Essential Information

The ‘City of Angels’ is one of the most-loved tourist destinations in Southeast Asia. There are many good reasons for this. With its skyscrapers, convenient public transport, broadwalks, huge shopping malls and cosy hotels, the metropolis is easily accessible, comprehensible and similar to the Western world.

At the same time, there’s more to it – the Thai mentality is distinctively different and the concrete jungle is thus a lively hub of activity you won’t find anywhere in the West – amazing night markets, traditional temples that are always packed with locals, and people living practically on the street.

Bangkok is a busy city with an unbelievable atmosphere and surprises awaiting you at nearly every corner – just be open to new experiences and don’t let yourself be fooled by the illusory urban facade.

Time Zone
ICT (UTC/GMT +7 hours), no daylight saving time.

Contacts
Tourist Contacts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Type</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety information (police)</td>
<td>1672</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official tourist information</td>
<td>+66 2225 7612-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Authority of Thailand</td>
<td>+66 2 694 1222</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MONEY

Currency: 1 baht (THB, ) = 100 satang (almost worthless)

The easiest way to get local currency is from the ATMs. There are also many moneychanger kiosks that readily accept euros and dollars for the best rates. The banks offer reasonable rates too, but the actual exchange may take significantly more time.

All the major credit cards are accepted at places catering to tourists, including the shopping malls and better restaurants. Using them is not advised, though, because card fraud is common – it is best to withdraw and pay with cash.

Tax Refunds
Tourists departing by air are eligible for a VAT refund if they spent more than 2000 baht per approved store in a single day, with a minimum of 5000 baht in total. The shops must be part of the VAT refund network. You must fill in the appropriate forms and present them together with the goods upon your departure. The VAT is usually 7%.

Prices
There’s a striking difference between prices in Bangkok and the rest of the Thailand, tourist areas excluded. At first sight, it might seem quite expensive, but it is possible to cut costs significantly by sleeping in dorms and eating on the streets.

As a tourist, expect to be overcharged regularly and for practically everything – it is good to get a general idea about prices in advance, bargain heavily and double-check your change.

- Meal, inexpensive restaurant – 75 THB
- Meal for 2, mid-range restaurant, three-course – 640 THB
- Big Mac – 85 THB
- Bottle of water at supermarket – 8 THB
- Domestic beer (0.5 liter, draught) – 60 THB
- Cappuccino – 60 THB
- Souvenir t-shirt – 100 THB
- Gasoline (1 liter) – 40 THB
- Guesthouse (average price/night) – 150 THB
- 4* hotel (average price/night) – 1500 THB
- Car-hire (medium-sized car/day) – 1200 THB

Tipping
Tipping is not customary in Thailand. Some restaurants will add a service charge of 10% to your bill or the waiter may keep the small change from a larger bill. Tipping in taxis is not expected, but appreciated – just round up the bill. If you are satisfied with the services of a hairdresser, masseur or tour guide, appreciate it with a 20 to 100 baht gratuity.
Electricity
The standard electricity supply is 220V/50Hz with the American and/or European two-pinned plug.

Languages
Unsurprisingly, the official and most widely spoken language is Thai. Luckily, the public signs are often in Thai and English, sometimes even in Chinese and Japanese. Young people can generally speak English better than the old, but not many are fluent. Expect communicative level of English in the tourist industry, but don’t expect too much. The other languages sometimes spoken are Chinese, Japanese and German.

Mobile Phones
The standard mobile network (GSM/GPRS/3G) has quite good coverage except for some rural areas. Check the compatibility of your phone and services if coming from a non-GSM standard country. If coming from America, your phone might not be compatible with the local network – check with your operator in advance.

To avoid high roaming costs, it might not be a bad idea to buy a local sim card – you can easily get it in any local 7-11. All cards are usually pre-loaded with 99 baht and there is not a considerable difference between the operators, the coverage is comparable and the prices too. Again, you need to check your phone in advance to see whether it is not locked.

Internet
Connecting to the Internet is very easy in Bangkok – there is an impressive network of free hotspots situated at bus stops, in main streets, in tourist areas, even in the parks and the coverage is gradually increasing. You just need to register at www.mict.go.th prior to using the service.

Internet cafés are abundant and inexpensive, although you might want to avoid the touristy areas. Most hotels and restaurants also offer Wi-Fi internet connection.

