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Railway Station to Nakhon Ratchasima several times daily from 6.50 a.m.- 11.25 p.m. the journey taking around 6 hours. Tel: 1690, 0 2220 4334 Website: www.railway.co.th.



Phanom Rung Historical Park

Buri Ram

...the region is most famous for its ancient Khmer ruin, Prasat Hin Phanom Rung, which is arguably the most impressive of all such monuments to be seen outside Cambodia.

East of Nakhon Ratchasima, Buri Ram is one of the largest and most populated provinces in the Northeast, with an area of 10,321 sq. km. and the provincial capital located 410 km. from Bangkok. For the visitor, the region is most famous for its ancient Khmer ruin, Prasat Hin Phanom Rung, which is arguably the most impressive of all such monuments to be seen outside Cambodia.

City Attraction

Lower Northeastern Cultural Centre

Located in the Buri Ram Rajabhat University, the centre provides a good introduction to the history and culture of the region with collections of artefacts covering archaeological finds, ceramics, textiles, mural painting, and elephant training. Open weekdays from 9.00 a.m.-4.00 p.m. Tel: 0 4461 1221 ext. 159

Out-Of-City Attractions

Phanom Rung Historical Park

Lying about 120 km. south of Buri Ram town and with a spectacular hilltop location, Phanom Rung is a magnificent example of ancient Khmer art and architecture. Dating mostly from the 12th century and constructed out of sandstone and laterite, with the stonework elaborately carved, the park complex is approached via a grand stairway. Principal buildings within the walled compound comprise a chambered gateway, and a square-based sanctuary tower with entrances and antechambers at the four cardinal points. Also noteworthy are the pediments and carved lintels of interior and exterior doorways, as well as the decorative friezes on walls and pillars. Open daily from 6.00 a.m.-6.00 p.m.

Prasat Hin Mueang Tam

Located near the foot of the hill of Phanom Rung are the Khmer ruins of Mueang Tam. With 10th-century foundations, the small square sanctuary comprises a central building surrounded by four smaller towers, while in the four corners are ceremonial L-shaped ponds. The site is also rich in carved stonework.

Prasat Hin Mueang Tam





Phanom Rung Historical Park

Wat Khao Angkhan

Sited on an extinct volcano 20 km. from Phanom Rung, Wat Khao Angkhan represents an interesting mixture of architecture from various periods. Inside the main building are murals and stories of Buddhism written in English.

Suan Nok (Bird Park)

This wildlife reserve at Huai Talat reservoir, reached by taking Buri Ram-Prakhon Chai Road for 12 km. and then a left for 2 km., is home to various species of waterfowl both indigenous and migratory. The best time to visit is between November and April.

Prasat Nong Hong

Another ancient Khmer sanctuary, lying about 100 km. south of Buri Ram town near Khuean Lam Nang Rong, which comprises 3 brick buildings situated on the same laterite base and surrounded by a laterite wall and moat.

Special Events

Khao Phanom Rung Fair

April

Held when the sunrise amazingly shines through all 15 doorways of the sanctuary, bringing out the true splendour of the site and confirming the unmatched skill of the sanctuary's builders. Such a spectacle occurs only at Phanom Rung. Activities include an old-style Khmer procession and a light-and-sound presentation.

Boat Races

November

On the first Saturday of November, long boat teams from Buri Ram and other provinces race in front of the Satuek district office to find the champion of the Mun River.

I-san Kite Festival

December

On the first weekend of December, a contest is held to find the best kites, with the winner judged for its design, the sound it makes and its flying performance. Kite flying is a popular pastime when the northeast monsoon winds blow strongly during the harvesting season, signalling the beginning of the cool season in Thailand.

Shopping

The most popular souvenir buys are silk and cotton fabrics from Ban Na Pho, 78 km. north of Buri Ram town.

How To Get There

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Saraburi, from there Highway 2 to Nakhon Ratchasima, and then on to Buri Ram via Highway 226, a total distance of 384 km.

By Bus

Buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road to Buri Ram everyday. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66
Website: www.transport.co.th

By Rail

Trains depart from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Railway Station to Buri Ram daily. Tel: 1690, 0 2220 4334
Website: www.railway.co.th

Wat Khao Angkhan





Elephant Back Ordination

Surin

Surin boasts a number of excellent ancient Khmer sanctuaries, while the province is also known for a variety of handicrafts, most notably traditional silverware.

East of Buri Ram and with its southern limits bordering Cambodia, Surin covers an area of 8,124 sq. km., its provincial capital situated 457 km. from Bangkok. The province is best known for the annual Elephant Roundup, held in the 3rd week of November to celebrate the region's traditional fame for the skill of its elephant trainers. In terms of monuments, Surin boasts a number of excellent ancient Khmer sanctuaries, while the province is also known for a variety of handicrafts, most notably traditional silverware.

