

# THAILAND

## **Language**

English is fairly widely spoken in the popular tourist areas. Elsewhere, sign language, an expression, a calculator and a little patience will work wonders!

## **Time Zone**

Thailand is 5 hours ahead of South African Time

## **Climate**

Thailand enjoys a tropical climate with three distinct seasons:

Hot Season: March - May

Rainy Season: May - October

Cool Season: November – February

The average annual temperature is about 30°C. The northern regions can become slightly colder in the evenings during the cool season, so be sure to bring along a sweater or a light jacket if you intend visiting this area between November and February. During the rainy season, downpours hardly last more than a couple of hours but it can get quite hot and sticky due to the humidity over this period.

## **Currency**

The Thai monetary unit is the Baht. There are 100 Satang to one Baht. Coins are used in denominations of 25 Satang, 50 Satang, 1 Baht, 2 Baht, 5 Baht and 10 Baht. Bank note denominations comprise 20 Baht (green), 50 Baht (blue), 100 Baht (red), 500 Baht (purple) and 1000 Baht (gray). Notes are also scaled in size; the larger the denomination, the larger the note.

**MONEY EXCHANGE:** Money and travelers cheques of all major currencies can be exchanged at hotels, banks, exchange booths and mobile exchange kiosks in tourist areas. Banks usually offer the best rates. During the week, banking hours are 08h30-15h30.

**CREDIT CARDS:** Credit cards are widely accepted in department stores, major hotels, up-market shops and restaurants. They can also be used for cash advances at banks and exchange counters. Most commonly accepted credit cards are VISA, Master Card, American Express & Diners Club.

## **Tipping**

Taxi drivers do not expect tips. Hotels and restaurants usually add 10-15% service charge in lieu of a tip.

## **Health Requirements**

No vaccinations are currently required unless traveling from/or through contaminated areas. It is recommended to be immunized against polio, typhoid, tetanus and hepatitis A and B. Malaria prophylactics are suggested for the Northern areas.

## **Visas**

South African passport holders do not require a visa for a stay of up to 30 days. Passports have to be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of entry. It is also recommended that your valid passport have at least 2 remaining unused pages for any necessary entry and exit stamps that may be issued. On arrival in Thailand, return ticket or onward travel arrangements may need to be presented upon request. These requirements are subject to change & it is therefore recommended to check with the embassy or consulate in your home country prior to departure.

## **Departure / Arrival Taxes**

International Departure tax of Thb700 has now been included in your air ticket costs.

## **Customs Regulations**

Importation of all kinds of narcotics (opium, heroin, cocaine, etc.) and pornographic media are strictly prohibited. Firearms and ammunition can be imported only after a permit has been obtained from the local police department. A reasonable amount of clothing for personal use, toiletries and professional instruments can be brought in free of duty. In addition, 200 cigarettes or smoking materials in total of 250 grams, one liter of wine or spirits, one video camera, five rolls of still film, three rolls of video film, and one item of electrical goods per person are allowed in duty free. Buddha images, antiques or fragments thereof are not allowed to be taken out of Thailand without authorization from the Fine Arts Department.

## **Safety & Security**

Thailand is a safe country, but like anywhere in the world, it is advisable to practice caution by following simple safety measures such as: ignoring touts, keeping away from trouble areas, not wearing excessive jewelry, being careful when crossing roads (remember: left-hand traffic!) and taking care of valuables. Valuables such as money, traveler's cheques, passports and flight tickets are best kept in the safety box of your hotel. Please reconfirm with hotel on times in which you can retrieve your belongings as hotel safes may open at odd times, which may not coincide with your departure. Keep note of your traveler's cheques, passports & air ticket numbers in a separate place, should you lose them. Having a record of these numbers saves time should you require replacement documents. It is also recommended that you make copies of air tickets & relevant passport pages.

## **Electricity**

The electric current for the whole of Thailand is 220 volts AC, 50 cycles. Dual-prong rounded plugs as well as flat-pin plugs can be used in sockets. Adaptors are provided by most of the hotels. It is recommended that you take an adaptor with you, to avoid any frustration, particularly if staying in a smaller hotel,

## **Travel Tips**

Very lightweight clothing is all that is necessary. Men wear jackets for dinner at some hotels. Woollens are necessary for the evenings if in the northern mountains, especially during the cooler part of the year. When visiting temples, as sign of respect, ladies are requested to cover their shoulders and wear shorts or dresses that come below the knee. Further to this, wear slip-on shoes, as you have to enter barefoot.

Thai food is a unique blend of hot and spicy flavours. Most of the meat and fish dishes are richly spiced with pimentos, fennel, mint, caraway seed, garlic, onions and exotic galangal and lemon grass. For simpler, yet equally delicious meals, there is Thai seafood.

Imported alcohol is expensive in Thailand –this includes both liquors and wines. Singha and Chang beers are the best seller; it is an outstanding lager. It is advised that only bottled water be consumed – the consumption of tap water is not recommended.

## **Activities**

Department stores are normally open from 10h00-21h00, 7 days a week. All stores will be closed 3-4 days during the Chinese New Year in February.

There is a lot to buy in Thailand, but not in the way of electrical equipment. Best buys are Thai silk, cotton fabrics, silver, lacquer ware, bronze ware and woodwork. Gems and semi-precious stones (zircon, topaz and garnet) are regarded as excellent buys. It is safer and cheaper, to stick to shops which are approved by the tourist association. Avoid overpricing and fraudulent deals and purchase jewellery from shops that are members of the Jewel-fest Club. Endorsed by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, retail outlets carry the Jewel Fest logo on shop fronts. Make sure you get receipts for all goods you buy, and certificates of guarantee for jewellery and gemstones

## **Special Attractions**

In Bangkok visit the Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, Phuket, Koh Samui, Phi Phi Islands, Khao Lak etc. Please contact our consultants for further information on each destination and attractions.



Dream the destination... Live the journey.

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