

DESTINATIONS

Sumptuous Sanctuary

137 Pillars House Chiang Mai, blending modern luxury with historic charm, offers a refined retreat amid the riches of northern Thailand's Lanna culture.

Words: Robert Burkley
Images: 137 Pillars House Chiang Mai

On lush, meticulously landscaped tropical grounds in the mountainous north of Thailand, a region known from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries as the Kingdom of Lanna, stands a lavish, lovingly restored boutique hotel.

Honoring its colonial past while pampering its guests with an intimate, contemporary experience, 137 Pillars House Chiang Mai traces its beginnings to the nineteenth century, when the original building served as part of the northern headquarters of imperial Britain's Borneo Company. Its business was built on harvesting teak logs from mountain slopes and transporting them, originally by elephant, to nearby rivers to be floated south to sawmills in Bangkok and then on for use in Royal Navy ships and ornate Victorian furniture.

The Borneo Company compound included the spacious teak structure around which the hotel is now built and which served as the manager's home until 1927. In later decades, when inquisitive visitors asked the then owner, Scotsman Jack Bain, why such a notable house had no name, he arrived at one, following Lanna traditions that based a home's status on the number of its supporting pillars, by counting a total of 137.

Today, thirty stylishly appointed, high-ceilinged suites bear names associated with the hotel's history. Featured are butler service, walk-in wardrobes, and bathrooms equipped with Victorian claw-foot tubs, dual washbasins, and indoor and outdoor showers. Four-poster beds are done up in luxury linens, and vintage-tiled verandahs – perfect for afternoon leisure or balmy starlit evenings – come with daybeds, signature rocking chairs, and cane privacy shades.

The hotel's three David Fleming Macfie Suites provide additional living area for a couple or a family of up to four and include an adjoining furnished conservatory, which can be optionally enclosed and air-conditioned or left open-air.

Two expansive upper-floor William Bain Terrace Suites look out on the historic homestead, the infinity pool, and the feature garden wall. A super king bedroom extends to a generous living room, and a breezy verandah overlooks manicured tropical gardens. In addition to these amenities, each of the two larger ground-floor Louis Leonowens Pool Suites comes with French doors leading to a private swimming pool.

Dining is equally gracious. The day starts right with breakfast in the bright and airy elegance of The Dining Room – or it can be taken alfresco in the adjacent courtyard. The menu features classic Thai dishes and seasonal international favorites made with fresh ingredients sourced from local farmers and Thailand's sustainability-focused Royal Project.

Lunch and dinner become fine-dining occasions at romantic Palette. On its handsomely paneled walls is a rotating collection of works by local artists, and on its farm-to-table menu is an imaginative mix of Western and Asian cuisines.

At Jack Bain's Bar, a colorful character's legend lives on in nostalgic surroundings harking back to the age of gentlemen's clubs. Colonial- and Asian-inspired cocktails, premium whiskeys, sabered Champagnes, and bespoke spirits prevail.

Afternoon tea, in the classic style that Chiang Mai's early foreign visitors enjoyed, is served each day. Guests may partake of bespoke tea or coffee blends and dainty delicacies in the Parlour of the old house, on the immaculately groomed lawn, or in their suites, as they may choose.

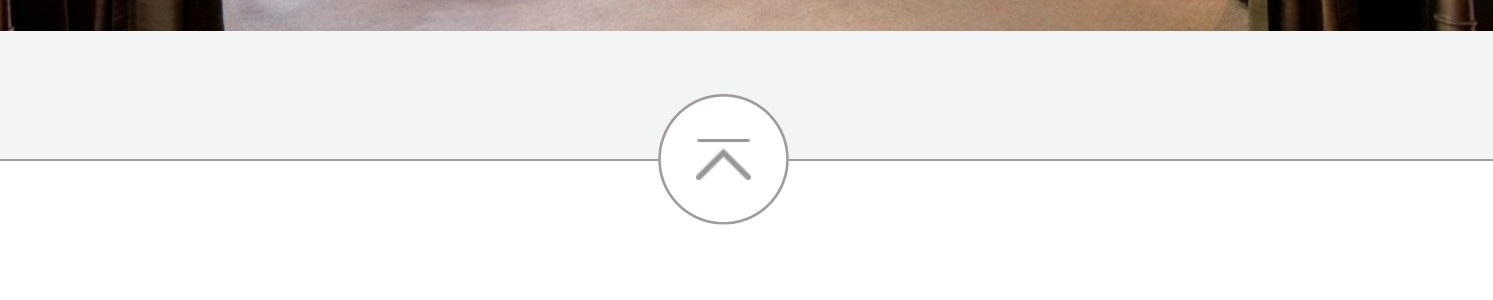


Gourmet picnic baskets and light lunch boxes for toting on excursions or at departure are available on request, and in-suite private dining is offered from morning till night. And for a hands-on approach, Thai cooking classes and demonstrations are offered at the hotel's showpiece outdoor kitchen.

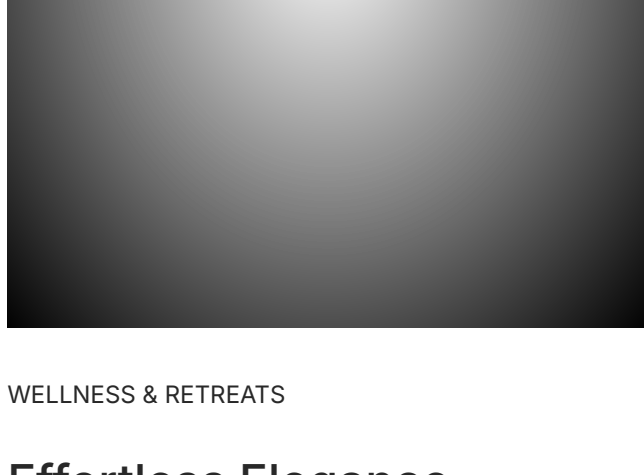
The hotel's wellness and fitness options include The Nitra Serenity Centre, with a treatment menu of signature ceremonies, face and body therapies, and therapeutic massages. The fully equipped gym is open twenty-four hours. Cocktails, fresh juices, and light refreshments are attentively served around the sparkling swimming pool, a perfect spot for a refreshing dip or a lazy snooze in the sun.

Each new day brings endless possibilities for local discovery. The hotel offers a range of fascinating tours of the scenic and cultural treasures around the ancient capital city of Chiang Mai, including its myriad of gorgeously adorned Buddhist temples.

Brought up to date with every modern amenity, 137 Pillars House Chiang Mai, through its respectful restoration, cultural storytelling, and authentically warm Lanna hospitality, invites guests to step into a living piece of Thailand's history.



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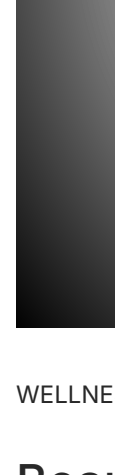
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