City Attractions

Phraya Surin Phakdi Si Narong (Changwang Phum) Monument

This is dedicated to the first Lord of the City and is located at the southern entrance to the city where the original inner wall once stood.

Wat Burapharam

On Krung Si Nai Road near the provincial hall, the temple enshrines the city's sacred Buddha image of Luang Pho Phra Chi, which dates from the latter half of the 18th century when Surin was founded.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Phanom Sawai Forest Park

Located 14 km. along the way to Amphoe Prasat and a further 6 km. off to the right, the park features a large Buddha image and three peaks. The view from the top is quite spectacular.

Silverware and Silk Villages

These villages of Ban Khwao Sinarin, Ban Chok and Ban Sado, all located near each other some 4 km. off Highway 214 between Km. 14 and 15, are noted for their fine silverware and silk products.

Prasat Hin Ban Phluang

Some 30 km. south of town, this small ancient Khmer

Phraya Surin Phakdi Si Narong

Wat Burapharam





Prasat Hin Ban Phluang



Prasat Si Khoraphum

sanctuary is known for its detailed decorative designs. The site comprises four buildings on a rectangular laterite base, each decorated with floral and human figure designs.

Prasat Ta Muean

Located 12 km. from Ban Ta Miang on the Thai-Cambodian border, these are arguable the most evocative of Surin's ancient Khmer ruins. The site comprises three separate sanctuaries within a few hundred metres of each other: Prasat Ta Muean itself, a relatively small monument built in the late 12th or early 13th century; Ta Muean Tot, a "healing station" consisting of an entrance pavilion, mondop and main sanctuary; and Prasat Ta Muean Thom, a walled complex of sandstone blocks on a laterite base.

Prasat Si Khoraphum

At Tambon Ra-ngeang between Km. 34 and 35 on Highway 226, this 12th century sanctuary has five buildings on the same base, each about 30-metres high. Designs adorn the door columns and lintels.

Prasat Phumipon

In Tambon Dom, 10 km. from the district office on Sangkha-Buachet Road, this is the oldest Khmer sanctuary in Thailand, dating from the 7th or 8th century, although the ruins are otherwise unimpressive.

Elephant Village

The inhabitants of Ban Ta Klang village, on Highway 214, belong to the Suai group, a people traditionally renowned for their skill in capturing, training and raising elephants. An elephant museum here displays a complete elephant skeleton, tools used to capture elephants and elephant-raising techniques, along with a history of elephants in Surin.

Special Events

Surin Elephant Roundup

3rd Week of November

Visitors from around the world flock to see this grand event. The shows include capturing elephants, a tug-of-war between elephant and men, an elephant soccer match, elephant dances, a parade, elephants at war, and cultural performances.

Shopping

Best buys in Surin include silk, hand-woven cotton clothes, rattan basketry and silverware.

How To Get There

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Saraburi, from there Highway 2 to Nakhon Ratchasima, and then Highway 226 to Surin via Buri Ram, a total distance of 457 km.

By Bus

Buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road to Surin every day. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66
Website: www.transport.co.th

By Rail

Trains depart from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Railway Station to Surin daily. Tel: 1690, 0 2220 4334
Website: www.railway.co.th

Surin Elephant Roundup





Candle Procession Festival

Ubon Ratchathani

...the province is known for its strong Buddhist tradition, and distinctive folk culture witnessed especially in the local cuisine, handicrafts and traditional events such as the annual Candle Festival.



Wat Thung Si Mueang



Wat Mahawanaram

With a total area of 15,517 sq. km., Ubon Ratchathani is the easternmost of the I-san provinces, bordered in the east by the Mekong River and Lao P.D.R. and by Cambodia to the south.

The provincial capital, 629 km. from Bangkok, stands on the banks of the Mun River and is one of the Northeast's largest cities. As a whole, the province is known for its strong Buddhist tradition, and distinctive folk culture witnessed especially in the local cuisine, handicrafts and traditional events such as the annual Candle Festival. The Mun River and the bordering Mekong River provide some picturesque natural scenery.

City Attractions

Thung Si Mueang

This open ground in the middle of the city is a recreation area and venue for festive celebrations. The monument of the city's founder is also located here.

Wat Thung Si Mueang

Located on Luang Road, the temple was built in the reign of King Rama III (1824-1851) and is notable for its beautiful ordination hall in the Northeastern architectural style, the scripture repository located in the middle of a pond, and the mural paintings.

Wat Si Ubon Rattanaram

This royal temple, on Upparat Road beside the City Hall, has an ordination hall in the same style as that of the Marble Temple in Bangkok, and enshrines the city's most sacred image.

