Travel Tips

THAILAND

Aurora Travel & DMC

The Locals Know Best

Gerneral Information

TIME ZONE & WORKING HOUR

Thailand operates on Indochina Time (ICT), which is GMT +7 hours. Standard business hours are typically 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday to Friday. Many restaurants, shops, and services in tourist areas remain open until 10:00 PM or later, especially in major cities like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phuket. Shopping malls and night markets often stay open late.

LANGUAGE

Thai is the official language of Thailand. English is widely spoken in tourist areas, hotels, and major cities, but proficiency can be limited in rural regions. Thai script is unique and differs from other Southeast Asian languages, though many road signs and official documents include English translations.

PASSPORT & VISA

A valid passport with at least six months of validity is required. Many nationalities enjoy visa-free entry for stays of 30 days when arriving by air and 15-30 days when entering overland (depending on nationality). Travelers who require a visa can apply for a Tourist Visa (valid for 60 days, extendable for another 30 days) or an e-Visa in advance. Starting May 1st, 2025, all international travelers entering Thailand by air, land, or sea must complete the mandatory Thailand Digital Arrival Card (TDAC) online before or upon arrival. Always check the latest visa policies before traveling.

TRANSPORTATION

Thailand offers diverse transportation options. Taxis, tuk-tuks, motorbike taxis, and ride-hailing apps like Grab and Bolt are widely available in major cities. BTS Skytrain and MRT subway systems in Bangkok provide efficient urban transport. For intercity travel, options include buses, minivans, domestic flights, and the expanding railway network. Motorbike and car rentals are popular but require an international driver's license.

CURRENCY

The official currency is the Thai Baht (THB). As of 2024, the exchange rate is approximately 36 THB per US dollar. Credit cards are widely accepted in hotels, restaurants, and shopping malls, but cash is preferred for small vendors and local markets. ATMs are easily available, though international withdrawals may include fees. Money exchange booths provide competitive rates.

ELECTRICITY

Thailand operates on a 230V supply voltage and 50Hz frequency. Common plug types include Type A (two flat prongs), Type C (two round prongs), and Type B (two flat prongs with a grounding pin). A universal adapter is recommended, as plug types may vary depending on the accommodation.

Etiquette

Dos

- Greet people with a Wai (pressing your palms together in a prayer-like gesture) instead of a handshake.
- Show respect to elders, monks, and religious traditions through polite speech and gestures.
- Use both hands when giving or receiving items, especially to elders or officials.
- Dress modestly when visiting temples or religious sites (cover shoulders and knees).
- Remove shoes before entering homes, temples, or certain establishments.
- Ask permission before taking photographs of people, monks, religious sites, or rural communities.

Don't

- Do not touch a person's head, including children, as it is considered sacred.
- Do not point at people or objects with your index finger; use your whole hand instead.
- Do not raise your voice or show anger in public; Thai people value calmness and avoiding confrontation.
- Women should not touch monks or hand items directly to them—place offerings on a table or cloth instead.
- Avoid excessive displays of affection in public.
- Do not discuss sensitive topics such as politics, the monarchy, or past conflicts unless invited to do so.

Before Traveling

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

Travelers to Thailand should consult their healthcare provider or a travel medicine specialist to ensure they are up to date on routine vaccinations and to discuss any necessary immunizations. Recommended vaccinations may include:

- **Measles-Mumps-Rubella (MMR):** Ensure full vaccination, as outbreaks have occurred in Southeast Asia.
- **Diphtheria and Tetanus:** Keeping vaccinations current is essential due to periodic outbreaks.
- **Hepatitis A and B:** Recommended due to the potential risk of exposure through food, water, or contact with bodily fluids.
- **Typhoid:** Advised for travelers consuming local or street food.
- **Rabies:** Consider vaccination if engaging in outdoor activities or visiting areas with stray animals, especially dogs or monkeys.
- **Japanese Encephalitis:** Recommended for travelers spending extended periods in rural areas or visiting during the transmission season.
- **Malaria & Dengue Fever:** Mosquito-borne illnesses are a concern, particularly in remote, forested, or coastal regions. Use insect repellent, wear long-sleeved clothing, and sleep under a mosquito net if staying in rural locations.

It's highly recommended that all travelers purchase comprehensive personal travel insurance before departure. This insurance should cover health-related expenses, including medical evacuation, as well as loss or theft of personal belongings. Having insurance from your home country can simplify the process in case of accident or illness, avoiding complicated paperwork abroad.

