

Thailand



The Kingdom of Thailand is a nation located in Southeast Asia, and is a popular tourist destination for people from around the Globe. It is a very diverse country geographically. Every region of the country is populated by fascinating people who represent uniquely different cultures. As you visit sites throughout the Kingdom one thing will become



apparent, it truly is the “Land of Smiles”. Thai people are known for their laid back, easy-going, “mai pen rai “ approach toward life. From the metropolis of Bangkok to the Northern Thailand hills of Chiang Mai, the pristine beaches of Southern Thailand or the plains of Northeastern Thailand you will not soon forget your experiences.

The Land	2	Government and Politics	14
The People	3	Education	15
Practical Stuff	4-5	Christianity and Buddhism	16-17
Food	6	Worldview Differences	18
Behavior, Etiquette, Ways to Offend	7-9	Worldview Applications	19
At the Wat	10	What's a CPM?	20
Language	11	The Main Thing	21
Places of Interest	12-13	References and Further Reading	22

GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

- Approximately the size of France, Thailand covers an area of 510,000 sq. km and has a population of 60 million growing at a rate of 1.5% each year.
- Administratively, the country is divided into 7 regions: The North, Northeast, Central Plains, East, West, and the Bangkok Metropolitan Region. Each of which has its own distinctive geographical character.
- Thailand shares its border with Myanmar in the west and north, Laos in the northeast, Cambodia in the east and Malaysia in the south.
- Thailand's monsoons arrive around July and last into November (the 'rainy season'). They can be uncomfortably, unpredictably sticky. This is followed by a dry, cool period from November to mid-February, followed by much higher relative temperatures from March to June.
- The best overall time for visiting most of Thailand climate-wise is between November and February when it is not too wet and not too hot. The south is best visited when the rest of Thailand is miserably hot (March to May), and the north is best from mid-November to early December or when it starts warming up again in February. If you're spending time in Bangkok, be prepared to roast in April and do some wading in October - probably most challenging two months, weather-wise, in the capital.



REGIONS

- The central region, encompassing the Bangkok metropolitan region and the central plains, is known as "Thailand's Rice Bowl". One of the world's most fertile rice and fruit growing areas, this is the economic and cultural heartland of the Thai nation.

- The mountainous north is Thailand's largest region. Here, elephants work the forest and winter temp. are sufficiently cool which allows cultivation of temperate fruits such as strawberries and peaches.

- The second largest and poorest region is the northeast. Better known as "Isaan" or the "Khorat Plateau", it is bordered by the Mekong River, where the world's oldest Bronze Age civilization flourished some 5,000 years ago.

- Just south of the northeast lies the eastern region. Sandwiched between the sea and the Damrek range, this is where beautiful beaches support the growth of summer resorts such as Pattaya.

THE LAND

- Despite recent development efforts undertaken by the government in the west, its beautiful mountains, which rise up towards the Burmese border and its lush valleys remain relatively unspoiled. The towns here have a frontier-like atmosphere.
- Last but not least, the peninsular south. Here, scenic beauty complements the economically vital activities of tin mining, rubber cultivation, and fishing.



The Thai people are believed to have migrated from either Mongolia/Tibet or from southwestern China to the settle along the borders of the Khmer kingdom. In approximately 1238 AD. As the Khmer empire was losing power, two Thai princes led a rebellion that successfully overthrew the empire. This began a long history of many dynasties and

various geographical borders for the new Kingdom of Siam.

The colonial era saw many European nations exert power in Southeast Asia. Though Thailand lost control over land in what is now Laos, Cambodia and Malaysia, they managed to maintain the kingdom. Thailand remains the only country in Southeast Asia that has never been colonized by a foreign power.

In 1932, a student-led coup against the absolute monarchy of Siam resulted in the formation of a constitutional monarchy similar to the British system. Later attempts to return to an absolute monarchy failed and the constitutional system continued to develop-despite occasional coups. The name of the country was officially changed from Siam to Thailand in 1939.

Thailand has a population of approximately 62 million people. Over 1/3 of all Thais live in urban areas-over 11 million of them in Bangkok. Seventy-five percent of the population are ethnic Thais; however, there is a large Thai-Chinese population scattered throughout the country, and a substantial concentration of Malays in the southern peninsula.

The majority of the population (94%) are cultural Buddhists. However, don't expect this to be the case if you are working in the South. Approximately 4% of Thailand's population are Muslim, and they tend to be concentrated in the South. The Muslims are usually poorer and are often looked down upon by Buddhists. They are also less interested in or accepting of Christian influence. ONLY .6% OF THAILAND'S POPULATION ARE CHRISTIANS.



THE PEOPLE

PRACTICAL STUFF

COMMUNICATION

Email/internet – the Internet is widely available in most cities at an affordable price. Note: Hotel Internet service is typically more expensive.

Phone – Good phone service is available in most places. Communication to the USA through the purchase of an international calling card usually bought at a convenient store is best.

You may find an Internet Café that allows making calls through the Internet.

Mail – The postal service in Thailand is very good. To send a package to the USA typically takes 7-10 days.

CAMERA / FILM

Film will be readily available in most areas. However, if you like a particular brand you might want to bring it with you. Remember it is polite to ask permission to take photos of people, especially monks,



villagers, older people and military.

PASSPORT / VISA

You must have a passport that is valid for at least 6 months to receive entry into the Kingdom of Thailand. At Thailand Immigration you will be given a 28 day visa at no cost.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Consult the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) website: www.cdc.gov for recommendations. Be sure to begin getting your immunizations at least 6 weeks in before your scheduled departure.

Note: It is always good to carry insect/mosquito repellent for use at all times.

