

THAILAND

Mae Hong Son



**Interactive
Travel
Guides**

**Mae
Hong
Son
Loop**



**Your Interactive
Travel Guide Specialist**

MEGAWORLD ASIA

Mae Hong Son



MEGAWORLDASIA FB LINK

This Interactive Travel Guide Promotes:

12GO ASIA

VERIFIED AFFILIATE

Your Thailand Travel Specialist

Mae Hong Son

Table Of Contents

General Info = Getting There, Accommodation, Transport & Dining

1: Foreword.....	Page	4
2: How to use this interactive travel guide.....	Page	5
3: Mae Hong Son Province - General info.....	Page	6
4: Doing the Mae Hong Son Loop.....	Page	7
5: STAGE ONE - Chiang Mai to Pai.....	Page	8
6: Pai Township - General info.....	Page	9
7: Pai area sightseeing.....	Page	10
8: Pai area - Photo's and video link.....	Page	11
9: STAGE TWO - Pai to Pangmapha.....	Page	12
10: Lod Cave Rafting Tour.....	Page	13
11: Lod Cave - Photo's and video link.....	Page	14
12: Phi Marn Coffin Cave Tour.....	Page	15
13: Ban Ja Bo Village.....	Page	16
14: Coral Cave & Phi Marn Cave - Photo's and video link.....	Page	17
15: Nam Bor Pee (Spirit Well) - Hiking Tour.....	Page	18
16: STAGE THREE - Pangmapha to Mae Hong Son.....	Page	19
17: STAGE FOUR - Mae Hong Son to Mae Sariang.....	Page	20
18: STAGE FIVE - Mae Sariang to Chiang Mai.....	Page	21



**It's Time To Get
Off The Beaten Track**

FOREWORD



Thanks for downloading this FREE interactive travel guide. You've made an excellent choice if you plan on **GETTING OFF THE BEATEN TRACK** in THAILAND. Before you delve into the content of this travel guide, please take a few minutes to read this foreword. It outlines how to make the best use of the information contained within.

First-hand experience: This travel guide has been put together using first-hand experience gained from traveling to, and exploring, all the locations presented within. The information and photos featured in my travel guides, have been collated over years of putting boots on the ground. There is no second-hand information, or information which is plagiarized from other travel sources, within this guide. Every cave, waterfall, river, viewpoint, jungle trail, temple site, guesthouse and restaurant presented, or promoted, I have been to and seen and/or experienced myself.

Getting off the beaten track: The primary focus of my travel guides is **ADVENTURE TRAVEL** (and activities) to locations which are non-mainstream tourist destinations. As an example, there is no information for the mainstream tourist locations of Thailand (except as transit hub's before heading off to a more remote location) listed in this travel guide. As such, the information in this guide is directed towards travelers (not tourists) who are keen for a bit of adventure - caving, climbing, jungle

trekking, kayaking - in an off the beaten track location, of South East Asia. If these types of activities aren't to your liking, then this travel guide won't be much use to you. There's no information in here about the party towns in South East Asia.

Budget travel: Knowing the importance of making the most of your hard-earned currency, my travel links ([12GO ASIA](#)) and accommodation links ([AGODA](#)) are predominantly budget oriented. They provide a range of options for getting to a central hub, or base, from which you can make your daily explorations.

Independent sightseeing: Instead of going on group tours, I strongly promote the idea of renting your own vehicle (car or motorbike) and venturing out yourself. To help you get to the exact location, there's always a [GOOGLE MAPS](#) link to show the route from a hub (hotel or guesthouse) to the sightseeing attraction. If there's a local tour operator offering excellent adventure type tours, or activities, I'll provide links to their website. A good example of a great adventure tour operator is [GREEN DISCOVERY LAOS](#), who offer excellent caving, kayaking and trekking tours throughout Laos.

The Table of Contents: This is page four of the travel guide and has a sequential list of sections, which you can go to directly by clicking on the **GREEN** numbered tab.

YouTube Links: These take you directly to my YouTube Vlog ([Megaworld Asia](#)) where you can see short, high quality travel videos of the numerous attractions listed in my travel guides. If you enjoy the videos, please hit the like button and don't forget to subscribe to see my upcoming adventures.