Ubon Ratchathani National Museum

Located on Khuean Thani Road, the museum offers an excellent introduction to the history, art and traditional culture of the province from prehistory to modern times. Open Wednesday-Sunday from 9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

Wat Chaeng

On Sapphasit Road, this temple boasts one of the oldest ordination halls in the province and is a fine, well-preserved example of Northeastern-style religious architecture.

Wat Mahawanaram

Also on Sapphasit Road, this is another venerable temple enshrining the revered Buddha image of Phra Chao Yai Indra Plaeng.

Wat Supattanaram

Built in 1853, this temple on the bank of the Mun River is remarkable for its ordination hall which blends Thai, Chinese and European architectural styles. The presiding Buddha image is also worthy of note.

Hat Wat Tai

This small sandy island in the middle of the Mun River on the southern edge of town is a popular picnic spot.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Wat Ban Na Mueang

Situated 5 km. from town, the temple has a beautiful ordination hall built of ceramics in the shape of the Suphannahong Royal Barge.

Wat Nong Bua

On the outskirts of town along Highway 212, this is a striking, almost exact copy of the famous Mahabodhi stupa in Bodhgaya, India.

Ban Kan Lueang Archaeological Site

Situated at Wat Ban Kan Lueang, 3 km. from town along Highway 212 and right for 2 km. on Highway 2050 for 2 km. The Fine Arts Department excavated the site in 1992 and finds include implements, ornaments, beads, pottery and iron axes, evidence of a settlement that is believed to date back at least 2,000 years.

Hat Khu Duea

This is a river beach area, with thatched pavilions and restaurants, on the banks of the Mun River north of town.

Ban Pa Ao

Located 21 km. from town off Highway 23, this village is more than 200 years old, making it one of the oldest in Ubon Ratchathani, and has a rich tradition of silk weaving and making bronzeware.

Wat Nong Pa Phong

About 6 km. from town, this forest temple and meditation centre was founded by the revered ecclesiastic, the late Achan Cha, who taught Buddhist meditation techniques to many foreigners.

Wat Phukhao Kaeo

Situated on a hillside in Phibun Mangsahan, 43 km. from Ubon Ratchathani along Highway 217, the temple has an ordination hall built entirely from ceramics. Inside are replicas of the Buddha relics found in Thailand.

Kaeng Saphue

This is the most beautiful cataract in Ubon Ratchathani, located on the Mun River near Phibun Mangsahan district office, about 45 km. from town along Highway 217.

Khuean Sirindhorn

Located 70 km. from the provincial capital along Highway 217, the dam, built to generate electricity and to facilitate agriculture, offers a tranquil recreation area.

Chong Mek Checkpoint

This Thai-Lao border post, at the end of the 89-km-long Highway 217, is scheduled to become a major gateway to Indochina, linked via a 38-km. road to Pakse in southern Lao P.D.R.

Kaeng Tana National Park

Reached via Highway 222, the 20,000 acre national park contains interesting rock formations and waterfalls, notably the attractive Kaeng Tana cataract.

Tham Heo Sin Chai

Located off Highway 222, about 7 km. before Amphoe Khong

Wat Phukhao Kaeo





Kaeng Saphue



Pha Taem National Park

Chiam, the cave is a Buddhist centre with a beautiful reclining Buddha image, in front of which a waterfall cascades down a cliff.

Wat Tham Khu Ha Sawan

This temple, on Highway 222 about 6 km. before Amphoe Khong Chiam, was the residence of a revered I-san ecclesiastic, Luang Pu Kam Khaning Chula Mani. The site offers scenic views of the Mekong River and Lao P.D.R.

The Two-coloured River

Here, in Amphoe Khong Chiam, about 84 km. from town, the blue water from the Mun River flows into the muddy brown Mekong River.

Sao Chaliang

Located on Highway 2112, about 11 km. from the office on the route to Pha Taem, Sao Chaliang is a natural formation of rocks forming a mushroom-like shape. Fossilised sea shells, pebbles, and sand grains can be seen in the stone slabs. Geologists believe the area must have been on the seabed about a million years ago.

Pha Taem National Park

Covering an area of 140 sq. km., the park is comprised of a plateau and hills, along with sheer cliffs. Most of the trees are deciduous, while flowering plants grow using the rocky ground. Places of interest within the park include Pha Taem, a cliff face on which can be seen prehistoric rock paintings dating back 3,000-4,000 years.

Tham Muet

Located at Ban Sa Som, this cave, some 4-metres wide and 6-metres high, houses numerous carved Buddha images.

Namtok Soi Sawan, Thung Na Mueang and Saeng Chan

These three cascades, essentially the same waterway at different elevations, are located beside Highway 2112. The first (Soi Sawan) is some 30 km. from Amphoe Khong Chiam. The settings of each are lush and verdant.

