

## COUNTRY INFORMATION, FACTS & ADVICE

---

### Thailand

Historically known as Siam, the Kingdom of Thailand is a cultural hub in Southeast Asia, bordering Myanmar and Laos to the north, Cambodia to the east and Malaysia to the south. A land of vibrant cities, lush mountains and stunning coastlines, Thailand has enjoyed a long and dynamic history, stemming from the Sukhothai and Lanna kingdoms, which rose to power during the 13th century and remain the pillars of Thai arts, crafts and architecture to this day.

Following the rise and fall of the Ayutthaya kingdom from the 14th to 18th centuries, the nation's capital moved to a location on the west bank of the Chao Phaya River before it was finally established in its current location where it is now known as the city of Bangkok.

Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932, although the Thai royal family is still held in high regard. Thai culture is deeply rooted in the principles of Theravada Buddhism and the people are known for their unquestionable friendliness and warm, welcoming smiles.

<b>Capital City:</b>	Bangkok
<b>Estimated Population:</b>	69 million people
<b>Total Area (square kilometers):</b>	513,120
<b>International Dialing Code:</b>	+66

### Getting into Thailand

#### Passport & Visa Information

##### **Visa-free:**

The following nationals may enter without a visa for up to 45 days if traveling between 1 October 2022 and 31 March, 2023, or 30 days if traveling outside those dates:

Andorra, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brunei, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kuwait, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Monaco, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, The Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovak, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, Ukraine and United States.

The following nationals may enter Thailand without a visa for varying periods of stay:

Cambodia (14 days), Myanmar (14 days), Hong Kong (30 days), Laos (30 days), Macau (30 days), Mongolia (30 days), Russia (30 days), Vietnam (30 days), Argentina (90 days), Brazil (90 days), Chile (90 days), South Korea (90 days) and Peru (90 days).

##### **Visa on Arrival:**

The following nationals may apply for a visa on arrival at the airport or land border for stays of up to 30 days if traveling between 1 October 2022 and 31 March, 2023, or 15 days if traveling outside those dates:

Bulgaria, Bhutan, China, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Kazakhstan, Malta, Mexico, Nauru, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Uzbekistan and Vanuatu.

*Please note that visa on arrival is available for single entry only. If you are planning to re-enter Thailand at any point during your journey, it is recommended that you apply for a multiple-entry tourist visa prior to arrival, either [online](#) or at a Thai embassy or consulate at your point of origin.*

**Please prepare the following documents when applying for a visa on arrival:**

- A passport valid for more than six months with at least two blank pages
- One recent passport-size photograph (4x6 centimeters or 2x2 inches)  
*Please note that it is not possible to obtain passport photos at the border or at the airport*
- A completed visa application form (the form can be obtained on the aircraft)
- Return ticket or proof of onward travel
- Visa fee of THB 2,000 per person in cash
- You may also be asked to provide proof of financial means while traveling in Thailand, so it is recommended to carry a cash amount equivalent to USD 300 per person or USD 600 per family.
- You may also be required to provide proof of address in Thailand, so we recommend that you have a print-out of your hotel reservation handy.

**Other Visas:**

Nationals not eligible for visa-free entry or visa on arrival must apply for a visa at their nearest Thai embassy prior to departure from their point of origin. Alternatively, e-visas are available for some nationalities and you can check your eligibility online at [www.thaievisa.go.th](http://www.thaievisa.go.th). The visa fee may vary depending on the applicant's nationality.

**Useful Tips:**

- Check your passport expiry date and ensure it is valid for more than six months beyond the date of your expected return to your country.
- Ensure you have at least two blank pages in your passport prior to arrival in each country of your journey.
- Write the full details of your next of kin in your passport.
- Make two copies of your passport number, date and place of issue. Leave one copy at home and take the other with you but be sure to keep it in a safe place, separate from your passport.
- Bring along extra passport photos in case you are required to apply for a new visa or a replacement passport during your journey.
- Print all important documents and keep them handy, such as airline tickets and visa approval letters.
- If your passport is lost or stolen overseas, please contact your local Abercrombie & Kent representative or hotel staff. They will assist you in contacting the relevant embassy or consulate.
- Abercrombie & Kent can help arrange VIP and Fast Track services on arrival and departure (supplementary fees apply). Please check with your travel professional.

