

AuthenticAsia®
The Reliable DMC in Asia

THAILAND

Land of Smiles



As one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world, relaxing on white sandy beaches, trekking through the northern jungle, visiting gorgeous temples, tasting delicious street food, enjoying the nightlife or exploring rich culture, it has something for everyone. The 'Land of Smiles' is the perfect holiday destination.

Capital city: Bangkok

Population: 67 million

Language: Thai

Currency: Baht

Time zone: GMT+7

International dialing code: +66





DESTINATION

National Parks: trekking up mountains and watch the wildlife will be a wonderful choice for the ones loving the beauty of nature.

Islands: Relaxing on the beaches and swimming in the turquoise water are great, but you can also discover the underwater marine life as you go snorkeling or diving, or sea walking and many other water activities.

Cities: Cities in Thailand such as Bangkok, are chaotic and energetic. There are temples. Shopping malls, markets, night clubs... and everything you want for an interesting trip.



CLIMATE

Thailand has a tropical monsoon climate. June sees the beginning of the South West Monsoon, it brings the rainy season until the end of October. During this season there is often heavy rain and the humidity is high.

From November to February, the weather is cooler and less humid, this is the best time of the year to visit Thailand.

From March to May is the hottest time of the year. The weather can be extremely hot and stifling. It's also the time when farmers burn their crops so the air becomes really unpleasant.





PASSPORT AND VISA

A passport with at least six months validity from the date of entry is required. Visitors from most Western and ASEAN countries who arrive in Thailand without a visa will be granted a 30-day stay if they have proof of an onward ticket and adequate funds. For longer, you can apply for a tourist visa in Thai embassy which gives you 60 days.

However, some nationalities still need to pay around 1000 THB for a visa on arrival. Overstaying your visa will require 500THB per day. You need to enter Thailand within 90 days of the visa being issued, otherwise it will be invalid.

TRANSPORTATION

Traffic in Bangkok can be very bad, especially during the rainy season. Using the **Metro or Sky Train** is by far the fastest and most convenient way to get around.

However, these do not cover the entire city. If using a **taxi**, try to make sure you get one on the meter. **Tuk-tuk** is another way of getting around. These

motorised, three wheel cars tend to be more expensive than meter taxis, and prices are negotiated beforehand.

Motorbike taxis: Travel by motorbike in Thailand is not safe and under no circumstances is this sanctioned or recommended by Authentic Asia. Please note that travel by motorbike is not usually covered by insurance. Please check the fine print of your travel insurance policy to be sure of your cover.

LANGUAGE

Although Thai is the official language in Thailand, English is a lot more common on Thai's islands as a lot of people are in the tourism industry. So many people, especially those who work in tourists' areas and hotels will be able to help you out. Thai's English may be hard to understand at first because of their quick and strong voice.

In rural areas, you will encounter people who don't speak English. It's advised to carry a language guide or have a translate software in your mobile phone.



CURRENCY

The official currency in Laos is the **Thai Baht**. 1 US\$ is about 30 THB. Credit cards may be accepted by big hotels, restaurants and large shops but cash is preferred in most parts of the country, so you'd better always have local currency on you. ATM's are also widely available and accept most international cards.

Traveler's cheque are not generally accepted outside of hotels, you can go to any banks around your accommodation to exchange them for cash ...

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Telephone connections to the rest of the world are widely available, however they can be expensive.

Internet access and wifi is available in most major tourist places such as hotels, restaurants and cafes.

ELECTRICITY

Thai uses 220V AC electricity. Power outlets are usually two-prong round (type C) or flat sockets (type A). Be sure to pack a travel adaptor so you can still use all your electronic gadgets.



SAFETY

Thailand is a safe place for tourists. But it's necessary to read more about some safety problems of Thailand since the scams, violence... in some part of the country are pretty complicated.

Scams exist widely in South East Asian countries, it may hurt nothing but your wallet, so you just need to be cautious if any local people try to approach and talk to you. Don't give your personal information to anyone but your hotel staffs and travel agents.

