

TRAVEL TIP

THAILAND



LANGUAGE

Thai is the official language. However, English is widely understood, particularly in Bangkok where it is almost the major commercial language.



PASSPORT AND VISA

Foreign visitors from 57 countries can enter Thailand without a visa for a period not exceeding 30 days, and visitors from even more countries can get a Tourist Visa on Arrival for stays not exceeding 15 days. A passport with more than 6 months of validity remaining is compulsory. If you plan to apply for visa on arrival, kindly make sure that the passport has enough blank page(s) for the visa stamp(s).



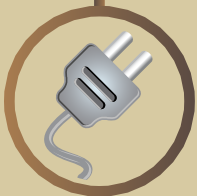
CURRENCY

The Thai unit of currency is the Baht.



TIME ZONE & WORKING HOUR

Local time is GMT + 7 hours.



ELECTRICITY

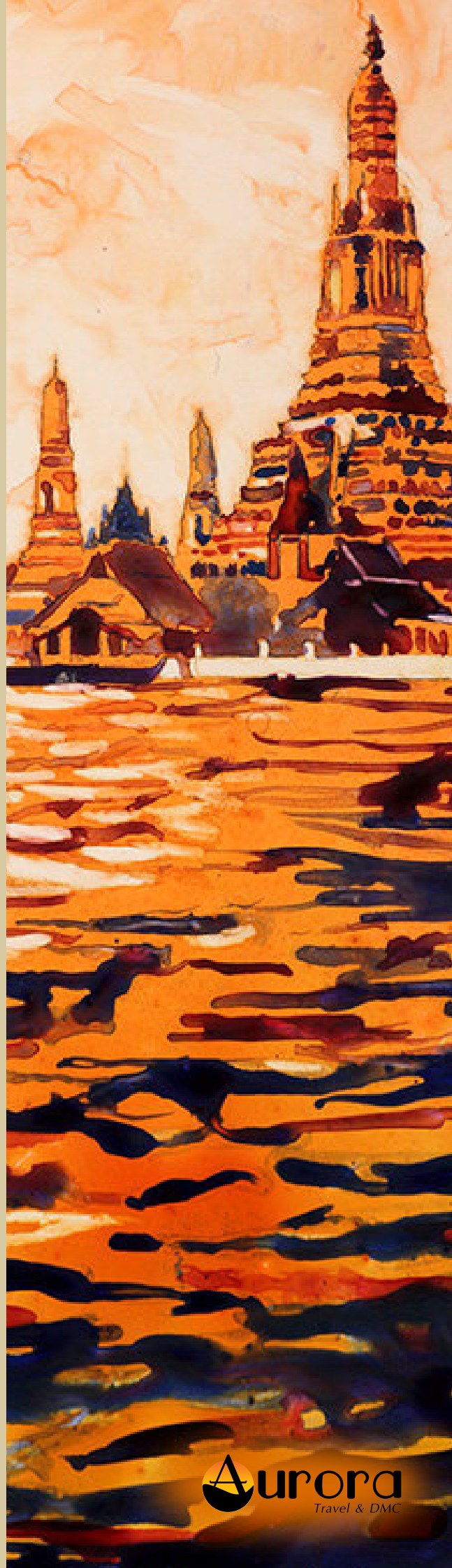
Thailand uses 220V AC electricity. Power outlets most commonly feature two-prong round or flat sockets.

The following plugs are used:



TRANSPORTATION

Buses, trains, tuk-tuks, taxi & airplanes. Transportation in Thailand is very chaotic and varied. Motorbikes and bicycles are the main mode of transport in rural areas and are generally used for short distances, while bus/train transportation dominates in Bangkok and for long distances.



