

## **General Information of the Province**

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### **Location and territory**

Location Nakhon Phanom province is located in the northeast (upper part) of Thailand, between the latitude 16-18 degrees north and longitude 104-105 degrees east. Approximately 740 km. from Bangkok.

The Territory Nakhon Phanom province is about 5,512.70 sq.km. or about 3,445,414.32 Rai big, accounting for 3 percent of the Northeast. It spreads about 175 km. along the Mekong River and has connecting territories as follows:

- In the north: connects to Seka District and Amphor Bung Khong Long of Bung Kan Province
- In the east: connects to Kam Muan of Lao People's Democratic Republic with the Mekong river as the borderline
- In the south: connects to Amphor Dong Luang and Amphor Wah Yai of Mukdahan Province
- In the west: connects to Amphor Kusuman, Amphor Ahkad Amnuai, Amphor Phonnakaew of Sakon Nakorn Province

Nakhon Phanom province has two permanent border points and lenient points, which is a border area allowing the Lao people to buy-sell the consumer products in the morning and return in the evening, however the Thai people are not allowed to travel to Lao PDR. The 4 lenient points for commerce are as follows:

- 1) The permanent Friendship Bridge 3 (Nakhon Phanom-Kummuan) at Baan Homm area, Amphor Muang Nakhon Phanom, is a connecting point to Baan Wern Tai, Tahkek city, Kummuan district. The open hours are from 06.00-22.00hrs. daily. This is an important crossing point and universal, which the government of Thailand and Lao PDR has together built to create da gateway to the Indochina.
- 2) The permanent crossing point at the pier of Muang Nakhon Phanom in Tambon Nai Muang, Amphor Muang Nakhon Phanom, opposite from Takkek city of Kummuan district, opens from 06.00-22.00 hrs. daily.
- 3) The Baan Pohsai lenient crossing point in Tambon Pailom, Amphor Baanpaeng, across Baan Tha Sa-aad of Muang Pakkrading of Bolicasai district is open from 06.00-16.00 hrs. Mondays to Fridays.
- 4) The lenient crossing point at Ban Tha Uthen in Tambon Tha Uthen, Amphor Th- Uthen, Moo Tambon Tha Uthen, Amphor Tha Uthen across the Hin Boon city opens from 08.00-15.00 hrs. Mondays and Fridays.

- 5) The lenient crossing point at Ban Nad Tha, Moo 2 Tambon Ban Klang, Amphor Muang Nakhon Phanom, across Ban Pak Peng in Kum Muan district opens from 08.00-14.00 hrs Tuesdays and Fridays.
- 6) The lenient crossing point at Ban That Phanom Sammakee, Moo2 Tamabon That Phanom Amphor That Phanom, across Ban Paksae of Nongbok city in Kummuan district opens from 07.00-15.00 hrs Tuesdays and Fridays.

## **Topography**

The over all condition of Nakhon Phanom province is plain, with some plateaus and mountains, short rivers sub-branched from the Mekong river to nourish the abundance within the area. The Mekong river flows through most of the areas. Therefore, Nakhon Phanom is considered a province with rich water resource. In the east, the Mekong river flows as a border between Thailand and Laos.

Northern Most of the area is upland and highland with forest in alternating with flat land. In the middle and western of the area is a flat plain area with wide fields, which will be flooded with heavy rains.

Southern The area near the Mekong river is a plain terrain with flooded area to the west, which is further away. The terrain is wavy and the highland is full with forest covered with Tengrung trees. Most of the soil is gravel and some part are hilly and low terrain in alternate.

## **Weather**

In general, Nakhon Phanom is a province with a high rainfall in the rainy season, as it is influenced by the southwest monsoon. And influenced by forests and mountains from the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The storms from the South China Sea are moving or approaching the rainy season from mid-May to mid-October. In the year 2017 (to August 2017), Nakhon Phanom District has 105 days of rain, rainfall of 2,106.8 mm, maximum temperature of 38.5 degrees Celsius on March 14, 2017, the lowest temperature was 14.0 degrees Celsius on February 14, 2017, the weather of Nakhon Phanom is divided into 3 seasons.

Summer Starts from mid-February to mid-May of every year. The average temperature in the summer is 25-35 degrees Celsius and the maximum temperature is 37-41 degrees Celsius.

Rainy season Starts from mid-May to mid-October of every year. In some parts of the province there is heavy rainfall. Especially the area by the Mekong River,

which will be flooded every year, such as Muang District, Tha Uthen District. And Ban Phaeng district.

