

FREE FAMILY TRAVEL GUIDE

A Singapore Family's Guide to Chiang Mai

Where to stay, what to experience and how to create a meaningful family holiday



BY JOE CHAN & JENNIFER KOH



Welcome to Chiang Mai

We first came to explore Chiang Mai as a family in May 2023, and on 10 December 2023, we boarded a one-way flight and made the move from Singapore with our two boys, who were then 11 and 13.

Looking back, we can see how much we have grown through the transition. This guide shares some of the lessons we learned and practical tips for families considering Chiang Mai—whether for a holiday, an extended break or something longer-term.

Joe Chan ([my website](#))

Joe is an ICF Professional Certified Coach, former social worker and author of *From Rat to Warrior* and *Youth Lenses*. For more than 20 years, he has supported boys, young people and families through social work, youth mentoring and coaching. His own journey—from Singapore's rat race to a more intentional life in Chiang Mai—shapes his work around courage, purpose and family connection.



Jennifer Koh

Jennifer is an educator and mother who has walked alongside Joe in raising their two teenage sons and making the family's move from Singapore to Chiang Mai. She brings an educator's care, a mother's practical wisdom and firsthand insight into helping a family adapt to a new culture and rhythm of life.

Together, they share what they have learned so other families can explore Chiang Mai with confidence, connection and intention.



START HERE

How to Use This Guide

Stay

Explore our accommodation partners in the city and on the quieter outskirts of Chiang Mai.

Explore

Discover places and experiences we have personally visited and tried, shared through our own photographs.

Reconnect

If you are looking for a deeper connection, use this trip as intentional time together as a family.





01

Why Chiang Mai for a Singapore Family?

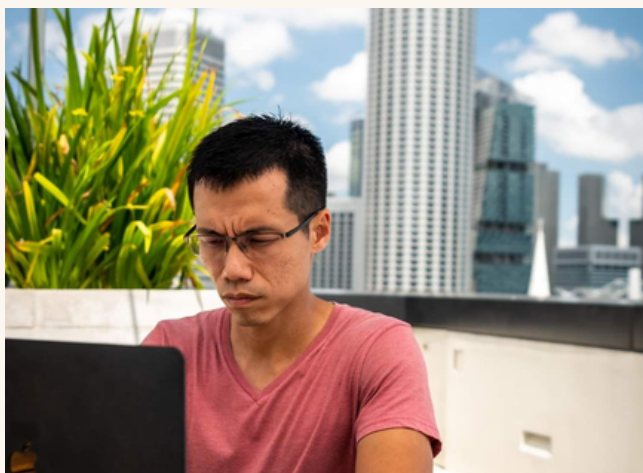
Space to slow down, explore and experience family life differently.

A CHANGE OF PACE

From Singapore's Rhythm to Chiang Mai's Spaciousness

Singapore

Efficient, convenient and highly structured—yet family life can become filled with work, school, tuition and activities.



Chiang Mai

Mountains, open spaces and a slower rhythm that invites families to pause, explore and be present together.



What would you like our family to experience differently during this holiday?



02

Planning Your Chiang Mai Family Trip

Make room for adventure, recovery and everyone's voice.

BEFORE YOU BOOK

Family Trip Planning Checklist

- ☐ Check the season, weather and air quality

Nov–Jan is peak season, with more international visitors and higher flight and accommodation prices. Mar–Apr is the hot season, so plan outdoor activities for cooler parts of the day.

- ☐ Book early around Singapore school holidays

Flights and popular stays fill up sooner during the June and year-end breaks.

- ☐ Choose a comfortable pace and trip length

Five to seven days works well. Avoid changing accommodation too often.

- ☐ Match activities to your children's ages and readiness

Check age, height and fitness requirements, and let each child choose one experience.

- ☐ Set a realistic family budget

Food usually costs less farther from the city. Budget for flights, stays, transport, activities, insurance and a buffer. Direct Singapore–Chiang Mai flights are convenient, but connecting through Bangkok can sometimes reduce the fare. Prices also rise around Songkran, Loi Krathong and New Year, so book early.