ELECTRICITY

In most places electricity is available although there are occasional power outages. Thailand operates on 220 volts. You will probably need a dual prong rounded and/or flat plug adapter, plus a voltage converter for any 110 volt appliances you carry.

TRANSPORTATION

You may utilize multiple forms of transportation while here. Some of the types are:

- 1. Tuk Tuk – a three-wheeled motorized vehicle.
- 2. Songthaew – a pick-up truck that has a covered bed with seats.
- 3. Meter Taxi – just like the ones found in the USA.
- 4. Rental Van – a passenger van with driver provided.

* Regarding the above forms of transportation...1 & 2 you would negotiate the price before boarding. On 3 & 4, there is no negotiation.

Tuk Tuk



MONEY

The Thai baht is the currency of Thailand. \$1 US = 33 baht (at writing)

Bank Notes: 20, 50, 100, 500, 1000 baht (rarely used 10 baht)
Coins: 25, 50 satang, 1, 2, 5, 10 baht (rarely used 1, 5, 10 satang)

1. Money can be exchanged at any large airport and at banks the post the "Exchange Sign".

2. It is best to exchange bills that are Newer, Unmarked, Crisp and Flat. You get the best exchange rate for US \$100.

3. Credit cards can be used in many areas without problems. Note: Notify you bank that you will be traveling and possibly using your credit card/debit card

4. ATM machines are usually available in most cities.

5. Barter with a smile! It is common to barter and Thai people expect it. Caution: avoid being too tough or giving the appearance of being greedy. There is a balance that must be achieved between saving face and obtaining a lower price. If you barter or an item and the price is agreed upon then, PLEASE PURCHASE THE ITEM.

TIPPING

1. Tipping is not required in Thailand but doing so is always welcomed, especially if good service is rendered.

2. In some restaurants a service charge is added to your bill automatically. If this is the case do not leave a tip.

3. You might want to tip hotel workers who carry your bags to/from your room.

More Practical Stuff

WHAT TO WEAR/PACK

Pack Light!!!

GIRLS

1. No sleeveless shirts
2. No shorts (except during recreation times)
3. Shirts, Blouses and T-shirts can be worn.
4. Pants and Capri pants may be worn
5. Lightweight skirts between knee and ankle length.
6. Sandals, tennis shoes etc., easy on/off.
7. Wear only simple jewelry.
8. Depending on work assignment you should check with the field contact for appropriate dress.

GUYS

1. No sleeveless shirts
2. No shorts (except during recreations times).
3. Casual lightweight pants, shirts, T-shirts may be worn.
4. Sandals, tennis shoes etc., easy on/off.
5. Depending on work assignment you should check with the field contact for appropriate dress.

***Avoid wearing all black in normal situations.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

• Drink a LOT of WATER—BUT ONLY bottled water that has been sealed. Also use bottled water to brush your teeth.

• Eat only fruits / veggies that you know



have been cleaned/cooked properly or that you can peel (like bananas, pineapple, etc),

• Bring insect repellent and WEAR it especially in the mornings and evenings!

• Wear sunscreen if you are outside.

• If you are taking a prescription drug of any kind, bring it with you. It is also handy to have a basic first aid kit with Tylenol, Band-aids, antiseptic cream, Pepto-Bismol, Imodium, etc.



• Good medical care is available in Thailand.

Serious cases would be taken to Bangkok or Chiang Mai. You will be expected to pay for services when received. You will have to deal with your own insurance company for reimbursement.

• Thailand is a safe place in general, but avoid going out alone (especially at night). Be smart and avoid putting yourself in risky situations. Make sure others know where you are and when you expect to return at all times.

• Pedestrians DO NOT have right of way! Look both ways before crossing streets and BE CAREFUL!

SQUATTY POTTIES

• Most guesthouses, hotels where you might stay will have western type toilets. BUT be prepared to use the infamous SQUATTY POTTY — where you squat over a hole in the ground.

• It is wise to carry small packets of tissues or baby wipes with you—just in case...There is often a small basket for used paper (instead of flushing it).

PERSONAL SECURITY

It is impossible to hide the fact that you are a foreigner. However, avoid being perceived as a “foolish foreigner” and thus becoming a target. Thais are “much” quieter than Americans, especially in crowds. Try not to talk loud in public. It is not advisable to walk alone after dark. Be careful where you carry your money and documents. A billfold in the back pocket is an easy target for pickpockets. However, a money pouch under clothing is a safe way to carry money. You will see all sorts of people on the street carrying more money than you, but the difference is you do not know they are carrying it.

Always keep your passport, customs declarations, plane tickets and money in a safe place. A safe place does not necessarily mean you carry your documents in your hip packs, backpacks, front pockets or in money pouches as you work and travel, however, these are the safest places.



BATHING

People usually bathe at least twice a day and are often amazed that Americans only bathe once a day. Don't focus on the number of times you bathe, but do make sure that you look clean and smell fresh.

FOOD

& ETIQUETTE



Thai food has a reputation for being hot and spicy and while this is true of a number of dishes, Thai cuisine has something to suit everyone's taste. Rice, of course, is the main food of the nation. It's really not a meal unless it includes noodles or rice!

MAKE SURE to try some of EACH food (you won't know if you like it until you try!). Be considerate of others and don't hog one dish.

Always put the food on your plate before eating it. Don't take it directly from the serving dish and put it in your mouth; this is considered rude.

Try not to be offended if someone puts food on your plate for you. If you're getting too full to eat much more, eat slowly and leave a LITTLE food on your plate to discourage well-meaning

servers. Thai people will talk during a meal, but not too loudly. Respect this and save your conversation and questions till later.