Phu Chong-Na Yoi National Park

Accessed some 4 km. from Na Chaluai district office, the 686-sq-km park forms part of the so-called “Emerald Triangle”, a verdant forested area bordering Thailand, Lao P.D.R. and Cambodia. Among the park’s features is the scenic Huai Luang Waterfall. There are also opportunities for viewing wildlife at night, especially deer and tigers.

Special Events

Kaeng Saphue Songkran Festival

13-15 April

The traditional Thai New Year celebrated in I-san style beside Kaeng Saphue.

Candle Procession Festival

July

Celebrated on Asalha Puja Day and Khao Phansa (Buddhist Lent) Day, this is the largest religious ceremony in Ubon Ratchathani and focuses on giant beeswax candles made for the lent period with processions, entertainment and religious merit-making.

Shopping

Ubon Ratchathani is noted for its *Khit*-designed pillows, traditional *Pha Khao Ma* cloth, silk, fold-up mats, and basketry.

How To Get There

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Saraburi, from there Highway 2 to Nakhon Ratchasima, and then Highway 226 to Ubon Ratchathani via Buri Ram, Surin and Si Sa Ket, a total distance of 629 km.

By Bus

Buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road to Ubon Ratchathani daily. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66
Website: www.transport.co.th

By Rail

Trains depart from Bangkok’s Hua Lamphong Railway Station to Ubon Ratchathani daily. Tel: 1690, 0 2220 4334
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Air

Thai Airways operates daily flights from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani. Tel: 1566, 0 2356 1111
Website: www.thaiairways.com



Phrathat Anon, Wat Mahathat

Yasothon

It is famous, however, for growing high-quality jasmine rice and for its annual Rocket Festival, the largest event of its kind in the region.

One of I-san's newest and smallest provinces, with an area of 4,161 sq. km., Yasothon is a little off the beaten track.

It is famous, however, for growing high-quality jasmine rice and for its annual Rocket Festival, the largest event of its kind in the region. The provincial capital is 530 km. from Bangkok, though access is easy from Ubon Ratchathani, some 100 km. to the southeast.

City Attractions

Phaya Thaen Public Park

This landscaped park, on Chaeng Sanit Road, is named after the rain god, Phaya Thaen, and is the venue for the annual rain invoking Rocket Festival in May, as well as other major festivals such as Songkran.

Wat Mahathat

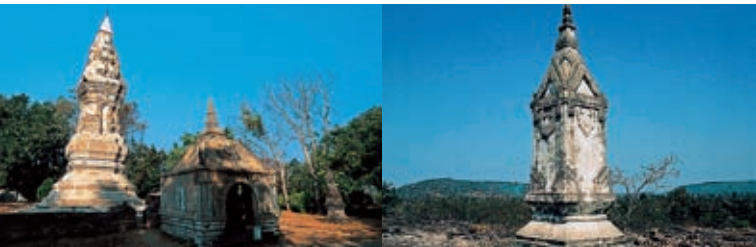
This important temple is primarily interesting for the highly revered Phrathat Anon, a Lao-style stupa believed to enshrine holy relics of Phra Anon, the Buddha's first disciple. Also in the temple compound is a scripture hall beautifully decorated with woodcarving and lacquer designs.

Chi River Beach

A popular local picnic spot, this 2-km. natural beach is formed by the receding level of the river during the dry season.

Scripture Hall, Wat Mahathat





Phrathat Kong Khao Noi

Phu Tham Phra

Out-Of-City Attractions

Phrathat Kong Khao Noi

Located at Tambon Tat Thong, some 2 km. from town along Yasothon-Udon Thani Road, this small square Ayutthaya-period pagoda is notable for its distinctive top, while the middle section has designs of doorways on all four sides.

Ban Si Than

Located 20 km. from Yasothon town on the way to Amnat Charoen, the village produces *Khit* pillows for which the province is renowned.

Phu Tham Phra

East of Ban Kut Hae, 12 km. from Loeng Nok Tha on Highway 212, this large cave houses countless sacred Buddha images.

Wat Song Pueai

Lying 21 km. from town on Highway 23 and a further 5 km. off to the right, the temple is interesting for its 8-metre high Buddha image, which is more than 200 years old. There is also a pagoda containing earth from Buddhist sites in India, as well as a museum with artefacts found at Dong Mueang Toei, an ancient Khmer city.

Dong Mueang Toei

Located 1 km. south of Ban Song Pueai, the ruins show traces of a religious building, a pool and a city wall, the site thought to have been inhabited during the pre-Angkor Chenla period prior to the rise of the Khmer.

Lord Buddha's Footprint

Located 6 km. west of the district on Highway 2083, the sacred footprint was originally found on a sand dune in the middle of the Chi River. The one-metre-tall laterite Buddha image can also be seen at the site.