ETIQUETTE

Dos



Respect all Buddha images

Dress properly when visiting a temples/pagodas or someone's house

Remove your shoes before entering a temple, somebody's house and even some shops

Treat monks with the highest respect

Try and keep calm no matter what the problem or provocation may be

Do lower your body slightly when passing between or in front of people

Don'ts

Don't show disrespect towards the Thai Royal Family

Don't cross your legs when you are in the presence of a monk. This applies whether you are sitting on the floor or in a chair

Don't touch a Thai woman without consent. Despite the image portrayed in some bars and clubs, the majority of Thai women are conservative

Don't be overly affectionate in public

Don't sunbathe nude. This is offensive to most Thai people although nobody is likely to say anything to you if you do so

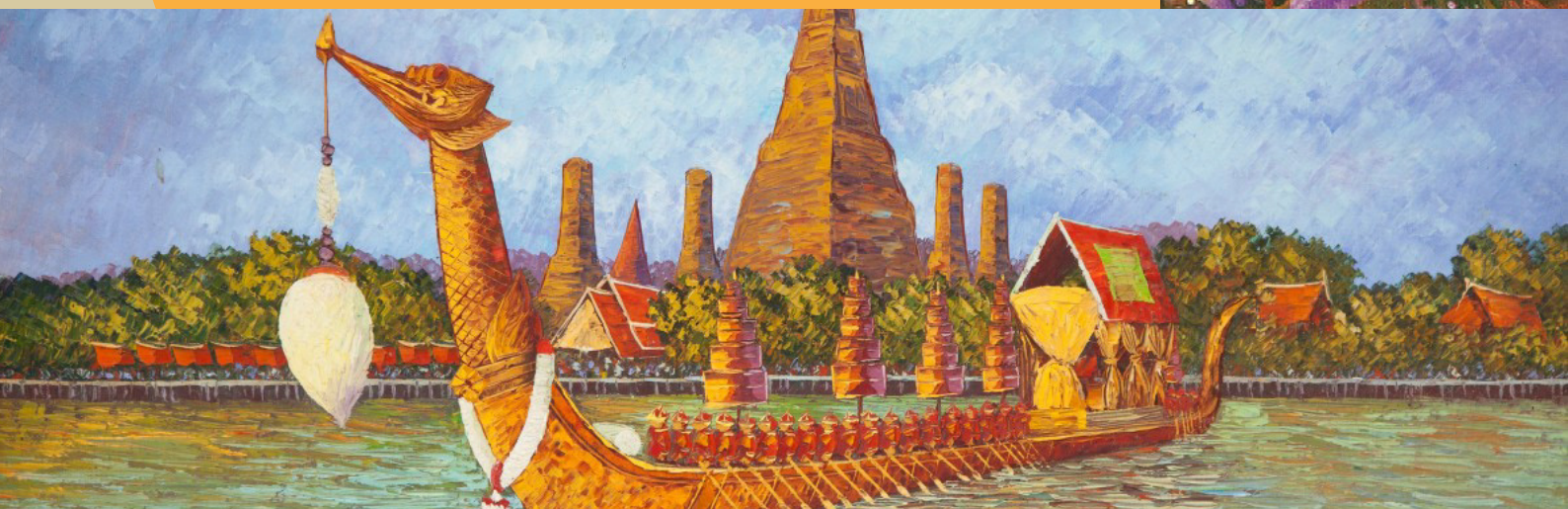
Don't touch a Thai person's head or ruffle their hair

Don't place your feet on the table while sitting, don't point to anything with your feet and don't touch anybody with your feet

Don't raise your voice or lose your temper; try and be jai yen

Don't be offended by questions about age, marital status or what you do for a living

Don't take Buddha images out of the country. Strictly speaking it is against the law to take or send Buddha images out of the country unless special permission has been granted



