



THAILAND PRACTICAL INFORMATION

We are pleased to offer you herewith some useful tips and practical information on traveling in Thailand.

COUNTRY PROFILE

Official Name:	Kingdom of Thailand
Population:	67,5 million
Capital City:	Bangkok
Area:	513,120 km ²
People:	Thai (75%), Chinese (14%) and other (11%)
Religion:	Buddhism (Theravada)
Language:	Thai
Time Zone:	GMT +7 hours
International dialing code:	+66
Electricity:	220V AC 50 Hz
Driving:	Left hand side



BORDER CROSSINGS

Thailand has several border crossings, mainly used as gateways for (one-day) tours, between Malaysia, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia.

Important: Most nationalities get a 30 day Thai visa upon arrival at airport, but only 14 days if arrive by land!



with Laos:

Chong Mek – Vang Tao (Ubon – Pakse)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

Nong Khai – Tha Due (Vientiane)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

Note that clients can cross by road or train! In case of train, railway ends at Tha Nalaeng Station(*), no station in Vientiane!

(*) The rail link between Nong Khai and Tha Nalaeng (near Vientiane, Laos) was officially opened on 5th March 2009. There are two services per day departing from Nong Khai at 10:00 and 16:20, and returning from Tha Nalaeng at 11:00 and 17:05.

Mukdahan – Savannakhet (Mukdahan)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

Nakhon Pathom - Tha Kaek

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

Tha Li - Nam Hueng/Kaen Thao (Loei)

Foreigners can access this crossing from Thai side.

Huay Kon – Hongsa (Nan)

Foreigners can access this crossing from Thai side.

Chiang Khong - Ban Houay Xai

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.



with Cambodia:

Aranyaprathet – Poipet (Sa Keaw)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

Chong Chom/Osmach - Anlong Veng (Surin)

Foreigners can access this crossing from Thai side.

Ban Pakard - Phsar Prom Paylin (Chantaburi)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

Hat Lek - Pak Khlong (Trat)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

with Myanmar:



Over the past years borders crossings with Thailand have been opened and closed again regularly, often without any advance notice. The majority of tourists arrive and leave the country by flight at Yangon International airport.

Tachileik - Mae Sai (Chiang Rai)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.

Myawaddy - Mae Sot (Tak)

Foreigners can only access this crossing from the Thai side; neither onward travel into Myanmar (ie beyond the border town) nor overnight stays are possible.

Note: In August 2013 this border crossing will be open for onward travel!

Three Pagodas Pass (Payathonzu - Sangkhlaburi)

Foreigners can not access this crossing; onward travel into Myanmar (ie beyond the border town) is not possible.

Kawthoung - Ranong

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here.



with Malaysia:

By train:

Sadao / Padang Besar – Padang Besar

Both the Malaysian and Thai towns where the crossing is located are known by the same name. This crossing connects to Malaysia's West Coast trunk line and Thailand's main southern line to Bangkok via Hat Yai. Both Malaysian and Thai customs, immigration and quarantine formalities are conducted at Malaysia's Padang Besar railway station.

Sungai Golok – Rantau Panjang

On the Malaysian side, this bridge crossing is on a branch line which is connected to Malaysia's East Coast line. In Thailand, the crossing is connected to the Sungai Golok branch line which links up with the main southern line at Hat Yai.

By road:

Betong – Keroh

Sadao – Changlun

There are also ferry crossings:

Langkawi – Koh Lipe / Satun

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Most visitors get a 30 day visa upon arrival at all airports. Two week visas are given to those entering Thailand at any of the land border crossings! Some nationalities might need a visa in advance to enter Thailand overland.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Khiri Travel will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, certain risks are involved and should be recognized by participants. Thus, we require all guests to purchase travel insurance prior to their trip. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment in the event of problems due to cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind for your trip

MONEY

Thailand's currency is the baht. 1 euro is approximately 40 baht. Bills are available in the following denominations: 20, 50, 100, 500, & 1000. It is recommended to carry cash bahts when traveling to more remote areas.

ATM Networks: Apart from most major banks throughout the country, major chains like 7-11 and all Department Stores have automated-teller machines as well. In general you can get cash with your debit card at any Bangkok Bank, Thai Farmers Bank, Siam Commercial Bank, or Bank of Ayudhya, provided your card is hooked into the MasterCard/Cirrus or Visa/PLUS network.

Banks: Most hotels will change foreign currency, but banks and moneychangers offer better rates. Official banking hours are Monday to Friday 8:30am to 3:30pm. Major cities have foreign-exchange banks and moneychangers, which are open daily until as late as 10pm for exchange.