Special Event

Rocket Festival

May

Celebrated over two days in the middle of the month with a procession and the firing of giant home-made rockets, the Festival both promotes social unity and serves as an invocation to the rain god Phaya Thaen.

Shopping

Local handicrafts include *Khit* pillows from Ban Si Than and basketry in the form of rice containers that are widely made at Ban Thung Nang Ok and Ban Na Samai in Amphoe Mueang.

How To Get There

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Saraburi, from there Highway 2 to Ban Phai, and then Highway 23 to Yasothon via Borabue, Maha Sarakham and Roi Et, a total distance of 531 km.

By Bus

Bangkok-Yasothon buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road daily. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66
Website: www.transport.co.th

By Rail

There is no direct train service to Yasothon. Visitors can take a train to Ubon Ratchathani, then continue the trip by bus.
Tel: 1690, 0 2220 4334 Website: www.railway.co.th

By Air

There is no direct flight to Yasothon. Visitors can fly from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani and continue the trip by bus.

Khit Pillows Making

Rocket Festival





Prasat Ban Prasat

Si Sa Ket

...its provincial capital lying 571 km. from Bangkok, is another of the northeastern provinces with a strong Khmer influence in the past, as witnessed in the ruins of several ancient sanctuaries.

South of Yasothon, Si Sa Ket covering an area of 8,840 sq. km. and with its provincial capital lying 571 km. from Bangkok, is another of the northeastern provinces with a strong Khmer influence in the past, as witnessed in the ruins of several ancient sanctuaries.

The most spectacular site is the Temple of Ruins Preah Vihear, which although situated just over the border in Cambodia is only conveniently accessed via Si Sa Ket.

City Attractions

Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Park

This large public park, set inside an agricultural college 2 km. from the provincial hall, is planted with *Lamduan*, a fragrant flowering shrub that is the official plant of the province and blooms from March to April.

City Pillar Shrine

Located near the provincial hall, the city pillar is housed in a square shrine decorated with marble and stained glass.

Out-Of-City Attractions

Phrathat Rueang Rong

Located 8 km. from town on Si Sa Ket-Yang Chum Noi Road, the site has a traditional design and is used for religious ceremonies. There is also a museum with cultural displays relating to I-san's ethnic minorities such as the Lao, Khmer, Suai, and Yoe.

Phrathat Rueang Rong



Prasat Hin Wat Sa Kamphaeng Yai

At Ban Kamphaeng, 22 km. from town, this large Khmer sanctuary has three buildings built on the same base, the main middle one being finely proportioned and still intact. Carved lintels, Buddha images and bronze artwork have been found here. The sanctuary was built in the 11th century in honour of the Hindu God Shiva and later converted to a Buddhist temple.

Prasat Hin Wat Sa Kamphaeng Noi

Located at Ban Klang, 14 km. from the district office on the road to Si Sa Ket town, the site consists of a stupa, a building made of laterite and a pool. Originally built in the 11th century, it was expanded in the 13th century to serve as a community medical centre.

Prasat Ban Prasat

This Khmer structure, 39 km. from Si Sa Ket town and a further 7 km. along the road to the right, comprises three 11th century square buildings with pointed tops that were erected on the same laterite base.

Prasat Prang Ku

Standing 10 km. from Prang Ku district office, this is a small Khmer monument built of large laterite slabs more than a thousand years ago. To the front is a large pool that is a habitat of waterfowl in the dry season.

Prasat Hin Ban Samo

The site, 10 km. southeast of Prang Ku, comprises a square building with a carved lintel above a fake doorway on the south side and is surrounded by a laterite wall. An ancient pool lies beyond the wall.

Pha Mo I-daeng



Prasat Hin Wat Sa Kamphaeng Yai

Wat Pa Maha Chedi Kaeo

Also known as Wat Lan Khuat, the temple is about 70 km. from town and is notable for its decorations made of numerous coloured bottles.

Prasat Tamnak Sai

Located 19 km. from Khun Han district office on the way to Namtok Samrong Kiat, the site has a single square building made of brick, while the lintel and doorway are of sandstone. Two stone *Singha* (lions) guard the entrance.

Namtok Samrong Kiat and Namtok Huai Chan

Namtok Samrong Kiat, 20 km. from Khun Han district office, is a medium-sized cataract with a rock plateau. Namtok Huai Chan, 24 km. from the district office on Kanthrom-Ban Samrong Kiat Road, drops down several rocky levels.

Prang Sila Chong Don Tuan

Situated on a steep cliff in the Dong Rak mountain range near the Thai-Cambodian border, 38 km. from Kantharalak district office, this small Khmer site has a square stupa built of brick, a doorway of stone and a lion guarding the entrance.