Eat with both SPOON and FORK— using the fork (in the left hand) to push food onto the spoon (in the right hand).

If your host eats with their fingers, you eat with your fingers.

Watch and do as they do!

Food is often served “family style” from a common dish or dishes. When among good friends you can use your own spoon, otherwise use a serving utensil.

When visiting people, especially in the villages, you WILL be offered food. Your hosts will be deeply offended if you refuse. Don't be so

concerned with what you eat that you offend your hosts. Remember the “M” prayer...”Lord, I'll put it down, if you keep it down!”

While eating off the street is not recommended, look for those places well attended by Thai people.

Thai food has been influenced by and has adopted cooking techniques and ingredients from India, China and Oceania.

Some people take to Thai food immediately while others don't, but Thai cuisine has been ranked in the top four favorite cuisines globally. Try it, you might just, love it! If not, many of the larger cities have McDonald's, Pizza Hut, KFC, Baskin Robbins, Starbucks or other Western food.



DO'S AND DON'TS

- Don't touch anyone on the **HEAD**. The head is often considered a sacred part of the body.
- Don't pat someone on the **BACK**. It may be interpreted as condescension or excessive intimacy.
- Don't **TOUCH** people of the opposite sex—men especially need to avoid physical contact with women.
- Don't **POINT** your finger at someone. It is considered a sign of accusation and aggression.
- Don't step over someone. If you must, ask permission or bow your head and smile.
- Ask permission to reach above someone's head to get something.
- Bend/lower your head when walking in front of someone or between people.
- Give/receive with your **RIGHT** hand.

- Keep your **FEET** on the ground when sitting in a chair or tucked under you if sitting on the ground—showing the bottom of your feet is offensive.
- Take your **SHOES** off when entering a home or anywhere else you see a pile of shoes by the door.
- Control your **EMOTIONS** and avoid open displays of anger, sadness, etc.
- Speak **SOFTLY** and pleasantly. Don't be loud or obnoxious.
- Speak slowly and clearly with people trying to learn or speak English.
- Be **PATIENT** and understanding. Show appreciation for the people who are trying to help you!

- **DRESS** conservatively and neatly—see guidelines provided in this manual.
- Don't display any type of **AFFECTION** with the opposite sex.
- Avoid direct **EYE** contact with people of the opposite sex on the street.
- **TRY** new foods and avoid making a scene because you are served something that does not look appetizing. But do be careful where you eat.
- Don't go out after **DARK**.
- Respect and **NEVER** criticize or speak out against the government or officials.



THAI CULTURE

A Westerner might offend the THAI by:

- Pointing his foot at someone
- Sitting with his legs raised and pointed at another person
- Crossing one leg over the other when sitting
- Using his foot to make gestures (pointing with feet)
- Not taking off his shoes when entering a temple or home
- Touching someone's head or shoulders
- Having his head higher than one older than him
- Calling someone by waving his finger or hand with palm up
- Offering his or her hand when being introduced
- Using his fingers and hand to make gestures with the palm up
- Sitting on a pillow, a book, a newspaper, or a desk
- Putting books on the floor
- Eating or drinking while walking on the



- street
- Speaking too directly

A THAI might offend a Westerner by:

- Staring at them
- Picking his nose or spitting on the streets
- Flattering people too often by telling them they are beautiful, handsome or intelligent.
- Telling you how fat you are, or by pointing out blemishes.
- Arriving very early or extremely late for a meeting.
- Beating around the bush when he needs to say something (it is difficult for them to get to the point).
- Asking personal questions like, "How old are you?" or "What is your salary?"
- Putting food directly on your plate even if you don't want more.
- Breaking into a line in front of you or others. By the erratic behavior that manifests itself when behind the wheel of a car.
- Motorcycles cutting you off in traffic.
- A Tuk Tuk driver or Songthaew driver wanting to charge you more because you are a westerner or because he thinks you weigh more than a Thai.



THE WAI

The Thai Greeting

This traditional Thai greeting and sign of respect is done by placing the palms of the hands together, with fingertips in front of the nose and elbows down. Social class and position determine the height of the hands, how far to bow your head and the length of the wai. You will not be expected to know all of these details, but it is proper and polite to greet people this way.

- Always wai people who are older than you.
- Let children and workers wai you first and respond with a nod of the head.
- Thai's rarely shake hands or hug as a greeting.
- Thai people expect Americans to know as much about Thailand as they know about America.
- They will expect to be flattered when they ask you what you think of Thailand.
- Thais think most Americans are Christians and judge Christianity based on those they see of TV.

In formal situations

Thais go by title + first name. Khun is the Thai equivalent of Mr or Mrs.; Acharn is the title for teachers (including missionaries and religious teachers); Phra is used for

monks and deity. In less formal situations, nicknames are used. The nicknames are generally monosyllabic and easier to remember than first names! Smile a lot. Thais and westerners differ on their reasons for smiling; the later do it only when they are happy, the former do it in almost any situation to express any number of emotions.

Failure to smile perpetually will earn you the reputation of being "fierce" and maybe even "hot-hearted."

Be careful of other people's feelings. Saying negative things directly to a Thai person about him or herself, especially when anyone else is around, will usually be interpreted as an attempt on your part to "break" that person's face. The old adage, "If you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all" is always applicable. It is OK to complain about the traffic jams; pollution and floods in Bangkok, but other criticisms of Thailand and her people are never appreciated. Thais avoid direct confrontation; "face breaking" always damages the reputations of all involved.