*While we do our best to provide the most up-to-date information, visa requirements may change at short notice. Obtaining the correct visa is the responsibility of each passenger and Abercrombie & Kent will not be held accountable for any refusal upon entry. Therefore, we recommend that you check with your consulate or embassy for current visa information before leaving home.*

**Early Hotel Check-in**

Although we will do our best to accommodate early arrivals, A&K cannot guarantee that your first-day hotel room will be available for immediate occupancy if you arrive on an early-morning flight.

**Keeping Healthy in Thailand****Vaccinations**

Please consult your doctor for specific advice about your personal medical requirements and note the following advisories:

- Getting immunized against hepatitis A, tetanus and diphtheria is recommended.

- A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required for travelers over nine months old coming from areas at risk of yellow fever transmission (including parts of South America and Africa).
- Malaria is present in Thailand but the main areas of risk are in the remote, forested areas near the border with Myanmar and Laos. There is little risk in the central and coastal areas.
- Please note that dengue can be transmitted by mosquitoes in Thailand, although cases tend to occur in more rural areas. The risk of getting dengue in major cities and towns is low. To reduce the risk, avoid mosquito bites as much as possible; keep your arms and legs covered, use insect repellent and avoid perfumes, hairspray and other scented products.

### Drinking Water

Do not drink tap water in Thailand and avoid ice in your drinks unless it is made from mineral water. A&K supplies clean bottled drinking water when you travel by private vehicle. Exercise caution when eating and drinking outside reputable hotels and restaurants and avoid eating fruit and vegetables if they have been peeled already.

### Special Requirements

If you are on prescribed medication, ensure that you take a copy of your prescriptions in case of loss of supply. Be sure to pack enough medication for the duration of your trip as it may not be available locally. It is important to keep the medication in its original packaging. Check with the relevant embassy or consulate that your medication is legal in the countries you plan to visit and find out whether you need to take a doctor's letter with you.

*Please advise A&K of any special dietary requirements or allergies at least six weeks prior to departure. Every effort will be made to comply with your request. Travelers with physical disabilities and those who require frequent or on-going medical attention should advise A&K of their situation at the time of booking or at the earliest possible opportunity.*

### Tipping

Tipping is not compulsory but is often expected in Thailand. You are traveling on an independent itinerary and the cost of your program does not include gratuities. Tipping is a very personal matter and should you feel you would like to acknowledge the service provided, please consider the following as a rough guide, per person per day.

Type of Service	Group Size (Number of People)					
	1	2	3	4	5-9	10+
Tour Director	15.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	6.00	5.00
Guide	15.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	6.00	5.00
Driver	8.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	3.00	3.00
Hotel Porters	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00

**Please note:** Currency is in USD

*The above tipping guidelines are recommendations only and are not compulsory. Please use your own discretion in tipping, based on quality of service.*

### Restaurants

- Most restaurants add a 10% service charge and 7% government tax to your bill.
- You may wish to add about 10% to the bill to show appreciation for the service, however this is not required or expected

### Taxis

Taxi drivers do not expect to be tipped but they appreciate the fare being rounded up.

## Talk the Talk

The official language in Thailand is Thai, with various dialects spoken in regional areas. It is a tonal language which is mostly derived from Pali and Sanskrit. Although English is widely spoken in tourist areas and resorts, Thai people are always delighted when a visitor attempts a few words of their language. It can be a little tricky in pronunciation, but just a few words will go a long way.

English	Thai
Hello	Sawasdee
Goodbye	Sawasdee
Thank you	Khop khun
How are you?	Sabai dee mai?
Excuse me	Kor tawt
How much?	Taew rai?
I don't understand	Mai khao jai
Beautiful	Suay

## Weather

Thailand experiences moderate to high temperatures throughout the year. The best time to visit is from October to March when there is less chance of rain and the weather is warm. If traveling in the north between January and March, you may encounter poor air quality due to seasonal farming practices that cause haze and poor visibility.

The coolest months are December and January while the hottest time of year is April, when the country celebrates Songkran, the Thai New Year. The Green Season between May and October may bring wet weather, but this is also a great time to explore the countryside, which is refreshed by the rain. For a beach stay, Phuket and the southern Thai islands enjoy clear skies from November to April while Koh Samui and the islands in the Gulf of Thailand are pleasant from January to September. The heaviest rainfall occurs in the month of October.