Pha Mo I-daeng

At the end of Highway 221, 98 km. from Si Sa Ket town, this is a wide rock plateau on a high cliff overlooking the Thai-Cambodian border with good views of the Dong Rak mountain range and the Temple of Ruins Preah Vihear. Housed in a chapel here is the Nak Prok Buddha image and a 10th-century Khmer-style bas-relief, the oldest of its kind in Thailand.

Temple of Ruins Preah Vihear

This spectacular hilltop Khmer sanctuary, built between the 10th and 12th centuries, is physically within Cambodia but is only easily accessible from Thailand, via a 2-km. footpath from Pha Mo I - daeng. In addition to the superb ruins of the sanctuary, the site also offers breathtaking views of the Cambodian lowlands.

Special Events

Si Phao Thai Si Sa Ket Festival

March

Held at the Somdet Phra Srinagarindra Park when the Lamduan flowers are in full bloom, the festival includes cultural performances by four different ethnic groups: the Khmer, Suai, Lao, and Yoe, a light-and-sound presentation about the city's founding, and handicraft sales.

Namtok Samrong Kiat



Namtok Huai Chan

Pha Mo I-daeng Half and Quarter Marathon

August

A popular uphill run from Phumisaron Village to Pha Mo I - daeng on the third Sunday of the month.

Shopping

Si Sa Ket's best known souvenirs include silk and cotton fabrics, and bamboo handicrafts.

How To Get There

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Saraburi, from there Highway 2 to Nakhon Ratchasima, and then along Highway 226 to Si Sa Ket via Buri Ram and Surin, a total distance of 571 km.

By Bus

Buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road to Si Sa Ket daily. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66
Website: www.transport.co.th

By Rail

Trains depart from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Railway Station to Si Sa Ket daily. Tel: 1690, 0 2220 4334
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Air

Visitors can fly from Bangkok to Ubon Ratchathani and continue the trip by bus. Thai Airways Tel: 1566, 0 2356 1111
Website: www.thaiairways.com



Chao Pho Phraya Lae Shrine

Chaiyaphum

The main attraction of the province is that it's somewhere different, somewhere off the well-trodden tourist path. It is also notable for the production of silk.

With an area of 12,778 sq. km. and with its capital 342 km. from Bangkok, Chaiyaphum lies in the geographical centre of Thailand, although, ironically, it is one of the country's more obscure and least known provinces.

It nonetheless has a long and interesting history, the area having once been under the sway of the Khmer, then in the 18th century was settled by a group of 200 Laotians who were brought here from Vientiane by Nai Lae, an official of the Lao court. The main attraction of the province is that it's somewhere different, somewhere off the well-trodden tourist path. It is also notable for the production of silk.

Attractions

Phraya Phakdi Chumphon Monument

By the Sun Ratchakan roundabout on the way into the city, the monument honours the city's founder.

Chao Pho Phraya Lae Shrine

A large tamarind tree on the banks of Nong Pla Thao, 3 km. from the city, is said to be where the ruler of Chaiyaphum, Chao Pho Phraya Lae, died fighting against an invasion from Vientiane in 1826.

Tat Ton National Park

About 20 km. from town on Highway 2051, this 218-sq. km. park on the edge of the Phu Laen Kha mountain is noted for its extremely scenic waterfalls of Tat Ton, Tat Klang and Pha Iang.

Prang Ku

At Ban Nong Bua, 3 km. from town, Prang Ku is a Khmer-style monument built in the 13th century. The main stupa is square and beside it is a Buddha image from the Dvaravati period (6th-10th centuries). In front of the chedi and surrounded by a wall is a laterite building with door and window frames, as well as lintel and columns made of sandstone. Beyond the wall lies a ceremonial pool.

Prang Ku

Tat Ton National Park



Phu Phra

Located at Ban Nakaisa, Tambon Na Siao, this small mountain has a cliff face with drawings of Buddha images dating from the early Ayutthaya period.

Ban Khwao

This village, 13 km. from town along Highway 225, is famous for silk weaving, especially distinctively patterned, tie-dyed *Mut Mi* silk. Here visitors can see the whole process from the propagation of silkworms to weaving and the finished product.

Pa Hin Ngam National Park

Scattered throughout the park, located in Amphoe Thep Sathit, are large rocks of unusual shapes, variously resembling a nail, a serpent's head and an ancient castle. From Sut Phaen Din, a steep cliff dividing the Northeast and Central regions, visitors can get a panoramic view of the surrounding area.

Sai Thong National Park

The park covers 340 sq. km. of the Phang Hoei mountain range, with the park headquarters located at Tambon Wang Takhe in Amphoe Nong Bua Rawe. The main attraction of the park is Namtok Sai Thong, located 1 km. from the park office. The fall tumbles 100 metres over rocks.