Winter Starts from mid-October to mid-February every year. In general, the weather is cold. The average temperature is 16-25 degrees Celsius and the lowest temperature is in the range of 8 - 15 degrees Celsius, but possibly lower in some years.

### **Governance Information**

Nakhon Phanom is divided into 12 districts, 99 Tambon 1,128 villages. Local government organizations consist of 1 Provincial Administrative Organization, 1 Municipal, 81 Subdistrict Administrative Organization and 21 Municipalities.

### **Population**

Nakhon Phanom Province consists of 8 ethnic groups, including Thai Lao of Phuthai tribe, Tai Yor tribe (Yor), Thai Soh Tribe or Thai Kaso Tribe, Thai Kalerng Tribe, Thai Kah Tribe, Thai Saek Tribe and Thai Tuan Tribe. Including the Thai people of Chinese and Vietnamese descendants live together peacefully. The tribes conserve their arts and culture such as the Phu Tai people of Amphor Renunakorn , who can still maintain their identity very well.

There are 717,805 people in Nakhon Phanom province. There are 358,209 males, 359,596 females, and 213,497 households. (Source: Provincial Registration Office, August 2017)

Amphor	Area (Sq.Km.)	Tam bon	Villag e	Munici pality	District Municip al	SAO
1. Nakhon Phanom	853.306	15	165	1	1	12
2. Tha Uthen	467.983	9	111	-	2	7
3. That Phanom	367.884	12	136	-	5	7
4. Na Kae	539.217	12	143	-	2	11
5. Ban Paeng	284.731	6	66	-	1	5
6. Pla Pak	547.096	8	85	-	1	8
7. Sri Songkram	671.371	9	109	-	5	5
8. Renu Nakorn	253.952	8	91	-	1	8
9. Na Wah	288.448	6	68	-	2	5
10. Ponsawan	718.835	7	90	-	1	7
11. Natom	398.129	3	37	-	-	3
12. Wang Yang	137.931	4	27	-	-	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,528.883</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>81</b>

(Source : Nakhon Phanom Provincial Administration Office, September 2017)

### **Religion / customs / culture**

The majority of people in Nakhon Phanom are Buddhist 95%, followed by Christians 3.9% and other religions 1.1%.

- Phra Tiu- Phr Tiam are the city's relics, which is believed that any misfortune or disasters can be chased away by the relics. They are located at the temple in the city of Nakhon Phanom.

- Phra Thong is an ancient gold bronze statue. Those who worship and wish upon Phra Thong will be blessed and their wishes will come true. It is located at the Wat Pho Si, Tambon Na Muang, Amphoe Mueang, Nakhon Phanom

- Luang Poh Ong Tue is a Buddha statue of Pang Manwichai style. It is to believe that anyone who has come to pay homage to Luang Por will be fairly achieved in life. It is located at Wat Klang, Tambon Naimuang, Amphor Muang Nakhon Phanom.

- Phra Ong Saen of Mahathat Temple is a Buddha statue melted from many kinds of metals to be homogeneous. It is believed that those who came to worship will find only happiness, success and safe from any harms in the way. It is located at the Mahathat Temple in Tambon Naimuang, Amphor Mueng Nakhon Phanom.

- Phra Saeng of Srithep Praditharam Temple was built by the daughter of the Laanchang Kingdom in the era of King Anuwong Wiengchan. There are 4 statues; Phra Serm, Phra Suk, Phra Sai and Phra Saeng. Located at Srithep Praditharam Temple in Tambon Naimuang, Amphor Mueng Nakhon Phanom.

- Luang Pho Sri Koddboon of Kok Temple is a sacred ancient Buddha statue stayed with the city for over 400 years. It was built around B.E. 2144, made of red wood carved into a standing Buddha with golden encryptions, fine engraved lines at the Buddha's clothing carving. This Luang Pho Sri Koddboon is a true Sri Koddboon art.

- Phra Ong Saen of Phra That Renu Temple is a brass Buddha weighs 10 thousand over 100 years old. It is believed that those who came to worship will find blessing and safe from any harms to come. It is located at Phra That Renu Temple in Tambon Renu, Amphor Renunakorn.

- Phra Bang Traibhume is a standing Buddha statue Hammsamut style. It is believed to bless the rain in the draught one worship it. Located at Traibhume Temple in Tambon Tha Uthen, Amphor Tha Uthen.

