

# Condé Nast Traveller

THE WORLD MADE LOCAL

MARCH 2022

## Love & Travel

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**THE UK'S BEST FAMILY STAYCATIONS**

HAND-ON-HEART TALES FROM ELIF SHAFAK,  
SUKETU MEHTA AND COLM TOIBIN

*Reading between the sheets: an intimate take on the smartest hotel rooms*









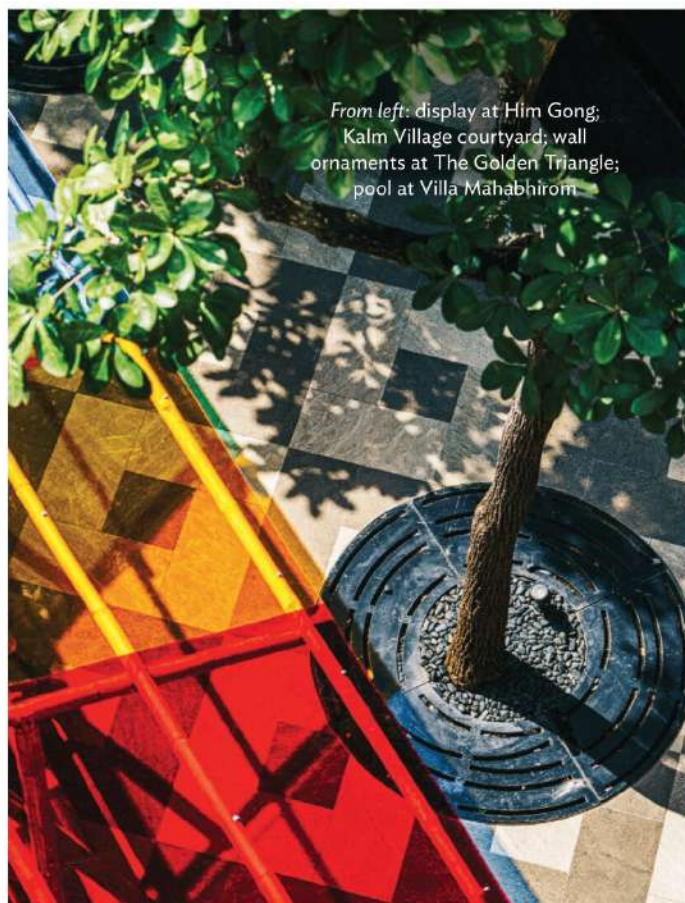
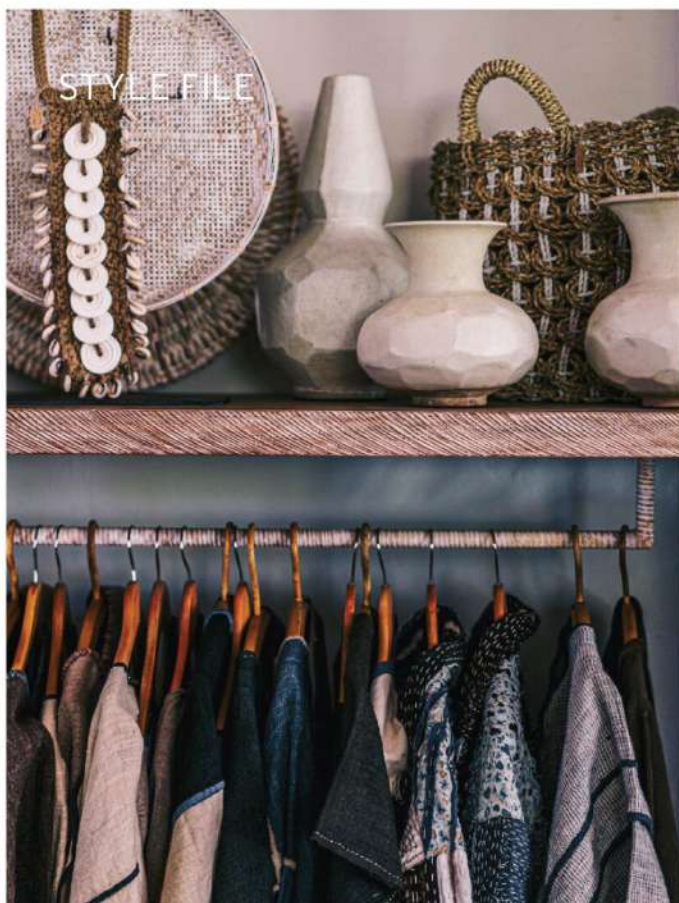
PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS SCHALKX