Your next adventure is just one click away

Safe travels,

MEGA

How To Use This Interactive Travel Guide

The Table Of Contents: To effortlessly move from the TOC to the page you want to view, simply click on the **page number**: **1**

YouTube Links: These will take you to a short highlights video, of the sightseeing attraction, in the section you're looking at:



Other Links: These take you to ancillary services such as recommended restaurants, or car and motorbike rental agencies, in the location you're traveling to:

ANCILLARY SERVICES

Travel Links: This takes you to **12GO ASIA**, an excellent travel group which provides a range of options for getting around the region:



The Table Of Contents: To move back to the TOC, click on the **yellow arrows**, at the bottom of each Page: 

Google Maps Links: These provide a route from a designated location (e.g., a hotel) to a particular sightseeing attraction:



Information Links: These links take you to information sites, such as Wikipedia or Wiki-voyage, to provide more in-depth info on a particular subject or location:



Accommodation Links: This takes you to the Agoda website to check accommodation availability and make bookings:



It's Time To Get Off The Beaten Track



MAE HONG SON PROVINCE - GENERAL INFO

About: Mae Hong Son is a remote Province, located in the far north west corner of Thailand, which borders Myanmar. An excellent way to see Mae Hong Son is to do the LOOP TOUR, which begins and ends in Chiang Mai City.

The Mae Hong Son Loop: This is a fantastic motorcycle tour (or car if you can't ride a motorbike) which takes you through some of the most beautiful mountain terrain in South East Asia. Stops along the way include the picturesque towns of Pai, Pangmapha, Mae Hong Son, and Mae Sariang. The travel distance (highways only) is 500 km, so you should allow at least seven days to see most of the sightseeing attractions along the way. **Notable sightseeing attractions include:** mountain scenery, viewpoints, caves, hot springs and hill tribe villages.

Getting there: For most travelers coming to Thailand, and interested in Doing the Mae Hong Son Loop, you'll inevitably first need to make your way from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. There are plenty of good transportation options available for this 700 km journey: domestic airlines, overnight sleeper trains and overnight sleeper buses.

Click the following link to check your preferred transportation option from Bangkok to Chiang Mai:



Self-Drive: For travelers who have the time and budget, the option of renting a vehicle in Bangkok is also worth considering. Note: The drive from Bangkok to Chiang Mai takes approximately 10 hours. Cars and SUV's can be hired at Bangkok Rentacar for very reasonable rates. **Click the following link for booking enquiries:**



Note: The highway distance doesn't include the side road trips to the various sightseeing attractions. This can add at least 100 km to the travel distance, particularly if you're interested in seeing the remote hill tribes along the border of Myanmar.



The Rugged Beauty of Mae Hong Son

DOING THE MAE HONG SON LOOP

Start (and end) point: The start point for the loop trip is CHIANG MAI. Once you arrive there it's probably worth having a couple of nights in town to get your bearings and sort out your transportation, before getting underway.

Chiang Mai Accommodation: The MONTHA HOTEL, located near the city center, is a great accommodation choice if you're planning to do the Mae Hong Son Loop. Their room rates are very reasonable (600 - 700 THB per night) and they have a large carpark directly across the road from the hotel. If you're renting a motorbike, or car, for the loop trip this is a safe place to park it overnight before you depart. Additionally, an excellent feature of the hotel is the attached German Restaurant which offers a full German Buffet (daily) for just 239 THB per person. **Click the following link for inquiries:**

Transportation: For the traditionalists the preferred mode of transport is a motorbike. There are a number of motorbike rental outlets in Chiang Mai offering scooters, and larger bikes, at very reasonable rates. Scooters are available everywhere but if you want a larger bike, for a bit more comfort, then POP BIG BIKE CHIANG MAI is highly recommended. **Click the following link for inquiries:**

POP BIG BIKE

Weather conditions: Although only 132 km from Chiang Mai, the climatic difference between the two locations is marked, particularly in the dry season (December to February). At this time of the year, Pai is significantly colder than Chiang Mai so make sure you've got a warm jacket and a woolen hat when you set.