HEALTH

Regardless the duration of your trip we recommend you to make sure you have had the vaccinations Hepatitis (A and B) and DTP (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Polio). If you're planning to stay for more than three months, vaccination for rabies and typhoid is recommended as well, and in some cases Japanese encephalitis.





Malaria can only be found at the border with Myanmar, deep into the jungles. Taking malaria prevention pills is not really necessary but we do recommend bringing mosquito repellents, also to prevent you from getting dengue fever.

We also advise you to bring anti diarrhea medicines, because Thai food can give you an upset stomach and it is important not to get dehydrated.

CLIMATE

The Thailand climate is controlled by tropical monsoons and the weather in Thailand is generally hot and humid across most of the country throughout most of the year. While Thailand's seasons are generally divided into the hot season, cool season, and rainy season, in reality it's relatively hot most of the year. The weather in central, northern, and northeastern Thailand (the landlocked provinces) is determined by three seasons, whereas the southern, coastal regions of Thailand feature only two, making the weather in Thailand quite easy to understand and plan a trip around. In Thailand's inland provinces the seasons are clearly defined: Between November and May the weather is mostly dry and the cool season and hot season occur from November to February and March to May respectively. The other inland season, the rainy season, lasts from May to November and is dominated by the southwest monsoon, during which time rainfall in most of Thailand is at its heaviest.

The southern, coastal region of Thailand really has only two seasons – rainy season and dry season. Fortunately, for those planning a beach holiday, Thailand's two coasts have slightly different rainy seasons, allowing visitors to find sunny beaches nearly year round.

On the Andaman or west coast, where Phuket, Krabi, and the Phi Phi Islands lie, the southwest monsoon brings heavy storms from April to October, while on the Gulf of Thailand or east coast, where Koh Samui, Koh Phangan, and Koh Tao lie, the most rain falls between September and December.

Winter Season (November - February)

The weather in Thailand around the central, northern, and northeastern regions is mostly cool and dry between November and February, consequently these are the most popular months to visit Thailand. Considering its location in the tropics however, the Thailand climate is quite warm most of the year and genuinely "cool" weather really only occurs in the northern mountains, while areas like Bangkok and Ayutthaya receive perhaps only two or three weeks of "cool" weather in late December or early January.

The southern region of Thailand really has only two seasons – "rainy" and dry, not technically experiencing "cool" weather, per se, but featuring glorious sunshine without unbearable heat, beginning in late November and continuing onto April or May.

Summer Season (March - June)

The weather in Thailand classified as the hot season lasts from March to June when higher relative temperatures and occasional rain are the norm. Around the inland areas, including Bangkok and Ayutthaya, this often means punishing heat and high humidity. The temperatures in the hot season begin climbing in February and by April the unrelenting heat makes many residents eager for the upcoming rains, which begin sporadically falling around mid-April. This is traditionally the least popular season for travelers to visit, although the weather in Thailand is still quite nice along Thailand's coasts.





Season (July - October)

The season lasts from July to October and is dominated by the southwest monsoon, during which time rainfall in most of Thailand is at its heaviest. However, like the “winter” season, the name “rainy season” is slightly misleading. While it certainly does rain during this season it’s more likely to consist of flash-flood afternoon downpours than a continual drizzle for days. If you can bear the heat and humidity, the weather in Thailand is typically sunny throughout the rainy season, but when the rain comes, it’s fast and it’s furious.



Fortunately for beach lovers, Thailand’s two coasts have slightly different rainy seasons, allowing visitors to find sunny beaches nearly year round. On the Andaman or west coast, where Phuket, Krabi, and the Phi Phi Islands lie, the southwest monsoon can occasionally heavy storms from April to October, while on the Gulf of Thailand or east coast, where Koh Samui, Koh Phangan, and Koh Tao lie, the most rain falls between September and December. While the monsoon on the west coast brings a fairly steady season of continual rain that forces businesses outside the major tourist destinations to shut their doors for the season, the east coast storms are more similar to the north’s, generally sunny days with occasionally heavy downpours.

Overall, the southern parts of Thailand, particularly the Andaman Coast, get the most rain: around 2,400 millimeters every year, compared with the central and northern regions of Thailand, both of which get around 1,400 millimeters.



FOOD & DRINKS

The food in Thailand is usually safe but make sure your fruits and raw vegetables are washed and peeled. You should be careful with the chili. Thai food here tends to be than back home! When you have had too much chili, take some sugar, rice, cucumber or yoghurt instead of water. If you drink water, make sure it is bottled water. Never drink tap water. Ice cube is safe in Thailand.