SHOPPING IN

# CHIANG MAI

IN THAILAND'S CREATIVE CAPITAL THE REGION'S RICH HERITAGE IS CHERISHED BY TRADITIONAL WEAVERS, NEXT-GEN STUDIOS AND ENTIRE VILLAGES OF ARTISANS. BY CHRIS SCHALKX





## DESIGN HUB

Chiang Mai and its surroundings are at the epicentre of Thailand's traditional craft scene, but, until last year, the area lacked a space that brought the various disciplines together. This changed with the opening of **Kalm Village**, a cluster of charcoal-black houses in the moated Old City housing an art gallery, design library, textile archive and pop-up space. Its boutiques carry all things crafty – from Indian block-print towels to groovy batik shirts from Nakhon Si Thammarat in the south. Browse the enamel tiffin boxes, wickerware and jars of local honey at Kalm Coffeehouse next door. [kalmvillage.com](http://kalmvillage.com)

## HAND-DYED FABRICS

After meeting at an indigo-dyeing apprenticeship in rural Japan, the Thai-Siberian couple behind **Slowstitch Studio** moved to Chiang Mai to further hone their skills. Using laborious *shibori* techniques and natural dyes (including onion skin, brazilwood and mangosteen peel), they create intricately printed scarves, dresses and bags, on sale at their studio near Wat Seemaram temple just outside the city. At weekends, the bamboo-lined street in front of the shop turns into a vibrant market with music and food vendors. [slowstitchstudio.com](http://slowstitchstudio.com)

## LOCAL LOUNGEWEAR

From a pint-sized shop between the hills and rice fields of rural Mae Rim, the just-opened **Wood and Mountain Studio** sells hand-dyed bedding and casualwear inspired by textile techniques from around the country. Standouts include drapery two-pieces made from upcycled scarves sourced in the north-eastern Sakon Nakhon province and colourfully woven ikat trousers from neighbouring Nong Khai. A carpenter by trade, co-owner Nott Vachira also stocks cutting boards and other home accessories made from reclaimed wood. [woodandmountain.com](http://woodandmountain.com)

## CURATED CURIOS

Interior designer Vichada Sitakalin met dozens of local weavers, ceramicists and woodworkers while designing the craft-centric Raya Heritage Hotel just north of Chang Phueak. With **Him Gong**, a concept store next to the hotel's lobby, she offers a much-needed platform to sell their wares. The shelves heave with tote bags and pillowcases made from textiles by the Hmong tribe and chunky bangles of hammered silver. Keep an eye out for one-offs such as antique wooden printing blocks and decorative, camel-hide bottles. [therayacuratedcollection.com](http://therayacuratedcollection.com)

## ASIAN ANTIQUES

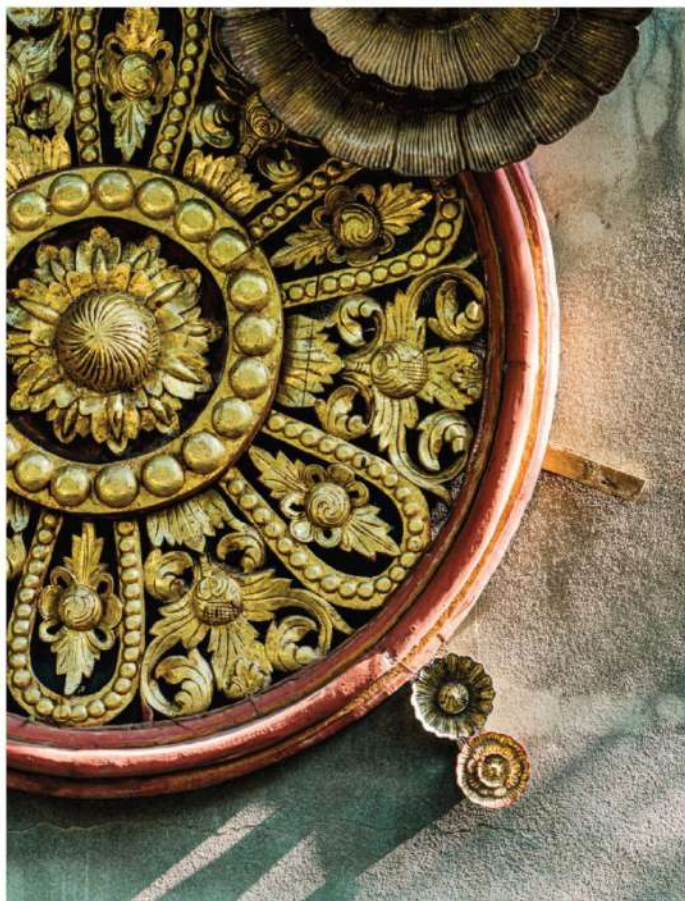
Thirty minutes south of the city, the homeware enclave of Hang Dong is peppered with wickerwork ateliers and antique stores dealing in goods with various degrees of authenticity. None can hold a candle to **The Golden Triangle**, which specialises in pan-Asian antiques sourced from Pakistan to China. The showrooms, all exposed brick and colonnades, span nearly two hectares and are packed with Indian doors, Qing-dynasty armchairs and teakwood furniture from British-era Burma, but offer plenty of suitcase-friendly bric-a-brac too. At the workshop, watch artisans turn recycled materials into contemporary pieces. [goldentriangle.co.th](http://goldentriangle.co.th)