Westerners prize self-expression; Thais prize calmness, politeness and respectability. Loudly and passionately expressing your ideas on any given topic is not likely to do any good, although it might startle or frighten Thais into some sort of maneuver designed to either soften you or get rid of you. Losing your temper means a loss of face in Thai eyes; "hot-hearted" (tempestuous) people are not well respected in Thailand. Remember that when you are in a foreign county, you are the foreigner.

AT THE WAT



How to behave at the Wat...

- Wats are sacred places—Your behavior should be quiet and respectful.
- Dress in clean, conservative clothes (no shorts/sleeveless shirts).
- Always take off your shoes and socks before entering a Wat compound or monastery.
- Never step on the threshold of a Wat—step over it.
- Never step over anyone sitting on the floor or interrupt anyone worshipping
- Always sit facing the Buddha image with your feet tucked under you.
- Never point your feet toward any Buddha image.
- Never touch the offerings that have been given.
- Photos may not be allowed in certain areas—respect signs and ask if in doubt. In some places you will have to pay a small fee to take a camera into the pagoda.
- Remember that this is the place of worship for Buddhists—respect it like you would want them to respect your place of worship.
- Monks are respected. Don't try to shake hands with them.
- It is common for most males to spend some time in their life as a novice monk
(usually a few days when they are about 7 years old, and then again for 3 months to a year while they are in their 20's)
- Monks may not touch a woman (even her clothes) or take anything directly from her. If you need to give anything to a monk, place it before him and let him pick it up. Men may hand something to a monk using both hands.
- Women should avoid sitting near monks and should not talk to them unless spoken to first.
- Everyone should sit lower than a monk and should even avoid stepping on his shadow or risk showing great disrespect.

MOST CULTURAL MISTAKES AND INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR ARE EASILY FORGIVEN, BUT INAPPROPRIATE DRESS OR BEHAVIOR AT A WAT OR RELATED TO A MONK IS NOT SO EASILY EXCUSED!



Basic Thai Phrases

Survival Language

เนรมิตสร้างสรรค์พลัง

๑. ในปฐมกาล พระเจ้าทรงเนรมิตสร้างฟ้า
สวรรค์และแผ่นดินโลก

๒. ขณะนั้น

โลกยังไม่มีรูปทรงและว่างเปล่า ความมืดปกคลุมอยู่เหนือผิวน้ำ
พระวิญญาณของพระเจ้าทรงเคลื่อนไหวอยู่เหนือน้ำนั้น

๓. แล้วพระเจ้าตรัสว่า "จงเกิดความสว่าง" ความสว่างก็เกิดขึ้น

๔. พระเจ้าทรงเห็นว่า ความสว่างนั้นดี

และทรงแยกความสว่างออกจากความมืด

Communication is more than knowing the right words...

- Body language, tone, and your face often communicate as much as your actual words do.
- When you talk to someone, smile at them—it is part of the culture and makes you less threatening.
- Westerners often do not realize how loudly they speak—even in normal conversations.
- Try to be soft spoken in ALL conversations, with the people and when in a group with Americans.
- When speaking with people who are learning English—SPEAK SLOWLY. (Note: Speaking louder does NOT help with comprehension, so don't yell to get your point across...you'd be surprised how many people do this!)
- Avoid yelling and talking loudly in public places—even if you are angry. Avoid confrontation.

Survival Language 101

Thai is spoken by 95% of Thailand's Population. When traveling in Thailand, learning a few Thai phrases will be an added advantage. You will be alternately praised and appreciated by the Thais; many of them who barely speak English or no English at all. One of the best reasons for you to learn Thai is that it helps you gain insight to its rich and beautiful culture. In addition, it will help you to easily get around Thailand easier.

Whenever you speak Thai, if you are male, you should end the sentence with “Krab” and “Kha” if you are a female. Thai Language has five tones, which are low, middle, high, rising, and falling. Vowel length is important when speaking Thai, because if you speak the word longer, it will change the meaning of the word. The best way to learn a language is through listening to native speakers.

GREETINGS/BASIC PHRASES

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Hello | Saw - what - dee (khrap/kha) |
| 2. Goodbye | Saw - what - dee (khrap/kha) |
| 3. Excuse me | Call - Toe - It |
| 4. Thank you | Crop Coon (khrap/kha) |
| 5. How are you? | Coon Ben Yaang Eye |
| 6. I am fine | Sa Bye Dee |
| 7. No Problem | My Ben Rye |
| 8. Where is the toilet | Hong Nam Tee Nai |
| 9. Do you speak English | Phoot Phaa Saa Ang Khrit |
| 10. How much? | Towel Rai |
| 11. Yes | Chai |
| 12. No | Mai Chai |

FOODS

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Steamed Rice | Cow |
| 2. Fish | Blaa |
| 3. Chicken | Guy |
| 4. Pork | Moo |
| 5. Beef | New a - Woo - a |
| 6. Shrimp | Goo-ng |
| 7. Coffee | Gafe |
| 8. Tea | Chaa |
| 9. Water | Nam |

<h1 style="text-align: center;">Important Information</h1>	<p style="text-align: center;">United States Embassy</p> <p><u>Phone:</u> 053-252629(-31), 053-252644</p> <p><u>Address:</u> 387 Wichayanon Rd., A. Muang, Chiang Mai 50300</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Airlines</p> <p>Thai International = 053-210210, 053-211044(-7)</p> <p>Silk Air = 053-276647</p> <p>Bangkok Airways = 053-281519, 053-992257(-8)</p>
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PLACES OF INTEREST IN BANGKOK:

