

Thailand

Travel guide



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THAILAND TRAVEL GUIDE

As one of Asia's most popular tourist destinations, Thailand is on the bucket list of many a seasoned traveller and wanderluster alike. Whatever you're looking for, Thailand probably has it. From a rich history and culture to abundant nature, and from daredevil activities to incredible nightlife

Discover lush jungles, beautiful beaches, friendly locals and delicious food. All for a very affordable price. If you're all about nature and taking in stunning views, take a trip to Khao Sok National Park and the Phi Phi Islands. For a bustling city vibe and heaps of culture, discover the eclectic capital of Thailand, Bangkok.

There really is no wonder why Thailand is a favourite place to travel for so many people, and why visitors return time and time again. This Thailand travel guide provides all the essential information you need to know before visiting Thailand. From how to get around and the best time to visit, through to destination highlights and FAQs.



HOW TO GET TO THAILAND

There are six main airports in Thailand, so you aren't short of options if you want to travel by plane. The main airports are :

- Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK)
- Don Mueang International Airport (DMK)
- Phuket International Airport (HKT)
- Chiang Mai International Airport (CNX)
- Hat Yai International Airport (HDY)
- Mae Fah Luang - Chiang Rai International Airport (CEI)



Depending where you are travelling from, most visitors will fly into Bangkok (Suvarnabhumi Airport). It offers the most options in terms of international connections and airlines, plus Bangkok is a great place to start your Thai adventure.



HOW TO GET AROUND THAILAND



Some travellers choose to make their way around Thailand by plane. Many of the major tourist destinations have airports, including Bangkok (BKK), Krabi (KBV), Chiang Mai (CNX), and Phuket (HKT). This may not be suitable for those on a budget, but it's certainly the quickest and most efficient way of getting from A to B.



If you're doing a longer journey, for example from Bangkok to Surat Thani, then you may want to consider a sleeper train. A cheaper alternative is the overnight bus.

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Travelling around Thailand by train is a more budget-friendly option than by plane, and there's still the option for an added bit of luxury if you travel first class. Thailand has four distinct types of trains that you can use to travel around: Ordinary (ORD) trains, the most budget-friendly option; Rapid (RAP) trains, which stop less frequently; Express (EXP) trains, which have first to third class seating; Special Express (SP EXP) trains, which don't have the option of third class seating.



For shorter distances, my favourite way to travel around Thailand is by tuk-tuk. The three-wheeled vehicles offer a budget-friendly and definitely more exciting way to travel around Thailand.

BEST TIME TO VISIT THAILAND

While you're sure to love Thailand all year round, it's important to consider how the weather will impact your plans for travelling in Thailand. Thailand's hot season, rainy season, and dry season all bring a different take to the Asian travel hotspot.

Hot Season : March - June

Thailand's hot season runs from March to June, and this is also the shoulder season. Many people who aren't acclimatised to warm weather find the hot season just too hot, so prefer to travel during other seasons. The hot season in Thailand is perfect for beach days and pure relaxation, as it's probably too hot to do much else! Be prepared to sweat if you visit in this season, as the humidity is seriously intense. Don't even think about make-up, it'll just slide off!

Rainy Season : July - October

Rainy season in Thailand comes between July and October, and makes it the low season. While you'll likely have to contend with frequent rainstorms, you'll benefit from less tourists and reduced rates. If the rain doesn't bother you, this may be the perfect time to visit Thailand as you'll be able to get on with your activities without the crowds of people. It's still warm at this time of year, and heavy downpours can be good fun. Dancing in the rain is a must!

Dry Season : November - February

The dry season in Thailand is between November and February, and is also the high season. Many people prefer the slightly milder temperatures of this time of year, as it means they'll be able to get stuck in with activities like hiking and swimming in the sea. As this is the most popular time to travel, attractions will likely be busy. It also means that flights and accommodation will be more expensive than in the hot season or rainy season.