## ECLECTIC HOMEWARE

A short walk away in Hang Dong, **Wit's Collection** is a dog-eared entry in the address book of many a local interior designer. The ever-changing stock spans kaleidoscopic porcelain, delightfully kitsch chinoiserie and vintage pieces from around the world, plus sculptures and furniture by home-grown designers. The blue-and-white ceramics by Ploy Chariyaves and the African-inspired masks assembled from scrap metal by Chiang Mai-based Prakit Seehawong are particularly noteworthy. [witscollection.com](http://witscollection.com)

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRIS SCHALKX





### ONE-STOP LIFESTYLE SHOP

At the entrance of Thapae East, a creative hub housed in two rows of shophouses just outside the Old City, concept store **Rivers and Roads** brings together local art, vintage trinkets and sustainable home goods. Tumblers in Pantone colours share space with Japanese glassware and quirky lapel pins, all of which are beautifully wrapped in *washi* tape and dried flowers. In line with the owners' eco-ethos, there's also a refill station with natural soap and dishwasher liquid. [fb.com/riversandroads.chiangmai](https://fb.com/riversandroads.chiangmai)

### PUNK MEMENTOS

With hip-hop blasting through its speakers and a heavily tattooed shopkeeper behind the till, **Den Souvenir** isn't your typical gift shop. Owner Kitiwat Mattanapan launched the space as an indie zine store and has grown it into a meeting space for street artists and alternative thinkers from around Asia. The store frequently hosts pop-up exhibitions to accompany limited-edition journals and riso prints, but the permanent collection of vintage novelty T-shirts, cheeky urinal-shaped incense burners and retro toy collectibles is equally worth a look. [densouvenir.com](https://densouvenir.com)

### INSPIRATIONAL PIT STOP

A higgledy-piggledy mini village of reclaimed wood and mossy concrete, **Baan Kang Wat**, in leafy Wat Umong, is a gathering spot for creatives. From its Studio Ghibli-esque ateliers, the collective turns out leather-bound notebooks, woven baskets and ceramic jewellery, and is often happy to offer customisations. Some studios host workshops (including candle-making), while others double as tiny cafés and locavore restaurants serving slow-drip coffee and curries with organic rice grown in the mountains nearby. [fb.com/baankangwat](https://fb.com/baankangwat)

### WHERE TO STAY

The hush-hush walled garden of **Villa Mahabhirom**, down the road from Baan Kang Wat, is a welcome respite from Chiang Mai's sweaty streets. Here, amid bougainvillea and fan palms, traditional 14th-century villas from the plains of central Thailand have been meticulously rebuilt into two-level suites with creaky wooden floors and marble-clad bathrooms with copper rolltop tubs. The restaurant dishes up excellent Vietnamese specialities, made from locally sourced ingredients, while the café in front offers home-baked goods. [villa-mahabhirom.com](https://villa-mahabhirom.com). Doubles from about £170

## SOURCE MATERIAL

### GO DIRECT TO THE MAKERS

#### BAN PA BONG

This hamlet, 20 minutes' south-east of the city, has long been renowned for its distinctive wickerwork. These days, the workshops produce everything from clutches to lampshades. At the heart of it all is a cheerful 90-year-old matriarch who still weaves at eye-popping speed.

#### BAN MUANG KUNG

As one of the few remaining villages specialising in clay pottery, this is a great spot to pick up traditional earthenware.

Some 22 families – believed to be descendants of tribes from Burma's Shan state – create water jars with patterns shaped like bodhi-tree leaves.

#### BAN TAWAI

In the lanes of this nearby village, woodworkers chisel life-size Buddha sculptures and intricate elephant side-tables from teak and oak. Local shipping companies can assist with sending made-to-order pieces home.