



Monk Chat Programs in Chiang Mai

By BigBoyTravel

An amazing opportunity to interact with Buddhist Monks is through the many Monk Chat programs at different locations around Chiang Mai. Monk Chats are informal discussions where you sit at a round table and talk with prep school age Monks who are usually accompanied by their teacher. Monk Chats are a great way not only to be part of a fun exchange culture, but is also important in helping the young Monks to get better at speaking English.

We found all of the young Monks we've talked to be extremely curious even though some are a little shy. It is interesting to learn the different places they are from and what they want to do with the Monkhood. Some already know they are going to get a regular job after their schooling is done, some want to be Monk school teachers, and others want to become life long Monks.

Common Questions About Monk Chats:

What Do You Talk About? You can pretty much talk about anything you want as there is no set script. Most of the boys will have cheat sheets to ask you questions as they are still learning English and don't quite have the confidence yet. Feel free to ask them anything you want and make sure to share stories about yourself. Even if you only have time to stop and introduce yourself and have them introduce themselves back, every little bit helps and is still fun.

How Long Does A Monk Chat Last? How long you talk with the young Monks is pretty much up to you. Some programs are available only for 2-3 hours and others are available all day so it is only limited to however long you want to talk. A normal conversation ends up lasting about an hour especially if you are with a larger group of Monks or have multiple people in your group. Even if you only have 5 minutes though, make sure to stop in a Monk Chat while in Chiang Mai

Can Women Join A Monk Chat? For sure, all visitors are welcome. This is a great question as normally older Monks are allowed to interact with women outside of their family. Women are typically not allowed to approach Monks or touch them as not to corrupt them. It is so strict that often when receiving Morning Alms from a woman Monks must have offerings placed on the ground and pick them up instead of receiving them directly from a woman.

Monk Chat Locations In Chiang Mai:

It seems like there is almost always a Monk Chat going on somewhere in Chiang Mai, so here are the details of where you can join a Chat while you are in town.

1. Temple of the Great Stupa (Wat Chedi Luang): Wat Chedi Luang's central Chiang Mai location and constant availability makes it our favorite place to join a Monk Chat. It is very easy to find and takes place at the outdoor tables on the Northside of the Temple Complex. There typically 7-6 large tables and up to 50 young Monks waiting to talk. **Chat Hours:** Daily 9am-6pm, most abundant on Saturday & Sunday Mornings.

2. Doi Suthep Temple: If you are planning on visiting Wat Doi Suthep we suggest going during their daily Monk Chat as the Monks here are the ones that run the International Buddhism Center. The Center is located on the far Eastern side of the Temple complex. We suggest skipping the tour groups and just renting a driving to Doi Suthep which is not only cheap but gives you more flexibility. **Chat Hours:** Daily 1-3pm.

3. Flower Garden Temple (Wat Suan Dok): free Monday, Wednesday and Friday 5-7pm; you can also do a 2 day meditation retreat weekly on Tuesday & Wednesday

4. Wat Umong: Available Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 5:30pm-7:30pm.

5. MCU Buddhist University, Chiang Mai Campus: Monday, Wednesday, Friday from 5-7:30pm

Thai Language Basics:

While English will get you by it is nice to know a few key Thai phrases and is also a good way to impress the young Monks during your conversation.

Background Info on Buddhist Monks in Thailand:

Thailand is 99% Buddhist and almost all young boys are become a monk at least for a little while usually starting around age 12. Boy from rural communities tend to stay in the Monkhood longer as it is a great way to get a better education and learn English. While they learn about Buddhism and meditation there are only a limited number of strict rules they need to follow compared to the over 200 rules an ordained Monk lives by. Boys can become ordained as early as age 21.