CULTURAL DO'S AND DON'TS IN THAILAND



4. Respect the monks

You'll encounter monks all over Thailand, and you should always treat them with utmost respect. Always bow when you meet one and never ask them overly personal questions. If you want to give them something, place the item in front of them instead of handing it directly. Women should be extra careful around monks because **it's strictly forbidden for women to touch monks** or even to brush against their robes.

5. Use a spoon

The proper way to eat in Thailand is with a spoon and fork. The spoon should be in the right hand and the fork in the left. The fork is only used to scoop the food onto the spoon; it should never enter your mouth.

6. Smile

Smiling is deeply rooted in Thai culture, which is why Thailand is called the Land of Smiles. **It is an important part of Thai etiquette** and can mean many things, including expressing various emotions such as embarrassment or frustration. Thais also smile to avoid confrontations. But that does not mean the Thai smile is fake. Thais are friendly people and their smile is a way of showing respect, so if you're the recipient of a smile, make sure you smile in return.

Do's

1. Take your shoes off

Like in other Asian countries, people in Thailand believe that the feet are unholy and unclean. This is why they take their shoes off before entering a house, temple, and even some restaurants, shops and offices. A pile of shoes and slippers outside one of these establishments is a good indicator that footwear is forbidden inside.

2. Dress properly

Thais dress modestly, and showing too much skin is considered disrespectful. This is especially true when visiting temples. Rules in Thailand state that before entering a temple, you should **wear clothes** that fully cover your shoulders and knees. The more formal the attire, the better. If you think the weather in Thailand is too hot to be covered up, you can find markets selling loose and light clothing items that are culturally appropriate.

3. Return a wai greeting

Bowing in Thailand is called the wai (pronounced as 'why'). It's the traditional way Thais greet one another and say hello. When one is directed at you, you should always return it. Thais consider it disrespectful if a wai is not returned. The proper way to wai is to bring your hands together in front of your chest — make sure your hands are pointing upwards. Then bow your head until your nose touches your index fingers.



Don't's

1. Don't disrespect the Thai royal family

The Thai people have a deep reverence for their king and the royal family. Insulting, disrespecting or talking ill of the king or images of the king can land you a one-way ticket to prison.

2. Don't touch people's heads

In Thailand, the head is revered as the highest and most sacred part of the body, therefore, you should never touch a person's head or hair — this includes ruffling children's hair. Don't raise your feet over someone's head and don't step over someone who is sleeping or sitting on the ground.

3. Don't point

Pointing at someone in Thailand is inappropriate and rude as it is in many other countries too. Instead, lift your chin in the direction of the person you're indicating. If you're asking someone to come closer, raise your arm horizontally and wave your hand up and down. Pointing at animals and inanimate objects is generally tolerated, although it's better to use your entire hand to gesture instead of the index finger.

4. Don't point with your feet

Pointing with your feet is just as rude as pointing with your fingers, especially when you're pointing at Buddha statues in and outside of temples. You should also avoid showing the bottom of your feet because they're considered to be extremely dirty, so don't put your feet on top of tables and chairs.



5. Don't disrespect Buddhas

Buddhism is the primary religion in Thailand, therefore you should respect the status and images of the Buddha. Climbing on Buddha statues in temples is highly offensive and is punishable by law. It's also illegal to take images of the Buddha out of the country without special permission.