Nongnut Orchid Farm

Located 1 km. from Phu Khieo on Phu Khieo-Chum Phae Road, the 10-acre farm is noted for its *Oncidium* orchid, the winner of an international competition.

Phrathat Nong Sam Muen

Reached from Chaiyaphum via Highway 201 to Ban Nong Song Hong and then along Highway 2055 to Ban Kaeng, this splendid 45-metre-high square-based stupa dates from the 16th or 17th centuries and blends Lanna, Lao and Ayutthaya architectural styles. It is constructed over the site of an ancient city of the Dvaravati period.

Silk Products at Ban Khwao



Phu Khiao Wildlife Reserve

The reserve has an area of 1,560 sq. km. spread over a sandstone mountain range with high cliffs. The verdant jungle is the watershed of Chi River and is home to an abundance of wildlife, including over 350 bird species. The most interesting spot is Thung Kamang, a grass field that is the grazing ground for many animals. Permission to visit must be obtained by writing to P.O. Box 3, Chum Phae Post Office, Khon Kaen, or contact the National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department Tel: 0 2562 0760.

Special Events

Chao Pho Phraya Lae Festival

January

The festival's highlight is a procession to pay homage to Phraya Lae and features a parade of elephants. There are also exhibitions and stalls selling local products.

Candle Procession Festival

July

This Buddhist ceremony, with a procession and a candle-carrying contest, is similar to that held in Ubon Ratchathani.

Shopping

Among the best buys are *Mut Mi* silk, *Khit* cloth, *Khwan* pillows and other woven products.

How To Get There

By Car

From Bangkok, take Highway 1 to Saraburi, Highway 2 to Sikhio and then Highway 201 to Chaiyaphum via Dan Khun Thot and Chaturat, a total distance of 342 km.

By Bus

Buses depart from Bangkok Bus Terminal on Kamphaeng Phet II Road daily. Tel: 0 2936 2852-66
Website: www.transport.co.th

By Rail

Trains depart from Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Railway Station to Bua Yai Railway Station, which is 51 km. from Chaiyaphum. Tel: 1690, 0 2220 4330
Website: www.railway.co.th

By Air

Visitors can fly from Bangkok to Nakhon Ratchasima or Khon Kaen and continue the trip by bus. Thai Airways Tel: 1566, 0 2356 1111 Website: www.thaiairways.com



Wat Tham Saeng Phet

Amnat Charoen

Amnat Charoen is one of Thailand's newest provinces, created in 1993...

Tucked in at the southern end of the I-san plateau, 583 km. from Bangkok, Amnat Charoen is one of Thailand's newest provinces, created in 1993 when it was upgraded from being a district of Ubon Ratchathani.

Attractions

Phra Mongkhon Ming Mueang

This 20-metre high Buddha image, the most sacred in the province, is enshrined at Wat Dan Phra Bat, located 3 km. from the provincial capital. The temple also houses the Phra La Hai Buddha image, discovered in a pond in 1962, when the temple was under renovation, and widely believed to bring good fortune to worshippers.

Wat Tham Saeng Phet

This is a meditation sanctuary, located 14 km. from town, and consists of the hilltop chapel with a principal Buddha image, and is set amidst rocks that reflect the light and sparkle like diamonds.

Wat Phra Lao Thep Nimit

The temple, 40 km. from Amnat Charoen town, has a Lanna-style chapel that enshrines an 18th- century Buddha statue that, with its blend of Lanna and Lao influences, is considered one of the most beautiful images in the Northeast.

Phra Mongkhon Ming Mueang





Wat Phra Lao Thep Nimit

Wat Chaiya Tikaram

Located in Ban Phon Mueang, the temple houses a 55-centimetre-tall Buddha image in Lao style.

Phu Sa Dok Bua National Park

Accessed between Km. 24 and 26 of Highway 2227, 60 km. from Amnat Charoen town, the park covers a mountainous area of 252 sq. km. where the fertile jungle is the habitat of a great number of different plants.

Amphoe Chanuman

About 80 km. from the provincial capital, this is a tranquil area beside the Mekong River set amid fine natural scenery. Rapids surface during the dry season (February-May).

Ban Kham Phra Handicraft Centre

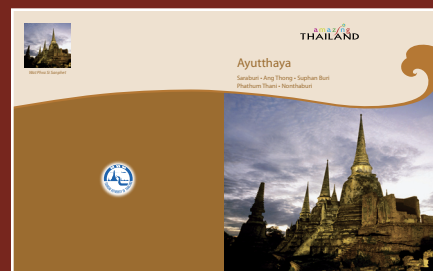
On Hua Taphan-Amnat Charoen Road, 37 km. from the provincial capital, the centre offers a selection of handicraft products, notably *khit* fabric and items made from the material.

