



## **USEFUL INFORMATION FOR TRIPS TO THAILAND**

### **AIRLINES**

International: Major airlines flying to Thailand include Thai Airways, Air France, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Lufthansa, Qantas, Singapore Airlines and many more.

Domestic: Five domestic airlines are currently operating in Thailand: Thai Airways, Thai Air Asia, Bangkok Airways, Nok Air, and Orient Thai

### **AIRPORT TAX**

Airport taxes are included in all international and domestic flight tickets. Any additional airport fees are also included so there is no additional payment needed at the airport.

### **ARRIVAL IN THAILAND**

#### **BY AIR**

Bangkok is one of Asia's largest air hubs, so it is very well-connected to the rest of the world. Besides Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok, the airports in Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Koh Samui, Phuket, and Krabi are served by international flights directly. Consult your local travel agent for routings, fares and availability on flights to Thailand. Discount websites and flight search engines may offer some good deals.

#### **BY LAND**

Thailand shares borders with Myanmar to the north-west, Laos in the north-east, Cambodia to the east and Malaysia to the south.

From Laos: The Friendship Bridge across the Mekong River between Vientiane and Nong Khai is the busiest crossing. The Second Thai-Lao Friendship Bridge now links Savannakhet with Mukdahan. It is also possible to cross the borders at Houey Xai / Chiang Khong, Nakaxeng / Kaenthao, Pakxan / Bungkan, Thakhaek / Nakorn Phanom.

From Myanmar: Visitors can cross into Thailand from Tachileik to Mae Sai (Chiang Rai) and from Kawthoung into Ranong. For the border checkpoints at Mae Sot / Myawaddy and Three Pagoda Pass at Sangkhlaburi / Payathonzu, foreigners can only access them from the Thai side, so it will be impossible to cross into Thailand from Myanmar at these points.



**(Note:** Border crossing at Three Pagodas Pass is closed from time to time due to the political situation)

From Cambodia: There are six border crossings linking Thailand and Cambodia. The highway linking Siem Reap and the Angkor temples leads to Aranyaprathet via Poipet and it is a popular crossing.

From Malaysia: There are four crossings linking Thailand with Malaysia, namely Padang Besar and Sadao in Songkhla province, Betong in Yala province and SungaiKolok in Narathiwat province. **(Note:** These border crossings are closed from time to time due to the political situation)

### **ARRIVAL FORMALITIES**

Upon arrival in Thailand, all visitors must complete an entry/exit form including a customs declaration. It is important that your copy of this form is kept safe with your passport while in Thailand and is presented to the customs and immigration officials on departure. In case you are obtaining your pre-arranged visa on arrival please proceed to the Visa counter and read the visa section below. **(Note:** Overland entry procedures change from time to time according to the immigration office) If you have booked a transfer from EXO Travel, we will provide you with information on where to meet your guide/driver as well as a 24-hour phone number to be used in case of difficulties.

Also, the Thai immigration have enforced that travelers entering the country have to carry 20,000 THB per person or 40,000 THB per family in cash. Spot checks will be made of travelers, in case you face any issue, please do not hesitate to contact the EXO customer care directly.

### **ATMs**

ATMs for withdrawing Thai Baht are widely available in major airports, shopping malls, hotels and almost all provincial banks in Thailand. For most banks there is a maximum withdrawal of 20,000 THB per transaction; however several withdrawals may be made in a single day. There is also a fee of 150 THB locally for every withdrawal. Ask your tour guide for help when you need to locate an ATM.

### **BUSINESS HOURS**

Most businesses are open from Monday to Friday. Government offices are open from 08:30 to 16:30 with some closing for lunch from noon to 13:00. Many retailers and travel agencies are also open on Saturday and most shops are open on Sundays.



## **CLOTHING**

Comfortable light weight clothing in natural fabrics such as cotton is most suitable for traveling in Thailand. The dress code is fairly casual as in most parts of the tropics but it is advisable to cover arms and legs in the evenings against biting insects. A light weight raincoat is a good idea in the rainy season. During the winter months from November to February, warm clothing is needed for visiting northern Thailand. Visitors should not wear shorts, short skirts or other skimpy clothing when visiting religious buildings and shoes should be removed before entering a private home.

## **CREDIT CARDS**

VISA and MASTERCARD are the most widely accepted, but most other major credit cards are also accepted in Thailand. Not all shops and restaurants will accept credit cards, so do check with the cashier before making any purchases. Bear in mind that some places may pass onto you the fee imposed on them by the credit card company (approximately 2.25% to 3.5%, depending on card type), so you may want to pay by cash instead of credit card in some instances.

