

## THAILAND AT A GLANCE

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**POPULATION:** 69,625,582 (July 2019 est.)

**LANGUAGES:** Thai, English (in business and tourism)

**PREDOMINANT RELIGIONS:** Buddhism, Islam

**TIME ZONE:** Eleven hours ahead of Eastern Daylight Time  
(New York City)

**TELEPHONE CODES:** 66, country code; 2, Bangkok city code;  
53, Chiang Mai city code; 54, Chiang Rai city code

Thailand offers something for nearly everyone. The capital, Bangkok, is alive with commerce and street-bustle almost every hour of the day and night. Whether in big cities, the country or on a pristine beach, Thailand offers travelers a safe, friendly atmosphere full of possibilities. Thailand has fabulous architecture, diverse hill-tribe villages, ancient ruins, beautiful islands, excellent shopping and all the amenities as well.

Despite Thailand's well-developed infrastructure and a free enterprise economy, some of the problems that faced children decades ago still plague them today. These include malnutrition, exclusion from education, trafficking, child labor and other forms of exploitation. Too many children have missed out on the benefits of Thailand's development — especially the children of ethnic minorities, migrants and the very poor. Development itself and the changes that come in its wake have also brought a host of new challenges for children and young people. These include the spread of HIV/AIDS, the breakup of traditional family systems, and a rising toll of child deaths from road traffic and other accidents.



The tsunamis that struck southeast Asia in December 2004 dealt a serious blow to Thailand's western coast. The area has recovered, however, and is once again attracting thousands of visitors.

### COMPASSION IN THAILAND

Compassion's ministry in Thailand began in 1970. Today, more than 58,480 children are served by more than 180 Compassion-assisted child development centers throughout the country. Compassion's church-based child development centers are places of hope for impoverished children in Thailand. Under the guidance of caring Christian adults, children's pressing needs for nutrition and medical attention are met. Children also receive tutoring to help with their academics. Health and hygiene lessons teach them to care for their own physical well-being, and positive social skills are modeled and encouraged.

### WEATHER

The weather in Thailand is mostly hot and humid, although the northern highlands are generally 10 degrees F / 5 degrees C

cooler. From November through February, the days are milder and the nights are cooler. March through June is especially hot, with average high temperatures in the mid-90s degrees F / 32-35 degrees C. The monsoon season is mid-May to October, when it's particularly humid and rainy (the streets of Bangkok flood easily).

## CURRENCY

Thailand's official currency is the Thai *baht* (THB). ATMs can be found just about everywhere in Thailand, and most accept credit cards. Look for the Cirrus or Visa symbol. Cash can be exchanged at banks and shops as well. Some tourist locations accept U.S. dollars, but at a higher rate.

## FOOD

Most hot, freshly cooked food should be safe, but peel fresh fruit and raw vegetables before eating, choose meat that is cooked thoroughly, avoid local dairy products, and assume the water is unsafe (stick with prepackaged or boiled drinks).

## SHOPPING

Silk is a great buy, but quality varies. Be sure to bargain when appropriate (though not in department stores). Some gold sold as 24-karat in Bangkok's "Thieves Market" is somewhat less than pure, and name brands are often counterfeit copycats.



Shop for lacquerware, celadon pottery, painted umbrellas, tribal weavings and handicrafts, custom shoes and clothing, bronze, silver, sand paintings, and carved water-buffalo bells. Be careful what you buy because protected animals are often hunted for their hides. Although salespeople may say that an item is very old or authentic, don't buy it unless you know for sure. Bargaining is not only common but also expected at tourist shops and in markets.

## ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

The voltage used in Thailand is 220V, and electrical outlets accommodate plug types A or C. (For up-to-date plug and outlet information, check [whatplug.info](http://whatplug.info) and click on your destination country.) You also may wish to take a universal plug adaptor, available in the luggage/travel sections of most big-box stores.

