

Budget WorldClass Drives

CHIANG MAI - MAE HONG SON LOOP

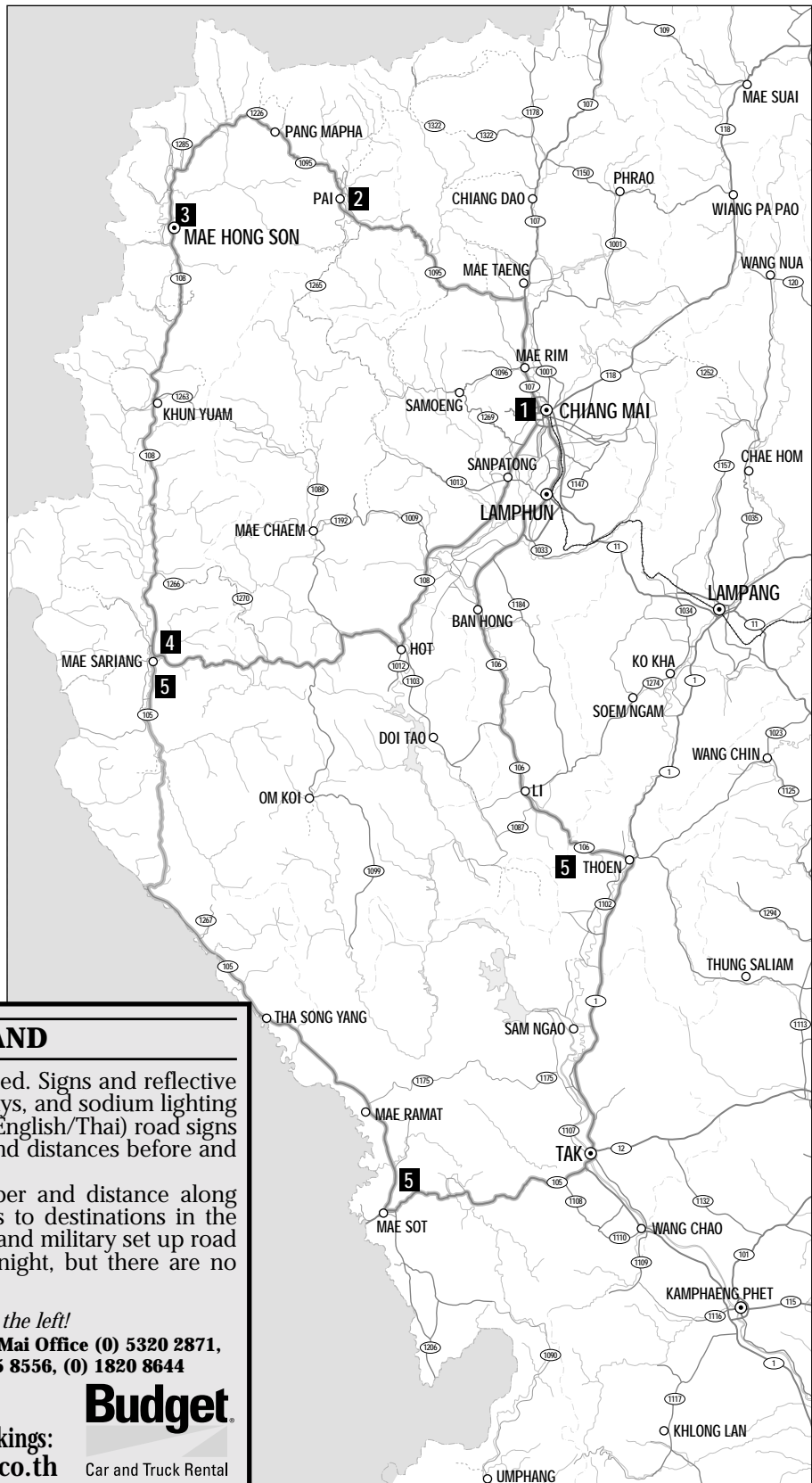
Highlights of the Drive

The Mae Hong Son Loop is a classic drive that crosses and recrosses the spectacular watershed between the River Ping and the Salween in Burma-Myanmar.

Starting in Chiang Mai, the cultural and historical capital of Northern Thailand, a high route crosses to the small town of Pai, a very popular starting point for trekking into the hills to see the Lahu, Hmong, Lisu and Karen hill tribes common to this region.

West of Pai the route goes through a rugged, mountainous territory with sunken valleys hemmed by cliffs penetrated by deep caves — an area that offers many opportunities for adventure sports amidst a landscape of outstanding natural beauty. Rejoining the Pai River Valley near the provincial capital Mae Hong Son, the highway provides the main link to this culturally distinct enclave with its Shan and Karen peoples.

Three return routes offer choices that can take you on scenic routes directly back to Chiang Mai, or can take you as far as south as Phitsanulok via Sukhothai. Choose your route and then enjoy your drive through some of the most spectacular territory in the Kingdom.



ROADS IN THAILAND

All main and most minor roads are sealed. Signs and reflective markers warn of hazards on major highways, and sodium lighting illuminates major intersections. Bilingual (English/Thai) road signs indicate destinations, highway numbers and distances before and after intersections.

Kilometre stones show highway number and distance along the road on the front face, and distances to destinations in the direction of travel on the side. The police and military set up road check-points on highways, especially at night, but there are no security problems.

Please remember to drive on the left!

Emergency Assistance 1-800-BUDGET, Chiang Mai Office (0) 5320 2871, (0) 1980 8723, Phitsanulok Office, (0) 5525 8556, (0) 1820 8644

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CHIANG MAI PAI

While it is best to see the sights of inner Chiang Mai on foot, or to hire a pedicab, your car becomes most useful to see the sights around Chiang Mai. These include Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep, a must for all who visit Chiang Mai, and the Mae Sa Valley, a scenic valley with so many attractions that the area merits at least a full-day if not a night at one of the numerous country resorts (see sidebar and city map section 4).

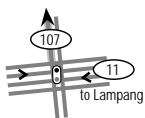
Once you are heading north on the route proper, take the alternative route from KM18 north of Mae Rim through the countryside following the River Hao for a leisurely route which joins H1095 to Pai near KM10 (see sidebar).

Leave Chiang Mai in good time, however, for the best scenery along the route is to be found in the last 60 kms, particular from KM43 onwards as the road reaches 1350m in altitude before descending into the valley of the River Pai.

With its wooden buildings and small town atmosphere, Pai has become a popular destination for back-packer tourists, and low-cost accommodation is plentiful. The town itself is Shan and Haw Chinese, but Lisu hill-tribe folk can often be seen in the market. The surrounding valley is a pretty, rural area good for walking or just relaxing before or after treks into the nearby hills.