Internet Resources
- Thailand Tourist Website (www.tourismthailand.org)
- Bangkok Tourist Website (www.bangkoktourist.com)
- Bangkok Information Guide (www.bangkok.com)

HOLIDAYS

- 1 January – New Year’s Day
- Magha Puja (Full moon of the 3rd Thai lunar month)
- 6 April – Chakri Memorial Day
- 13 April – 15 April – Songkran Festival (traditional Thai New Year, the most important holiday)
- 5 May – Coronation Day
- Royal Ploughing Ceremony and Farmer’s Day (Arbitrarily declared date in May)
- Vesak (full moon of the 6th Thai lunar month)
- Asalha Bucha (full moon of the 8th Thai lunar month)
- Beginning of Vassa (first waning moon of the 8th Thai lunar month)
- 12 August – HM the Queen’s Birthday
- 23 October – Chulalongkorn Day
- 5 December – HM the King’s Birthday
- 10 December – Constitution Day
- 25 December – Christmas
- 31 December – New Year’s Eve

If the holiday falls on a weekend, the following workday is considered non-working as compensation. The system is rather chaotic, but as a rule of thumb, expect the offices to be closed. The larger shops usually don’t observe all the holidays and sometimes stay open.

Opening Hours
The official business and office hours are from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. during the week and 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturdays. The larger shops and shopping malls usually stay open until 10 p.m.

The tourist sights and museums generally operate 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., but not the whole week and the opening days can vary – always check in advance.
TRANSPORTATION

Public Transportation

It is easy to get around Bangkok by public transport! The whole system is well-connected but it is not integrated, unfortunately – you need to buy specific tickets for particular means of transport.

If you don’t feel like being adventurous, avoid the buses – they can be really tiresome sometimes. The three train lines are comfortable though, and they connect all the important sights and hubs in the central city.

BTS Skytrain – its two lines cover the downtown with interchange at Siam. Tickets can be purchased at vending machines accepting coins. The fares vary according to the zones traveled from 15 to 40 baht. You can also purchase a one-day pass for 130 baht.

MRT – one line connecting two main railway stations. A single ride ranges from 16 to 40 baht (children/senior ticket 8 – 20 baht). The one-day pass is 120 baht which is valid from first entry into the paid area until midnight. Tickets can be bought in vending machines at the stations.

Airport Rail Link – the Express line will take you from the airport to the city for 150 baht and the public transport can take you around conveniently. Also try to avoid driving at night as the streets are badly lit and the condition of the roads can be questionable.

Trains

Bangkok taxis are fairly inexpensive and the ride around downtown usually comes to under 100 baht. There’s a surcharge if taking a taxi from the airport but you don’t pay extra for luggage or night travel. The only possible extra costs are for using the toll ways – the driver should ask you in advance. Taking a toll way is usually quicker and more comfortable and it is paid for at a booth – always watch your knees. Insist on wearing a helmet, too.

Motorbike taxi

Very quick and very dangerous – you will recognize them by their neon vests. Always negotiate the price before getting on. And watch your knees. Insist on wearing a helmet, too.

Regional Transportation

Trains – State Railway of Thailand (www.railway.co.th) covers the whole country with a surprisingly dense network of rail lines. There are three classes: first class includes a sleeping compartment with two beds and air-conditioning. The second class may or may have no air-conditioning; there are six bunks in the compartment. The third class is the cheapest way of traveling in Thailand – there are only hard seats and just about enough space for your legs.

BKS (Baw Khaw Saw) – government-run bus company connects every province in Thailand. There are various lines and levels of comfort, from regional buses to first class. Always take BKS buses and avoid other options as they usually run ‘scambuses’ aimed at tourists where thefts and breakdowns are almost a rule.

Driving

Driving in Thailand is a very adventurous experience. Generally, driving in the provinces is a cheap and unproblematic way to get around, while car transportation in the major cities and in Bangkok is best to be avoided. Vehicles should drive on the left side of the road but it is not a rule – actually nothing is on Thai roads. The cities are often congested and the driving style is just erratic.

Traffic rules and speed limits:
- It is compulsory to have at least a copy of the vehicle registration documents in the car.
- Seat-belts are compulsory in the front seats.
- Cell phones can only be used with hands-free.
- Blood alcohol limit ~ 0.5 (0.5 pro mille)
- Highway speed limits ~ 90km/h to 120km/h
- Speed limit in cities ~ 60 km/h

If you don’t feel like being adventurous, avoid the buses – they can be really tiresome sometimes. The three train lines are comfortable though, and they connect all the important sights and hubs in the central city.
**Walkability**

The walkability of Bangkok is slowly but steadily improving. Still, it is nowhere near as pleasant as in European cities – the traffic is erratic, noisy and polluting, and the motorcycles are distressing. The combination of public transport and walking is the best solution to avoid the busiest areas and yet still be able to explore the back-streets on your own.