BEFORE TRAVELING

PACKING LIST

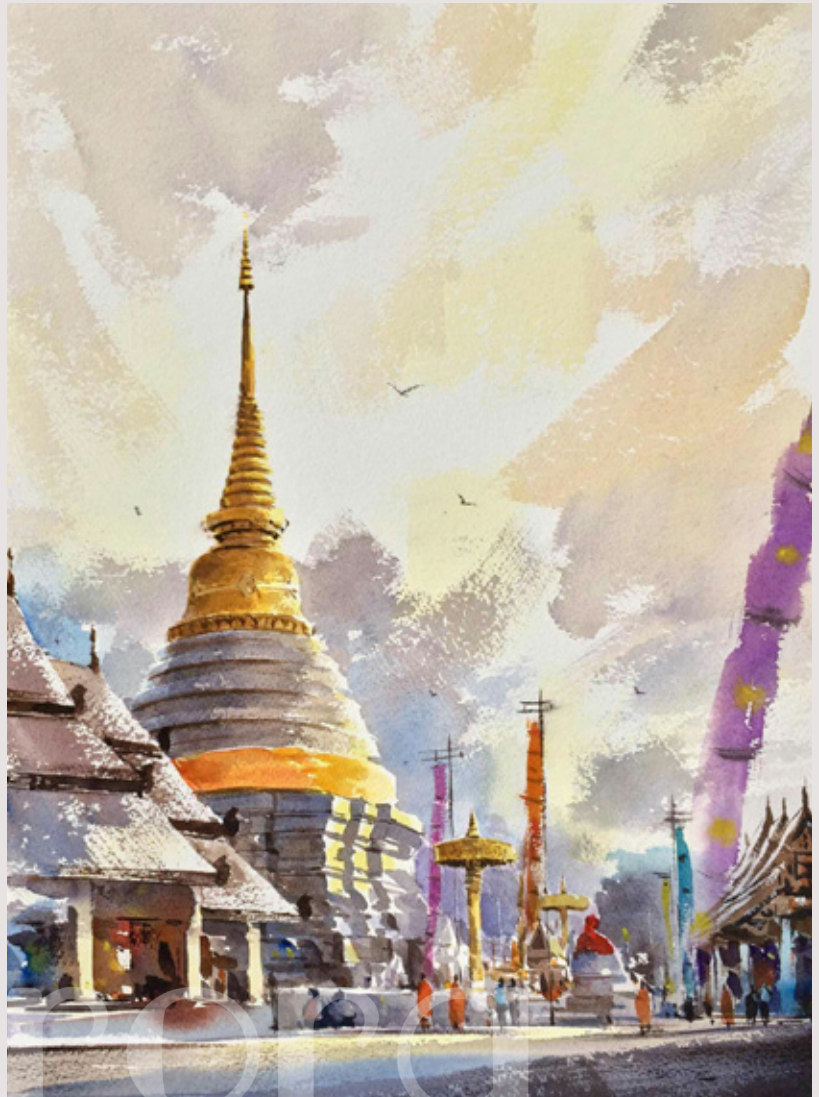
Light, cool clothes such as light cotton shirts and t-shirts are recommended and a jacket is needed for formal meetings and dining in top restaurants. Shorts (except knee-length walking shorts), sleeveless shirts, tank tops and other beach-style attire are considered inappropriate dress when not actually at the beach or in a resort area.

A good pair of shoes is recommended if you are island hopping or participating to an adventure trip, or even going from one temple to another as the paths can be rough.

A hat, sunblock and sunglasses are absolute necessities as the tropical sun can be very intense and can leave you with very painful sunburns.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

As in most countries, vaccination certificates are not required for visitors unless coming from or passing through a designated "contaminated" area. Some border areas of Thailand are malarial and appropriate precautions should be taken if visiting there. Bangkok, major cities, and resorts have excellent medical facilities and most hotels have doctors on 24-hour call. Thailand has a total of 455 private hospitals—121 in Bangkok, 165 in the Central region and East Coast, 62 in the North, 57 in the Northeast, and 50 in the South. Visitors can be assured of round-the-clock international standard medical services.



CUSTOMS AND FORMALITIES

All kinds of narcotics (hemp, opium, cocaine, morphine, heroin), and obscene literature, pictures and articles are prohibited. Cigarettes, cigars, or smoking tobacco, each or in total, must not exceed 250 grams in weight. Cigarettes must not exceed 200 in quantity. One liter each of wine or spirits may be brought in duty free. Certain species of fruits, vegetables and plants are prohibited. Entry permission for animals arriving by air can be obtained at the airport. If arriving by sea, application for entry must be made at the Department of Livestock, Bangkok. Vaccination certificates are required.

