

Survival in the city

Survival in Thailand

Some useful Thai phrases

These few words and sentences might be of help if you are without a guide.
If you speak very slowly chances are you could be understood even though the tone in speaking could be slightly off

I want to go shopping

Phom (a pronoun for men) / Chan (a pronoun for women) chah pai sue khong.

What time do the stores open?

Pok-kati raankha perd ki mong?

I'll buy it if it is cheaper.

Phom/chan chah sue tha lod dai ik.

Very expensive.

Phaeng maak.

Stop here.

Yout thi-ni.

Wait a minute.

Khoi sak-khrou nueng.

Is it far from here?

Klai maak mai?

Don't drive so fast.

Ya khap reow.

I don't speak Thai well.

Phom/chan poud Thai mai keng.

The Do's and the Don'ts in Thailand

Getting Along in Thailand

Thailand is justly praised for its tolerance and hospitality, and the average tourist will have no difficulty in adjusting to the local customs. All the same, as when coming into any unfamiliar society, a visitor may find it helpful to be aware of certain "do's" and "don'ts" and thus avoid being accidentally offensive. It mostly just involves using good common sense and manners just as one would in one's own country. However, there are a few special codes of conduct, due to important aspects of Thai culture, that one should take heed of.

The Royal Family

The Thai people have a deep traditional reverence for their Royal Family and a visitor must also take care to show respect for the King, the Queen, and the Royal Family. In a cinema, for example, prior to the movie, a portrait of the King is shown during the playing of the National anthem and the audience is expected to stand. And when attending a public event at which a member of the Royal Family is present, the best guide as to how to behave is to watch the crowd and do as it does.

Social Customs

The do's and don'ts of Thai social behavior are less clearly defined than those concerning the Royal Family and religion. In the city of Bangkok, western customs are better known and deviations from traditional Thai behavior are mostly accepted. However, what may be acceptable in Bangkok may not be acceptable in rural areas where Thai customs remain unchanged. The following list of Thai customs should be kept in mind both in and outside of Bangkok.

Thais normally do not shake hands when they greet each other; instead, they Wai (press hands together and bring in front of the face while dropping the head forward and say

"Sawasdee ka / krup" for woman/man, respectively).

A younger person will wai more strongly (bring head lower) to an older person, who will return less of a wai. Watch how Thais do it and you will soon catch on.

Thais regard the head as the highest part of the body and the feet the lowest. As a result it is considered impolite to point your foot at a person or even at an object if intentionally done. In addition, patting one on the head, even as a friendly gesture, is considered impolite.

When passing in front of, or through, a group of people in discussion, it is customary to lower ones head and neck. Also, as Thai meals are frequently taken on the floor, one must take care to never step over (bringing the foot above) the food or the area designated for consuming the food.

Public displays of affection between those of the opposite sex are frowned upon.

Losing your temper, especially in public, will more than likely get you nowhere as Thais consider such behavior poor manners. A littering offence will result in a fine of up to 2000 Baht.

Thais refer to each other by first name. The word "Khun" is used in front of their name instead of Mr. or Ms./Mrs. preceding the first name of someone, especially for foreigners. Thais call their teachers or professors "Ajahn".

Most Thais prefer to talk in a low voice so it is better not to raise your voice too loud when speaking with them.

Religion

Thai law has a number of special sections concerning religious offenses and these cover not only Buddhism, the religion of the majority of the people, but also any other faiths represented

in the Kingdom. For example, it is unlawful to commit any act, by any means, to an object of a place of religious worship in a manner likely to insult the religion. Similarly, one who causes any disturbance at an assembly lawfully engaged in the performance of religious worship "is subject to punishment", as well as is one who dresses or uses a symbol that indicates membership of a religious order of any religion to which that person does not truthfully belong .

Outside of Thai law, there are a few tips on what to do and what not to do during a visit to a religious place. Dressing appropriately is of primary importance. Do not go shirtless or in shorts or in any other unsuitable attire.

Shoes must be removed prior to going inside a Buddhist temple where the principal Buddha image is kept.

Buddhist monks are forbidden to touch or to be touched by a woman or to accept anything from the hand of one. If a woman has something to give to a monk or nen (young monk), she must first hand it to a man who then offers it. If a woman wants the offering to come directly from her, the monk or nen will first lay out a piece of saffron robe or handkerchief for the woman to place the item onto. All Buddha images are regarded as sacred regardless of size, shape or condition. Refrain from any activity that may indicate a lack of respect towards a Buddha image.

In a Muslim mosque, men should wear hats and women should be well covered with long slacks or long skirt, a long-sleeved blouse buttoned to the neck, and a scarf over the hair. Both men and women are required to take off their shoes before entering the mosque.