Doi Suthep-Pui National Park Ticket

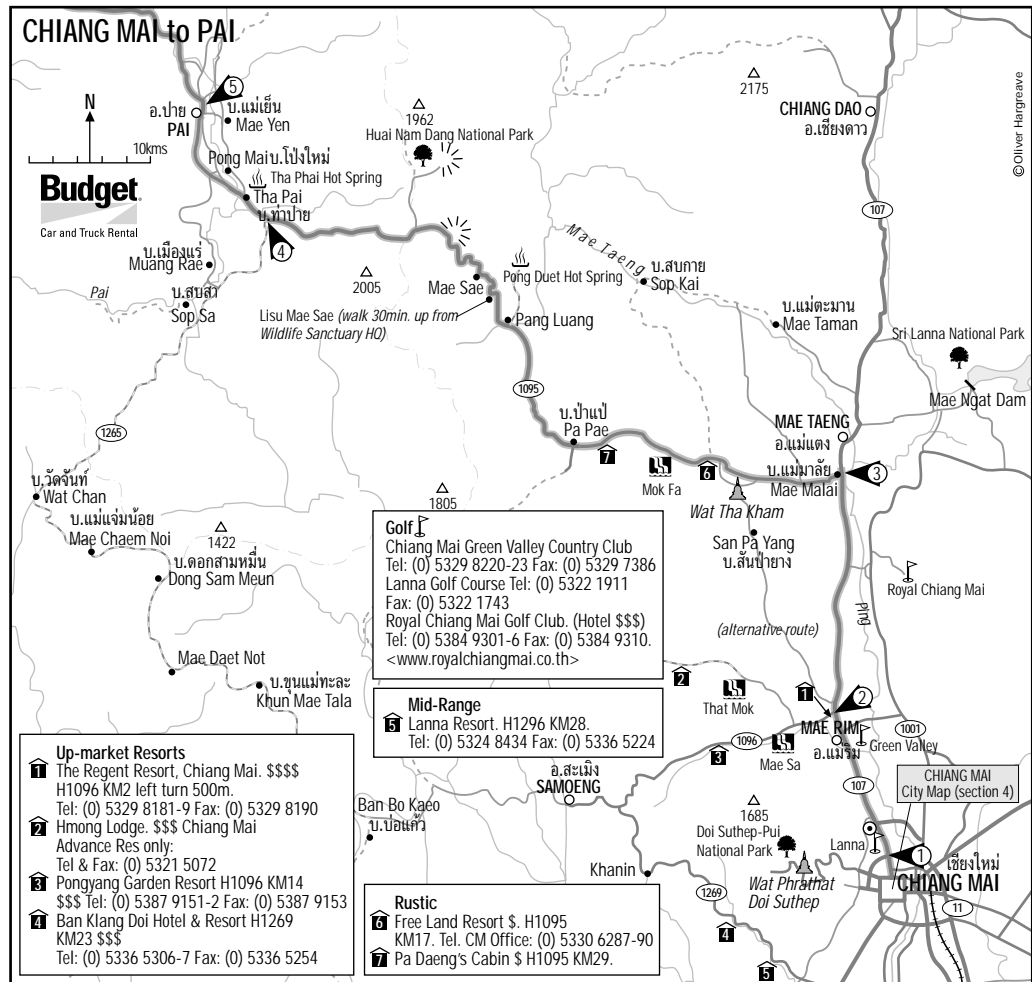
If you buy an entrance ticket at either Doi Suthep-Pui National Park, Mae Sa Falls, That Mok Falls or Mok Fa falls, you may visit any of these sites within the same day.



POINTER ONE

The intersection of Chotana Road, Highway (H)107 and the Chiang Mai - Lampang Superhighway.

KM16. Darapirom Palace Museum. Turn left just north of the footbridge across the highway, and continuing straight into the Dararatsmi Camp of the Border Patrol Police. Keep going straight till you see a colonial style villa to the left.



The museum details the life of Princess Dararatsmi, a consort of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V). (09:00-17:00 closed Mondays. Adults 50bht.)



POINTER TWO

H107 KM17 intersection with H1096 to Samoeng. See Mae Sa Valley Loop sidebar.

The Mae Sa Valley Loop

At KM17 H1096 goes west to the Mae Sa Valley and Samoeng (38 kms). The upland valley of the Mae Sa is 700 metres in altitude, making it a prime location for tourist attractions and resorts near Chiang Mai.

Attractions include orchid farms (go left at KM2 for Sainumphung Orchid & Butterfly Farm or try the Mae Ram Orchid Farm KM6), waterfalls (KM6 & 11), the Mae Sa Elephant Camp (KM10), the Queen Sirikit Botanical Gardens (KM12) and the Pong Yaeng Elephant Camp (2 kms from left turn at KM16-17).

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE TO PAI VIA WAT CHAN (4WD!)

If taking this route from Chiang Mai, start very early and avoid delaying in the Mae Sa Valley in order to reach Pai by nightfall. Avoid this route in the rainy season as muddy sections, particularly around KM71 can make this "all-weather" road difficult.

From Samoeng the route follows a cobbled lane north to Ban Mae Sap Nua (5 kms.) and is sealed to near Ban Mae Yang Ha (30 kms.). The road continues on a winding highland route passing Hmong villages (Ban Mae Chae -40 kms., Ban Mae Tala -54 kms., and Ban Don Sam Meun -75kms.) Ban Mae Chaem Noi (84 kms.) is a large Karen village in the middle of pine country.

From Wat Chan, which is in the middle of an area famous for its pine forests, H1265 is an all-weather dirt road that joins H1095 at KM.85. Cross the River Pai approx 33 kms. from Wat Chan for a slightly shorter route to Pai on the Pai-Muang Paeng road.

A little west of KM4, a sealed road to the north leads to That Mok Falls (9kms), From there a dirt road climbs up to the village of Ban Pang Hai and Hmong Lodge (16kms)

H1096 passes into the Samoeng Valley at KM.23, from where there are spectacular views west. Dirt roads (4WD!) lead to White Hmong villages in the hills of the Doi Suthep-Pui National range that surround the Mae Sa Valley. The small market town of Samoeng lies in a narrow valley with pleasing rural scenery.

Return to Chiang Mai from Samoeng via H1269 or continue from Samoeng to Wat Chan



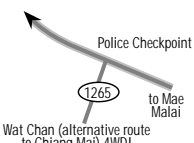
POINTER THREE

(H107, KM36) Mae Malai market at the start of H1095 to Pai and Mae Hong Son

KM18-19 south turn for Mok Fa Falls. 2kms (Entry fee included in Doi-Suthep Pui National Park ticket)

KM42 north turn for Pong Duet Hot Springs 6kms. (200 Bht. gives access to Huai Nam Dang National Park at KM67 on the same day only)

KM67 Huai Nam Dang National Park (6kms). Dawn viewpoint towards Chiang Dao mountain. (200 bht. Adults. Tents available for rent: park information Tel: (0) 5347 1669)



POINTER FOUR

H1095 KM85. Start of H1265 to Wat Chan

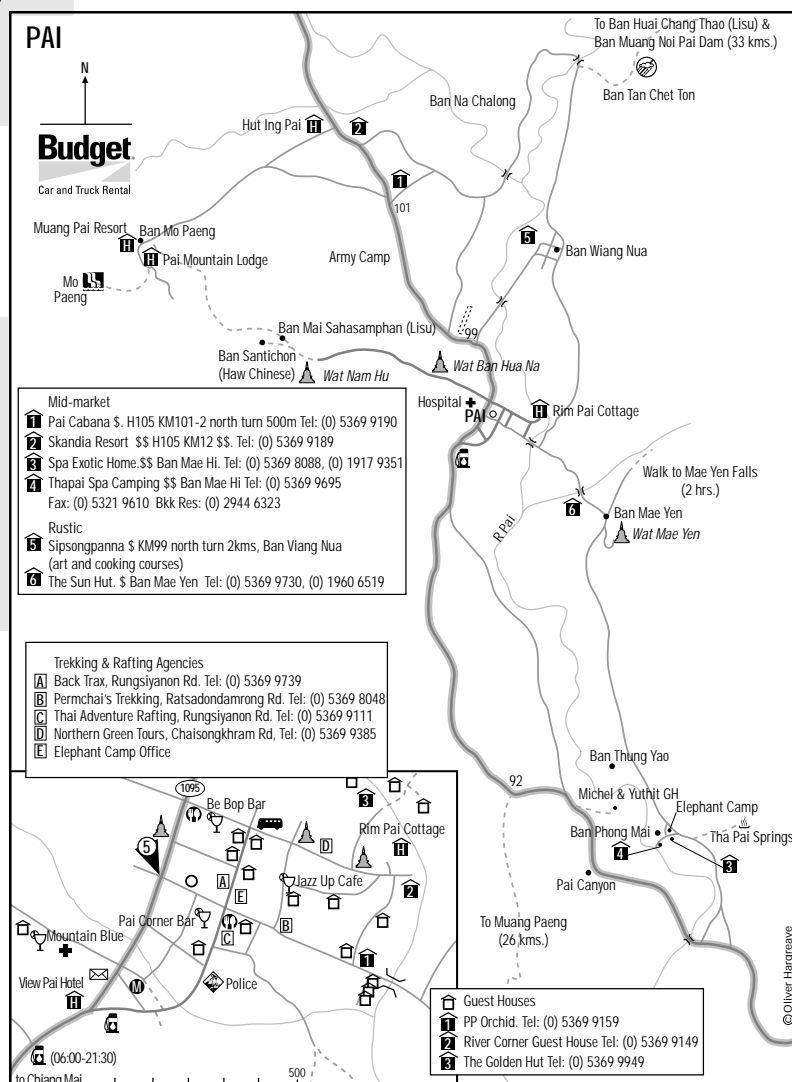
KM87-88 north turn on concrete road to Thaphai Hot Springs (2kms. Though part of Huai Nam Dang National Park, there is no charge at present) as well as two resorts with open-air hot mineral baths.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE ALONG THE HAO VALLEY (23KMS)