The Grand Palace and the Temple of Emerald Buddha

The Grand Palace was built in the same time King Rama 1st of Chakri Dynasty move the capital of Thailand from Thonburi to Bangkok or in 1782. Located on Sanarmchai Road, in city center. Presently, this Palace is the place where all Royal Ceremonies are conducted. Inside of the main temple in the same area of the Grand Palace there is a Temple of Emerald Buddha. (open from 0830 hrs to 1600 hrs daily)

National Museum

Located on Nah Pra Tard Road, city center, close to the Silpakorn Fine Arts University and Thammasat University. (open from 0900 hrs to 1600 hrs daily)

Wimarnmek Palace (Museum)

The Euro-Thai Style Palace built during the Reign of King Rama 5th, over 100 years old, Wimarnmek Palace is still kept in best condition. Open for public daily from 0930 hrs to 1500 hrs. Located on Rajchasima Road, close to Suan Dusit Rajchapat Vocational Institute and Bangkok Zoo

Prachan Roads and Prachan Dock River Bank Walking Lane

Prachan Road was built during King Chulalongkorn's reign (Rama 5th over 100 years old). Located behind the Thammasat University on Chao Praya River's bank, where there are local vendors, shop, new and used Thai and international book stores, restaurants and other Thai products for locals and university crowds

The Royal Swing

Located in front of the Bangkok City Office, on Bumrungrmuang Road. Royal Swing is used in Thai Royal Religion Ceremony (based on Bharman's belief to welcome the new year)

China Town, Yaowarat Road, Sampeng, Indian Town

Exotic busy part of Bangkok, China Town and Indian Town are visited by people from other parts of Thailand, and tourists. There are hundreds of shops : whole sales shops of all kinds of things, restaurants, vendors, clothes, materials, goldsmiths, accessories etc. Daily from 0800 hrs until 1800 hrs daily.

Jim Thompson's House and museum

Jim Thompson was a trader and a pioneer for Thai Silk industries, who had improved the silk production, quality and style. The house is a beautiful Thai teak wood house open from Monday to Saturday from 0830 hrs to 1600 hrs. Address Soi Kasemson 2, opposite the National Stadium, Pratumwan

Live Boxing

Rajadamnoen Boxing Ring (on Rajadamnoen Road) Thai Boxing and International Boxing Sports and Competitions all year round, every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1700 hrs to 2300 hrs. At Lumpini Boxing Ring (on Rama 4th Road, next to the Cadet Academy, Bangkok) Every Tuesday, Friday and Saturday from 1800 hrs to 2200 hrs, Saturday only from 1700 hrs to midnight

Jatujak Weekend Market

Center of all local interesting, exotic, fun and outstanding items and foods you can find here at Jatujak or JJ Market on Kampheng Petch Road. Open Saturday and Sunday only from 0700 hrs to 1700 hrs.

PLACES OF INTEREST IN CHIANG MAI:

Wat Pra Tard Doi Suthep (Doi Suthep Temple)

Located western side of the City of Chiang Mai, is a golden Shrine and a temple on the mountain called Doi Suthep. Only approximately 20 minutes drive from city, the temple is located on a peak of the mountain range, over 300 steep steps flanked by Naga (snake) railings. There is a magnificent golden pagoda which dated the 16th century. Visitors will enjoy the bird eye view of the Chiang Mai Valley and the Ping River from this temple.

A Walk in the Old City

Inside of the Chiang Mai Moat is the old city, where there are numerous back lanes or “soi” as we call them in Thai. Also there are many old and new temples on every streets and lanes. Starting from Tapae Gate, walk west along Ratchadamnoen Road, You will see Wat Phan Tao (19th Century), walking toward Wat Prasigh on Prapokklao Road, where you will see Wat Chedi Luang (15th Century). Ratchadamnoeb Road takes you to the three way section where Wat Prasingh (13th Century)

Wua Lai Silver Village

Slightly south of the Chiang Mai Gate, the old Silversmith Community is still making the silverwares using their old fashion techniques. Varieties of gracious silver products to offer; from small pieces of silver jewelries to the big pieces of Silver Arts, and home decoration items.

Warorot Market, China Town

Center of Chiang Mai City in the busy part of town, there is a market area where the multi heritages Chiang Mai Traders had been for decades. Here one can find all sorts of northern foods, and products, exotic fruits, local fresh cut flowers, clothes, and many more.

Khan Toke Dinner

A northern style dinning with cultural shows are one of the highlights in Chiang Mai. Daily arranged from 1900 hrs. to 2200 hrs., at The Old Chiang Mai Cultural Center and The Khum Khan Toke.

Chiang Mai Night Safari

The largest Night Safari in the world, located approximately 15 kms south of Chiang Mai city, operated daily zoo hours from 1000 hrs. through 2200 hrs. Night Safari time with tram ride safari tour is offered daily from 1800 hrs. to 2200 hrs.

Bor Sang, the Umbrella Making Center, San Kampheng

Located approximately 9 kilometers east of Chiang Mai City. Along the road to Bor Sang Village are the handicraft shops: silver wares, lacquer wares, silk, jewelries, and leather products. Bor Sang is also the center of Saa Mulberry Paper Factories, old fashion inexpensive handmade paper products. Handmade umbrella making procedure is daily demonstrated at the Umbrella Making Center, no extra fee charged. San Kampheng Village is further on the same road, small but attractive village, with local market, restaurants, candle and spa product factories.

Baan Tawaii Wood Crafting Village

South of Chaing Mai City on the Chiang Mai Hod Road, loated the Baan Tawaii Village. There are hundreds of shops, thousands of wood crafted products from this village. Cotton products, handbags, accessories, nick nacks, furniture, home and yard decoration items and more.



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

ROYALTY AND NATIONALISM



NEVER criticize the king, the royal family or the government. At best, this will offend the Thai people, at worst, it will get you in jail.