On the road: Additionally, highway 1095 is a winding mountainous route which demands due care and concentration for the greater part of the journey. **For an excellent Coffee break enroute, stop at the 32 Coffee Hill & Resort.**



STAGE ONE - CHIANG MAI TO PAI

Stage One: Chiang Mai to Pai.

- Distance = 132 KM.
- Travel time = 3 - 4 hours.

Click the following link for directions:



Sightseeing attractions on route: Once you start driving up into the mountains there's some nice viewpoints and interesting attractions on the road to Pai. The best attractions are probably PONG DUET HOT SPRINGS and the tea factory at the HALAL RESTAURANT at Mae Sae Village.

Pong Duet Hot Springs: is located approximately 6 km off route 1095, and is a great spot for a warm mineral bath on the way to Pai. The site is well developed with a number of thermal pools as well as bungalow styled accommodation. There's also a well-constructed nature trail which takes sightseers to the source of the hot water, an area of scalding hot geysers. The entry fee for foreigners is 300 THB per person.



Click the following link for directions from Chiang Mai to Pong Duet Hotsprings:



If you're a tea connoisseur, a 30 minute stop at the HALAL RESTAURANT is highly recommend if you want to sample some excellent locally grown tea.



PAI TOWNSHIP - GENERAL INFO

About: The town of Pai is one of the most popular stops on the Mae Hong Son Loop trip. There are a number of notable sightseeing attractions in the surrounding area which make it a great base to travel out from each day. It also has an excellent choice of restaurants and cafés, which add to the attraction of spending more than one night there. Additionally, the nightly street market (in the town center) has great selection street food and snacks.

Recommended budget accommodation in Pai: An excellent choice for budget accommodation is the HEART OF PAI RESORT. The premises are located on the main road into Pai and about 700 meters from the central café and restaurant area. The rooms are spacious, comfortable and air-conditioned, and a bargain at 400 THB per night. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**



Recommended mid-range accommodation in Pai: An excellent choice of mid-range accommodation is the B2 PAI RESORT. The premises are in a quieter location of town (approximately 500 meters from the restaurant and bar area) and it has a good size swimming pool fronting the rooms. **Click the following link for booking inquiries:**



PAI SIGHTSEEING

Pai sightseeing: As mentioned, there's a number of worthwhile sightseeing attractions in the surrounding area. Most of them are a few kilometers out of town so having your own transportation is a necessity. If you don't have a motorbike, you'll need to rent one to get to the various locations. **The most popular sightseeing locations are:**

- Pai Canyon
- Pai Land Split
- Pam Bok Waterfall (rainy season)
- Ho Kuu So Bamboo Bridge (rainy season)
- Pai Taradon Geyser
- Tha Pai Hot Spring
- Tha Pai Memorial Bridge (WW2 relic)

Pai Canyon: This is an interesting sightseeing attraction, just a few kilometers south of Pai Township and just off the main highway. This attraction has no entry fee and is worth 30 - 60 minutes of your time. From the car-park, a cement footpath takes you up to the top of a peak where you get a broad view across a landscape punctuated with large sinkholes.

Narrow tracks run along ridge-lines between the sinkholes. However, the track is quite hazardous in places as there's a number of spots where the trail drops steeply from one level to another, without any form of handholds. **Click the following link for directions:**



Pai Taradon Geyser: This scalding hot geyser is located 20 km south of Pai and is well worth a couple hours of your sightseeing time. The site is very easy to find as it's located right next to the road. There's a large parking area with some thatched roof hawkers stalls nearby. They sell small bamboo baskets with eggs so you can boil them in the scalding hot water bubbling up from underground. There is no entry fee for this site. **Click the following link for directions:**



Pai Canyon



Taradon Geyser

PAI AREA - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Pai Taradon Geyser

Click the link to the right to see video highlights of the Pai area:



Pong Duet Geyser

STAGE TWO - PAI TO PANGMAPHA

Stage two: Pai to Pangmapha.

- Distance = 44 Km.
- Travel time = 1 hour (approx.) Click the following link for directions:



About: Stage two of the loop trip is relatively short, in terms of time and distance, however the road takes you through some of the most rugged, mountainous terrain in the area. Additionally, the township of Pangmapha (approx. 44 km west of Pai) is the primary caving area of Thailand. For those who are interested in spelunking activities, Pangmapha is well worth a two day stop on your way through. For those who are on a tight schedule I'd recommend checking out LOD CAVE (Thailand's biggest cave) on your way through.