Advice and Help for Foreigners

Beware of unauthorized persons who offer to take you around. If you go along with them, do not buy high-value items in the shops they bring you into. If you feel something which is just not right, contact the Tourist Police (hotline: 1669). For sight seeing in and outside Bangkok, visitors should contact reliable travel agents or the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) for tourist information (tel. 0-2226-0060, 0-2226-0072, 0-2226-0075-6).

Visitors are advised to use the taxi service provided by their hotel if they do not know their way around.

Metered-taxi is available on the street and most of them are reliable. Taxi fare is metered on the distance, as well as the duration of travelling. If you want to go directly to some places within the metropolitan area, the taxi fare should not exceed 200 Baht, except when the traffic is extremely bad. Walking alone in a deserted area or on a quiet street at night is not recommended. Be sure that all your valuables, Such as money, jewelry, airline tickets, and passport. are properly stowed to protect against loss or theft.

Visitors needing assistance relating to safety or security, unethical practices, or other matters, can contact the Tourist Assistance Center (tel. 0-2281-5051 or 0-2282-8129) or the Tourist Police (1669).

Advice for Shopping

In Thailand, a large variety of souvenirs made from local products are available at reasonable prices.

For those who have little time and do not want to bother bargaining, department stores where items are sold at fixed prices may be better for shopping. However, the real bargains could be made at small shops or with street vendors. Some of the preferred items amongst foreign shoppers include silk products, leather products, silverware, and ceramics. Note that the prices of materials or items change in accordance with the time and place of purchase.

When bargaining, always do in a friendly but firm manner. Remember that you want to give the impression that you know the true value of the item, so if you propose an offer that is too low it will suggest that you do not know its value, thereby weakening your credibility in the bargaining process. In addition, the bargain should be reached quickly with low and moderately priced items, particularly at a busy vendor. If the price you desire is not achieved then stop bargaining and leave - with a smile. However, with expensive items, such as jewelry, the bargaining process may take a long period of time and require a revisit or many visits to many shops. In general, purchased jewelry goods can not be returned for a refund. However, occasionally

jewelry can be returned at a 70-75% refund.

Visas

There are three kinds of visas issued by the Thai visa authority: transit, tourist and non-immigrant visa. The transit visa is usually issued at the airport where the person is required to complete an application form accompanied by three passport-sized photos and a fee of 500 Baht. The transit visa is valid for a few days up to 30 days stay, depending on the person's nationality. The tourist visa is valid for 60 days (not two calendar months) and the non-immigrant visa is valid for 90 days (not 3 calendar months). The tourist and non-immigrant visas must be acquired prior to entering the kingdom. The tourist visa may be extended at the discretion of Thai Immigration. The Immigration office in Bangkok is on Soi Suanplu, Sathorn Tai Road. The usual fee for extension of a tourist visa for up to one month (maximum) is 500 Baht. Be sure to bring along two photos and two photocopies of your passport (main pages including Thai visa page) when applying for extension of your visa. The non-immigrant visa can be extended for one year (from the first day of entry) when supported by appropriate documentation (eye certifying letter of student status at a certain university). When a visa-holder travels outside of the country, the visa becomes invalid. Therefore, for re-entering the kingdom, a re-entry permit should be obtained prior to leaving. The process takes 24-36 hours and the fee is 500 Baht for a single re-entry permit and 1000 Baht for a multiple re-entry permit.

Money

Thai currency is called Baht. There are 100 Satang in 1 Baht. Coins include 25 Satang, 50 Satang, 1 Baht, 5 Baht, and 10 Baht. The paper currency comes in denominations of 20 B, 50 B, 100 B, 500 B, and 1000 B.
.Foreign Currency Exchange

Foreign currency can be exchanged at any bank or money exchanger. The Bank foreign currency exchange counters function 5 days a week, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.. When exchanging money, your passport must be

presented at the bank's counter. For cashing traveler's cheques it is necessary to pay a commission and duty stamp charges for each cheque cashed, independent of the denomination of the cheque.

Postal Service

Aerograms are 10 B, and can be dropped into any postal box along the street. All other letters and parcels must be taken to the Post Office for weighing in order to determine the postal fee. Bangkok's GPO is located on Charoen Krung and is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m, Monday to Friday and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on weekends.

Radio, Television, Cinema

The National Radio, FM band, broadcasts several English language news and music programs on various stations. The standard Thai television channels do not offer English language programs but special cable service providers, such as UBC, broadcast English and Thai programs. Cinema, except for some cartoons are always shown in their original language with Thai subtitles.

Food and Drinks

Taking care in what you eat and drink is the most important rule for maintaining good health. Bottled water is available for safe drinking. Foreigners may be affected by mild diarrhea occasionally due to a small amount of local bacteria that may contaminate some foods. However, hot noodle soup is usually a safe choice for avoiding diarrhea.

Transportation

To get around Bangkok you should have a map in which the bus numbers and their routes are indicated.