If you hear the national anthem played over a loud speaker or at any type of performance, you should stop, stand and remain still/quiet until it is finished and activities around you resume.

The prime minister and members of the more powerful “lower house” (4 year terms) are elected, but the senators of the upper house are appointed (6 year terms) by the prime minister. In 1997, Thailand’s Constitution was revised for the 16th time since 1932 and included such things as compulsory voting, 12 years of free public education and the creation of some watchdog/anti-corruption entities.

Since the 1932 revolution, the military has had a substantial influence on the government and politics in Thailand. The military includes the: Royal Army, Navy, Air Force and

National Police Dept.

The Thai king represents the country. Though he has no formal political power, the king and the royal family are deeply concerned for the well being of the Thai people, who have the highest respect for their king. The current king, His Majesty Bhumibol Adulyadej, took the throne in 1946. He is the longest reigning monarch in Thai history & the world’s longest reigning, living monarch.



EDUCATION

“Standards”

Primary school (prathom)-6 years
Middle school (mathayom don)-3 years
High school (mathayom blai)-3 years
University (mahawithaya lai)-4 years

SCHOOL TERM 1: June-September
SCHOOL TERM 2: November-February
SUMMER TERM: Mid March-Mid May (option)

All citizens are entitled to free public schooling for 12 years; however, some statistics reflect that less than 9 years is the national norm. Thailand's literacy rate runs at 95.5%, one of the highest rates in Southeast Asia. Private and International schools for the foreign or wealthier class are found in Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

High social value is placed on education, but it is focused more on memorization of facts rather than the critical thinking that has become such a vital part of Western education. This has significant implications for teachers.

It is VERY difficult to get Thai students to answer questions or participate in class discussions, even though they know the answer. Be prepared for this!



CHRISTIANS IN THAILAND

- Christians usually face strong resistance from their family when they accept Christ.
- Christians generally have only role models from other religions and have no one to model the Christian life for them.
- A Thai Christian entire heritage, culture and often identity are ingrained in Buddhism.
- Christians are often seen or disowned as “betrayers” of mother, father, country, religion and their own Thai-ness.
- Christians often have only one option for the type of church, youth group or Bible study they can attend.
- Christians only recently have had the ability to buy Christian literature in Thai. They now have a modern translation of the Bible available.



- From a Thai parent’s Buddhist point of view, their child becoming a Christian threatens the destiny of their souls.
- Christians are tempted in very different ways living in a Buddhist culture, where ancestor and idol worship is the norm.
- Christians often don’t know many eligible Christians of the opposite sex when they reach the age of marriage.
- In Thailand, Christians are never seen as normal.

Buddhist - 94.4%	Hinduism - 0.1%
Muslims - 4.6%	Other (incl. Judaism) - 0.1%
Christian - 0.75%	

Buddhism is more than a religion
— it is culture, values, ethnicity,
and nationalism to the people of
Southeast Asia.



B U D D H I S M

Buddhism can be traced back to Northern India, where Hindu mythology was the foundation of all religious thought. Hindu mythology is based on the teachings about karma. It assumes life has neither a beginning nor an end, but repeats itself in a never-ending cycle of birth, death and rebirth. These rebirths are determined by the good works which any living being is able to accumulate during a lifetime. If the amount of good works is more than that of bad works, it is possible to reach a higher existence in the next life.

Buddhism claims to have found an escape from the endless cycle of birth and rebirth. Its founder, Siddhartha Guatama, concluded from his observation of a series of negative events in life that life means suffering – birth is preceded by trials and sickness until death. He also observed that suffering is always connected with undesirable attachments to this world and its pleasures. Therefore, he searched for a total separation from such attachments through meditation and had a mystical experience he called enlightenment.

1. Life is suffering.
2. The cause of suffering is desire.
3. The solution to suffering is to extinguish desire.
4. The way to distinguish desire is thru the Eight-fold path. He claimed he had escaped the cycle of rebirth and he was convinced he would proceed to Nirvana—a state of nonexistence where all human attachments that cause suffering are cut off.....This is the goal of Buddhism!

The idea of meditation is a continuous practice of the eight-fold path: concentrating on right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right connection. Using meditation, this eight-fold path is supposed to lead to the extinction of suffering by reaching a state of detachment from reality, which guarantees entrance into Nirvana.

Siddhartha Gautama gave himself the title of Buddha, which means ‘enlightened one.’ He did not claim to be a savior, but claimed he had gained salvation and could therefore teach others to follow.

According to Buddhist teachings, everyone can rely only on his own effort to reach nirvana. In actuality, though, the efforts needed are so great that nearly everyone knows it is impossible and so they resign themselves to the lesser goal of avoiding a bad existence in the next life. This is done through visiting the pagodas, making sacrifices to the Buddha image, making merits, giving food to monks, maintaining the family shrine, etc.

Buddhism claims more than 1 billion followers. It dominates most of the eastern part of the 10/40 window, where almost half of the world’s population lives. Since Buddhism so easily adapts indigenous traditions/animistic beliefs (like the importance of worshipping and appeasing nats spirits), it takes many forms and is difficult to penetrate.