North of Pointer 2 you will cross a bridge (KM18) and then enter a bend to the left. Turn left through an arch at the sign to Thai Buffalo Training Camp. The camp is on the left after 1km (show times: 08:00/09:00/15:00/16:00 Adults 150bht. Tel: 0 5330 1628). Follow (do not go left at intersection after 1.5kms.) this rural route, which at times is reduced to a narrow concrete lane. Rural temples of note are at Wat San Pa Yang (KM17) and Wat Tha Kham (by the Bo Tree at KM22). The route eventually joins H1095 between KM10&11, where-upon you turn left (west) to continue to Pai (this route misses pointer 3).

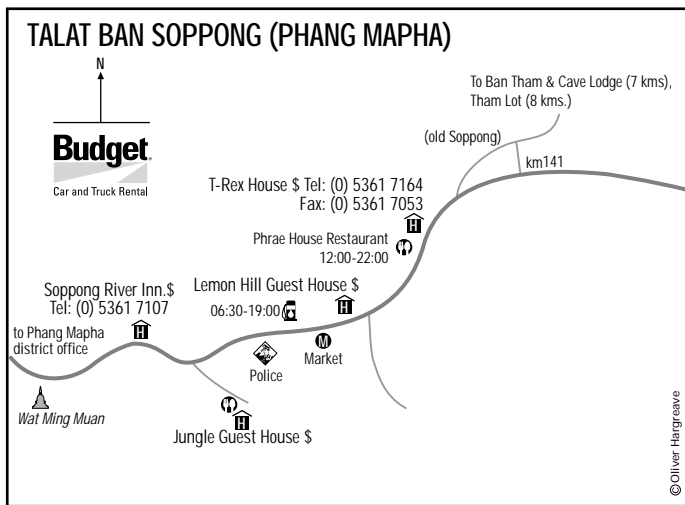
ACCOMMODATION

- Hut Ing Pai ๕๕, H1095 KM102-3 south turn 300m. Tel: (0) 5369 9781-2. Bkk Res: (0) 2702 7208. <www.hutingpai.com>
- Muang Pai Resort. ๕๕. H1095 KM101-2 left turn 5kms. Tel: CM office (0) 5327 0906, Fax: (0) 5327 2895. Resort (0) 5369 9988.
- Pai Mountain Lodge ๕๕, H1095 KM101-2 left turn 5kms. Tel: (0) 5369 9995, (0) 1950 1603
- Rim Pai Cottages ๕-๕๕, Chaisongkhram Rd, Pai Tel: (0) 5369 9133





KM141 A concrete road leads north Ban Tham Lot, where you turn right at the junction by the tree and go one kilometre to Tham Lot Cave. Villagers await with lanterns (100bht) and rafts (100bht) to escort you through the cave



(08:00-17:30). Cave Lodge nearby has comfortable rooms and offers canoe trips, expert speleology and information on adventures into the area.

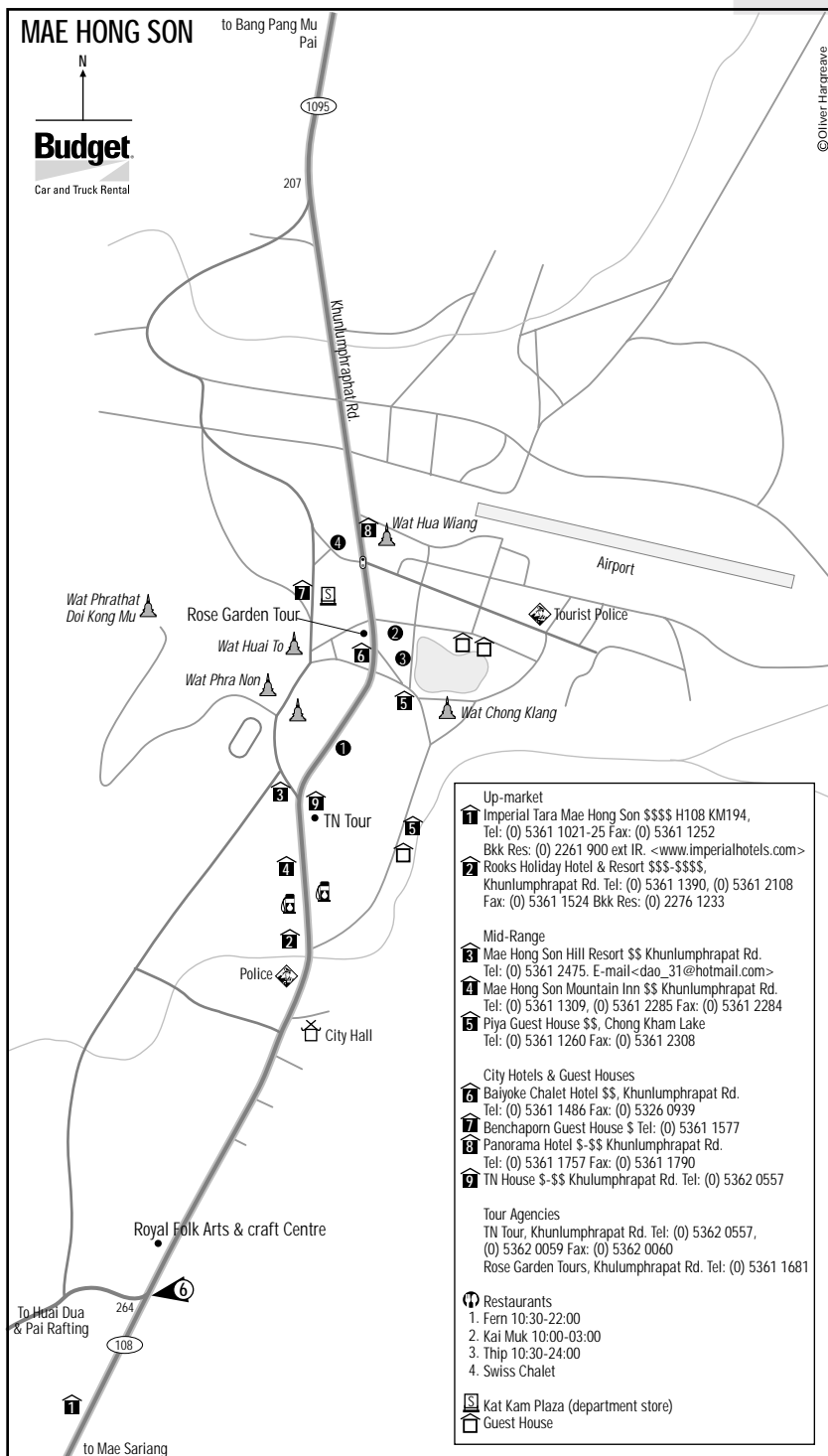
KM152 Sealed road to Mae La Na (4WD). The asphalt and dirt road passes the Lahu village of Chabo (3.5kms) before dropping down to the Shan village of Mae La Na (5.5kms). From there a dirt road continues north (4WD only), passing the Red Lahu villages of Ban Pha Charoen (8kms) and Yapanae (11.5).

