

Beat: Travel

## Wat Rong Khun - The White Temple in Chiang Rai, Thailand

### White Temple Thailand

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**USPA NEWS** - Wat Rong Khun, in English called “The White Temple” is a contemporary Buddhist temple in Northern Thailand. It is the vision of well renowned artist and Chiang Rai local Ajarn Chalermchai Kositpipat.

Disembodied heads dangling from trees and ghoulish hands reaching from the pits of hell, make the visitors wonder in astonishment what kind of message the artist is trying to get across.

About 15 minutes south of the city of Chiang Rai is one of the most famous temples in Thailand. Wat Rong Khun, known by Westerners as the 'White Temple' is a combination of classic and contemporary art design. This visually conspicuous religious style makes it one of Thailand's most unusual, man-made attractions interesting enough even for tourists who have no interest in Buddhist temples.

Ajarn Chalermchai Khositpipat, the internationally acclaimed Thai artist and creator of the temple was born in 1951 in Chiang Rai province. Started as an act of faith, Chalermchai has invested his own money to create the temple and to make it one of the world's greatest works of art. Work on Wat Rong Khun was started in 1997 on an area of 3 Rai (0.48 hectares) with an preliminary capital of 18 million Thai Baht (approx. 587,300 USD, or 443,000 Euro). Additional land was bought through donations of wealthy contributors and by now the area comprises 10 Rai of land (1.6 hectares).

With his contemporary thinking Chalermchai revolutionized the reiterative and profane style of temple architecture and Thai art in general. To create his most meritorious work of his life, Chalermchai has planned the temple area well in advance, knowing that it would have a huge impact on his life as he knew it until then. Sacrifices of family life, his time, money and personal business were factors he had to consider. Chalermchai thinks the work will take about 90 years before it is finished. He has trained people who will carry on with the work even after his death.

He started with 6 local villagers who had an interest in art, and trained them. By the year 2009 he had more than 60 students. The color white in his architecture symbolizes heaven and Buddha's purity while the small mirrors reflect His wisdom, shining all over the earth and the universe.

A small bridge leads to the main temple which symbolizes the transition from the cycle of life to the land of the Buddha. On the left and the right of the bridge, one can see hands reaching up representing human sorrow but also happiness.

It indicates that if you want to reach Buddha or happiness one must pass through hell, which means that human desires and passions have to be eradicated. One will find the Buddha teachings or Dharma all over the temple grounds.

Murals in the main temple show artwork that displays some mind-boggling surreal scenes with cartoon characters such as Superman or Spiderman, not usually found in Buddhist temples, while outside one can see whisky bottles in trees with demon heads as well as traffic cones with demons heads on them.

On the left of the main temple is a golden, temple-like building which are the toilets. This golden building is just as beautiful as the temple itself, representing the worldly body while the white temple itself represents the transcendent mind. With these fascinating looking buildings Chalermchai is trying to teach people not to hang on to worldly things and money but to let go of these desires.

Chalermchai proved that he is skillful and highly talented in all areas such as painting, sculpture and architecture. As a practitioner of

dharma, Chalermchai said that money and possessions are insignificant for him. These possessions are only make-believe. What belongs to him is merit and therefore, money is of no value to him. It is only valuable as a means to make merit to the further journey of the soul.

Wat Rong Khun presents too many kinds of art work to describe in one article. The best way to appreciate this unusual, astonishing and even bizarre Temple is to visit the area and see for yourself.

For more information go to: <http://northern-thailand.weebly.com/white-temple-chiang-rai.html>

**Article online:**

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1107/wat-rong-khun-the-white-temple-in-chiang-rai-thailand.html>

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