## **CUSTOM REGULATIONS**

Free import by each passenger holding a passport of his own, irrespective of age:

1. 200 cigarettes or 250 grams of tobacco or equal weight of cigars;
2. 1 liter of alcoholic liquor;
3. A camera with 5 rolls of film or one movie camera with 3 rolls of 8 or 16 mm. film;
4. Foreign currency not over 20,000 USD

E-cigarettes are also banned in Thailand. You are not allowed to bring vaporisers (like e-cigarettes and e-baraku) or refills into Thailand. These items are likely to be confiscated and you could be fined or sent to prison for up to 10 years if convicted. The sale or supply of e-cigarettes and similar devices is also banned and you could face a heavy fine or up to 5 years imprisonment if found guilty.

In addition, the smoking ban has been enforced on 20 beaches across Thailand. You could be imprisoned up to 1 year or fined up to 100,000 THB (3,000 USD) or both, if getting caught. The 20 beaches are in Pattaya, Bangsaen, Cha-am, Hua Hin, Phuket, Samui, Phang Nga, and Songkhla.

Also with regards to camera regulation, all drone users who bring the unmanned aerial vehicles over 250 grams in Thailand must register their devices to obtain an official license from the Civil Aviation Authority in Thailand. If you fail to do so, you are at risk of paying a 100,000 THB (3,100 USD) fine or being imprisoned up to 5 years. This regulation could have an impact on any tourists and media (photographers and social media bloggers) alike, who are using drones for both commercial and recreational purposes.



## **ELECTRICITY**

Thailand uses 220V (50 cycles per second) but the plugs are not standardized. It is recommended to bring a universal plug adaptor.

## **ENTERTAINMENT**

There are plenty of entertainment options in Thailand and restaurants/bars and nightclubs open until late at night / early in the morning. A wide variety of restaurants are on offer with everything from Thai, Chinese, Italian, French cuisine, etc. to fast food.

**Note that officially you can buy alcohol between 11.00 and 14.00 hrs, and again between 17.00 and midnight on any day, weekends included. At any other times, it is not allowed.**

*Other restrictions include all Buddhist holidays and any election days, when the sale of alcohol is banned for all 24 hours. These holidays include Makhabucha (falls in February), Wan Wisakhabucha (sometime in May), Wan Asanhabucha (July) and Wan Khao Phansa (also in July).*

*All bars are usually closed then as well.*

## **FOOD**

The basis of a Thai meal is rice, usually steamed although it can be made into noodles, while glutinous or sticky rice is preferred with some specialties. Accompanying the rice are main dishes featuring vegetables, meat, seafood, egg, fish and soup. Although Thais generally prefer hot, spicy food, not all dishes are so intense and there are grades of hotness as Thai food can be modulated to suit most tastes. Thailand is also the perfect place for a large choice of tropical fruits such as mangoes, pineapple, bananas, longan, mangosteen, jackfruit, as well as the famous durian, dubbed 'the fruit of the gods' fruits very special smell and taste. We have a 'Restaurant & Shopping Guide' which show cases our preferred restaurants and bars in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket. Feel free to request a copy!

## **HEALTH**

No vaccinations are required except for yellow fever if you are coming from a country or travelling through a country where the disease is present (<http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/services/4908/15384-List-of-countries-which-require-International-Heal.html>). However visitors should be inoculated against typhoid, cholera, hepatitis A & B, tetanus and polio. Dengue and Malaria are present in most of the region and it is advisable to take precautions especially if traveling off the beaten track. The standard of medical facilities is generally good and Thailand has a growing medical tourism industry. It is advisable to take out a good medical insurance policy before traveling in case evacuation is needed.



## **INTERNET**

Internet cafes are widely available everywhere and are easily found in major towns and cities. Prices are reasonable but may vary from 10 – 60 baht an hour. In many Internet cafés, you can buy pre-paid international phone cards to dial from a computer to a landline or mobile phone worldwide. Most Internet cafés are equipped with webcams, headsets and microphones. Wi-Fi hotspots are becoming increasingly available, mostly free of charge, in hotels, and public spaces in Bangkok. Many hotels also have Business Centers with PCs connected to the Internet or in-room broadband access- please note that this service is not always free and the rates are usually cheaper at internet cafes.

## **LANGUAGE**

The most widely spoken language in Thailand is Thai, a complicated language with a unique alphabet. Beside the numerous hill tribe dialects, other languages spoken include Lao, Khmer and Chinese. Most Thai people, especially in the major cities, speak English and tourists should have no troubles with communication in these areas.

## **MONEY**

The currency in Thailand is the Baht. Banks, which are open Monday to Friday from 8:30 to 15:30, give the best exchange rates. (Some banks in the central business areas or in department store extend business hours until 18:00 or 19:00) You will receive a better exchange rate in country than overseas so it is advisable to wait until reaching Thailand to exchange your money. At the Bangkok airport arrival area, there are banks offering the same rate as you will find in the city center.

In tourist areas, there are also currency exchange outlets that stay open later, usually until around 20:00. ATM machines are found throughout the country and most will accept foreign ATM cards. Credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants and other businesses.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Photo developing labs are common in Bangkok and the rest of Thailand, providing normal print films as well as professional quality films (like slide films). Digital photos can easily be downloaded and loaded onto a CD-Rom in case you run out of memory. Besides, it is easy to purchase SD memory cards in all major cities.