A sign at the junction north of Chabo indicates distances to distant villages on a sealed road (sealed 4kms, 4WD only beyond!) that follows a spectacular ridge line north towards the border with Myanmar. Allow a full day for exploration.

KM166 dirt road to Wilderness Lodge (4WD 1.5kms-park at top of entrance track to lodge). Remote, rustic (\$) accommodation for nature lovers only. Walk and explore.

KM191-2 Tham Pla (Fish Cave). Part of the Tham Pla Nam Tok Pha Sua National Park (HQ is 9kms north on H1285), Tham Pla is a pleasant roadside halt (no charge at present). At KM92 a concrete lane to the right goes 2.2 kms. Turn left at its conclusion in a T junction and right at the second T junction. Note the Ban Na Restaurant nearby en route to Pha Sua Falls (partly spoiled by a hydro-electric project). The asphalt road continues for 24 kms up to the Hmong village of Ban Na Pa Paek, offering some great views. Turn right for a dirt road to Mae Aw, a high plateau area for growing tea—6kms.

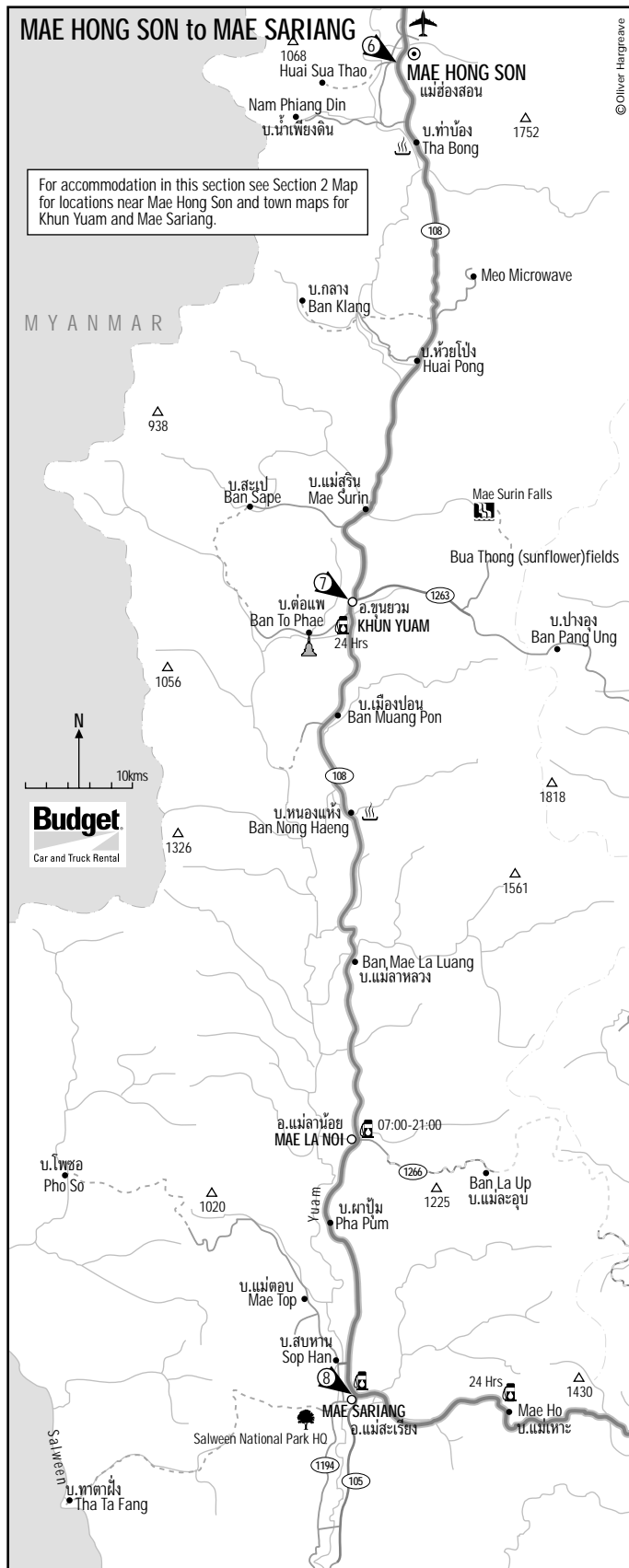
By turning left at the second T junction you can go to Mae Hong Son, rejoining H1095 at Km199. One kilometre before this junction an asphalt road south goes 18kms to Ban Nai Soi, from where you follow a dirt road (4WD - 2kms) to reach a Padaung refugee village (See Padaung Sidebar)



ACCOMMODATION

- Golden Pai Resort ๑๑๑ H1095 KM202, west turn 500m, Ban Pang Mu. Tel:&Fax: (0) 5361 2265-6. CM Off: (0) 5327 3198, (0) 5328 2579 Fax: (0) 5327 9260
- Imperial Tara Mae Hong Son ๑๑๑๑ H108 KM194, Tel.: (0) 5361 1021-25 Fax: (0) 5361 1252 Bkk Res: (0) 2261 900 ext. IR. <www.imperialhotels.com>
- Fern Resort ๑๑-๑๑๑ H108 KM260 east turn 2kms. Off Tel: (0) 5361 1374, (0) 5361 1877 Fax: (0) 5361 2363. Resort Tel: (0) 5361 3585

MAE HONG SON MAE SARIANG



South of Mae Hong Son the road follows narrow valleys, climbing over low passes while following a route that runs along the foot of the high range to the east, a pattern that continues south of Khun Yuam, where the road often takes a tortuous route following narrow valleys.

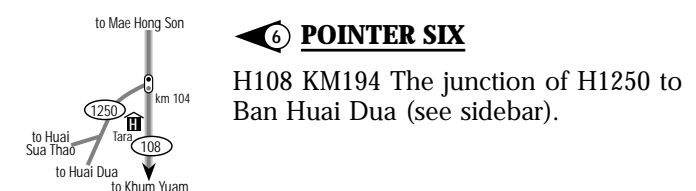
The best side trips offer possibilities to climb high into the hills to the east of the highway, while routes west from Mae Saring offer the best opportunity to see the River Salween (see sidebar). The first and most scenic of three possible return routes to Chiang Mai begins in Khun Yuam, but may only be used by vehicles with 4WD (see section 4)

Mae Saring is a district town that has been bypassed by the highway and by extensive modern development. The narrow street and wooden buildings along the river bank have helped preserve some of the charm of an old river route trading town.

From Mae Saring, you may take Highway 108 east back over the mountains for a straightforward return to Chiang Mai (section 4), or you may continue south along an equally scenic route following the Moei River.