## DO'S AND DON'TS

- **Don't** eat bird's nest soup or shark fin soup — these dishes are decimating the species.
- **Do** be careful what you buy because protected animals are often hunted for their hides.
- **Do** stand when you hear the national anthem (usually at 8 a.m. and 6 p.m.) in public zones such as airports and schools. "The King's Anthem" is played before movies in theaters, and the whole crowd stands.
- **Don't** go shirtless except on the beach. Shorts are fine, but you will see that Thai people generally dress very well and rarely wear shorts themselves. Even on the beach, many Thais wear long pants. Dress modestly (long pants or skirts) and behave seriously when visiting temples. Always remove your shoes before entering. If men forget to take long pants to the Grand Palace, rent them from a shop across the street for a small fee. The Grand Palace authorities are very particular about what kind of sandals can be worn in to the general grounds; they must at least have a strap around the heel. Other temples may have extra pants that men can borrow for free.

- **Don't** touch the heads of Thais (not even children), and don't sit so that the bottoms of your feet point at anyone, including images of Buddha. Also, aside from the ground, don't touch anything with your feet. The feet are considered the dirtiest part of the body.
- **Do** bring wash-and-wear clothing for mid-April, when the Thai-Buddhist New Year tradition calls for throwing water on anyone who passes by.
- **Don't** throw or toss anything, except during sports activities. It is considered extremely impolite.

## DRESS

Thailand's year-round humid climate means that light, cool clothes are the best choice, day and night. If you are susceptible to sunburn, pack lightweight, long-sleeved clothing, a sunhat and sunscreen. Sandals are the best footwear throughout the day, but if you expect to do any cycling or trekking in the hills, pack stout walking shoes. If you are traveling in the north during the cooler months, you may require a lightweight sweater or jacket in the early morning or evening. Likewise, in the rainy season, a lightweight raincoat or umbrella will come in handy. Those items can be bought very cheaply all over Thailand. When visiting a temple, you will be expected to dress in a respectful and culturally sensitive manner — no shorts or sleeveless tops.

**Women:** Modest, loose-fitting tops (nothing form-fitting) are recommended; sleeveless tops are acceptable, but please cover your shoulders in places of worship; pants, capris, longer skirts and loose-fitting, casual dresses are recommended for women.

**Men:** Button shirts and polo shirts are recommended. T-shirts are allowed in casual settings. Long, non-denim pants are recommended for center visits and church services.

**Both:** Shorts are highly discouraged outside of beachside locations. A light jacket is recommended for cool evenings or rainy days.

**Shoes:** Closed-toe shoes are recommended during the day due to potential unsanitary or uneven terrain.

## GENERAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS

Leave at home all unnecessary credit cards, Social Security card, library cards and similar items you may routinely carry in your wallet. Carry items in front pockets, not back pockets. Do not display large sums of money in public; make visible only the amount of money that approximates your purchase. Never leave items with cash in them (purse, wallet, backpack, etc.) on a bus, car or any other location. Stay alert and be cautious at all times. Don't take safety and security for granted.

## U.S. EMBASSY INFORMATION

**Website:** [th.usembassy.gov](http://th.usembassy.gov)

**Phone:** 66-2-205-4000

**Address:** 95 Wireless Road, Bangkok 10330, Thailand

**We strongly advise you to contact the CDC ([www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) or check with your personal physician for more information about your specific health needs while traveling, including any recommendations for immunizations.**

*All information taken from the World Factbook, World Population Review and Compassion International.*

## USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

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The official language of Thailand is Thai. The country's secondary language is English. Some common Thai greetings include:

Hello (to male)	<b>Sawat dee krup</b>
Hello (to female)	<b>Sawat dee kah</b>
How are you? (to male)	<b>Sabai dee ru krub</b>
How are you? (to female)	<b>Sabai dee ru kah</b>
Fine	<b>Sabai dee</b>
Thank you	<b>Khob khun</b>
You're welcome	<b>Mai pen rai</b>
Yes	<b>Chai</b>
No	<b>Mai chai</b>
What is your name?	<b>Kun cheu a rai?</b>
My name is ... (female)	<b>Phom-chew (name)</b>
My name is ... (male)	<b>Chan (name)</b>
Nice to meet you!	<b>Yin dee tee dai ruu jak</b>
How old are you?	<b>Kun r yu tao rai</b>
I cannot speak Thai	<b>Pood thai mai dai</b>
Do you speak English?	<b>Kun pood pa sa ang kgrit dai mai?</b>

Do you understand?

I do not understand

How much?

Expensive

Can you give a little discount?

**Kow jai mai**

**Mai kow jai**

**Nee tao rai?**

**Pang**

**Lot noi dai mai?**