CLIMATE AND WEATHER

Thailand enjoys a tropical climate with three distinct seasons: hot and dry from February to May (average temperature 34 degrees Celsius and 75% humidity); rainy, though with plenty of sunshine, from June to October (average temperature 29 degrees Celsius and 87% humidity); and cool from November to January (temperatures range from 32 degrees Celsius to below 20 degrees Celsius with a drop in humidity). Much lower temperatures are experienced in the North and Northeast during nighttime. The South has a tropical rain forest climate with temperatures averaging 28 degrees Celsius almost all year round.

WHILE TRAVELLING



SAFETY

Ostentatious displays of money, jewelry, luggage and luxurious dress can encourage the wrong type of attention. When traveling, be aware of where your luggage is at all times - particularly your hand bag, camera, etc. Do not leave them unattended or hanging on the back of chairs in restaurants. Petty theft is also common on crowded trains, buses, and at supermarkets.

Important: You should take good care of all your *belongings first; do not always rely on your guides or drivers*, as their duty is not to take of your belongings during the trip but to help you get to and well understand your destinations. Lost items are not always found by local policemen, as the report procedures are quite complicated and take time. In case of any loss, do not submit claim to your local agent or tour operator as they are not the responsible party in this matter. While they may try to help you as much as possible so that you can submit a claim to your insurance company, local operators are not liable for this type of loss.

MONEY EXCHANGE & ATM

The Thai unit of currency is the Baht. Credit cards are widely used at hotels, tourist shops, all provincial banks, shopping centers and money changers. There are ATMs everywhere.

For spending small amounts, you are recommended to change to Thai Baht, since only Thai Baht is accepted for taxis and small shops.

TIME ZONE & WORKING HOURS

Most commercial concerns in Bangkok operate on a **five-day week, usually from 8am to 5pm**. Many stores are open seven days a week from 10am to 10pm. Banks are open Mondays to Fridays from 9:30am to 3:30pm, except on public holidays.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS & AIRPORT TAXES

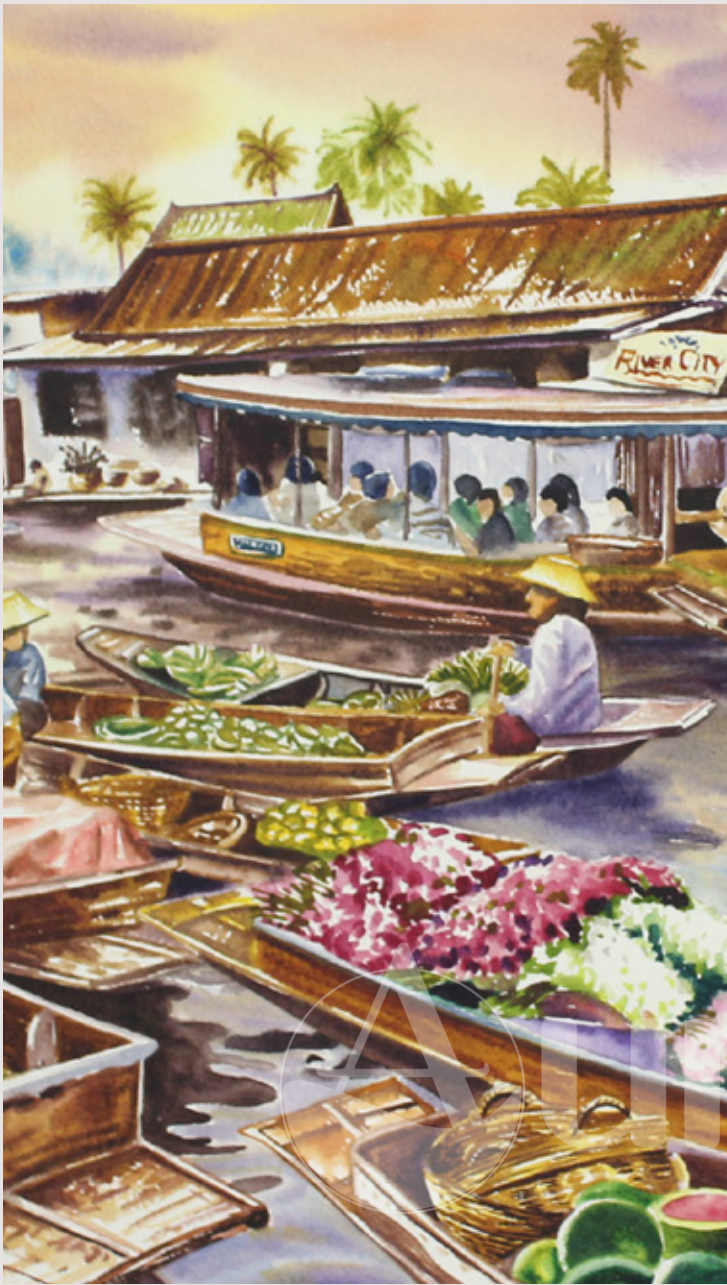
Thailand currently has seven international airports: in Bangkok, Suvarnabhumi Airport & Don Muang Airport, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Hat Yai, Ko Samui and Phuket. Domestic airports are at Mae Hong Son, Nan, Lampang, Phrae, Mae Sot, Phitsanulok, Udon Thani, Sakhon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, Phetchabun, Khon Kaen, Ubon Ratchasima, Surat Thani, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Krabi, Trang and Narathiwat. Airport departure tax for domestic and international flights is included in the airfare issued.