WHAT TO BRING

To ensure a comfortable and safe trip to Thailand, consider the following packing tips:

- **Clothing:** Pack lightweight, breathable clothing suitable for a tropical climate. Include a light jacket or sweater for cooler evenings or air-conditioned environments.
- **Health Essentials:** Bring sunblock, a wide-brimmed hat, and insect repellent containing DEET to protect against mosquitoes.
- **Medications:** Carry a basic first-aid kit and any prescription medications you require, along with a copy of the prescription.
- **Documentation:** Keep photocopies of important documents, such as your passport, visa, travel insurance, and vaccination records, in a secure location separate from the originals.
- **Miscellaneous:** A reusable water bottle, travel umbrella, and power adapter suitable for Thaialnd's electrical outlets can be very useful.

Before Traveling

CUSTOMES & FORMALITIES

Travelers arriving in Thailand must complete an arrival card (TM6) and customs declaration form if carrying dutiable or restricted goods. These forms are usually distributed on flights or available at immigration counters. Visitors with an eVisa or visa on arrival should present a printed approval letter along with their passport.

Duty-Free Allowances

- **Alcohol:** Up to 1 liter of spirits.
- **Tobacco:** Up to 200 cigarettes, 250 grams of tobacco, or 50 cigars.
- **Other Goods:** Personal items and gifts valued at no more than 20,000 THB.

Restricted & Prohibited Items

- Narcotics and illegal drugs (strictly prohibited with severe penalties).
- Firearms, explosives, and ammunition (unless with prior government approval).
- Obscene materials, counterfeit goods, and politically sensitive publications.
- Endangered wildlife and products made from them (e.g., ivory, certain animal skins).

Medications & Special Declarations

- Prescription medications should be in original packaging, accompanied by a doctor's note or prescription to avoid customs issues.
- Large amounts of cash exceeding $20,000 USD (or equivalent) must be declared upon arrival or departure.

Departing Thailand

- Antique artifacts and Buddha images require special permits for export. Only purchase from licensed dealers who provide official export documentation.
- Thai Baht (THB) exceeding 50,000 THB (or 450,000 THB if traveling to bordering countries) must be declared before leaving Thailand.

Before Traveling

CLIMATE & WEATHER

Thailand has a tropical climate with three main seasons:

Cool & Dry Season (November to February)

- Temperatures range from 18–30°C (64–86°F), with low humidity and clear skies.
- This is the best time to visit, especially for outdoor activities and beach destinations.
- Northern regions like Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai can get chilly at night, dropping below 15°C (59°F).

Hot Season (March to May)

- Temperatures can soar to 35–40°C (95–104°F), with high humidity, especially in Bangkok and central Thailand.
- April is the hottest month, and many locals celebrate Songkran (Thai New Year) with water festivals to cool off.
- Beach destinations in the Gulf of Thailand (like Koh Samui) offer relief with sea breezes.

Rainy Season (June to October)

- Temperatures range from 25–35°C (77–95°F), with frequent short but heavy rains, mostly in the afternoon or evening.
- Lush green landscapes and fewer crowds, making it a great time for nature lovers.
- Some islands in the Andaman Sea (like Koh Phi Phi and Phuket) experience rough seas and occasional ferry disruptions.
- Flooding may occur in some urban areas, including Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

While Traveling

COMMUNICATIONS

Phone/SIM Card

- Thailand has affordable mobile plans and strong network coverage.
- Purchasing a local SIM card is a cost-effective way to stay connected. Prepaid SIMs with 4G/5G mobile data start at around $5–$10 USD.
- Major telecom providers include AIS, TrueMove H, and dtac. SIM cards are available at airports, convenience stores, and mobile shops.
- You can easily top up credit at 7-Eleven, FamilyMart, or through mobile banking apps.
- Using VOIP services like WhatsApp, Skype, or Zoom is recommended for international calls..

Internet

- Free Wi-Fi is widely available in hotels, restaurants, cafés, and shopping malls, but speeds vary.
- 4G/5G connectivity is reliable in cities, while rural areas may have weaker signals.
- Pocket Wi-Fi devices are available for rent at airports and major tourist hubs.

Post Service

- Thailand's postal system is efficient and reliable, with Thailand Post offering domestic and international shipping.
- Express Mail Service (EMS) provides faster international delivery.
- Major post offices are found in cities, and some hotels offer mailing services.

THAI CUISINE

Thai cuisine is world-famous for its harmonious balance of sweet, sour, salty, and spicy flavors. Rice is a staple in Thai meals, often paired with aromatic curries, stir-fried dishes, and fresh herbs. Influenced by Chinese, Indian, and Malay culinary traditions, Thai food offers a wide variety of street food and fine dining experiences.