- Luang Pho Phra Song of Phra Song Forrest Temple is a sandstone statue Samathi style. It has the ancient Khmer art. According to the legend, Phraya Kumdaeng, ruler of Nonghan (Sakonnakorn), brought the stone from Phupan mountain to help with the construction, then once finished, the stone was carved into a Buddha statue to be put in Phra Song Forrest Temple. Located at Phra Song Forrest Temple in Tambon Phrasong of Amphor Nakae.

**Phra Nao** is an ancient Buddha statue with an unknown origin. It is a very powerful Buddha statue, as it is worshiped by the general people, especially the locals of over 25 villages in the area of Amphor Srisongkram, Amphor Natom and Amphor Banpaeng in Nakhon Phanom province for hundreds of years. Currently it is located at Sima Wat Buddhaphranao Baan Sriwernchai, Tambon Samong, Amphor Srisongkram, Nakorn Phanom province. It is a Pangmanwichai styled statue, sitting flat with crossed legs, an art of Laanchang era, made of sand stone, later covered by cement and there are another 2 honorable Buddha

statues; Phra Kaew and Phra Bang, located in Simaphranao since the Trai-Lao culture in B.E. 2100-2200. Urban legend says, that the 3 Buddha statues had shown its supernatural miracle by floating along the Songkram creek to the whirlpool by the pier of Sriwernchai village. The villagers then brought them to the temple. Some legend says, that Phra Nao is royal born, not a Buddha or the reason behind the name "Chaophranao" is because he was the ruler of the city in Srikoddboon Kingdom. Phrachaonao admired warfare, battles, sound of fireworks, sound of gunshots and all the entertainment. This is shown by the fireworks and stage shows, projection of war movies that people offer when their wishes are fulfilled after asking from this statue. Most worshipers, who made promises if the wish was granted, dream of "a big tall man wearing a piece of cloth called Phabiang or Sabai, riding a white horse with swords in his hand. The worshiper offers to give Phawan, which is made from sticky rice rolled in sugar crane juice or sugar in small balls put on the prepared plate and offer it to him in Simaphanao". The location of Phanao Temple since the ancient time, has a small dirt hill that looks like ruins of a construction, through to the Songkram river, the ruins were found, where many golden Buddha statues were dig up. They look like 3 of those in the dungeon of Phra That Phanom Temple. Besides, parts of ancient objects were found such as flat bell or Kong La weighs 7 Chang 4 Hoi, kept at the City Hall of Nakhon Phanom and some vases containing bones, debris of jars, debris of clay pots, smoking pipes scattered all over the place. Each of the bricks found have the symbol of "Phra Munphu" but broken neck, also those who joined the digging at Dong Phanao turned ill and died, therefore, it is believed that this place is a sacred place, it is a respected area and restricted. Therefore, this place is called "Dongphanao". When renovating the Sima for the first era, around B.E.2441, people witnessed many glass balls of multiple colors (Chappunnarangsi), moving out of the Simaphranao, floating toward the southern and northern, then returned back to the Sima again. It is believed, that this is a way of showing the supernatural power of "the relic" and the protecting holy spirits and besides, there are guarding angles, who guards the place from intruders intended to dig out the ancient objects in the area, because besides of returning empty handed, but it would be harmful for themselves too. During the Songkran or Nao day festival, it would be brought down from the resting place for people to put water over it and wish for blessing, this is a day of the Phra Nao worship event.

- Phra Inn fountain is a holy fountain to be used in the Burapha Friars Ceremony, which is a ceremony for the King to wash with water before his reign, started from the Rama VII onwards. Nowadays, the fountain was closed, it will be only open for the royal ceremony only. It is located within the Phramahathat Phanom Woramahawiharn Temple in Amphor That Phanom.

For the cultural tradition, Nakhon Phanom province mostly has the tradition similar to other provinces in the north eastern region, that is the tradition of making merit in various seasons such as Khaokum Merit (Duan Ai), Khunlaan Merit (Duan Yi), Khaojee Merit (Duan Sam), Kod Merit, annual festivals and Phrawed Merit (Duan Si), water pouring merit and Songkran event (Duan Ha) etc. In general, all of this has the aim of blessing and prosperity of the local well-being and important events are arranged such as Phra That Phanom worship event held on each full moon of the 3<sup>rd</sup> month yearly, the Fire Boat Floating Event held during the end of Buddhist Lent of each year.