Pangmapha Caving: The area around Pangmapha has the greatest concentration of caves, anywhere in Thailand. If you're someone who's a keen spelunker, a great choice of accommodation is CAVE LODGE, located a few km to the north of Pangmapha Township. Cave lodge offers guided tours to the best caves in the area.

Click the following link for booking enquiries at Cave Lodge:



Recommended mid-range accommodation in Pangmapha: An excellent mid-range accommodation choice in Pangmapha Township, is the SOP-PONG RIVER INN. Click the following link for booking enquiries at Soppong River Inn:



Recommended budget accommodation in Pangmapha: JUNGLE GUESTHOUSE. Click the following link for booking inquiries:



Lod Cave is near Pangmapha Township

LOD CAVE RAFTING TOUR

Lod Cave: This cave is probably the premier mainstream tourist caving attraction in Mae Hong Son. Situated approximately ten kilometers North of Hwy 1095 the road in branches off at Pangmapha and takes you directly to the parking area at the entrance to the site. **Click the following link for directions from Pangmapha Township to Lod Cave:**



On-site: Lod Cave is well set up for the many of tourists which visit the site each day. Thai style open air restaurants, including Som tam stands, are lined along one side of the car park.

Entry fee: The entry fee for foreigners is 250 THB per person and includes a tour guide for the trip through the cave. However, it's worth noting that a minimum of two (a total of 500 THB) are required for the rafting tour.

Fish feeding: An additional attraction of the cave tour is the swarms of large carp which inhabit the waters of the cave. Just beyond the entry point there's a row of fish food sellers, offering bags pellets for just 20 THB per bag.

Getting to the cave: The walk to the cave entrance is an easy 600 meters (from the car park) and the properly constructed pathways pass through a wide expanse of manicured open lawn areas set up for camping and picnicking. The last part of the track (roughly 300 meters) is dirt and follows the river, which runs through the cave.

Doing the cave tour: The trip into the cave is a fairly easy. The trail through the cave follows the right side of the river and leads up to the first cave room. After a few minutes viewing this first cave room, you'll return to the main trail and move on to the second cave room, beyond the bamboo bridge (crosses the river). The second, and largest cave room, is accessed from the end of the internal trail.

Note: there is presently no lighting system in the cave so it's highly recommended you bring your own torches, as the guides only have kerosene lamps.

Raft tour: Seeing the third cave room requires a 100 meter raft ride, to the end of the cave. On the way you'll be able to feed the multitude of carp which closely follow the raft on the way through.



Lod Cave Raft Tour

LOD CAVE - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Deep inside Lod Cave

Click the link to the right to see video highlights of LOD CAVE:



Intricate formations in Lod Cave

PHI MARN COFFIN CAVE TOUR

Phi Marn Cave: This interesting cavern site is one of a number of COFFIN CAVES in Pangmapha District. Phi Marn Cave is located approximately 1 km north of Pangmapha Township, on route 1095. **Click the following link for directions from Pai:**



On-site: The site is easy to access, as the parking area is right next to highway. From the parking area, take the stairs up to the ticket office (not manned during Covid period) and follow the cement path to the left. The pathway runs for approximately 300 meters to the base of the cliffs and from there, a series of steel ladders takes you up to the start of the route through the caverns.

The cavern tour: The route is actually a loop which circuits through three caverns and brings you back to the start point (actually a fork in the trail, indicated by signage). After working your way through a series of caverns, you'll arrive at coffin cave number one (the first coffin cave is the biggest and the best).

Cavern one: At the rear of the cave is a well-preserved teak coffin, on supports. A plaque nearby indicates the coffin is approximately 3000 years old and a relic of the early inhabitants of Thailand.

Cavern two: To get to cavern two and three, back track to the trail fork and follow the indicating signage. Cavern number two has no coffins, just some small pieces of timber which are remnants.

Cavern three: This has another fully preserved coffin on supports and a few meters below (as you head down the stairway) a number of coffins standing upright against the cliff face.