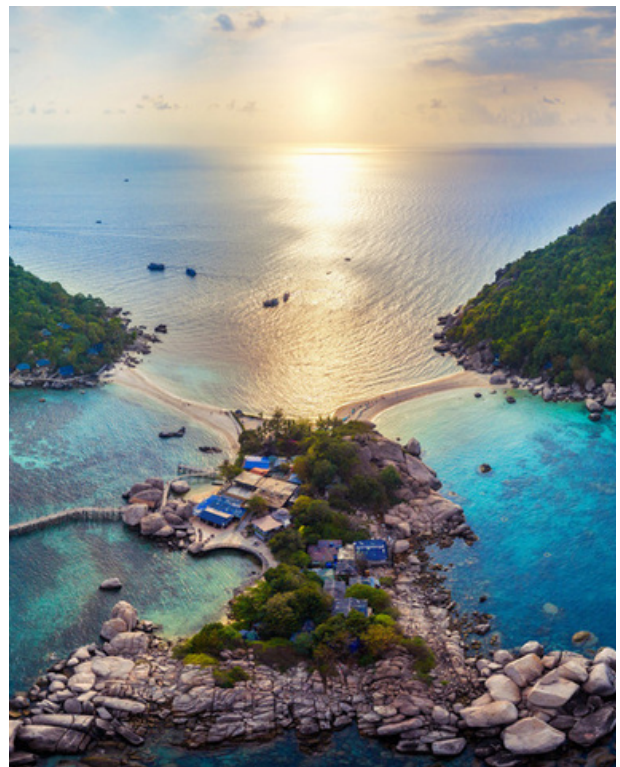


ESSENTIAL THAI WORDS AND PHRASES

When visiting Thailand, knowing a few basic Thai words and phrases can greatly enhance your travel experience. While English is spoken in many tourist areas, having some knowledge of the local language shows respect for the culture and can help you navigate more effectively.

Greetings and Basic Phrases

- 1.Sawasdee (Krub/Ka): Hello (for males/females)
- 2.Khob khun (Krub/Ka): Thank you (for males/females)
- 3.Chai: Yes
- 4.Mai chai: No
- 5.Kob kun mak: Thank you very much
- 6.Mai pen rai: You're welcome/It's okay
- 7.Sabai dee mai (Krub/Ka): How are you? (for males/females)
- 8.Sabai dee (Krub/Ka): I'm fine (for males/females)
- 9.Chai-yoh!/: Cheers!
- 10.Kor Thod: Sorry



THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THAI CULTURE

Body awareness

Thais place importance and significance to different parts of the body. The head is seen as the most spiritual part of the body and you should never touch a person's head... although, most people wouldn't go around touching strangers' heads in any case! This goes for children too—an affectionate ruffling of the hair could cause offence to Thai parents.

Thais are not overly touchy-feely in general. It's not so common to see Thais holding hands, hugging, or otherwise touching in public, and kissing and other public displays of affection are a big no.

Although it's preferable to walk around two people, rather than cutting between them, if you must pass between two people you should stoop slightly so that your head is lower than theirs. It is also polite for Thais to stoop slightly when walking past somebody they know has a higher social status than them.

The feet are seen as dirty and symbolically low. You should never touch somebody with your foot, sit with the sole of your foot pointing outwards, or point your foot at a person or a Buddha image. Even crossing your legs can cause some people to inwardly wince. This means no holding doors open with your feet, pushing your bag along with your feet, or otherwise using your feet in place of your hands. There are many times when you should take off your shoes too.

Pointing with a finger is also seen as impolite, as is beckoning somebody with a crooked finger. Thais will often use their lips to point, pushing out the lips to indicate a direction. Alternatively, use the whole hand, with all fingers outstretched, to point. To beckon somebody, the palm should be face down with all fingers extended and the action from the wrist.

Thais are generally very tolerant and understand foreign visitors will sometimes make a faux pas. As long as it's not something major, like showing disrespect to the religion or monarchy, yelling in public, or walking around semi-naked, many Thais will overlook cultural differences.

Monks are highly respected

You're sure to see many monks during your time in Thailand, both inside the temples and outside on the streets, on buses, at festivals, and in a variety of everyday settings. Monks are highly revered and respected in Thai culture and disrespecting a monk is a huge no-no.

There are designated seats on public transport for monks, for example, and people should always give up their seat to a monk if no other is available. Females, especially, should be careful of their actions around monks. As well as not touching a monk or directly handing things to them (females should put any offerings etc. on a monk's dish rather than into their hands), women shouldn't sit next to a monk or their belongings. If you act inappropriately around a monk in Thailand you can be sure that regular people around you will quickly point out your errors with disapproval.



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