Here are some favorites:

- **Gang Keow Wan**: Thai Green Curry, consisting of green curry paste, coconut milk, bamboo shoots, chicken, Thai basil, Thai eggplant and all kinds of Thai herbs and roots (like lemongrass, galangal, lime leaves, etc.), is an unforgettable blend of delights. It is mostly combined with some steamed rice.
- **Mango Sticky Rice**: Often offered as a dessert, or just as a snack, is the very popular yellow mango with sticky rice. Add a drizzle of coconut cream syrup to make it even more delicious!
- **Pad Thai**: This is probably known as the most famous dish outside of Thailand. The base is a stir fried rice noodle, hosted by ingredients like tofu, peanuts, shrimp, green onions, bean sprouts, garlic, pepper, fish sauce, lime juice, and a scrambled egg mixed into the noodles to seal the dish together.
- **Tom Yung Gung**: A delicious soup with shrimp, mushrooms, tomatoes, lemongrass, galangal and kaffir lime leaves, which you can order with (**nam kohn**) or without (**nam sai**) coconut milk and cream. This soup really is an authentic Thai delicacy with favorite Thai tastes: sour, salty, spicy and sweet, all in one bowl.



TIPPING & TAXES

When it comes to tipping, restaurants very often add a service charge to the check. If this is not the case, a 10% to 15% tip is appropriate. Tipping guides is recommended.

Hotels charge a 7% government value added tax (VAT) and typically add a 10% service charge; hotel restaurants add 8.25% government tax. Smaller hotels quote the price inclusive of these charges.





DONATIONS & GIFT-GIVING

Please do not give money, sweets or pens to children, as it encourages them to beg and encourages parents to take their children out of school as they can bring in more income through begging. If you really would like to give something, better consult your local tour leader or guides on making donations to a local school or hospital.

COMMUNICATION

Telephone, Telex & Fax: Major hotels in Bangkok, Pattaya, Phuket, Chiang Mai, and the provincial capitals have international direct-dial (IDD), long-distance service, and in-house fax transmission. Keep in mind that all hotels charge a surcharge on local and long-distance calls.

Postal Services: The postal services in Thailand are well organized and cheap. It takes approximately a week for airmail letters to reach the USA or Europe or America. Express mail services are widely available.

Phone: For making local phone calls use a Mobile phone card, much cheaper than using your own mobile phone. Another possibility is buying a local SIM card.

Internet: Cyber cafes are available in all tourist areas. Most hotels now have Wi-Fi or an internet area.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Clothing

Remember that what you would wear on a hot day at home is not necessarily acceptable here. Women in particular should be modest in dress, shorts should not be too short, and trousers are preferable in rural areas. Men should wear a top at all times. Remember that although some local people may be more used to tourists, they might still be offended by inappropriate dress.

Displays of Affection

Try to tone down any displays of affection in public, especially in rural areas, to holding hands. Anything more might make local people feel uncomfortable.

Bargaining

When bargaining, which can be enjoyable and a good way of interacting with local people, do try to keep things in perspective. It might be fun for you, but the seller's livelihood depends on getting a fair price as well. Not bargaining at all is not good either, since you might risk damaging the structure of their way of life and economy! Offer a third of the asking price and meet somewhere in the middle is quite reasonable.

SAFETY

Food

Cooked food in Thailand is usually safe, but take care with the chili, Thai food here tends to be back home!

In case of too much chili, instead of water take some sugar, rice, cucumber or yoghurt.

You should peel and wash fruit before eating, same for raw vegetables. Vegetarian food is not always available.

Heat & Sun

Beware of dehydration, take a water bottle wherever you go and drink plenty. Use sunscreen liberally, it is available at most places. Remember: sunburn can ruin your holidays completely! Why don't you wear a hat?





Mosquitoes

Take the following precautions; Liberally apply mosquito repellent, wear long pants, socks & long sleeves especially around dawn & dusk. Mosquito coils are usually available at most local shops. Do not scratch mosquito bites, better apply some ointment to stop the itching.

General Health

Beware of cuts, they get infected easily. Clean all wounds immediately, apply antibiotic ointment and keep them covered. Regarding upset stomachs, take some medicine (e.g. Imodium) and eat only plain rice or dry bread for a while. And of course do not drink any alcohol.

Traffic

Perhaps most dangerous of all – and not only in Bangkok – is the local traffic. As a pedestrian you have no rights whatsoever. Before crossing any street look both left and right, same when you're getting out of any vehicle. And when the traffic is completely gridlocked, beware of motorcycles!

Drugs

No matter what you may think, these are illegal, even only for personal use, period. The penalties are quite serious and the conditions of local prisons definitely unpleasant.

Beach

Nudity is not acceptable in Thailand, plus those body parts are extra sensitive when it comes to sunburn! At many beaches jet skis are for hire, don't! There have been many accidents! Also scams in which operators claim that tourists damaged their jet skis and charge serious amounts of compensation...