The wheelchair accessibility situation of Bangkok can also pose a real challenge – only some curbs have ramps and those ramps are often blocked by vehicles.

**Food**

- **Satay** – grilled meat with peanut sauce
- **Tom Yam Kung** – spicy soup with prawns and lemongrass
- **Pad Thai** – stir-fried noodles with eggs, fish sauce and red pepper
- **Khao Man Kai** – sliced chicken with rice and chicken broth
- **Kanom Roti** – pancake filled with condensed milk
- **Gaeng Daeng** – red curry
- **Kai Med Ma Muang** – stir-fried chicken with cashew nuts
- **Gaeng Keow Wan Kai** – green curry (the most spicy dish)

Thai whisky is called *lao* and is made of sugar cane; the cheapest alcohol available. There is also often home-made rice whiskey *lao khao* and rice wine. The most popular local beers are Singha and Chang.

The most typical non-alcoholic drinks are fresh juices, the most common being fresh orange juice with a bit of salt and fresh coconut. Also try iced tea with tamarind. Western-style black tea is called *cha ron* while the Chinese tea goes under the name *naam chaa*.

**Legal Age**

The legal drinking age is 20 and selling alcohol is banned from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and midnight to 11 a.m.
Events During the Year

January
- Don Chedi Memorial Fair
February
- Chinese New Year
- Nakhon Pathom Food and Fruit Fair
- King Rama II Memorial Fair
March
- Bangkok International Jazz Festival
- Thailand International Kite Flying Festival (thailandkite.com)
- Damnoen Saduak Floating Market and Sweet Grape Fair
April
- Songkran Festival
May
- Royal Ploughing Ceremony (en.wikipedia.org)
June
- International Festival of Dance and Music
- Amazing Thailand Grand Sale Fair – huge sales in the whole city
July
- Pattaya Marathon
August
- Bangkok International Fashion Fair (www.biffandbil.com)
- The Queen’s Birthday Celebrations
September
- Moon Festival (Mid-Autumn Festival)
- Food Festival in Chinatown
October
- Vegetarian Festival
- Thai Beer Festival
November
- Loy Krathong (en.wikipedia.org)
- Golden Mount Fair
- World Film Festival of Bangkok (www.worldfilmbkk.com)
December
- Trooping of the Colours
- Grand Celebration of His Majesty the King

Free Things To Do
- Temples: Dragon Flower Temple (Wat Mangkon Kamalawat), Wat Pathum Wanaram, Erawan Shrine (San Phra Phrom)
- Markets: Thewet Flower Market, Tha Prachan Market, Patpong Night Market
- Bangkok Art & Culture Centre
- Lumphini Park
- Royal Elephant National Museum
- Queen's Gallery
- Chinatown
- Patpong Road
- Silpa Bhirasri Memorial & Museum
- Bangkok Corrections Museum

Shopping
Shopping for souvenirs in Bangkok might not be as easy as it seems – there are too many things to choose from! Thailand is known for its skilled yet cheap tailors – having a dress or suit done here is recommended. You can also purchase beautiful Thai silk. Silver jewelry is also abundant, together with jade rings and pendants. Carved wooden objects or tea sets will be a great home decoration. Foodies will surely appreciate great selection of spices and curry pastes.
**DOS AND DO NOTS**

- **DO** avoid drugs – possession and consumption is strictly forbidden and may lead to jail.
- **DO** dress conservatively when visiting the temples.
- **DO** enjoy the street food – it is safe, tasty and cheap.
- **DO** respect Thai religion – don’t climb any Buddha statues and don’t let your children do so.
- **DO** visit the Grand Palace – one of the most impressive structures in Thailand.
- **DO NOT** show any disrespect towards the Thai Royal Family. This includes criticism as well as stepping on coins where the king is depicted.
- **DO NOT** buy Buddha statues – you might not be allowed to take them out of the country.
- **DO NOT** feed elephants in the city – it is forbidden for many good reasons.

**Safety**

Bangkok is full of petty crime and scams yet overall can still be regarded as a safe city – violent crimes are rare and even rarer against tourists. Use common sense; avoid dangerous looking and abandoned areas, always keep an eye on your possessions and try not to flaunt anything pricey.

One of the greatest dangers is the frenetic traffic situation – especially the motorbike riders speeding along pavements. You can never be careful enough.

As a tourist, it is more than likely that you will come across scams every day, especially in the most popular tourist areas. The general rules are quite simple: never agree on a service that is offered to (forced on) you that you didn’t request, always negotiate prices in advance, double-check everything and keep in mind that if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Always be cautious with the tuk tuk drivers – agree on the price beforehand and make sure that the price stated is in baht. Never accept any suggestions for what to do because they will most likely take you to place where they get commission for you buying bad quality merchandise or services: the gem scam is the most popular example of this. In this scam, Tuk tuk drivers offer day tours for extremely low prices (say 10 baht) and then will take you from one gem shop or factory to another. The pieces for sale are usually worthless or much overpriced and you are pressured to buy.