Foods

- Pad Thai – Stir-fried rice noodles with shrimp, tofu, eggs, and peanuts.
- Tom Yum Goong – Spicy and sour shrimp soup with lemongrass, lime, and chili.
- Som Tam – Green papaya salad with a mix of sweet, spicy, and tangy flavors.
- Massaman Curry – A rich and mildly spiced curry with potatoes and peanuts.

Drinks

- Thai Iced Tea – Sweetened tea with condensed milk and ice, popular for its creamy texture.
- Beer – The most popular local beers are Singha, Chang, and Leo.
- Rice Whiskey (Lao Khao) – A strong traditional spirit made from fermented rice.
- Water Safety – Tap water is not safe for drinking. It is recommended to drink bottled or filtered water, widely available at reasonable prices. Many hotels and restaurants provide free filtered water refills.

While Traveling

CURRENCY, MONEY EXCHANGE & ATM

The official currency of Thailand is the Thai Baht (THB). Banknotes are available in 20, 50, 100, 500, and 1,000 THB denominations, while coins come in 1, 2, 5, and 10 THB, along with smaller satang coins (25 and 50 satang). As of 2024, the exchange rate fluctuates around 35 THB per US dollar, but rates may vary.

Credit Cards

Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted at hotels, upscale restaurants, shopping malls, and tourist attractions. American Express and UnionPay are accepted at select locations. However, small vendors, street markets, and rural areas typically only accept cash. Some businesses may apply a 3%–5% surcharge for card payments.

ATMs

ATMs are readily available throughout Thailand, including in major cities, airports, and tourist areas. Most ATMs dispense Thai Baht only and have a withdrawal limit of 20,000–30,000 THB per transaction. International ATM withdrawal fees range from 150–220 THB per transaction, so it is advisable to withdraw larger amounts at once to reduce fees.

Money Exchange

Foreign currencies, particularly US dollars, Euros, and British pounds, can be exchanged at banks, currency exchange offices, and some hotels. Exchange rates are usually better at dedicated exchange counters rather than at airports or hotels. It is recommended to carry small denominations of Thai Baht for convenience, as some vendors may struggle to break large bills.

While Traveling

SAFETY

Personal Belongings

- Thailand is generally a safe destination for travelers, but it's important to remain vigilant.
- Avoid displaying valuable items such as jewelry, large amounts of cash, or expensive electronics in public.
- Use a money belt or anti-theft bag to store valuables, especially in crowded areas.
- Many hotels provide in-room safes or secure storage at the reception for passports and important documents.

Petty Theft

- Pickpocketing and bag snatching can occasionally occur in crowded areas such as night markets, public transportation, and popular tourist sites.
- When riding in tuk-tuks or on motorbikes, keep your bag securely strapped across your body and avoid using your phone near the road, as snatch thefts can happen.
- Be extra cautious at night, especially in less populated areas or on secluded beaches.

Scams & Tourist Frauds

- Overpriced taxi or tuk-tuk rides – Always insist on using the metered fare for taxis or agree on a price before getting in a tuk-tuk.
- Fake gem or tailor shop scams – Avoid deals that seem "too good to be true" and shop at reputable stores.
- Rental scams – If renting motorbikes or jet skis, take photos of the vehicle before use to avoid being blamed for pre-existing damage.

Lost Items & Travel Insurance

- Filing a police report for lost or stolen items can take time, and the chances of recovery are low. To minimize risk:
- Keep photocopies of your passport, visa, and travel insurance in a separate location.
- Carry only what you need when going out, and leave extra cash and valuables secured in your hotel.
- Travel insurance that covers theft, loss, and medical emergencies is highly recommended.

While Traveling

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS & AIRPORT TAXES

Airport Tax

- Airport taxes for both domestic and international flights are included in the ticket price. No additional payment is required at the airport.

Check-in Recommendations

- International Flights – Arrive at least 3 hours before departure.
- Domestic Flights – Arrive at least 2 hours before departure.
- Online check-in is available for most airlines, but some domestic airports may require a printed boarding pass for security checks.

Baggage Allowance

- Thai Airways, the national carrier, allows 1 checked bag (20–30kg) and 1 carry-on (7kg) for economy class passengers.
- Budget airlines such as Thai AirAsia, Nok Air, and Thai Lion Air often charge extra for checked baggage, so it is best to review baggage policies before booking.
- Overweight baggage fees can be expensive, so pre-booking additional luggage allowance is recommended if needed.

SHOPPING & BARGAINING

Thailand is known for its silk textiles, silver jewelry, wood carvings, ceramics, handmade crafts, and locally sourced spices and teas. Popular souvenirs include Thai herbal balms, coconut-based products, and high-quality skincare items.