- ☐ Protect unplanned time for rest

Plan one main activity a day and leave room for slow mornings, cafés, pools or naps.



Us transiting at KL airport from Singapore to Chiang Mai

Note: Money and payments

Change Singapore dollars to Thai baht before arriving; Mr Pierre Money Exchange is another option in the city. Cash remains important at local markets, small shops and eateries. Cards are mainly accepted where a POS terminal is available, so always carry some baht. Multi-currency cards such as iChange may offer better FX rates than traditional bank cards—compare current rates and fees. DBS PayLah! can also scan eligible Thai PromptPay merchant QR codes; personal QR codes may not work.

Joe's iChange referral: Download [here](#) and use code joe18. Under the current referral offer, both you and Joe receive \$5. Terms may change.

Plan This Trip Together

Invite every family member to contribute one choice.

One activity I would like to try

One food I would like to experience

One place I would like to explore

One challenge I am willing to take on

One restful experience I would enjoy

If we had our best family holiday together, what would it look like?





03 Choosing Where to Stay

City convenience, independent comfort or a restful countryside base.

COMPARE YOUR OPTIONS

Find the Right Base for Your Family

STAY TYPE

BEST FOR

EXPLORE

Astra Condo
Near the Old City

A modern city base near central Chiang Mai and its attractions.

[CLICK TO VIEW ASTRA CONDO](#)

Chom Doi Condo
Near MAYA

Easy access to MAYA, Nimman, cafés and city conveniences.

[CLICK TO VIEW CHOM DOI](#)

Village Green
Doi Saket

Nature, quiet and a slower wellness-focused countryside stay.

[CLICK TO VIEW VILLAGE GREEN](#)

Think of Chiang Mai in zones: the moat-enclosed Old City for temples, markets and heritage; Nimman and MAYA to the west for cafés and shopping; and the airport southwest of the Old City. The riverside and Night Bazaar are east, while quieter countryside stays extend towards Doi Saket.

[VIEW STAY OPTIONS](#)



OUR FIRSTHAND RECOMMENDATIONS

Three Distinct Ways to Stay

STAY

Astra Condo
Near the Old City

Chom Doi Condo
Near MAYA Shopping
Mall

Village Green
Wellness Retreat
Doi Saket

WHY WE RECOMMEND IT

Premium facilities including a rooftop pool, sauna, steam room, kitchen and washing machine. Clean rooms, card access and 24-hour security make it a comfortable short-stay base near the Old City and about 15 minutes from the airport in lighter traffic.

Experience the lively Nimman area near MAYA, cafés, restaurants and interesting roadside businesses. This neighbourhood stays active later and may appeal to families with older children or travellers who enjoy evening activity.

A deliberate contrast to Singapore's noise, crowds and stimulation. Choose the Thai house or log cabin for nature, personal quiet, reflection and time to slow down—not merely as somewhere to sleep.

EXPLORE

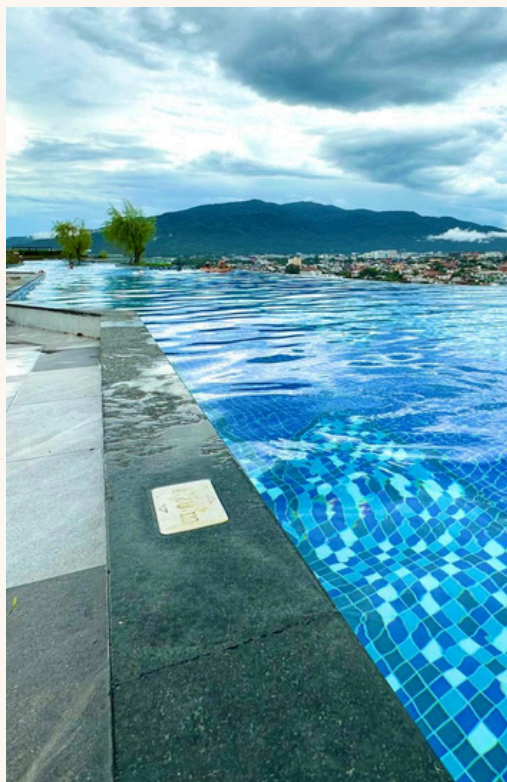
[VIEW ASTRA CONDO](#)

[VIEW CHOM DOI CONDO](#)

[VIEW VILLAGE GREEN WELLNESS RETREAT](#)

For a short family holiday, we would choose Astra as a comfortable base for exploring local neighbourhoods and taking one or two mountain trips. Grab serves both condo areas readily, with local eateries and 7-Eleven outlets nearby.