The Padaung — the Long Neck Karen

The Padaung are famous for their “long neck” women. The women do not have long necks as such, but have shoulders forced down by coils worn since they were young. They may be seen in three villages; in a refugee camp in Ban Nai Soi (west from H1095 at KM199 — see end section 2), in Ban Huai Sua Tao and , perhaps most preferably, by boat from Ban Huai Dua (see H1250 from pointer 6). Foreigners must pay 250bht/head at any of the sites. Thais are free

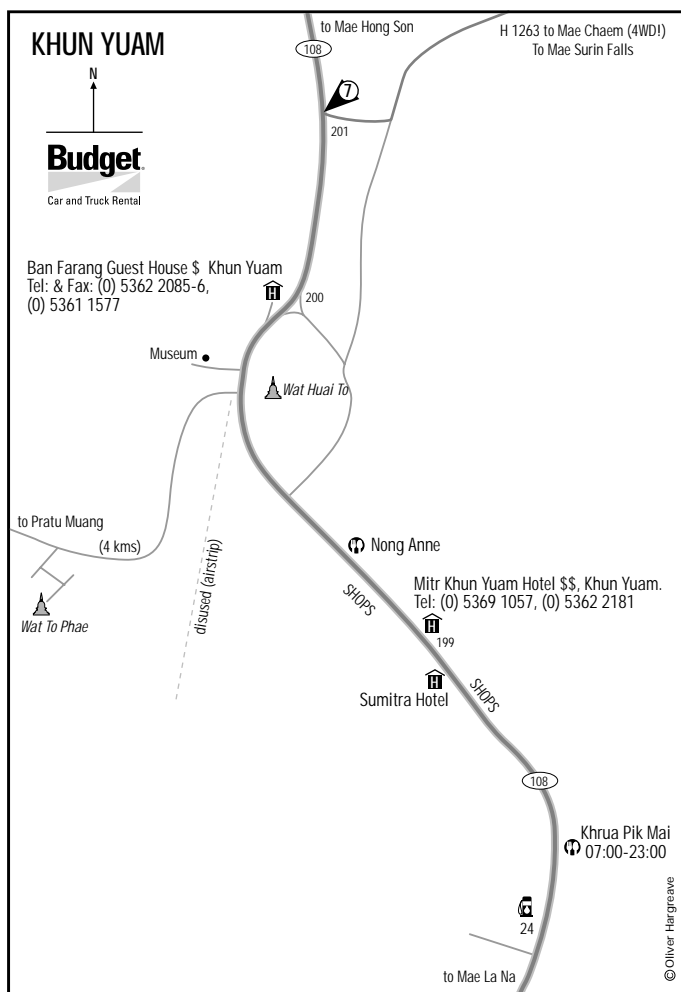


H1250 from Pointer 6

H1250 forks after 1km. The right fork first crosses the River Pai and then bears left on a concrete lane. Signs for Huai Sua Tao “long-necks” direct you to the Padaung village (currently 5 kms and 12 fords from the cement lane—a cement extension is under construction). Total distance 10 kms from H108 4WD!

The fork left (south) goes to Ban Huai Dua (4kms) passing two riverside resorts en route. Charter a boat (500bht. for 2 hrs.) from Huai Dua for the two hour trip to a Padaung village on the banks of the Pai River as well as to Ban Phiang Din, a village downstream.

KM235. 100m past this marker a narrow, asphalt lane climbs steeply for 10 kms to a Hmong Village (Meo Microwave) and a microwave station at 1470m. Superb views, especially if you walk north from the station. Allow 2 hours.



village of Ban La-Ang Nua (41kms). 500m beyond Ban La-ang Nua you will come to a gravelled road heading south to Ban Santitham (71kms — drum fuel), eventually becoming H1270 to Ban Kong Loi (108kms).

ACCOMMODATION

- Mitr A Ree Guest House \$\$\$, Mae Sariang, Tel: (0) 5368 1109 Fax: (0) 5368 1280

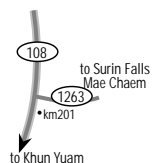
To the River Salween

The simplest route is by H1194 from Mae Sariang to Mae Sam Laep (45kms) from where approx. 2 hour boat trips can be made south to the confluence of the Moei and Salween (650 bht.), or north to Tha Ta Fang (750 bht.). Until a bridge is built, to reach Mae Sam Laep itself you must exit the sealed road after KM45 onto a track down to the river bed, double back, ford the river and enter the lane on the opposite side of valley.

You can also stay a night at the National Park site overlooking the Salween near Tha Ta Fang (36kms by dirt road — 4WD!). Visit the Salween National Park HQ (08:30-16:30) the day before to prearrange a park guide and buy your food in Mae Sariang before leaving. To reach the Park HQ, go on H1194 to KM1 + 500m and then head straight west onto the cement lane at the corner. Turn left at ornamental sign 400m after cement surface ends and drive 2kms to park HQ (4WD!)

KM229 To fellow warriors, wish your souls be blissfully in heaven. Roadside shrine to Japanese victims of World War Two buried near this spot.