Summary: This is an interesting tour which should take only an hour at an easy pace. However, the trail through the caverns has a number of places where you need to either climb up or bend down and squeeze through small openings, so a certain amount of exertion is required to complete it. Additionally, the caverns have plenty of ambient light from the openings, so torches aren't necessary.



Coffin cavern number one

BAN JA BO VILLAGE

Ban Ja Bo Village: This picturesque LAHU hill tribe village (in Mae Hong Son Province) is located 4 km off route 1095, and 13 km north-west of Pangmapha Township. The village has two excellent café's which provide fantastic views over the surrounding mountainous landscape. The viewing platforms are shaded and protrude over the cliff face, providing uninterrupted views of the rugged landscape. Ban Ja Bo is also the primary access point for a number of excellent cave sites in the surrounding area. **Click the following link for directions from Pai to Ban Ja Bo:**



Ban Ja Bo Caves: The best three cave sites are a few km further down the road from Ja Bo village, and through the village of MAE LANA. There's plenty of signage along the way to point you in the right direction. In no particular order the three caves are: CORAL CAVE; DIAMOND CAVE; MAE LANA CAVE. The road to the cave sites passes a ticket office where an entry fee must be paid (200 THB) and a guide must be hired.



Note: all three caves are adventure type, meaning there's no internal lighting and no developed pathway inside. If you're not an experienced caver, with plenty of your own lights, it's advisable to go with a guide. Coral Cave is the most picturesque of the three and has lots of concretions which resemble coral reef in the ocean.



CORAL CAVE & PHI MARN CAVE - PHOTOS & VIDEO



Click the link to see video highlights of
CORAL CAVE & PHI MARN COFFIN CAVE:



NAM BOR PEE (SPIRIT WELL) - HIKING TOUR

Nam Bor Pee (Spirit Well): Approximately four kilometers south of Hwy 1095, and six kilometers beyond (west) the turn off to Ban Mae Lana, Nam Bor Pee (Spirit Well) is a large sinkhole/collapse/doline located amongst the acute, jungle covered limestone peaks. Getting there isn't easy as it involves a 3-kilometer uphill trek before arriving at the rim of a dramatic 200-meter diameter, and 130-meter-deep, depression in the terrain. The starting point for the trek is the small hill tribe (LAHU) village of LUK KOH LARN. **Click the following link for directions:**



Local Guides: To ensure you going the right direction it's recommended hiring a local guide (guiding fee = 200 THB per person) for the hike up the mountain. The guides are easy to organise. When you arrive in the village they will approach you to see if you are interested in visiting the sinkhole.

Arduous Ascent: The gradient, for a lot of the upward trek, is quite severe and a reason-

able level of fitness is recommended if one is planning to visit the site. For the most part - 2.5 kilometers at least - it's all uphill going with the track only leveling out in the final 500-meter approach to the rim of the sinkhole. There are a number of thatched rest spots along the way where you can catch your breath while admiring the spectacular vista back down the valley and beyond. Be prepared to sweat and, above all, take at least two bottles of drinking water before setting out.

Depending on what kind of pace you set for yourself, the trek up to the rim will take between 1 - 1.5 hours. There is plenty of signage, up near the top of the peak, to guide you in and the final approach section of the trail is indicative of nearing the rim; the trail descends downwards for 200 meters or so. For safety the local authorities have installed wooden barrier rails along the part of the trail which skirts the rim. At certain locations it's possible to get right to the edge for a better view but extreme care should be taken as the drop into the hole is sheer.



Nam Bor Pee Sinkhole

STAGE THREE - PANGMAPHA TO MAE HONG SON

Stage Three: Pangmapha to Mae Hong Son

- Travel time = 1.5 hours
- Distance = 70 km

Click the following link for directions:



The Fish Cave: A few km north of Mae Hong Son is a sightseeing attraction which may, or may not, be worth an hour of your time, depending on whether you want to spend 200 THB to look at some fish. It gets promoted as a cave site but there's actually no cave, just a lot of large carp swimming about in pools of water. The stream comes out from under a rock which some enterprising local has deemed to be a cave. Bags of vegetable off cuts are available for 20 THB to feed the fish with. Click the following link for directions:



From the fish Cave car park, it's approximately 20 km further south to Mae Hong Son Township.