World View Differences

Christianity	Buddhism
Believes in God as the Creator who is alive and active in the world.	Believes cause & effect, and nature are what influences the world. “Good deeds get good results, bad deeds get bad results.” There is no complete story of creation.
God is Supreme Being	Buddha is not god, but is a teacher/pathfinder. There is no god in Buddhism.
Depends upon God for all things.	Depends upon self, family, and good deeds.
The soul is saved for eternity through the cross. The soul goes to be with Christ.	There is a spirit but no soul. Everything/object has a spirit. Upon death the soul goes to heaven/hell to be reincarnated. Freedom from suffering/reincarnation is by self effort only.
Rebirth for a Christian is joyous.	Rebirth for a Buddhist is a cycle to be overcome.
What happens in the next life depends on repentance and acceptance of Jesus as personal savior.	What happens in the next life depends on the balance of your good deeds/bad deeds, and the overcoming of all desire.
Eternal life is forever with God and other believers.	The goal of life is to reach nirvana— a complete state of non-existence.
Complete assurance in Jesus Christ.	No assurance whatsoever. One can never know the balance of karma.
There is eternal peace through Jesus Christ.	Peace is only temporary and can only be achieved through continual meditation and good deeds.
Jesus is the source of Hope.	The only hope is in ending the cycles of reincarnation (samsara) and achieving Nirvana.

World View Applications

Barriers to EV...	Bridges to EV...
Unbelief in living creator God. Belief in cause & effect.	Begin by showing interest in who they are, what they do believe, their ideas about creation, etc. Your interest generates questions and can lead to HUGE opportunities in the future.
Man is a product of nature.	Ask about their ideas of the creation story and then share THE creation story (Gen. and John 1:3) with them.
Belief in 4 Noble Truths	Explore how 4 Noble Truths have helped the person. Ask how they have helped overcome suffering and desire, etc.
Belief in Noble Eightfold Path.	Ask questions: How does the person accomplish all the “rights”? Is it possible? how do all the rights get someone to nirvana? Compare to 10 Commandments and how it is impossible to keep them all – but J came to replace the law...
Belief in Karma – deed of past/present will determine the reward or punishment in the future.	Ask what a “good” or “bad” deed or thought is? Can they know how many good deeds it will take to overcome that karma? What happens if they don’t? What happens in the next life? Share how payment has already been made by Jesus...
Belief in self-reliance and good deeds to reach nirvana.	Ask about the belief in self reliance—especially as it relates to the cycle of reincarnation and nirvana. Ask if they are satisfied with their life now? Can they show in Buddha’s teaching where he teaches about self.
Belief in samsara—wheel of reincarnation.	Ask if they fear samsara? If they know of past lives? If they can interrupt the cycle? Explain there is no cycle in Christianity, only 1 birth & rebirth—share about ONE re-birth!
Unbelief in the eternal life.	Ask if the person is afraid to face death? If there is no eternal why do they fear death?
Inability to know a “personal” God.	Can they have a relationship with Buddha? Have they ever asked him to reveal himself? Share how you asked God to reveal Himself and how He did...
Buddhism has become synonymous with culture and life values. Many will say they have to be Buddhist because they are Burmese...	Recognize and respect their culture. Share how J came to cross cultures—don’t impose Western beliefs or practices, but J and HIS love.

WHAT IS A CPM?

Our vision in the PacRim region is “The Gospel communicated to church planting movement for every people.” What is a church planting movement (CPM)? A CPM is the rapid movement of indigenous churches within a people group, city, or country. This is the ultimate goal of every person and field team serving with the organization. If you look at the large number of Unreached People Groups and the MILLIONS of people who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you realize fairly quickly how huge the task is. Historically, western Christian missiology focused on sending personnel into an area to start and often even to pastor a church. Often these churches were simply carbon copies of Western churches in organization, worship, leadership, and practice. Growth happened by ADDITION and was often slow as the “M” was depended upon for evangelism and leadership (there is a limit to how many people one person can reach). The goal of a CPM is growth by MULTIPLICATION – with true Biblical but INDIGENOUS models of organization, leadership, worship and practice.

There are 7 key elements of a CPM. A true CPM is...

- Powered by prayer
- Saturated by seed sowing
- Passionate for church planting
- Built on the Word of God (Biblical training for new believers/leaders)
- Led by local, lay leadership (CPM’s don’t happen with outside leadership)
- Multiplying cell churches (Multiplication is so fast it is often hard to keep up with!)
- Home-based, healthy churches (Buildings do NOT define churches)

EVERYTHING you will do during your time on the field should be focused on a CPM. It doesn’t matter whether you are teaching English, playing a sport, trekking, hanging out with university students, doing mobile medical clinics, playing with kids, helping with administration, learning language...We ALL have the same goal—To sow seeds (through distribution, relationships, and the way we live our lives) that draw people to Jesus and then to nurture and disciple them to intentionally share with their people until there is a rapidly reproducing, indigenous CPM among that people group.



THE MAIN THING...

If you only remember one page from this introduction to Thailand, remember this one! Thailand is a fascinating country. You can choose to be a typical tourist, take some photos, and go home without truly immersing yourself in the culture & people of Thailand. Or you can look deeper, give yourself to these people, and allow God to use your time in this country to change you and to touch lives through you.

The personnel you will be ministering with are excited about you coming and have been preparing for you for months. They are looking forward to ministering WITH you and TO you. They recognize both the contribution that they can make to nurturing and developing YOUR personal ministry AND the impact that you will have on their people and community. YOU also have an incredible opportunity to minister to these personnel! Here are some things to remember to maximize your time in Thailand...