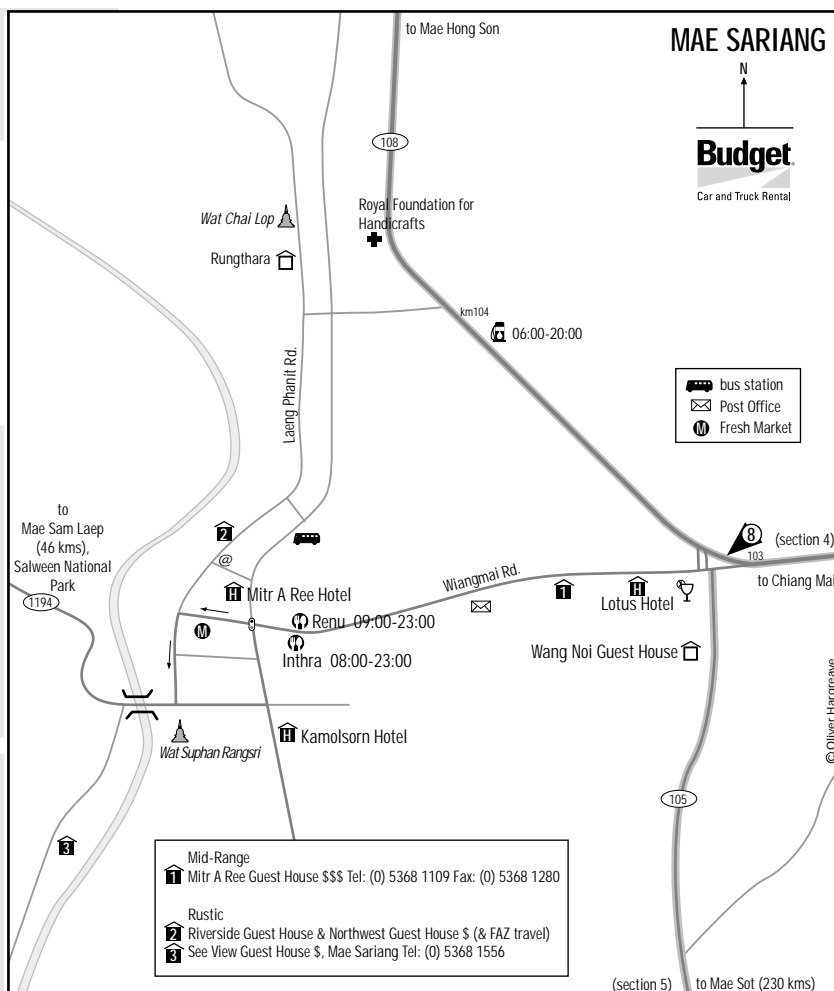
7 POINTER SEVEN



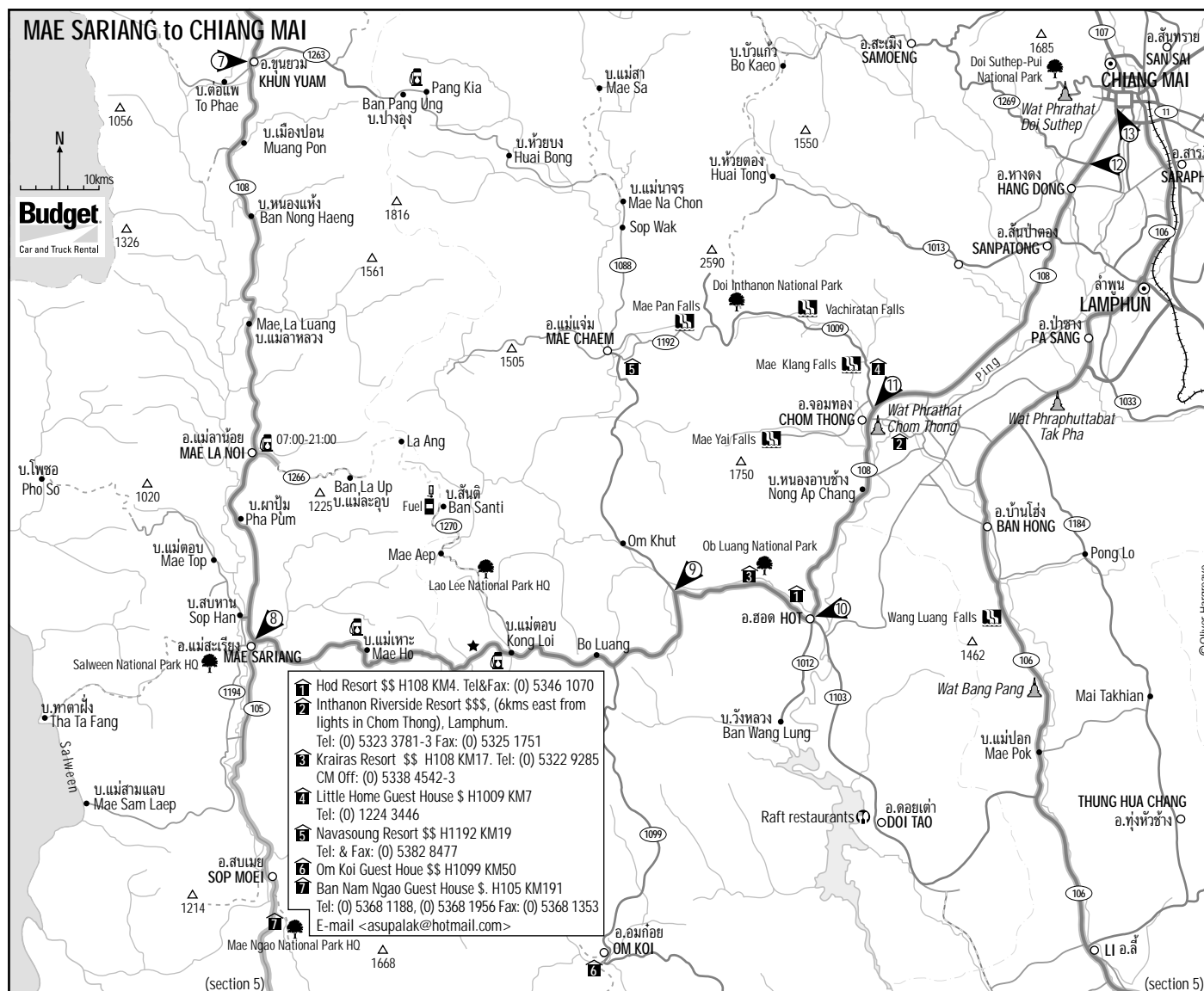
H108 KM201. Intersection with H1263 to Mae Surin Falls (37kms), Bua Thong Fields (26kms) & Mae Chaem (96kms) (See section 4 — all routes 4WD!)

KM200-199 Khun Yuam Museum (08:30-16:30 daily. donation) houses Japanese war memorabilia including many photos. Khun Yuam high street begins south of the museum. Take the concrete road bearing south-west around a former landing strip south of the Museum to see Wat To Phae (4kms) — a Shan temple known for its tapestry kept in a partitioned room to the left of the entrance in the main vihara.

KM132 H1266 is a dirt road (4WD!) that goes to Ban La Up (25kms), a Christian Lawa village known for its cloth weaving. For a circular route to Ban Kong Loi on H108 at KM56 (do not attempt during rainy season — see section 4), continue to Ban Du La Poe (31kms) and take the road up the ridge. At approx KM36 take the right fork (lower road) to the Lawa



MAE SARIANG
CHIANG MAI

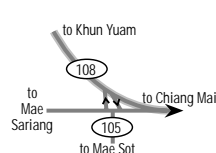


H108 climbs to the Karen village of Ban Mae Ho at KM84, crossing high valleys and cleared uplands that form the upper headwaters of the Mae Rit River. After crossing the BoLuang Plateau, the route descends to follow a pretty valley route following the Mae Chaem River to Hot.

From Hot, H108 is a busy road heading north for Chiang Mai, passing Chom Thong and Sanpatong, major district towns en route. Doi Inthanon, Thailand's highest peak, and the National Park (see sidebar) may be visited by making a detour on highways 1088, 1009, or as part of the direct route from Khun Yuam (see Khun Yuam to Chom Thong sidebar)

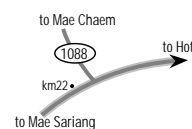
KM55-6 H1270 to the Mae Tho National Park (16kms) and the Lawa village of Ban La Ang Nua (67kms) links up with H1266 to Ban La Up (see section 3 KM128).

KM39 South turn for Om Koi (50kms) and Mae Tun (138kms). Because there is only one way into these pine forested uplands inhabited mainly by Karen, tourism has bypassed this area. Khun Ruj of Om Koi Resort, \$ (turn right at cross-roads in Om Koi and drive 1km. Tel: (0) 1950 7789) offers expert guidance to the local Karen hill tribe culture.



◀ 8 POINTER EIGHT

H108 KM103 junction with H105 to Sop
Moei and South (see section 5 for routes
south and west from Mae Sariang)



9 POINTER NINE

H108 KM22 H1088 to Mae Chaem (45kms). Take this route to approach Doi Inthanon National Park from the west, and check out possibilities for “Ecotourist activities at the Reforestation Office at KM16.

KHUN YUAM TO CHOM THONG VIA DOI INTHANON.

156kms 4WD only!

From Pointer 7, H1263 is a sealed road which goes 66kms over a route that offers fine vistas over the mountainous territory in this area.

KM12-13. Turn north (left) on the road (asphalt 3kms only—4WD) for the steep climb to the Hmong village of Ban U-Kho and the Bua Thong fields (the sunflowers bloom mid Nov. to early Dec.— 6kms). You can enjoy fine views west on the route to the Mae Surin National Park at the Falls (28kms).

H1263 climbs to KM20 (kilometre stones stop at this point), offering good views west near the top of the pass. The Hmong Villages of Ban Pang Oung (KM23) and Bang Pang Kia (KM28 - fuel available) and the Karen village of Ban Huai Bong (KM19 from junction with H1088) lie along the route.

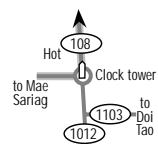
After 66kms the sealed road ends at a T junction, where you turn south (right) on the metalled dirt surface of what purports to be Highway 1088 at approx. KM78.

The route descends on the rough, dusty dirt road for 5kms to Ban Mae Na Chon before reaching a pitted sealed surface approaching the village (KM72). Turn right (south) at T junction in the village and go straight south to Mae Chaem on the mostly sealed road (*very rough dirt road KM65-62!*)

Turn east (left) in Mae Chaem (KM46) and follow H1088 till KM45-44, where you take H1192 uphill to Doi Inthanon. Take care on the narrow and steep road as it climbs up 20kms to a checkpoint (National Park Fee 200bht/adult) and H1009 to Chom Thong at KM37-38.

Resorts in Chom Thong, Hot and Mae Chaem offer a possible base for a night's rest before a day's exploration of Mae Chaem and Doi Inthanon National Park (See Doi Inthanon sidebar)

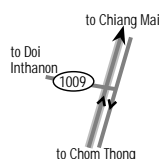
KM17 Ob Luang Gorge National Park. Short walks connected by footbridges span the Mae Chaem River as it passes through a narrow gorge.



10 POINTER TEN

H108 KM88/0 junction with H1012 for H1103 to Doi Tao

KM59-60 Wat Phrathat Chom Thong temple



11 POINTER ELEVEN

H108 KM57 junction with H1009 to Doi Inthanon and Mae Chaem (alternative route form Khun Yuam).