INTERNET

Broadband Internet is readily available in major cities and towns, but is still more difficult to access in smaller villages and in the countryside.

POST AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The telephone system in Thailand, operated by the government-subsidized Telephone Organization of Thailand (TOT) under the Communications Authority of Thailand (CAT) is quite efficient, and from Bangkok you can usually direct-dial most major centers with little difficulty. The telephone country code for Thailand is 66.



FOOD AND DRINKS

Almost all Thai food is cooked with fresh ingredients, including vegetables, poultry, pork, fish and some beef. Lime juice, lemon grass and fresh coriander give the food its characteristic tang, while liberal helpings of fresh chilies are used to add some fire to many dishes. Other common seasonings include black pepper, ginger, tamarind, and coconut milk, which is often added to curries.

Beers, wines, and spirits are readily available but the imported items can be a little expensive. A big favorite among Thai people is rice whisky. It has a sharp, sweet taste similar to rum. Several brands of beer are produced in Thailand. The most popular is the local Singha beer.

SHOPPING & BARGAINING

Thai silks, cottons, silverware, bronze ware, pottery and celadon, precious stones, finished jewelry, and a dazzling range of folk handicrafts make memorable gifts and souvenirs. International standard ready-made sports and leisurewear is inexpensive and quality tailors and dressmakers offer reliable 24-hour services in Bangkok and other major tourism destinations.

TIPPING

Gratuities are a prime motivator for tour guides, as well as a major source of their income and therefore are commonly expected in the travel industry of Southeast Asia in general.

If you are pleased with the services provided by your tour guides and drivers, then a tip for their hard work and being away from home will be very much appreciated. Tips are expected by hotel, boat and restaurant staffs also.

All suggested tips below are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars (do not use coins, personal or traveler's check for tips). Of course, whether you tip, how much you tip, and how you tip is always at your own discretion.

Tour guides and drivers

The following gratuity guideline is introduced solely for the convenience of our travelers.

If you are on private trip:

- US\$04-06/guest/day for local (city) guide

If you are on group trip:

- US\$04-07/guest/day for escorted (through-out) guide
- US\$02-04/guest/day for local (city) guide

Normally, drivers expect to receive half of the guides'

For biking/trekking trip: as guide and driver work harder than on regular cultural tours, you may consider tipping more in addition to the above tipping guidelines.

Hotel & Restaurant staffs

Most hotels and restaurants levy a 5% service charge, but this may not go directly to the staff. A tipping of 5-10% of the total bill is appreciated. If you stay a couple of days in the same hotel, try to tip the hotel cleaner, possibly US\$2-3/day/room. For hotel porters, US\$1-2/time/room is appreciated by those who have escorted you to your room and/or delivered your baggage.

Boat Cruise staffs

If you travel on a local basic boat, a suggested tip is from US\$1-2 per guest.

For an overnight boat trip, the suggestion is US\$20-50 for the entire boat cruise team depending on group size, or US\$3-5 per passenger.