Don’t listen to people who approach you to tell you that a particular site is closed – they are again probably trying to lure you somewhere to help you lighten your wallet. Always check for yourself on-site.

Never buy tours or bus tickets off the streets. This applies especially for Khao San Road. The ‘legendary’ backpackers street is overflowing with scams! Always check the transportation company and only buy tickets at official places. The touristy areas are full of ‘scambuses’. They mysteriously break down several times at designated stops where you find yourself buying a meal at an overpriced restaurant. You will also most probably reach the destination late in the evening, when it’s too late to look for any accommodation other than the overpriced one where the bus stops...

The thriving sex business poses some risks too – sex with minors under 18 can be heavily persecuted. Never accept invitations to go to the upstairs bars – you will end up paying outrageous prices for ‘shows’ – always stick to ground floor establishments. You would also be exposing yourself to the risks of robbery and infection.

The police are also very strict with drugs, even the smallest possession of marijuana can get you into serious trouble and you may face imprisonment.

Stick to bottled water. The tap water is said to be safe but the plumbing is not very well maintained. Avoid beverages with ice. Risk of food infection/poisoning is not too big a problem, and can be reduced by checking the cleanliness of restaurants and by only eating where locals eat.
ACTIVITIES

The Royal Grand Palace / Phra Borom Maha Ratcha Wang
Area built by king Rama V to commemorate the centenary of the Chakri dynasty. Interesting combination of European building and Thai roof. Must-see!

GPS: N13.74990, E100.49198
Opening hours:
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Tickets are sold till 3:30 p.m.
Admission:
400 THB

Temple of the Golden Buddha / Wat Traimit
The world's largest solid-gold Buddha weighing 5 tons is seated in Wat Traimit. It has very interesting history that you should learn about!

GPS: N13.73814, E100.51402
Opening hours:
Daily: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Admission:
Enterance to the temple is free, 10 THB for visiting the adjacent museum.

Chinatown
One of the oldest districts in Bangkok, because the Chinese moved in at the same time when the city was founded. Hustle and bustle, that's what it's about!

GPS: N13.73965, E100.50977

Dragon Flower Temple / Wat Mangkon Kamalawat
Founded in 1871, this is the most spectacular temple of Bangkok's Chinatown. Constantly busy place!
Mangkon, Pom Prap Sattru Phai, Bangkok 10100, Thailand
GPS: N13.74367, E100.50956
Opening hours:
Daily: 6 a.m. – 6 p.m.
Admission:
Free admission.
**Temple of the Reclining Buddha** / Wat Phra Chettuphon

Named after the monastery in India where Buddha lived. 43 metres long statue of giant reclining Buddha is the most famous attraction of Bangkok. Don't miss this!

GPS: N13.74661, E100.49345

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Admission:**
50 THB

---

**Museum of Siam**

Explore how Thai identity has developed over the times. Old colonial house where history is turned into life.

4 Sanam Chai Road, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

GPS: N13.74444, E100.49413

**Phone:**
+66 2 225 2777

**Opening hours:**
Tue – Sun: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

**Admission:**
Adults: 300 THB
Students: 50 THB
Children (up to 15): free

---

**Saranrom Park**

Almost forgotten shady oasis close to Grand Palace that used to be its part.

GPS: N13.74881, E100.49476

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 5 a.m. – 9 p.m.

---

**Temple of the Dawn** / Wat Arun Rajwararam

Amazing Buddhist temple dominated by Khmer-style tower which you may walk up a little bit to get a view of the river.

GPS: N13.74402, E100.48902

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 8 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

**Admission:**
THB 50

---

**Flower Market** / Pak Khlong Talat

Colorful and captivating place full of scents and flowers of all possible colours and shapes. Best time to visit is before dawn when boats arrive with flowers.

Thanon Chakphet, Wang Burapha Phirom, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

GPS: N13.74227, E100.49630

**Opening hours:**
Open around the clock, best time to visit is before dawn. The market is most lively around midnight.

---

**Temple of the Emerald Buddha** / Wat Phra Kaew

The most sacred Buddhist temple is located within the Grand Palace precincts. 66 cm tall Buddha carved from a single jade stone is hidden inside.

