

Thailand

FACTS ABOUT THAILAND

Geography: Thailand has a land area of around 512square km bordered by Malaysia (South), Myanmar (West and North), Laos (North and Easy) and Cambodia (Southeast).

Climate: Average temperature is about 29 C; humidity ranges from 66% to 82%.

Seasons: Hot (March to May), Rainy (June to October) and Cool (November to February).

Population: Around 63 million, of which 9% live in Bangkok.

Language: Thai is the national language. English is widely spoken in the cities.

Religion: Buddhists 94.2%, Muslim 4.6%, Christian 0.8%, other 0.4%.

Government: A constitutional monarchy with 76 provinces.

National flag: The red, white and blue bands symbolize the nation, Buddhism and the monarchy respectively.

Clothing: Thin cotton is the best. Jackets or sweater may be necessary in a cool season, especially in the mountainous areas on the North or Northeast.

Electricity: 220 volts 50 cycles throughout the country.

Water: Drink only bottled or boiled water.

Local time: GMT + 7 hours.

Business hours: Most offices open from 8:30 am- 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday. General banking hours are Monday to Friday 8:30 am- 3:30 pm.

Major agricultural exports: Rice, tapioca, rubber, maize, pineapples, durians, longings, palm oil and herbs.

Major manufactured exports: Computer and computer accessories, integrated circuit, textiles, electronics, cars and spare parts, gems and jewelry, television and television accessories.

TRAVEL TIPS

Custom

Thailand is a Buddhist country where Buddha images are held sacred. Any sacrilegious act is punishable by imprisonment even if committed by foreigner.

Thai people hold their King and Queen and the Royal family in great reverence and won't tolerate foreigners showing disrespect for them.

Dress properly when entering a Buddhist temple. Mini skirts and shorts are not allowed. Take your shoes off before going inside of hall.

Thai people smile to express their gladness and happiness, to thank for small services and even to excuse small inconveniences.

Don't touch person's head, nor ruffle his hair.

Currency and Money Exchange

You may bring in foreign currencies or any other types of foreign exchange.

Thai currency is bath.

Major foreign currencies can be exchanged for Thai bath with banks and authorized moneychangers.

1 USD equals approximately 33 baht; 1 Euro buys around 48 baht

Cheques and drafts brought in, if the owner wants to sell them must be sold in a bank

Major credit cards are also widely accepted in Thailand

Dinning

Most Thai food is already cut into small pieces before serving or made soft enough to be cut by spoon or fork; thus knife is not necessary

Salt-shakers are rarely found on Thai dinner tables, so add a little caramel- color fish- sauce (called nam- pla in Thai) instead, if you find your food not salty enough

English is spoken in large restaurants in tourist provinces and most establishments have menus in Thai and English except street-side food stalls and some small restaurants

Beckon waiters with a wave of a hand. Don't clap, snap fingers or hiss

Normally, a tip of 10- 20 baht or 5-10 % of the bill should be left when dinning in a middle or high- class restaurants

Shopping

Bargaining is an art long practiced in Asian countries including Thailand. So feel free to ask for a proper discount when shopping in places where prices are not marked

Be careful in dealing with sidewalk vendors who may not offer genuine goods ar fair prices

Receipts should be obtained for the goods you buy. For jewelry you must get a certificate of guarantee as well

Some shops can offer a money- back guarantee but you should determine all the conditions with the shopkeeper beforehand

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

Airport Tax: International departures: 500 BAHT Domestic flights: 30 BAHT Flights to Koh Samui: 400 BAHT (collected at Samui)

Bangkok: Thailand's capital was established in 1782 by the first king of the Chakri Dynasty, Rama I. The city, with a population of about 10 million, sits on the bank of the Chao Phraya River some 20 km. North of the Gulf of Thailand. Bangkok is the home of the Thai Royal family, and the centre of government, commerce, banking and transportation

Clothing: Thin cotton is the best. Jackets or sweater may be necessary in a cool season, especially in the mountainous areas on the North or Northeast. Light and loose cotton clothing is recommended, as are hats for sun protection. Sports shirts, sandals and shorts are usually fine, but more formal attire is required for temple visits and business meetings.

Credit Cards: Major credit cards (American Express, Visa, Mastercard and Diners Club) are accepted at most hotels, restaurants, shops, malls and travel agencies. ATMs are also abundant.

Internet: Many hotels provide Internet services, and cyber cafes are plentiful throughout the country.

Postal Service: Post offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. - noon on Saturday. EMS one-day service in Thailand is available, and major international express mail services have offices throughout the kingdom

Restaurants: Thailand has a large number of restaurants throughout the kingdom providing Thai as well as international cuisine. Thai restaurants feature extensive menus of simple and spicy dishes, from fried rice to exotic curries. Though Thais enjoy meals laden with chillies, most restaurants tone down fiery dishes for foreigners. For those with a craving for fast food, internationally known franchises abound in Bangkok, with burgers, fried chicken, pizza and ice cream readily available.

Taxis: Metered taxis are plentiful in Bangkok, with official ones recognizable by their yellow license plates. The meter starts at 35 BAHT, and the fare is 2 BAHT for the first 2 kilometers. Three-wheel tuk-tuks are not metered, and passengers must bargain with the driver. Outside Bangkok, taxis are scarce or non-existent, but most hotels provide some form of transportation service
 Telephones: Cell phones are everywhere in Thailand. Handsets may be rented at the airport. For those bringing their own, SIM cards may be purchased to allow users to call within Thailand at local rates.
 Public phone booths are also plentiful
 Useful links:

- Tourism Authority of Thailand
<http://www.tourismthailand.org/home.php>

- Bangkok International Airport
<http://www.airportthai.com>

- Tourist Police
<http://tourist.police.go.th>

- Ministry of Tourism and Sports:

<http://www.mots.go.th>

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kingdom of Thailand :

<http://www.mfa.go.th>