[VIEW STAY OPTIONS](#)



GETTING AROUND

Choose Transport That Fits the Day

Grab and Bolt

Your Singapore Grab app and saved card work in Thailand. Bolt is often a cheaper local alternative.

Airport Transfer

Pre-booking gives families with children and luggage a smoother arrival and departure.

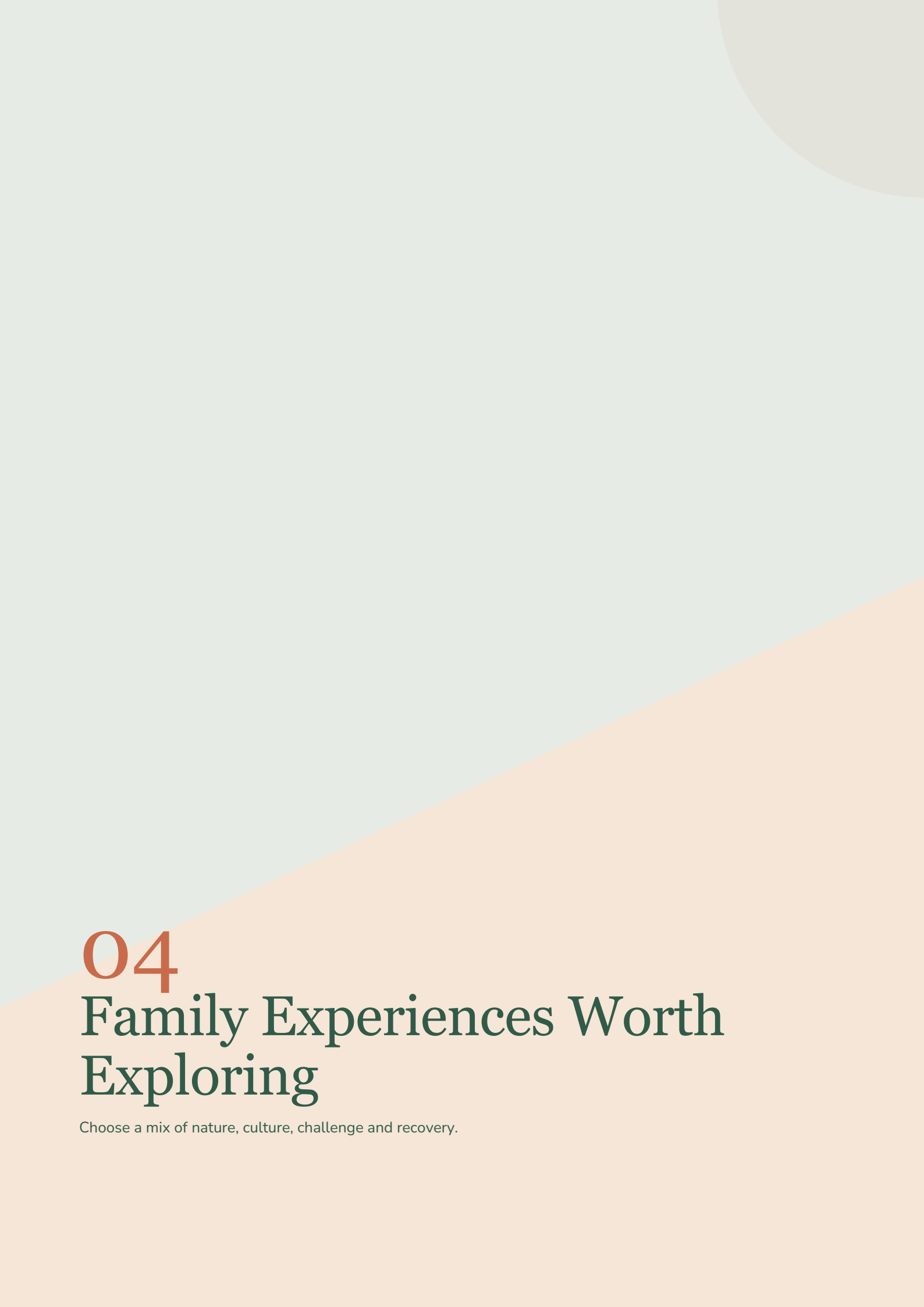
Private Driver ([click to view](#)).