GPS: N13.75150, E100.49266

**Phone:**
+660 2222 0094

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**Admission:**
400 THB – part of the Grand Palace complex.
**Sanam Luang**  
Large open field. Place of Royal ceremonies, kite flying festival, birdwatching. You can't miss it when visiting Royal Palace.  
GPS: N13.75492, E100.49308

---

**Temple of the Bells** / Wat Rakang Kositaram  
Temple known for the bells that gave him the name. The bot has been registered as a national heritage since 1949. Stop by!  
GPS: N13.75252, E100.48539  
**Phone:** +66 0 2411 2255  
**Opening hours:** Daily: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

---

**Tha Prachan Market**  
This market opens early in the morning and you can buy wide variety of amulets and talismans here.  
Tha Chang Pier, Phra Borom Maha Ratchawang, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand  
GPS: N13.75227, E100.48854

---

**The Golden Stupa** / Phra Si Ratana Chedi  
Bell-shaped stupa covered in gold tiles in the area of the Temple of Emerald Buddha. Relics inside!  
GPS: N13.75146, E100.49049  
**Opening hours:** Daily: 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
**Admission:** 400 THB – part of the Grand Palace complex.

---

**Banglamphu**  
Buzzing neighbourhood, a popular backpacker's destination. Abundance of delicious food, Thai massage places and shopping opportunities.  
GPS: N13.76045, E100.49148

---

**The Bangkok National Museum** / National Museum Bangkok  
Museum traces Thai history and art back to Neolithic times. Its collection includes The King Ram Khamhaeng Inscription that is on UNESCO register.  
GPS: N13.75810, E100.49112  
**Phone:** +662 224 1333  
**Opening hours:** Wed – Sun: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
**Admission:** 40 THB

---

**National Gallery**  
Although Thailand might seem to be the country of massages, girls and beaches, visit to a local museum might delightfully surprise you.  
Thanon Chao Fa, Chana Songkhram, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand  
GPS: N13.75919, E100.49409  
**Phone:** +66 2 281 2224  
**Opening hours:** Wed – Sun: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
**Admission:** General admission: 200 THB
**ACTIVITIES**

**Phra Sumen Fort**

Constructed in 1783 to fortify the old city. One of the two remaining forts. Beautiful chill out by the river and shiny white fort!

Thanon Lamphu, Chana Songkhram, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

**GPS:** N13.76374, E100.49614

**Opening hours:**
Open 24/7

**Admission:**
No entrance fee.

**Wat Bowonniwet Vihara**

The walls of Wat Boworniwiarenclude the Buddhist university. Often neglected by tourists, so very convenient spot for you!

GPS: N13.76074, E100.50085

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Admission:**
No entrance fee.

**Khao San Road**

The backpacker's Mecca! Tourists from all over the world come for the nightlife, shopping... Must-see for its incredible buzz!

Thanon Khao San, Talat Yot, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

GPS: N13.75892, E100.49730

**Wat Ratchanaddaram**

One of Bangkok's most unusual and most interesting structures. Each level of the temple is dedicated to a different aspect of the teachings of Buddhism.

Soi Khang Wat Ratchanatda, Bowon Niwet, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

GPS: N13.75523, E100.50376

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

**Admission:**
Admission is free.

**Mahakan Fort**

One of the two remaining citadels of original solid walls built in 1780's.

GPS: N13.75556, E100.50557

**Opening hours:**
Open all day around.

**Admission:**
No entrance fee.

**Brahmin Temple / Devasathan**

A temple to Shiva, built already in 1784. Giant Swing that was used as a sign of bravery until 1932 stands nearby.

GPS: N13.75225, E100.50059

**Phone:**
+66 02 222 6951

**Romaneenart Park**

The only non-ceremonial park in the city. Small and peaceful oasis amidst the concrete of Bangkok.

GPS: N13.74933, E100.50258

**Opening hours:**
Daily: 5 a.m. – 9 p.m.
**Golden Mount / Wat Saket**
Buddhist temple built by king Rama I. Climb its 318 steps to the cupola and take delight in the magnificent view.

GPS: N13.75349, E100.50686
Phone: +66 2 694 1222
**Opening hours:**
Daily: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

---

**Rajadamnern Stadium / Sanam Muai Ratcha Damnoen**
Experience real Thai entertaining and intense boxing.
Thanon Phaniang, Wat Sommanat, Pom Prap Sattru Phai, Bangkok 10100, Thailand
GPS: N13.76085, E100.50883
Phone: +66 22814205
**Opening hours:**
Mon, Wed, Thu: 6:30 p.m. – 11 p.m.
Sun: 5 p.m. – 8 p.m., 8:30 p.m. – midnight

**Admission:**
The price of tickets varies between 1000 and 2000 THB.