There have been protests on streets in Thailand when the government was in turmoil. The best choice is cancel or delay your trip to Thailand until the situation is resolved, but if you are unfortunately in Thailand when the protests are taking place, just get away from those areas in case might be violence there.

VACCINATIONS

Healthcare in Thailand is some of the best in South East Asia, with most hospitals offering a Western level of service, however those hospitals can be expensive. Pharmacies can be easily found throughout the

countries. The tropical climate is also a favorable condition for diseases and vectors (flies, mosquitoes, cockroaches, rats ...) to multiply, especially in rainy season. So you should book an appointment with your doctor or travel clinic, no less than two months before your departure to get the necessary vaccinations.

If you have a medical condition or allergy which requires particular attention, please carry a doctor's letter with you that describes the nature of the condition and treatment needed.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Every traveler is responsible for his or her own health. Travel inevitably involves some risks and this should be recognized by holiday-makers. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment should any problems occur such as cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind so that you can entirely enjoy your trip without worry. Please also ensure your travel insurance covers all activities planned on your trip.



RELIGION

The official religion in Thailand is **Theravada Buddhism**, practiced by more than 95% of the population. So there are many pagodas and temples in this country. Foreigners are always welcome in temples. However, it is important that a few simple rules of etiquette are followed:

- Act with the utmost respect when visiting temples and other religious sites: don't speak loudly, run in the temples or point your finger or the soles of your feet toward anyone or anything, especially the figures of Buddha or other Gods.
- Do not wear shorts, skirts, or tank tops and, sure your shoulders and knees are covered.
- Remove your shoes and hat before get inside
- If you sit down in front of the dais (the platform on which the Buddha's are placed), sit with your feet to the side rather than in the lotus position.
- A woman may accept something from a monk but should never touch a monk.

- Turn off mobile phones or the ringtones so as not to annoy other people praying.

FOOD

Thailand's food is regarded as one of the most amazing in the world. The cuisine has bold flavors, especially sour from citrus or mangoes, spicy from chilies, greasy from coconut milk... As a Buddhist country, there is vegetarian food in most restaurant. Here are some famous dishes from Thailand:

- Tom Yum Goong (spicy shrimp soup)
- Pad Thai (Thai style fried noodles)
- Som Tum (spicy green papaya salad)
- Khao Pad (fried rice)
- Gaeng Keow Wan Kai (chicken green curry)
- Khao Niao Mamuang (sticky rice in coconut milk, served with mango)

It is not advisable to drink tap water in Thailand. Bottled water is recommended but do check the expiry date before opening. Ice is widely used and is produced with treated water.



ETIQUETTE AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Thailand has cultural norms and taboos which we encourage visitors to understand and abide by.

- **Try not to get angry.** Losing face by shouting or becoming abusive is one of the biggest faux pas in Thailand. It is extremely impolite and unlikely to achieve a positive outcome.
- **Refrain from public displays of affection,** they are considered offensive. It is rare to see couples holding hands. However, it is quite common for friends of the same sex.
- It is polite to **remove your shoes before entering a house** – look for shoes at the front door as a clue.
- Thais greet each other with a slight bow and a prayer-like gesture, with the younger or lower-ranked person usually initiating the gesture. For foreigners and business, handshakes are acceptable.

HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

There are many public holidays in Thailand. Songkran is the festival that we highly recommend tourists to experience. Songkran actually is Thai New Year. It is celebrated all over the country, but don't miss the chance to join in the festival in Chiang Mai where celebrations go on for over a week.

Also many Thai people travel back to their hometowns to visit local temples during this time. This can make transportation more difficult and expensive since many people have already booked the train or flight ticket more than a month before the festival..

The most notable way of celebrating Songkran is by splashing water on each other. If you go on the streets during this time, be ready to get totally wet because large water fights break out across the country and innocent bystanders are often favored targets. They believe that the wetter you get, the happier you will be throughout the new year. Make sure your valuables and electronics are stored carefully!