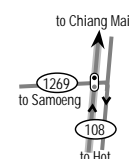
Doi Inthanon National Park

H1009 goes to the summit of Doi Inthanon (47kms), passing three major waterfalls; the Mae Yai Falls (KM1 south turn 13kms), Mae Klang Falls (KM7-8 south turn 1km), Vachiratarn Falls (KM20 north turn & park), the Park HQ at KM31 (accommodation, visitor centre & permits for Kiw Mae Pan trail at KM42. Tel: (0) 5331 1608), the Royal Pagodas (KM40 west turn), and the summit (47kms). Access to the Mae Pan falls is from H1192 KM6-7 (3kms 4WD). The national park entrance fee will give you access to all sites in the park for one day. The park also runs a home-stay ecotourism programme at KM26 (Tel: (0) 1881 7346 or (0) 1258 6071)

The following resorts are in good locations for an early start to explore Doi Inthanon:

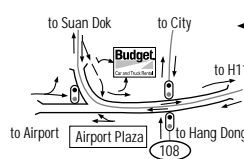
Little Home Guest House ☺ H1009 KM7 Tel: (0) 1224 3446

Navasoung Resort ☺☺ H1192 KM19 Tel: & Fax: (0) 5382 8477



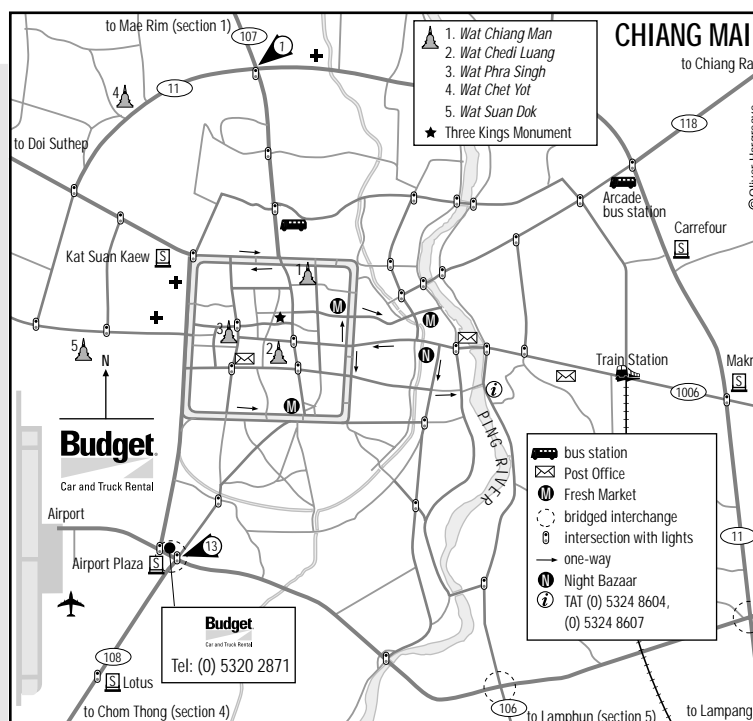
12 POINTER TWELVE

H108 KM10-11 junction with H1269 to Samoeng.



13 POINTER THIRTEEN

H108 KM4-5 junction with Om Muang Rd. Welcome to Chiang Mai.



MAE SARIANG CHIANG MAI VIA MAE SOT

H105 Mae Sariang to Mae Sot (232 kms — *fuel from drums only till KM33!*). KM190 a rough track (4WD!) leads to a riverside camp site at the Mae Ngao National Park (5kms). From KM115-14, H1267 climbs to The Moei River National Park HQ (11 kms) and viewpoints near KM18-20 and Karen Villages beyond (35kms). The Mae Usu caves (KM94 west turn 2kms) are part of the national park. Rustic accommodation in lovely locations at KM190 (Ban Nam Ngao), KM143 (Pa Pa Valley) and KM116 (Wila Guest House)

H105 Mae Sot to Tak (83kms). KM26 Taksin Maharat National Park. A north turn (3kms) leads to the park and a steep 400m trail down to a large specimen of *diptero-carpus.anisoptera*; KM26-25 Hill Tribe Welfare Development Centre and Lahu village (south turn 5kms); KM12 Lang Sang National Park — a south turn goes to a small local waterfall (3kms).

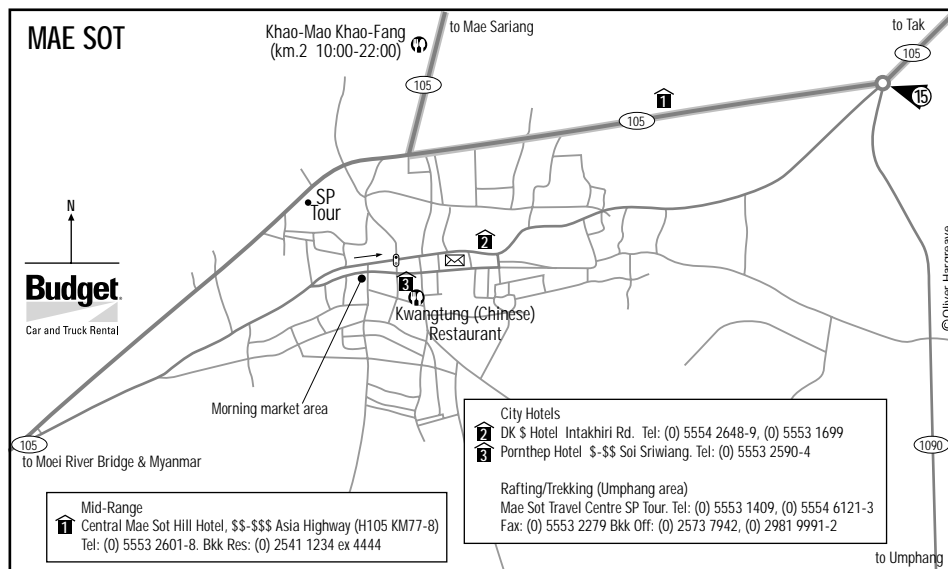
H1090 to Umphang

This highway is the only way in to Umphang (164kms) — a small district town bounded by mountains and nature reserves. Turn left at fork at KM31 and fill up with fuel at last gas station before Umphang near KM44. Allow at least 5 hours on this spectacular, but slow highway.

Comfortable, if not rustic, guesthouse/resorts organise rafting, elephant and trekking tours to Karen villages, the Tilosu Falls and forest reserves. Advance booking recommended.

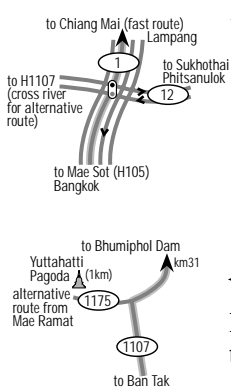
Tu Ka Su Cottage ๕-๕๕๕. Rooms in family sized bungalows. Tel: (0) 5556 1295.

Umphang Hill Resort ๕-๕๕ Tel: (0) 5556 1063-4 or call SP Tour in Mae Sot



14). The small Yuttahatti Pagoda is 1km down this road. If proceeding to Bhumiphol Dam, keep going straight after crossing river (KM54), crossing several lanes till you come to a T junction with main road. Turn left for Dam (5kms) and right for H1 (14kms).

H1 Tak to Thoen 92kms - fast divided highway. The road to the Bhumiphol Dam (8th largest concrete arch dam) goes west at KM463. H1102 to Mae Phrik at KM490-1 provides an alternative rural route to Thoen.

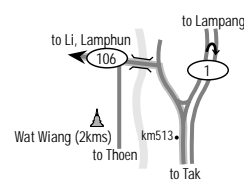


16 POINTER SIXTEEN

The junction of H1 and H12. Go west for H1107 to Ban Tak and rural route to Bhumiphol Dam. Take Highway 12 east for Sukhothai (see Budget's 'Chiang Mai-Sukhothai Loop'), or H1 for the fastest route north.