Local Markets

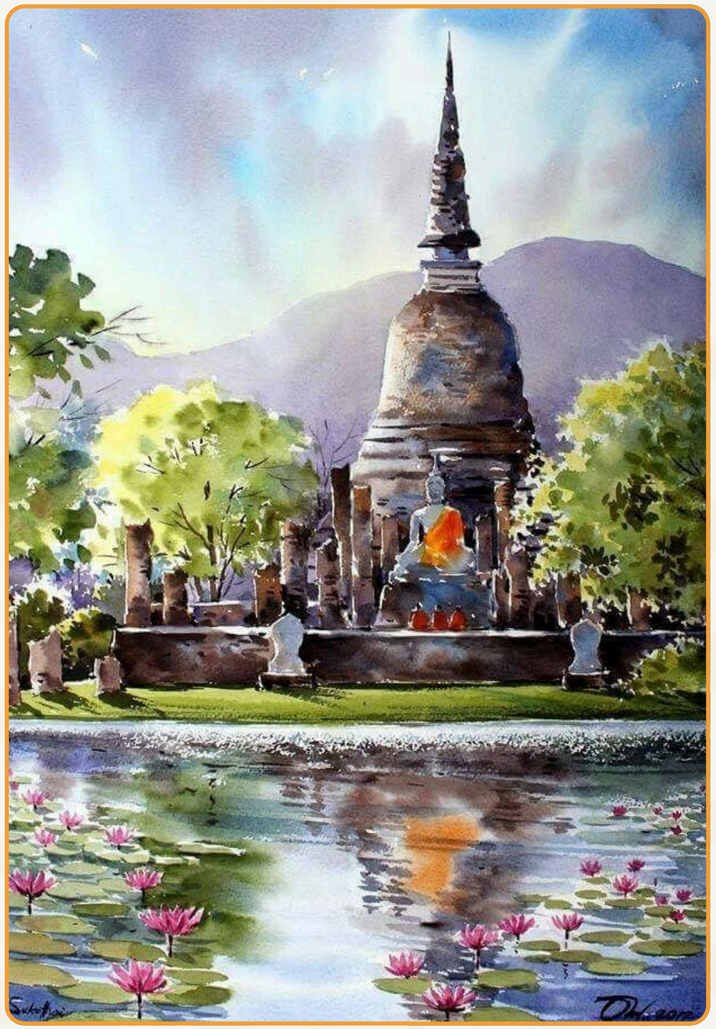
- Bangkok – Chatuchak Weekend Market (one of the world's largest markets) and Pak Khlong Talad (flower market).
- Chiang Mai – Sunday Night Market and Warorot Market for traditional handicrafts and textiles.
- Phuket & Pattaya – Local night markets offering souvenirs, fashion, and street food.
- Many villages and artisan centers sell authentic handmade products directly from local craftsmen.

Bargaining in Thailand

- Bargaining is common in markets and with street vendors, but not in malls or stores with fixed prices.
- A friendly attitude helps; start by offering about 30-50% lower than the asking price and negotiate from there.
- Politely walking away can sometimes encourage a better deal.
- Be respectful when haggling—excessive bargaining over small amounts may be seen as rude.

Street Vendors & Hawkers

- Vendors in tourist areas can be persistent; a polite but firm "Mai ow khrap/kha" ("No, thank you" in Thai) is enough to decline.
- Be cautious when purchasing silver, gemstones, or antiques, as counterfeit items exist. Buy from reputable stores for quality assurance.



While Traveling

TIPPING

Tipping is not deeply rooted in Thai culture but has become more common in the tourism industry. While not mandatory, a small gratuity is appreciated for good service. Below are suggested tipping amounts (in Thai Baht – THB):

Tour Guides & Drivers

- Private Tour: ฿200–฿500 per guest per day for a local or city guide.
- Group Tour: ฿150–฿300 per guest per day for an escorted guide; ฿100–฿200 for a local guide.
- Drivers: Typically receive about half of what guides get (฿100–฿250 per guest per day).
- Trekking or Adventure Tours: Additional tipping is recommended, around ฿100–฿200 per guide per day.

Hotel & Restaurant Staff

- Restaurants: 5–10% of the bill if a service charge is not included.
- Housekeeping: ฿50–฿100 per day per room.
- Porters: ฿20–฿50 per bag, depending on luggage size.

Boat Cruise Staff

- Day Boat Trip: ฿50–฿100 per guest for good service.

Other Service Providers

- Spa & Massage Therapists: ฿50–฿150 per treatment, especially for excellent service.
- Tuk-Tuk & Taxi Drivers: Tipping is not required, but rounding up the fare or adding ฿20–฿50 for longer rides is appreciated.

Thank You

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