Best for mountain routes such as Doi Inthanon or Mon Jam and multi-stop family day trips. You can also reach out to us for local drivers whom we know and have personally used.

Rental Car or Songthaew

For car rental, consider [Budget Catcher](#) if you are confident and properly licensed. Red songthaews operate flexibly within the city, while yellow songthaews generally follow routes connecting the city with surrounding districts. Check whether the route passes your location, flag one down and tell the driver your destination. Confirm the fare before boarding, then pay the driver in cash when you get off.





04

Family Experiences Worth Exploring

Choose a mix of nature, culture, challenge and recovery.

NATURE AND ANIMALS

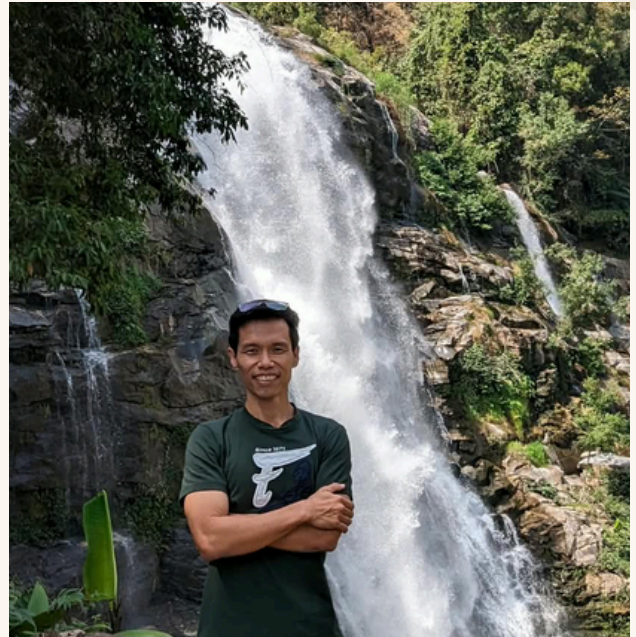
Step into the Outdoors

HUAY KIEW WATERFALL — Easy-gradient access for young children and older family members. Bring a change of clothes and arrive before its 6pm closing.

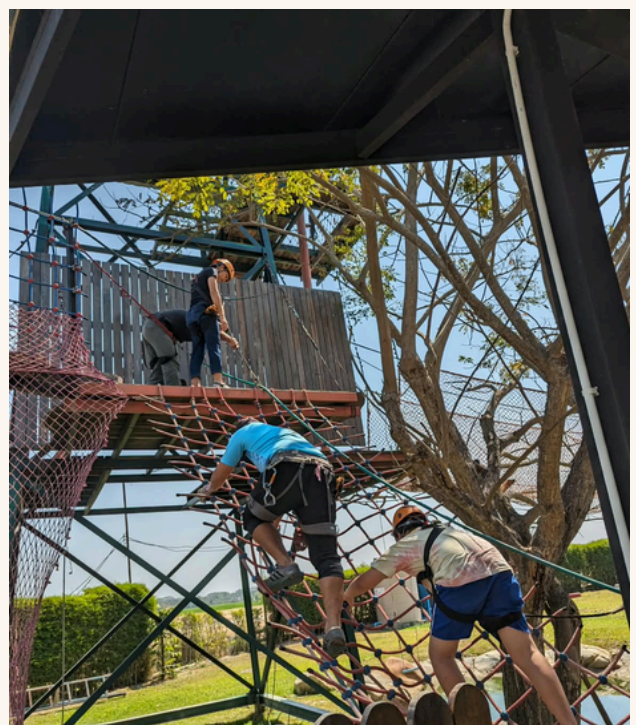
MON JAM — Scenic mountain views; descend by about 4pm or stay overnight for sunrise from your resort.