The cheapest way to get around is by bus. There are 4 types of buses:

red/white, blue/white (no air-con.) bus: 5.50-8.00 Bath flat rate;
air-conditioned bus: 8 B-18 B;
air-conditioned microbus: 25 B flat rate
mini-van: 20 B flat rate

Another convenient way to travel is by the BTS (Bangkok Mass Transit

System) -Sky Train, which is the fastest means of transportation and the fare starts from 15 baht. So far, there are 2 lines: Sukhumvit line and Silom line. You can also get around by metered taxi, starting fare at 35 B.

Precautions

Generally speaking, Thailand is not a dangerous country; however, due to some problems of poverty and drug abuse, one has to take precautions and avoid certain areas. If you are curious about night entertainment spots, it is best to go with friends who know the place. There is a wide range in the cost of entertainment, so care must be taken.

Do not walk alone at night in areas where there are few people, especially very late at night.

Do not engage yourself in a hot argument with an unknown Thai person.

At night, it is best not to travel alone by taxi unless urgent.

Do not carry or leave a large amount of cash.

Store your passport in a safe location to protect against theft in your apartment.

Telephone

The best way to make a long-distance telephone call is by using the telephone in your apartment. To make an international call 001 must first be dialed before the country code of the country you wish to call. International calls can also be made from the telephone office next to the GPO on Charoen Krung. Long-distance calling rates are 25% cheaper after 9 p.m. For within-country calls, there are two types of public telephones to choose from. One is operated by coin and the other by card, which can be easily purchased at convenient stores (like 7-11 or family mart).

Electricity

The electric current in Thailand is 220 Volts, 50 Cycles.

Office Hours

All offices are open Monday to Friday (with the exception of holidays).

The official working hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with a lunch break from 12 noon until 1 p.m. Banking hours are from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.; however, you can withdraw money from an ATM at any time of day of the week.

Business Hours

Most businesses operate between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. Markets and department stores are open later as well as 7 days a week. Shopping Malls are open from 10:30 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Newspapers

There are two English newspapers published daily in Thailand: the Bangkok Post, and the Nation. The cost per issue is 25 Baht.

Border Customs

Like most countries, Thailand prohibits the import of addictive and narcotic drugs, firearms and ammunition. A reasonable amount of clothing for personal use, toiletries and other personal items are allowed in duty free as are one still-life camera, one video camera, five rolls of still-life film, and three rolls of movie film or video tape. Electronic goods like personal stereos, calculators, and computers can be a problem as the customs officials may suspect that you are bringing them in for resale. If you tell them they are for personal use they may ask you to leave a substantial deposit which will be refunded when you leave the country with the item. The information regarding such procedures should be obtained before you decide to bring any electronic material into the Kingdom. Thailand has special regulations for taking a Buddha or other deity image out of the country. To do so, a license from the Fine Arts Department as well as a permit from the Ministry of Commerce is required.

Visa Extension

The non-immigrant visa is valid for 90 days from the date of entry into the country. The school will take the responsibility to extend your visa for a period of one year from the date of your entry. For extension of your visa, the MPH office must be contacted two to three weeks prior to the visa expiry date. The process involves completion of a visa extension form, attachment of a 2 by 2 inch photograph (head and shoulders only), and payment of 1,900 Baht. Please note: if this process is delayed you will be charged 500B for each day spent in Thailand without a valid visa - no exceptions. The tourist visa can't be extended; therefore, holders of this type of visa must leave Thailand and go to a Thai embassy in another country to apply for a Thai non-immigrant visa such that they can continue their studies. If the student wishes to temporarily leave Thailand, they must apply for a re-entry visa before leaving the country. In addition, please note that the Faculty does not arrange visas or visa extensions for family members of the students.

Health care and insurance

The University's Health Care service covers any visits to the Faculty's clinic, as well as basic dental care services at the Faculty of Dentistry (adjacent to the Faculty of Public Health). The Faculty's Health Care clinic is located on the 1st floor of Building 2 and is open during regular office hours, Monday to Friday. If you require a special health care service, the doctor at the clinic can provide a referral for you so that you can visit a specialist at one of the University's teaching hospitals.

In the event of an emergency after office hours or on the weekend, the student may go directly to one of these hospitals, but should contact the program coordinator or one of the other emergency contacts (see back of booklet). The student's health care insurance provides limited coverage for each O.P.D. visit as well as for daily I.P.D. admissions. Please note that the student must show his/her student ID card when seeking medical or dental attention. The most convenient University hospitals for students in case of

an accident or emergency are the Tropical Medicine Hospital, located on campus grounds, or Ramathibodi Hospital located a short distance from the Faculty on Rama 6 Road. Take bus # 8, 92, or 97 from in front of the Faculty and get off at the first bus stop after the bus turns left onto Rama 6. Cross the street using the fly-over bridge to reach the hospital.