



# Thailand

📍 66 / POP 68.65 MILLION

## Includes ➔

Bangkok.....	645
Sukhothai.....	679
Chiang Mai.....	685
Chiang Rai.....	698
Golden Triangle.....	703
Kanchanaburi.....	711
Surin.....	721
Ko Samet.....	728
Ko Chang.....	730
Hua Hin.....	734
Ko Samui.....	738
Ko Pha-Ngan.....	743
Ko Tao.....	748
The Andaman Coast.....	754

## Best for Regional Specialities

- ➔ nahm (p666)
- ➔ Tong Tem Toh (p694)
- ➔ Hua Hin Koti (p735)

## Best Places for Culture

- ➔ Cooking courses in Chiang Mai (p689)
- ➔ Loi Krathong in Ayuthaya (p671)
- ➔ Trekking in Mae Hong Son (p708)

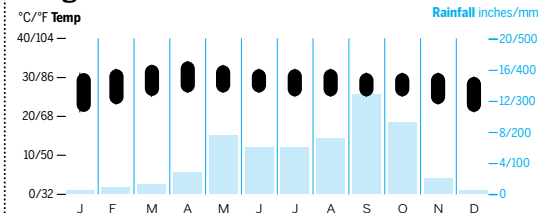
## Why Go?

Thailand is an abundant land with naturally good looks and warm hospitality. A stunning coastline lapped at by cerulean seas invites winter-weary travellers, while the northern mountains that cascade into the misty horizon invite scenic journeys. In between are emerald-coloured rice fields and busy, prosperous cities built around sacred temples. The markets are piled high with pyramids of colourful fruits and tasty treats can be found on every corner.

You'll suffer few travelling hardships, save for a few pushy touts, in this land of comfort and convenience. Bangkok reigns as an Asian superstar, Chiang Mai excels in liveability and the tropical islands are up all night to party. It is relatively cheap to hop around by plane or leapfrog anywhere else in the region, though once you leave you'll miss the fiery curries and simple stir-fries that earn Thai cuisine global acclaim.

## When to Go?

### Bangkok



**Nov–Feb** Cool and dry season; peak tourist season is December to January.

**Mar–Jun** Hot season is hot but a good shoulder season for the beaches.

**Jul–Oct** Wet season begins with a drizzle and ends with a downpour; July to August is a mini high season.

## AT A GLANCE

**Currency** Baht (B)

**Language** Thai

**Money** ATMs wide-spread; 150B withdrawal fee on foreign accounts

**Visas** 30-day free visa for air arrivals; 30- or 15-day free visa (depending on nationality) for land arrivals; pre-arrange 60-day tourist visas

**Mobile phones** Affordable pre-paid local SIM card on a GMS phone

## Fast Facts

**Area** 513,000 sq km

**Capital** Bangkok

**Country code** 66

**Emergency** 191

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	26B
Cambodia	10,000r	88B
Euro	€1	39B
Laos	10,000K	44B
Malaysia	RM10	83B
UK	UK£1	55B
US	US\$1	35B

## Daily Costs

**Basic room** US\$11–28

**Market meals** up to US\$2.50

**Beer** US\$3

**Local transport** US\$1

## Entering the Country

Fly to Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport. Land crossings include Poipet/Aranya Prathet (Cambodia), Huay Xai/Chiang Khong (Laos) and Ko Lipe/Langkawi (Malaysia).

## Don't Miss

Seeing the early-morning alms route – when barefoot, orange-robed monks walk the streets collecting food from the faithful – is one of the great highlights (made easy when suffering from jet lag) in Thailand. The silent procession transforms Thailand's otherwise deafening cities into calm, meditative spaces.

## ITINERARIES

### One Week

Get tussled about by Bangkok's chaos, then cruise up to Sukhothai to tour the quiet old ruins. Continue north to Chiang Mai, an easygoing cultural city. Climb up the mountain range to Pai for mountain scenery and bluesy late-nighters.

### Two Weeks

From Bangkok, continue south to the Samui islands (Ko Samui, Ko Pha-Ngan, Ko Tao) to become a certified beachaholic and diver. Then hop the peninsula to the Andaman beaches of Railay, Ko Phi-Phi and Ko Lanta.

## Essential Food

**Pàt gàprow gàì** Fiery stir-fry of chopped chicken, chillies, garlic and fresh basil.

**Kôw pàt** Fried rice, you never knew it could be so good; garnish it with ground chillies, sugar, fish sauce and a squirt of lime.

**Pàt prík tai krà-thiam gàì/mổ** Stir-fried chicken or pork with black pepper and garlic.

**Pàt tai** Thailand's oh-so-famous dish of rice noodles fried with egg and prawns garnished with bean sprouts, peanuts and chillies; eaten with chopsticks.

**Pàt pàk kanáh** Stir-fried Chinese greens, often fried with meat (upon request), served over rice; simple but delicious.