DOI SUTHEP (click here) — Go in the morning, allow time for the mountain journey and enjoy lunch, local shops and produce at the top.

ELEPHANT EXPERIENCES (click here) — Choose operators that prioritise animal care and natural behaviour. Avoid places that chain elephants or use them mainly for performances.



DOI INTHANON — Plan café stops; bring a sweater in cool season and avoid wet-season visits. (click here).



Encounter Northern Thailand

BO SANG UMBRELLA

- See a traditional craft becoming increasingly rare in a mass-produced world. Each umbrella is handmade from raw materials with care, patience and precision.

HMONG VILLAGE (click here)

- Discover how Northern Thailand's hill tribes each carry distinctive traditions shaped partly by neighbouring regions and countries.



What did you notice here that feels different from life in Singapore?



LOOK BEYOND THE ATTRACTION

Meet the People Behind the Culture



LOCAL MARKETS & LANNA LIFE

Products may look similar after several markets, but the people behind the stalls make each visit meaningful. Some vendors run stalls part-time to support their families. Slow down, hear their stories and encounter a Northern Thai culture distinct from the southern destinations many Singaporeans know.

Many may not know. Chiang Mai was once the capital of the ancient Lanna Kingdom, founded in the 13th century. Its heritage remains visible in the city's distinctive temples, traditional crafts, food, festivals and warm hospitality. From intricate woodcarving and handwoven textiles to lantern celebrations and centuries-old customs, Lanna culture gives northern Thailand its own gentle rhythm and character.

ADVENTURE AND GROWTH

Explore Mae On Cave



MAE ON CAVE

Proper steps and lighting lead into impressive underground chambers. The climb can still be challenging for anyone who struggles with stairs, so assess the mobility of younger children and older family members before going. Take your time, wear shoes with good grip and plan to leave the cave by 5pm.

What did you do today that made you feel courageous or proud?



CHALLENGE WITH PURPOSE

Martial Arts, Courage and Discipline

CORE COMBAT CHIANG MAI

(click [here](#))

This is the gym where Joe continues to train. It offers a wide range of martial arts for adults and children, including beginner-friendly classes. We recommend it as a shared physical challenge that can help children experience courage, resilience and discipline through movement.

MUAY THAI FIGHT NIGHT (click [here](#)).

Thailand's national sport showcases resilience, courage and discipline. Fights in local boxing stadiums often begin around 9pm and may continue until midnight, so consider your children's ages and arrange return transport in advance.



Fon Jerng at LFL Fon Jerng Studio (click [here](#))

Fon Jerng is a traditional Lanna martial art that combines graceful, dance-like movement with practical fighting techniques, using empty hands, staffs and other traditional weapons. At LFL Fon Jerng Studio, Coach Sakan, the founder, introduces visitors to this lesser-known part of Northern Thai heritage through movement, discipline and cultural learning. It offers families an active way to experience Lanna culture beyond sightseeing.

Recovery Is Part of the Journey



Slow down with

TOK SEN MASSAGE

- A traditional Northern Thai wellness treatment using wooden tools to create gentle, rhythmic tapping along the body. We suggest it because it is a distinctive local experience that most Singaporeans may not have tried. Ask for comfortable pressure and share any health concerns beforehand.

SAN KAMPHAENG HOT SPRINGS

- Soak your feet, swim, book a private mineral pool or cook eggs naturally in the hot spring.



MON JAM ([click here](#)).

- Mon Jam is a wonderful choice for families who enjoy cool mountain air, scenic views and a slower pace. Take time to explore the farms, cafés and viewpoints rather than rushing from one attraction to another. If you are making a day trip, begin your descent by around 4pm before it gets dark. Alternatively, stay overnight at one of the mountain resorts and wake up to a beautiful sunrise right outside your window.