## What to Pack

- Thailand enjoys warm weather throughout the year, so light cotton or linen clothing is recommended
- Avoid sheer clothing and pack long-sleeved shirts and long skirts or trousers for visiting temples, shrines and palaces where it is often a requirement to cover the shoulders and knees
- Smart-casual wear for dining at more established restaurants
- A light waterproof jacket for occasional rainy weather or cooler evenings
- Good walking shoes or sandals; keep in mind that you may be required to remove footwear when visiting religious sites
- A sunhat or umbrella, water bottle, sunscreen, sunglasses and insect repellent
- Universal travel adaptor; Thailand uses 220V 50Hz with sockets fit for plug types A, B or C

## **Religion & Etiquette**

### **Religion**

In Thailand, 94% of the population is Buddhist, while 5% follow Islam and Christianity, with other faiths making up the remaining 1%. Buddha images are considered sacred and should not be desecrated in any way. It is often forbidden to climb on or touch religious monuments.

### **Greeting**

As a greeting, Thai people perform a *wai*, which involves putting the palms of the hands together and bowing the head slightly.

### **Cultural Etiquette**

The feet are considered the most unclean part of the body and it is offensive to point your feet directly at a person or at an image of the Buddha. The head is considered the most sacred part of the body, so it is considered rude to touch the head of another person.

### **Thai Royalty**

The Thai royal family is highly revered and it is common to see images of the King prominently displayed in restaurants, shops and homes. It is considered an offense to defame the royal family under Thailand's *lese majeste* laws.

### **Bargaining**

Bargaining is common practice when shopping at local markets in Thailand, although it is not practiced in major department stores and shopping malls. Bargaining should be an enjoyable experience for both buyers and sellers. Remember to keep it light-hearted, be reasonable in your offer and meet the seller somewhere in the middle.

### **Photography**

Please ask permission before photographing local people, including young children. Photography is not permitted in some locations, such as museums and art galleries. Avoid taking photographs of government buildings and military personnel. If in doubt, ask your guide.

### **Waste Disposal**

Please help to keep the environment clean and dispose of any waste appropriately. Avoid littering and separate recyclables where possible.

### **Animal Welfare**

Abercrombie & Kent does not offer activities that are harmful to animals, such as riding on the backs of elephants. We work hard to ensure that the experiences we offer are positive and enriching for all involved. If you would like to engage in experiences with animals, please consult your guide for our socially responsible recommendations that do not put any animals at risk.

### **Child Safety Awareness**

Abercrombie & Kent is an advocate of the Friends International ChildSafe Movement. We believe that children from any background deserve an opportunity to learn and grow and should be protected from harmful or exploitative situations. We do not encourage giving money to beggars or children selling souvenirs as these activities incentivize the children to stop going to school. We also do not encourage visits to schools or orphanages, unless the activity has been adequately vetted and does not cause disruption to the children's education or daily life.

If you encounter a situation where you believe a child is at risk, please inform your guide who will be able to contact the relevant authorities or child safe organizations.

## **Responsible Travel**

Consider these simple tips to enhance your experience and have a more positive impact when traveling:

- Find out as much as possible about your destination; learning about the site's history, culture and environment can enhance the experience when you are there
- Learn a few words of the local language
- Pack light and limit excess trash
- Select accommodations, restaurants and activities that have clear goals and policies in relation to environmental impact, employment practices and sustainability objectives
- Buy local products and services
- Minimize your carbon footprint by using alternative transportation options or offsetting your carbon emissions
- Engage in local culture by eating local food, shopping at local markets and taking part in cultural festivals
- Connect with locals who can provide unique insights into the destination
- Leave the places you visit the way you found them; follow designated walking trails and do not remove archaeological or biological treasures from sites
- Bring your own fabric bag, washable straw, refillable water bottle or coffee mug, cutlery and reusable food container to reduce the consumption of single-use plastics; look for water refill stations at #RefillMyBottle or #RefillNotLandfill
- Share your responsible travel tips and help spread the word about best practices in sustainable travel
- Explore more and continue learning about other fascinating places to visit

## **Money**

### **Currency**

The national currency in Thailand is the Thai Baht (THB). Notes are issued in denominations of 1000, 500, 100, 50 and 20, and coins of 10, 5, 2 and 1 baht.