## **POSTAL MAIL**

Postcards are sold at all main tourist sites and stamps are available from post offices and some hotel reception desks. A postcard to Europe costs 15 THB to send and can take up to two weeks to reach the country of destination.

## **RELIGION**

Theravada Buddhism is practiced by about 95% of Thais. Every Thai male is expected to become a monk for a short period in his life. There is also a large Muslim minority in Thailand's four southernmost provinces of Yala, Narathiwat, Pattani and Satun.

## **SAFETY**

Thailand is a safe country to visit. As a global rule, never leave your belongings unattended and always maintain eye contact or a firm grip on cameras and shoulder bags. Do beware of scams and touts that remain fairly common in popular tourist destinations. As in any country, demonstrations do occasionally take place; however, they are usually in isolated areas away from the major tourist sites and has little, if any, affect on travelers.

## **SHOPPING**

Textiles are possibly the best buy in Thailand and Thai silk, considered the best in the world, is very inexpensive. The Thai shoulder bags known as yâam are generally well made and come in many varieties, some woven by hill tribes. Other items to look out for include gems and jewelry, silverware, bronze ware, woodcarvings, lacquer ware, celadon pottery, leather goods and tailoring.

## **TELEPHONE**

Most hotels have offer international dialing and fax facilities although be warned that these services are expensive in Thailand. The best way to stay in touch is to buy a local SIM Card for your mobile phone at a convenience store. They cost approximately 150 THB and offer international dialing rates as low as 5 THB per minute and free incoming international calls. Internet cafes usually offer cheap web-phone call systems as well, however the quality is often poor.

## **TIME**



Thailand is GMT +7 and does not operate on a daylight-savings system.

### **TIPPING**

Tipping for good service is not expected but is always appreciated in Thailand. It is customary, though not compulsory, to tip tour guides and drivers at the end of a tour. Hotel and station porters should also be tipped a small amount for their troubles.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Those possessing a valid International Driving License will be able to rent and drive a car. Road signs and maps are commonly displayed in the English language and international car hire companies such as Avis and Hertz also operate in major tourist destinations such as Chiang Mai, Pattaya, Phuket and Samui Island. It is also easy to rent a car with a driver. Getting around town there are several options. The ubiquitous three-wheeled Tuk Tuks are fun for short transfers while metered taxis offer a nice (and cheap) air-conditioned ride. In Bangkok, the public transportation includes River Boat, a Skytrain and Underground Metro which are easy to use, reasonably priced and link most major tourist areas! A great way to avoid the city's infamous traffic jams.

### **VISAS**

Citizens of 49 different countries can enter Thailand without a visa and be granted a free visa at the airport for a 30-day stay. (**NOTE:** Most overland arrivals only receive a 15-day visa) Next in length of validity is the tourist visa which is good for 60 days and costs approximately 25 USD, depending on the country of application. Three passport photos must accompany all applications. Please check the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs website for the latest information and full details of your country's visa agreement: <http://www.mfa.go.th/main/en/services/4908>

### **WEATHER**

The best time to visit Thailand is from November to February when the weather is dry and the temperatures are not too hot. During these winter months, the temperatures in the far north can drop down to freezing during the evenings, so trekking and camping trips in these areas are not recommended. From March to June, the heat returns with temperatures soaring to over 40 degrees Celsius during the day time. However there is rarely any rain during this time and the humidity is low. Thailand's rainy season begins toward the end of June and continues until October. During this time the humidity can be stifling as it rains on a daily basis, usually in the afternoon, but it is also the quietest time for travelers meaning hotel prices drop and popular tourist spots are blissfully uncrowded.



The Southern Thai beaches are faced with two weather systems which bring the tropical rains at different times of the year, so it's possible to enjoy Thailand's beaches year-round. From January to September you can choose a beach on the east coast such as Koh Samui or Koh Phangan where you will have the best chance on sunny and dry weather while from October to April the west coast, including Phuket, Krabi, Khao Lak, Koh Phi Phi and Koh Lanta offers the best chance of getting an allover tan. Some beaches can be visited all year round such as Hua Hin, Koh Samed, and Koh Chang.

For departure dates between 15th March until the end of April (approx. dates as the season varies), burning will occur in parts of Northern Thailand and other areas in SE Asia, resulting in a haze over Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai.

The burn season happens annually when rice farmers burn their land to prepare their fields for the following years crops. We do not discourage travel to Northern Thailand during this time, but please consider the smoke and high temperatures when participating in high intensity activities during this time if you have allergies, respiratory difficulties, or are sensitive to smoke.

## **WATER**

It is not advisable to drink tap water in Thailand but bottled mineral water is safe and available everywhere. Ice in drinks is generally OK in good standard hotels and restaurants, but it is best to avoid it on street stalls or in country areas.