05 A Five-Day Chiang Mai Family Itinerary

Arrive. Explore. Challenge and recover. Take a day trip. Return refreshed.

DAYS 1 AND 2

Arrive and Begin Exploring

Day 1

Airport transfer, check-in, rest, explore nearby and enjoy a pleasant local Thai dinner.

Ask: What are you most looking forward to experiencing together?

Day 2

Choose a Northern Thai cultural experience or a mountain journey around Doi Suthep or Doi Inthanon.

Ask: What did you notice that felt different from Singapore?



DAYS 3 AND 4

Challenge, Recover and Explore

Day 3

Try a family challenge, then recover with massage, hot spring, quiet time or an optional Village Green stay.

Ask: What made you feel proud today?

Day 4

Take a Mon Jam day trip for nature and scenic stops—or add an overnight Pai extension for a longer mountain escape.

Ask: Which moment would you like our family to remember?



DAY 5

Shop, Reflect and Return

- Check out or store luggage
- Visit Warorot Market or a city mall
- Have lunch
- Pick up local gifts or snacks
- Transfer to the airport early

What is one experience from this trip that we would like to continue at home?



Journey rhythm: Arrive → Explore → Challenge and Recover → Day Trip → Shop and Return



06

Making the Holiday More Meaningful

Better conversations often begin in ordinary, unpressured moments.

Questions for the Journey

What activity have you always wanted us to try together?

What small thing would make today enjoyable for everyone?

What did you learn about yourself from today's challenge?

What is one thing you did today that made you proud?

What did you appreciate about someone in our family today?

If we had a no-phones family day, what should we include?

What new family tradition from this trip should we continue?

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS MY "50 COACHING PROMPTS FOR PARENTS GUIDE"](#)

MEANINGFUL TRAVEL

Give Back While You Are Here

Chiang Mai can also be a place to contribute—not only consume. Joe can help visiting families explore appropriate ways to share their time or expertise with local children and young people through established nonprofits.



Advance planning is essential so the experience fits the organisation's schedule, responds to real needs and follows appropriate safeguarding boundaries.

Offer what is useful: practical workshops, professional expertise, encouragement, fundraising support or consistent service—depending on the organisation's priorities.

Keep the experience respectful and needs-led. Avoid treating children or communities as a tourist attraction, and never promise support you cannot sustain.

Joe's experience: facilitating connection, reflection and creative activities with young people at Asia's Hope Foundation.

WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING DEEPER

Deeper Experiences in Chiang Mai

For families and men who want their time in Chiang Mai to create more than memories.

Family Bootcamp

Joe & Jennifer can curate parent-and-child experiences using their combined coaching expertise and over 20 years of work with young people. Joe's particular focus is helping parents walk alongside boys and male teenagers through a rite-of-passage journey towards courage, responsibility and maturity.

Challenge Together

Martial arts, outdoor adventures and shared challenges become opportunities to explore resilience, courage, discipline, trust and perseverance—not merely entertainment.

Space for Men

Fireside gatherings and retreats give men carrying responsibilities at work and home a safe, non-judgemental space for reflection, honest conversation and brotherhood.

[CLICK HERE FOR MY FREE GUIDE ON "RAISING UP BOYS"](#)



CHOOSE YOUR JOURNEY

How Would Your Family Like to Experience Chiang Mai?

Stay

Find an independent family base with access to local recommendations.

[CLICK HERE FOR ACCOMODATION OPTIONS](#)

Explore

Choose ready-made activities that fit your family's interests.

[CONTACT US FOR OTHER EXPERIENCES](#)

Reconnect

Plan a deeper journey designed around your family.

[SCHEDULE A CALL AND LET'S PLAN FOR A CUSTOMISED FAMILY BOOTCAMP](#)

Presented by FProject LLP · UEN 53423920W
Free to choose your best life

Founded by Joe Chan and Jennifer Koh, FProject creates meaningful family experiences through coaching, retreats and trusted local connections.