### **Credit Cards**

Major credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard, JCB and American Express are readily accepted at most hotels, airlines, restaurants and upscale merchants.

### **Traveler's Checks**

Traveler's checks are widely accepted and can be cashed at all banks and most major hotels.

### **Banks & ATMs**

Normal banking hours are Monday to Friday, 08:30 to 15:30. Branches in department stores and shopping malls may stay open in the evenings and on weekends. ATMs are available in all major cities. Please remember to take your card when withdrawing from an ATM as the machines in Thailand often dispense cash first before returning your card.

### **Time Zone**

Thailand is on GMT+7

## Shopping

Souvenirs can be a great way of keeping memories alive and staying connected with a special place that you visited. However, please think carefully about what you buy and consider the supply chain ethics of your purchases. Here are our tips for responsible travel shopping.

- **Purchase Selectively** - Purchasing local crafts is a great way of showing support for local artisans. Some sellers, however, resort to importing mass-produced items from foreign countries. Therefore, we recommend that you inspect your purchases carefully, be selective and ask questions about where the items came from.
- **Purchase Locally** - We recommend dining at locally-run establishments rather than at international franchise restaurants when you have the opportunity. Choosing restaurants that use locally grown ingredients instead of imported products helps to reduce your carbon footprint and is also a great way to immerse in the local food culture.
- **Purchase Responsibly** - Avoid buying counterfeit items and ensure that the item you are purchasing is not stolen or taken without permission from a historical site. Insist on documentation to support the legitimacy of the item and its history.

## Ethical Souvenirs

Abercrombie & Kent does not encourage the trade of culturally sensitive souvenirs that may result in negative impacts to the community, culture or nature. To help you make more informed decisions, here is a guide to souvenirs to look out for in Thailand as well as items you may want to avoid.

### What to Buy

- Thai silks, cottons and textiles
- Thai spices
- Thai silver
- Paper umbrellas, lacquerware, rattan crafts and other handmade items by local artisans
- Custom-made clothes from an established tailor

### What Not to Buy

- Statues of Buddha and other relics from temples or religious monuments
- Elephant tusks (ivory) and other animal products
- Items made from coral, shark teeth, turtle shells and seashells
- Endangered orchids and other endemic species of flora
- Products made from endangered animals, such as bags or purses made from marine turtles, crocodile skin, tiger skin and bones

### Useful Tips:

- Take your purchases home with you wherever possible to avoid complications with additional shipping fees, customs duties and regulations. Airfreight and shipments can sometimes take several months to arrive.
- Avoid purchasing expensive items unless you are certain of its quality and value. Some vendors may overstate the value of their goods. While our guides will try to assist wherever possible, they are not authorities on antiques or rare items.
- Take the time to read credit card slips and calculate the exchange rate before signing.
- Retain receipts of your purchases as you may be asked to provide proof of purchase to local officials when exiting the country. You may also need to present it to customs on your return home.

*If you are looking for a specific item, your guide may help refer you to a vendor that carries the item. However, this should not be taken as an endorsement of the vendor. All purchases are your own responsibility and A&K does not accept liability for products that are found to be faulty or not as advertised. A&K does not take responsibility for any loss or damage during shipment.*

## **Local Food & Drink**

Thai food can be an eclectic mix of sweet, sour, salty and spicy. Dishes often feature a combination of herbs and spices such as lemongrass, chili and coriander. National specialties include *tom yum* (spicy soup with prawns or chicken), *pad Thai* (stir fried noodles with prawns or chicken) and sticky rice with mango (glutinous rice cooked in coconut milk and served with slices of mango).

Thailand is known for its tropical fruits such as papaya, jackfruit, mangosteens, rambutans, pomelos and the strong-smelling durian fruit which people either love or hate.

The local whisky is Mekhong and the local beer is Singha. Chalong Bay Rum and Iron Balls Gin are also popular. Thai wines, which are mostly sourced from vineyards in Khao Yai National Park or the seaside region of Hua Hin, are also worth a try.

*If you have any special dietary requirements, please advise Abercrombie & Kent at least six weeks prior to departure. Every effort is made to accommodate your request, but please be aware that this may not always be possible, particularly in remote areas.*