

THAILAND

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Khiri Travel is pleased to offer you herewith some useful tips and practical information on traveling in the beautiful southeast Asian country of Thailand.



FAST FACTS

OFFICIAL NAME

Kingdom of Thailand

CAPITAL CITY

Bangkok

TOTAL AREA

513,120 km²

BOUNDARIES

Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia

CURRENCY

Baht

LANGUAGE

Thai

POPULATION

69.04 million

PEOPLE

Thai (75%), Chinese (14%) and other (11%)

RELIGION

Buddhism (Theravada)

TIME ZONE

GMT +7

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 the airport, but only 14 days if you arrive by land!

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 the train, the railway ends at Tha Nalaeng Station* – there is 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 the Thai side.

Huay Kon – Hongsa (Nan)

Foreigners can access this crossing from the Thai side.

Chiang Khong - Ban Houay Xai

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



MYANMAR

Over the past few years, border crossings between Thailand and Myanmar have been opened and closed again regularly, often without any advance notice. The majority of tourists arrive and leave the country by plane at Yangon International airport. At present, there are four crossing available to foreign travelers.

Tachileik - Mae Sai (Chiang Rai)

Foreigners can access this crossing from either side, and enter and/or exit either country here. Foreigners coming through this crossing can travel as far as Kyaing Tong in Myanmar, however to travel over land further than this you will need a permit.

Myawaddy - Mae Sot (Tak)

This border crossing is now open for onward travel!

The Mae Sot / Myawaddy crossing point is the most practical place to cross for onward travel into Myanmar, because of its relative proximity to the main Myanmar transport network and places of interest. Passport control points are located on either side of the 'Thai-Myanmar Friendship Bridge' river crossing and there are separate windows for foreigners so you can skip the long locals line. The border point is located a kilometre from Myawaddy bus station on the Myanmar side and five kilometres from Mae Sot town on the Thai side; there are usually plenty of motorbike taxis on both sides.

Mae Sot has daily direct flights and frequent buses to Bangkok and Chiang Mai. On the Myanmar side, the new road over the Dawna mountains -connecting Myawaddy to the rest

of Myanmar - is now open (so you do not need to worry about the issue of the old single track road, with its alternating one-way system).

Kawthoung - Ranong

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

Htee Kee – Phunaron (Phu Nam Ron)

This remote border crossing point allows access between Phunaron (nearest town Kanchanaburi) and Htee Kee (nearest town Dawei). Note that e-visa is not valid for entry at this border crossing.

Three Pagodas Pass (Payathonzu - Sangkhlaburi)

Foreigners cannot access this crossing; onward travel into Myanmar (i.e. beyond the border town) is not possible.

Singkhorn Pass (Mueang Prachuap Khiri Khan)

This crossing is only open for Myanmar and Thai residents travelling either way for up to two days. It connects Mueang Prachuap Khiri Khan (Thailand) with a very remote part Myanmar's Tanintharyi Division (nearest large town Myeik, although this would take over one day's travel).

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 the 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.

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.

By ferry

Langkawi – Koh Lipe / Satun

Sungai Golok – Rantau Panjang

On the Malaysian side, this bridge crossing is on a branch line that 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

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. Contact us for more information.

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. One euro is approximately 36 baht, while one US dollar is approximately 31 baht; these rates are of course always changing. Bills are available in the following denominations: 20, 50, 100, 500 and 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 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 occasionally 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 this country 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, while 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, and consequently these are the most popular months to visit Thailand.

Considering its location in the tropics however, the Thai 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 into 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 the coasts.

Rainy 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 have 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; 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.

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 an 8.25% government tax. Smaller hotels quote the price inclusive of these charges.

DONATIONS & GIFT-GIVING

Please do not give money, sweets or other gifts 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, you are better to 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 Europe or American Express mail services are widely available.

Phone

For making local phone calls, use a mobile phone card; it's much cheaper than using your own mobile phone. Another possibility is to buy a local SIM card.

Internet

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

DISPLAYS OF AFFECTION

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

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.

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.

FOOD

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 hotter than back home! If 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 cubes are safe in Thailand.

Here are some favorite dishes:

- **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 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.

Please be aware that vegetarian food is not always available.

HEAT AND 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! Also, look at wearing a hat.

MOSQUITOES

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

TRAFFIC

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

DRUGS

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

It's also important to note that e-cigarettes/vaping is also illegal and offenders risk heavy punishment.



CITY TOURS

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

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 – we don't recommend you partake. There have been many accidents, as well as scams in which operators claim that tourists damaged their jet skis and charge serious amounts of compensation. We encourage tourists to be aware!

BICYCLE TOURS

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

TREKKING

Wear comfortable hiking clothes that provide sun protection and sturdy shoes that can get wet and muddy. Do NOT try out new hiking boots or shoes! Only carry necessary items, such as a 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 to 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 and beware of the direction of the current.

The best way is to begin your snorkeling session 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 harm it.

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 you 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:

<https://khiri.com/animals-in-tourism-2/>



RENT TRANSPORT

Renting bicycles is fine in general, but avoid motorcycles or mopeds. Don't ride too fast, and wear (or fasten) helmets and suitable clothes. Be extra careful on Koh Samui and around Chiang Mai.

We also advise against renting jetskis; apart from the fact that these can be dangerous (especially when used in crowded areas by the inexperienced), there are also issues surrounding licenses and scams.

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 and anything else you might need.

LINKS & READING

Some websites that might interest you are

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

SCAMS

The most successful one seems to be 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! The same can be said for tuk-tuk/taxi drivers who offer you free rides through Bangkok; if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!

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.



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