City tours

Wear comfortable lightweight clothes that provide some sun protection and walking shoes.

Trekking

Wear comfortable hiking clothes that provide sun protection and sturdy shoes that can get wet & muddy. Do NOT try out new hiking boots or shoes! Only carry necessary items, such as: drinking bottle, towel or sarong, sunscreen, toilet paper, some plastic bags, etc. Using a 'walking stick' can be quite helpful at times and it hardly weighs anything. Don't worry about leeches, they are harmless and do not spread diseases. Plus they are painless and mainly active during the rainy season. Don't forget: Stay with the group at all times, but if you feel tired don't hesitate to ask the guide to slow down or stop.

Boat / rafting / tubing / kayaking trips

Wear comfortable lightweight clothes that provide sun protection and can get wet. Don't forget your bottle of water and a life jacket. If you're thrown overboard, just get yourself to the shore or float downstream to a calmer area of water. Never fight the current, instead go with it until you reach a part where you can swim or walk to the shore easily. You'll be picked up later!

Snorkeling

Always go snorkeling with a friend. Also beware of the direction of the current. Best is to start swimming into it, so that when you get tired you can let yourself drift back. You will see lots of beautiful things underwater, however please don't touch anything, since you might accidentally kill it.





Bicycle tours

Wear comfortable lightweight clothes that provide sun protection and good shoes, no flip-flops!

Animals

Keep your distance from elephants and other wildlife and never make loud, sudden noises. When interacting with elephants, always accept the assistance of the *mahout*. When taking pictures, make sure to keep a good distance and watch your back.

Khiri Travel has a strict policy when it comes to wildlife and tourism, please read all about this on our website: <http://khiri.com/sustainability/animal-welfare-policy/>

Rent transport

Renting bicycles is fine in general, but avoid motorcycles or mopeds. Ride not (too) fast, wear (or fasten) helmets and suitable clothes, to avoid accidents from happening. Be extra careful on Koh Samui and around Chiang Mai.

Luggage

Don't bring too much luggage, it's not necessary and often awkward while traveling. Plus at lots of places it's relatively easy to buy clothes, etc.

Scams

The most successful one seems to be the one where you get approached by a very friendly local who's telling about your bad luck; the place you had intended visiting is closed today due to a religious holiday. However (s)he happens to have some free time and is more than willing to show you around... Refuse politely and continue your own program, it will save you lots of money! Same for tuk-tuk/taxi drivers who offer you free rides through Bangkok.

LINKS & READING

Some websites that might interest you are:

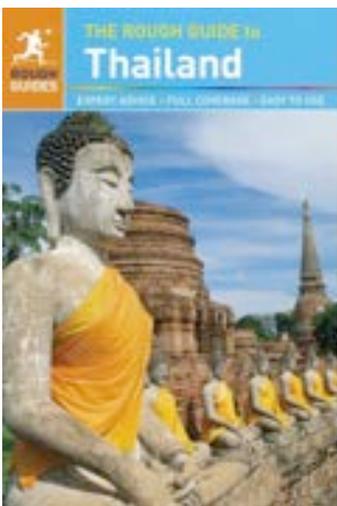
- For tips, facts and other information: <http://www.tourismthailand.org/Thailand>
To be up to date: <http://bk.asia-city.com/>
Some general and detailed information about the country: <http://wikitravel.org/en/Thailand>
- A website where you can find some nice travel information about Bangkok, Thailand, and the countries surrounding Thailand: <http://www.khaosanroad.com/>
- For news and tips: <http://www.richardbarrow.com/>
- To follow the news: <http://2bangkok.com/>

There also are some very interesting books written about Thailand. These are some of the ones we think are worth reading:

- Very Thai: Everyday Popular Culture by Philip Cornwel-Smith & John Goss
- Thailand: A Short History by David K. Wyatt
- Thailand: Buddhist Kingdom as Modern Nation-State by Charles F. Keyes
- The balancing act: A history of modern Thailand by Joseph J. Wright
- A Woman of Bangkok: Jack Reynolds

LANGUAGE

The national and official language of Thailand is Thai (more precisely Siamese or Central Thai). Thai is the native language of the Thai people and the Thai Chinese, which is Thailand's most dominant ethnic group. The language is a member of the Tai group of the Tai-Kadai language family. More than half of Thai words are borrowed from Old Khmer, Sanskrit and Pali. Thai is a tonal and analytic language with a complex orthography and relational markers. The language is mutually intelligible with Lao.



Khiri Travel Thailand

226/9 Tiwanon Soi 24
Tiwanon Rd.
Nonthaburi 11000
Thailand

T +66 2968 6828
F +66 2968 6829