Mae Hong Son Township: Mae Hong Son in times past was a bustling tourist center. The primary sightseeing attraction, prior to Covid appearing on the scene, was the boat trips to the Hmong villages located a few km up the Pai River. Unfortunately, this excellent sightseeing experience has been shut down to protect the remote communities. As of January 2022, the riverside departure point (boat jetty) was closed. This sightseeing experience may open again as tourism activities return to normal in Thailand. Click the following link for directions to the jetty:



Recommended Accommodation: An excellent mid-range accommodation choice in Mae Hong Son is the IMPERIAL HOTEL, which includes a buffet breakfast with the room rate. Click the following link for booking inquiries:



At The Fish Cave Site

STAGE FOUR - MAE HONG SON TO MAE SARIANG

Mae Hong Son Loop - Stage four: Mae Hong Son to Mae Sariang

- Travel time = 4 hours
- Distance = 160 km

Click the following link for directions:



The road to Mae Sariang: Heading south on hwy 108, Mae Sariang is only another 160 km further on from Mae Hong Son. However, the road is a winding mountainous traverse which, allowing for rest stops and sightseeing, can take up to four hours to cover. The scenery along the way is quite splendid, with a number of notable mountain viewpoints. The best is probably PHA BONG VIEWPOINT, located approximately 20 km south of Mae Hong Son. Other attractions along the way are a number of thermal springs, and a couple of small caves.

The Hmong Microwave Village Viewpoint: This is an excellent mountain area with Hmong hill tribes, located approximately 38 km south of Mae Hong Son. The primary feature is a peak, with a microwave tower, which provides splendid views of the surrounding terrain.

Heading south on Hwy 108, the turn-off is on the right at MAISANGNAM FOREST PARK. Click the following link for directions:



Mae Sariang: This is picturesque town in the southern section of Mae Hong Son Province. It sits at the junction of Hwy's 105 & 108. For those doing the loop tour, it's normally the last stop before the final 200 km leg across to Chiang Mai. The traveler/tourist accommodation strip runs along the eastern bank of the YUAM RIVER. There's plenty of guesthouses, in the 600 - 700 THB range, with nice balcony views across the river.

Recommended Accommodation: An excellent budget accommodation choice in Mae Sariang is the RIVERBANK GUESTHOUSE. Click on the following link for booking inquiries:



Mae Sariang Riverside walk

STAGE FIVE - MAE SARIANG TO CHIANG MAI

Mae Hong Son Loop - Stage five: Mae Sariang to Chiang Mai

- Travel time = 4 hours
- Distance = 200 km

The Final Stage: This final section of the loop takes you back to Chiang Mai. The first 100 km takes you through more winding, mountainous terrain. The final 100 km stretch into Chiang Mai is across relatively flat landscape where the ride becomes easier but increasingly more traffic congested.

Sightseeing: The first 100 km section has a number of sightseeing attractions worth looking at, including a couple of pine forest areas with bungalows and camping facilities. However, if you're tight for time the best is OP LUANG NATIONAL PARK. **Click the following link for directions:**



National Park Entry Fees: As with all national parks in Thailand, there's an entry fee for visiting Op Luang National Park. As of January 2022, the entry fee for foreigners is 300 THB



Ancient rock art

Hiking Trails: Op Luang National Park is well set up for safe sightseeing. There's a hiking trail which does a 5 km loop through the peaks and takes you up to couple of nice viewpoints. The primary feature is the river canyon which the trail follows as it returns to the start/finish point.

Prehistoric Human Settlement: The area is also a site of early human settlement in Thailand, and is promoted accordingly. Along the hiking trail there's allocation where ancient drawings can be seen on the sandstone rock.



Op Luang River Canyon

MEGAWORLD ASIA

**Off The Beaten Track
Travel and Adventure**

**With
Bonus
Locations**

- **Cambodia**
- **Laos**
- **Myanmar**
- **Thailand**
- **Vietnam**

**For use with
Mobile
Phones
and Tablets**

**With Interactive Links To
Google Maps, YouTube Videos
& Additional Information**

MEGAWORLD ASIA