- Your **SPIRITUAL HEALTH** is of utmost importance—and is YOUR responsibility. In America, it is often easy to slide by and be “fed” at church and by those around you. If you are able to be part of a church in Thailand, you probably will not be able to understand the service. This makes it even more important that you be able to maintain your personal time and walk with HIM independently.
- This is **CROSS CULTURAL** ministry! There is an international stereotype of the “obnoxious American” who is loud, rude, and self-centered. **DON’T** be the stereotype! This is especially important in building relationships with the Thai who are generally soft-spoken. Many Americans also come with the attitude “we do it best at home,” which is an automatic turn-off. People may ask you lots of questions about life in America, but avoid making comparisons or communicating that things are “better” in America.
- The most effective way to minister is to be a **LEARNER**. James 1:19 says, “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.” **OBSERVE** all that happens around you. **LISTEN** to what is said. **ASK** your new Thai friends about their life, culture, etc. Be a **STUDENT** and gain understanding of the culture. As you learn, you will recognize ways to share the message that you have come to bring in a way that is relevant to the people. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and talk with your supervisors about ministries you would like to be involved in and things you would like to learn. God will use you in ways that you have never imagined if you are focused and seeking Him – but you may only see a small part of what He does through you. Remember the value of planting seeds. **COME EXPECTING TO DO LOTS OF PLANTING—AND LEAVE THE HARVEST IN GOD’S HANDS.**
- **RELATIONSHIPS** are the key to sharing God’s love. Though your time here is limited, don’t shy away from building relationships and really getting to know people. You will be amazed at the doors God will open **AND** how He will challenge and change you in the process.
- Be **SENSITIVE** to the personnel, the people, and the culture around you. Your actions affect the long term work and could lead to future problems or set negative precedents for long term personnel.
- Be **FLEXIBLE**, both in ministry and free time. The people are much less time oriented than Americans. Take advantage of every opportunity that you get, but also recognize you will need your time. When things you have planned seem to change, look for what God is doing and the new door He is opening.
- **SLOW DOWN!** Many people struggle with the change of pace that comes with leaving American society and are frustrated because they feel they should always be “doing” something. Learn to recognize the value of relationships and see time spent with people as ministry time. You don’t always have to be leading a Bible study or organizing an event – your most effective ministry time may be the time you spend getting to know a student! Recognizing this **NOW** will save you a lot of frustration and will increase your effectiveness.
- Be a **SERVANT**. Only in serving can you lead—but realize this will be a cultural tension because of the status most give to Westerners.
- **PRAYER**—the foundation every ministry must be built upon. Without it, we are powerless!

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

BOOKS

Thailand. Lonely Planet. (BRING THIS WITH YOU!!!!)

Poles Apart: Contextualizing the Gospel in Asia by John R. Davis. Theological Book Trust, Bangalore 1998. Comment: While somewhat generic in terms of "Asia," the issue of contextualization is a critical issue here, and Davis was a long-time missionary in Thailand. Hence, many of his insights were derived from his own struggles in communicating the gospel effectively in Thailand.

Thailand: Into the Spirit World by Marlane Guelden. Asia Books, Bangkok and Times Edition Pte Ltd, Singapore 1995. Comment: This was written for a general audience interested in the many twists and turns of the Thai spiritual beliefs, from karma and spirit houses to tattoos and corpse chin oil (really!). The book is a very readable introduction to a variety of topics. [Note: After a short time on book shelves, it was no longer available in Thailand. I have seen it on the Amazon website, though.]

Meekness: A New Approach to Christian Witness to the Thai People by Nantachai Meujudhon. Doctoral dissertation, E. Stanley Jones School of World Mission and Evangelism, Asbury Theological Seminary 1997. Comment: This dissertation is used frequently by Dr. Nantachai in training new missionaries to Thailand. It is important that the reader view this as an important contribution to discussions about how to do evangelism in Thailand while recognizing that it should be placed alongside many other approaches.

Very Thai: Everyday Popular Culture by Philip Cornwel-Smith. River Books Co., Ltd., Bangkok, Thailand 2005. Comment: This is a fresh-off-the-press book that can help prepare the newcomer to expect much deeper meaning in the little things of life than most expatriates realize. Who would expect that growing plants in pots rather than planting them in the ground would have any connection with the Buddhist heritage of the people? It can help prepare the soon-to-arrive missionary to look not only on the surface for cues to understanding the Thai. It should likely be re-read after six months to a year on the field, too.

Reflections on Thai Culture by William J. Klausner. The Siam Society under Royal Patronage, Bangkok 1993. Comment: The first third of the book is devoted to Isaan (Northeastern Thai) issues, but the balance of the book is a collection of topics of a more general nature. One section deals with Buddhist topics and another with a variety of Thai cultural concepts. Many of Klausner's collected writings contained in this volume are a little dated, but the insights remain very helpful in understanding the heart of Thai culture.

Working with the Thais: A Guide to Managing in Thailand by Henry Holmes and Suchada Tangtongtavy. White Lotus Co. Ltd, Bangkok 1997. Comment: While written for the business world, it illustrates the challenges of cross-cultural working relationships. It is a "must read" for anyone who plans to work side by side with Thai partners, though it's value may be appreciated best by reading both before arrival and again after beginning to minister alongside Thai colleagues.

Thai Ways and More Thai Ways by Denis Segaller. Comment: This is a collection of Segaller's newspaper articles on Thai culture, thus, is written for a general audience.

Psychology of the Thai People: Values and Behavioral Patterns by Suntaree Komin, Ph.D. Research Center, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, 1990. Comment: One of the few resources that attempts to get into the psyche of the Thai people that is written by a Thai. This book was a major resource for the doctoral dissertation of Dr. Nantachai Meujudhon, a leading Thai pastor, who researched the concept of meekness as the key to witnessing to Thais. His dissertation is listed above.

Culture Shock, Thailand

WEBSITES

Use your internet search engine to find more websites and information on Thailand. Just remember to check your sources and realize that not everything you find on the internet is accurate and unbiased.

PacRim Volunteer Guide to Thailand — 2008. This manual is a combination of the knowledge and experiences of the Thailand Field Team.