TIPPING

Travelers are recommended to tip for the service if you feel satisfied. Though it isn't compulsory, the staffs will be appreciated, so you can tip any amount you feel is appropriate.

- Bellboy: 10-20 baht per suitcase / bag
- Chambermaid: 20 – 40 baht per day
- Guides: 150 – 200 baht per day for guides (depending on group size and performance)
- Drivers: 100 baht per day for drivers (depending on group size and performance)
- Restaurants: in smart establishments you may find that the tip is already included in the bill. In local restaurants tips are not expected but you may wish to leave loose change on the table.

PRICE GUIDE

Generally, things are cheap in Thailand. However as a tourist you will get overcharged if you are not careful. Haggling is considered a sport when it comes to non-food products. Always stay calm and polite and you'll be surprised at the discounts you may get. Be aware that many items for sale on street stands are counterfeit.

Street food:

- Pad Thai: THB 25 –50
- Rice dish: THB 30 – 60

Restaurants:

- Western dishes: from THB 150
- Thai dishes: from THB 80

Drinks:

- Soft drinks THB 10 – 20
- Beer: THB 50 – 70
- Fruit juice: THB 20 - 30
- Water: THB 10 - 15

Other Items:

- DVDs (real): THB 100 - 200
- SIM card: THB 100
- Mobile phone: from THB 1000

DONATIONS AND GIFT GIVING

Although there is poverty in certain areas of Thailand, please read the following points about donations and gift giving.

- Do not give money to people begging, especially children. This reinforces the belief that begging is an acceptable way to make a living. If children make money from begging, their parents are less likely to send them to school. Children working on the streets are also vulnerable to abuse.



- Giving money and goods to beggars can accentuate an unequal relationship between locals and visitors, with tourists being seen as purely money givers.
- Do not give sweets to children in villages that we visit.
- Do not feel that you necessarily have to give material things. Sometimes, giving your friendship, time and interest to locals can be the best gift of all.
- For more information go to www.thinkchildsafe.org

CLOTHING

The weather is hot in the tropical countries such as Thailand, so bring lightweight clothes, don't forget to bring hat, sunglasses, sunscreen and cover clothes for sunny days

Prepare appropriate clothes when visiting religious and historical sites, showing too much your legs and shoulders is considered disrespect, so don't wear shorts, skirts, or tank tops.

In many temples or pagodas, you'll have to take shoes off, so slip-on shoes or sandals are useful.

HOT TIPS

Keep in mind the telephone number of your country's embassy in Thailand. Don't put your passport or visa anywhere that's easily reached. Record images of your passport and visa in case of loss or theft.

Insect repellent are necessary when exploring forests and national parks, especially during rainy season.

The sunlight may be intense. Avoid outdoor activities during hottest hours (about 11am to 2pm).

USEFUL WEBSITES

The UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice on travelling to Thailand:

<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/thailand>

The official tourism website for Thailand;

http://www.tourismthailand.org/tourismthailand_in_dex/en/

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST



❖ Documents

- Passport (at least six months validity from date of entry)
- Photocopy of passport
- Visa or a passport photo and US\$20 for visa on arrival
- Travel insurance
- All relevant tickets
- Reconfirmed flights

❖ Clothes

- Lightweight clothing
- Long-sleeved shirts and trousers (to religious sites)

- Shoes, sneakers for trekking, cycling and walking
- Sunglasses, sunscreen

❖ Travel aids

- Suitcases, backpack
- Foreign currency (US\$) and/or ATM card
- Maps
- Pocket knife
- Language guide
- Medications, first aid kit
- Insect repellent
- Electrical adaptor: 220V, 50Hz; 2 pin plugs

Please note: domestic airlines impose baggage weight restrictions of around 20kg maximum, so travel lightly where possible. Also be aware that train and boat cabins have limited space.

Authentic Asia wish you a safe and pleasant journey.

In case of an emergency, please contact us at:

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