

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation on Thailand's islands and beaches is astonishing both for its range of quality and design. From bare-bones bamboo shacks under swaying palms to vast resort complexes where every whim is taken into consideration, you won't need to look too hard to find a place to suit your sensibility and your budget.

### Beach Bungalows

Simple beach huts used to make up most of the accommodation on Thailand's islands

## BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

and beaches. But these old-style A-frames are quickly being replaced by sturdier concrete huts. They are universally known as bungalows, no matter what they look like or are made from.

The cheapest bungalows are still those made of palm thatch and woven bamboo, with or without simple tiled bathrooms attached. They may contain nothing more than a basic bed or mattress, a bare light bulb, and (if you're lucky) a mosquito net and fan. However, there is often a small balcony where you can dry your beach towel and swing in your hammock. Bungalows generally house two people. As wooden bungalows are replaced by concrete structures with facilities including air-con and satellite TV, rates rise two or three times higher.

Nightly rates vary greatly according to the popularity of the beach, the quality of the bungalows and the season. In the high season, wooden bungalows on the cheapest beaches start from 200B per night with shared bathroom, and upwards of 300B with private bathroom. Concrete bungalows usually have bathrooms and air-con; rates start from 400B in the low season and 1000B in the high season. Bungalows in upmarket resorts, such as Ko Samui's Hat Chaweng and Phuket's Hat Surin, can cost more than 3000B.

### National Parks Accommodation

Some national parks provide accommodation in bungalows (sleeping up to 10 people) and *reu-an taa-ou* (longhouses), which consist of small rooms with mattresses on the floor for three or four people. Bungalows and longhouses usually have lights and fans, but electricity is often only available from

6pm to midnight or 6pm to 6am. Parks with bungalows often have a basic restaurant and many have a simple provisions shop. Rooms in longhouses cost between 400B and 600B, while bungalows vary from 1000B to 2000B, depending on their size and condition.

Advance booking is advisable at the more popular parks; on holidays and weekends it's essential. The **National Park Office** (Map pp70-1; ☎ 0 2562 0760; [www.dnp.go.th/parkreserve](http://www.dnp.go.th/parkreserve); 61 Th Phahonyothin, Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900) has a very convenient, easy-to-use online booking facility.

While few people bother carrying camping equipment in Thailand (the guesthouses are just too cheap), camping is possible at many parks. Expect to pay between 20B and 50B per person if you bring your own tent, and 200B to 450B if you hire one, plus 60B for bedding.

Most campsites will have toilets, running water, cold showers and sometimes a canteen serving authentic Thai meals. With permission from park authorities, you can camp in more remote locations, including some wonderful uninhabited islands and isolated beaches. However, you'll need to be totally self-sufficient, which includes bringing your own water and food.

Thai students get first preference for sites and equipment, so make reservations in advance or have a back-up plan.

Note that you'll usually be required to pay the national-park entry fee if you stay overnight – for foreigners this is usually 200B per adult or 100B for each child under 14, but in some parks it's double that. Hold on to your receipt as rangers randomly check visitors. Note also that securing a tent is obviously harder than locking a room.

## Guesthouses

Apart from in some provincial capitals and island commercial centres, rooms in a converted family home are not common in southern Thailand, though Bangkok has plenty. By and large, most people refer to modest collections of beach bungalows as guesthouses, as a matter of habit, when referring to places where backpackers stay.

Traditionally, Thai guesthouses have featured tiny box rooms with a bed or mattress on the floor, a fan and not much else, but competition is forcing standards up. In general, rooms with shared bathroom range from 100B to all the way up to 1000B per night for trendier places in Bangkok. With a private bathroom, expect to pay from about 300B to 1700B. Many guesthouses are in old wooden Thai houses, so remove your shoes before entering and expect creaking floorboards at night. Once ubiquitous, squat toilets are an absolute rarity these days. Showers are often cold. Many guesthouses have an attached restaurant serving simple Thai meals.

## Hotels

In provincial towns you can often find cheap hotels – often run by Thai-Chinese families – with basic box rooms, though in recent years many of these have been given a makeover. Expect to pay about 300B for a room with a fan and shared bathroom, and 500B to 1000B for more privacy and cool air. The cheaper places can be grim and noisy, especially when they are rented by the hour; not great for women travelling alone. The midrange options are more wholesome and good value, with private bathrooms, TVs, phones and air-con.

### PRACTICALITIES

- Thailand uses an electrical current of 220V AC, 50Hz (cycles). Electrical plugs have two flat or two round pins; adapters and voltage converters are widely available.
- The main English-language daily newspapers are the *Bangkok Post* ([www.bangkokpost.com](http://www.bangkokpost.com)) and the *Nation* ([www.nationmultimedia.com](http://www.nationmultimedia.com)), which usually reach beach destinations mid-morning.
- Thailand has five VHF TV networks based in Bangkok and broadcasting in Thai, but not all are available in the south. Most midrange and top-end hotels have satellite or cable TV. The Thai video system is PAL and Thailand is in DVD Zone 3.
- Thailand has more than 400AM and FM radio stations, some with hourly newscasts in English.
- Thailand uses the metric system of measurements, with exceptions: gold and silver are weighed in *bàht* (15g), and land area is often measured in *râi* (equivalent to 1600 sq m).