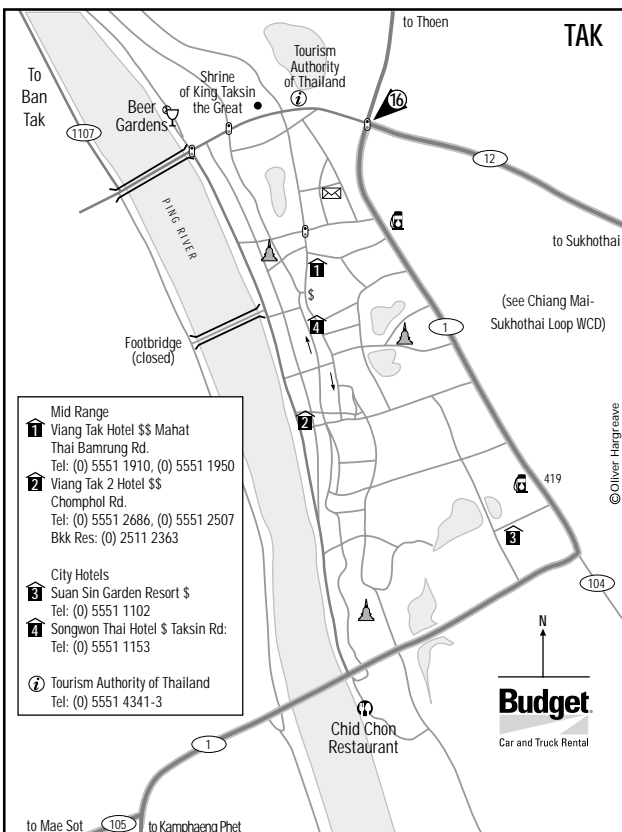
17 POINTER SEVENTEEN

H1107 KM30-31 termination of alternative route H1175 to Mae Ramat (pointer

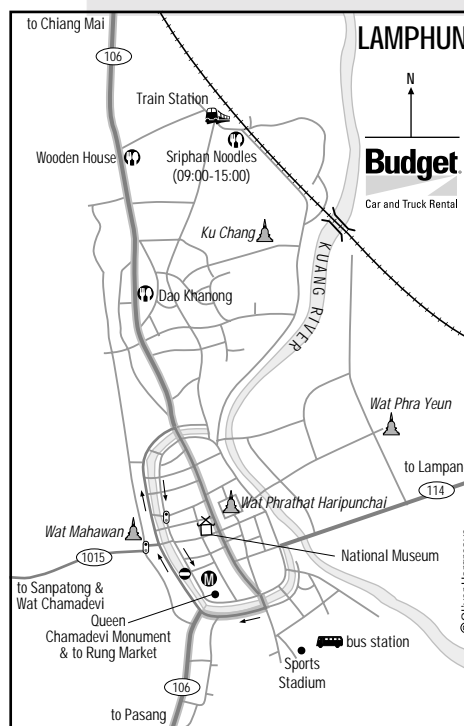


18 POINTER EIGHTEEN

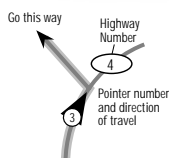
H1 KM513-4 west turn for H106 to Li. After crossing the river, a south turn leads to Thoen district town (4kms) and H1102 along the west bank. Wat Wiang (2kms) has one of only a few remaining classic northern-style vihara.



H106 Thoen to Lamphun (155kms) and Chiang Mai (181kms) — see section 4 map. *Beware of heavy trucks from the lignite mine near KM36 on the bends between KM12-29!* At KM 47 H1087 goes to the Mae Ping National Park HQ (20kms), Ko Falls (42kms) and the Kaeng Ko Rapids (43kms). Rafts accommodation available as well as boat trips on the Mae Ping Lake. Advance booking recommended (Tel: (0) 5351 9031). Sights in Lamphun include Wat Phrathat Haripunchai and Wat Chamadevi.



INSTRUCTIONS



Numbered pointers listed in sequence in the direction of travel show important road junctions along the recommended route (reverse these if travelling in the opposite direction). These are illustrated as follows.

Kilometre references are noted in two ways:

H107 KM13 = Highway 107 kilometre stone 13 is close to the point of focus

H107 KM98-9 = The point of focus lies between kilometre stones 98&99.

Kilometre stones are usually found at 1 or 2 km intervals on most numbered highways. Though names are written in Thai, the highway number (top front face of stone) confirms your route in the absence of English signs.

Background shading indicates points of interest/side trip/alternative road along or off the recommended route.

H108* = Black stars by highway numbers/along routes indicate rough patches where the sealed surface has buckled/potholed and broken up. Be ready to slow right down frequently, avoid driving faster than 60 kph!

4WD Only! If you are driving a vehicle that does not have four wheel drive, please do not take this road. Though it is not usually necessary to engage the 4WD itself, the higher clearance and fortified suspension of such vehicles make their use obligatory on such roads.

Dirt Roads go all over the mountains of N. Thailand, but there are few signs, even in Thai, and it is very easy to get disoriented. Main unsealed roads are all-weather, but in the rainy season most dirt roads will often have patches with deep mud ruts, glutinous mud that clogs up the wheels and or moist compacted mud that is so slippery that chains are obligatory — under no circumstances venture onto dirt roads in the hills during the rainy season!

We recommend that you avoid dirt roads, as you will be responsible for anything that happens to vehicles off regularly maintained and paved roadways. Should you go on a dirt road, however, please drive very slowly to avoid mechanical problems and to keep the dust down, especially when passing people and communities.

Remember to always take drinking water - allow for emergencies. Make sure you have a torch, enough fuel, basic provisions and warm clothing before entering remote roads through mountainous areas.

Help us get it right! If you have suggestions or wish to point out errors in this guide, please advise our staff.

INFORMATION

This guide is designed to complement regular guide-books. The offices of the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT — locations on city maps) at Chiang Mai and Tak can also provide very useful information and brochures.

ACCOMMODATION

Country resorts often occupy delightful settings offering rural ambience with the convenience of chalet-rooms with fan/air-conditioning and hot shower (fridge and TV) in a garden setting near a central restaurant/reception area. In the high season — November through April — advance booking is highly recommended, if not a must for the best places both in the country and the city.

Credit cards are usually only accepted by larger resort/hotels —

travel with enough cash baht to see you to the next ATM (at banks in main district towns — *amphoe*). Good hotel rooms in provincial cities usually cost 1000-1999 baht (฿฿฿), depending on season.

฿฿฿฿ 2000 Baht up

฿฿฿ 1000-1999

฿฿ 500-999 Baht

฿ less than 500 Baht

NATIONAL PARKS

Visitor centres at park HQs usually have brochures with maps detailing sights, though English language versions may not always be available. There are board maps and walking trails are usually well-marked.

Park accommodation can be spartan, and is not well set up for walk-in trade unless you bring your own tent and food. Prior reservation from the Forestry Department in Bangkok is essential in the season. Tel: (0) 2579 7223, (0) 2579 5734, (0) 2561 4292-4 ext. 724&725.

From August 2000 all foreigners are being charged 200 Bt./head entrance fee, and this fee is being rigorously applied at most national parks along the route in this guide. Hitherto charges were 40-50 Bt./vehicle and 20 Bt./head, as it is for Thai citizens.



STOP



NO PASSING



STOP (POLICE) CHECK



SLIPPERY ROAD



STEEP HILL



FALLING ROCKS (LAND SLIDE)

For reservations, please contact your travel consultant or call Budget:

**In the U.K.: 0541 565-656, In the U.S.: (800) 527-0700
In Germany: 01805 244-388, In Australia: 1-300 362-848
In Singapore: 532-4442, In Thailand: 1-800-BUDGET**