Special Event

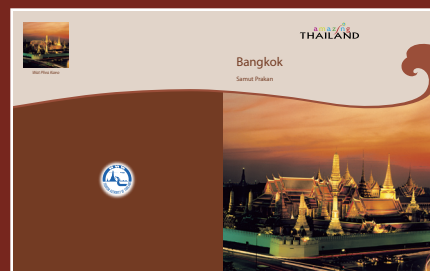
Boat Racing

November

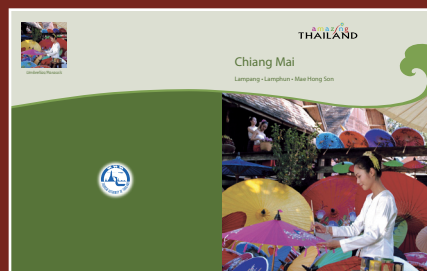
Held in front of Chanuman district office, the festival features decorative boats from Lao P.D.R., as well as neighbouring provinces.



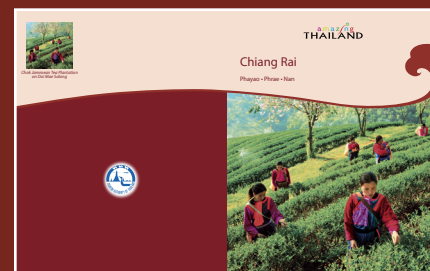
Ayutthaya



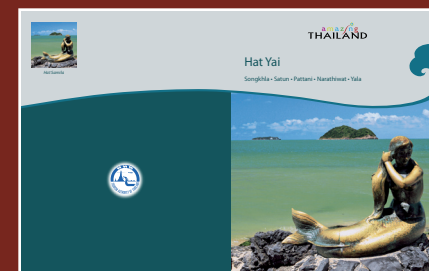
Bangkok



Chiang Mai



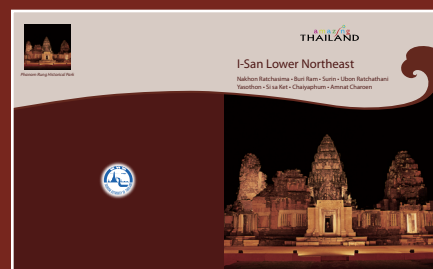
Chiang Rai



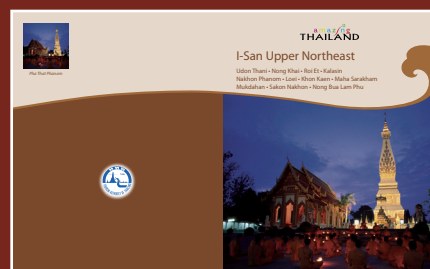
Hat Yai



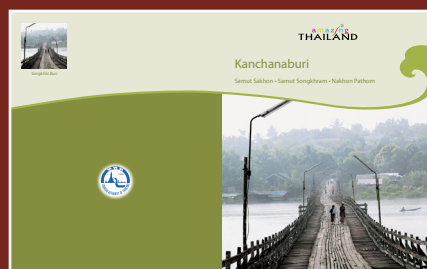
Hua Hin & Cha-am



I-San Lower Northeast



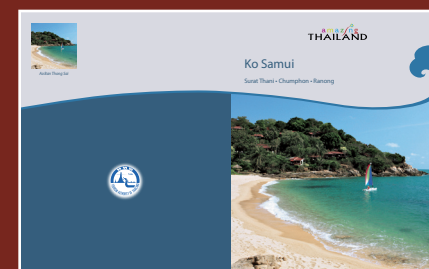
I-San Upper Northeast



Kanchanaburi



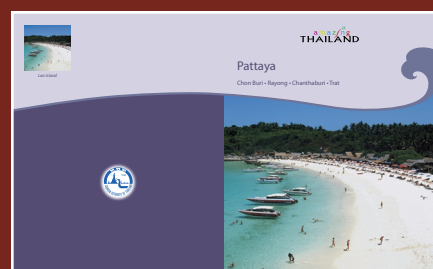
Ko Chang



Ko Samui



Krabi



Pattaya



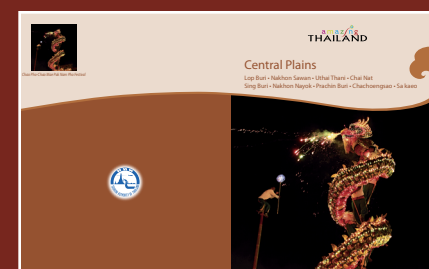
Phuket



Sukhothai



Tak



Central Plains



Trang

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Produced by Promotional Material Production Division,
Marketing Services Department, Tourism Authority of Thailand for free distribution.

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