

## make the most of this phrasebook ...

Anyone can speak another language! It's all about confidence. Don't worry if you can't remember your school language lessons or if you've never learnt a language before. Even if you learn the very basics (on the inside covers of this book), your travel experience will be the better for it. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort.

### finding things in this book

For easy navigation, this book is in sections. The Basics chapters are the ones you'll thumb through time and again. The Practical section covers basic travel situations like catching transport and finding a bed. The Social section gives you conversational phrases, pick-up lines, the ability to express opinions – so you can get to know people. Food has a section all of its own: gourmets and vegetarians are covered and local dishes feature. Safe Travel equips you with health and police phrases, just in case. Sustainable Travel, finally, completes this book. Remember the colours of each section and you'll find everything easily; or use the comprehensive Index. Otherwise, check the two-way traveller's Dictionary for the word you need.

### being understood

Throughout this book you'll see coloured phrases on each page. They're phonetic guides to help you pronounce the language. Start with them to get a feel for how the language sounds. The pronunciation chapter in Basics will explain more, but you can be confident that if you read the coloured phrase, you'll be understood. As you become familiar with the spoken language, move on to using the actual text in the language, which will help you perfect your pronunciation.

### communication tips

Body language, ways of doing things, sense of humour – all have a role to play in every culture. 'Local talk' boxes show you common ways of saying things, or everyday language to drop into conversation. 'Listen for ...' boxes supply the phrases you may hear. They start with the phonetic guide (because you'll hear it before you know what's being said) and then lead in to the language and the English translation.

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# thai



- first language
- second language



For more details, see the **introduction**.

Cradled between Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, and Myanmar, the Kingdom of Thailand is something of a Tower of Babel, with numerous dialects spoken from north to south. What has come to be known as Standard Thai is actually a dialect spoken in Bangkok and the surrounding provinces. Standard Thai is the official language of administration, education and the media, and most Thais understand it even if they speak another dialect. For this reason all the words and phrases in this book are translated into Standard Thai.

Thai belongs to the Tai language group, meaning that it is closely related to a number of languages spoken outside the borders of present-day Thailand. Some of these are Lao (Laos), Khampti (India) and Lue (China). The Isaan dialect, spoken in the northeast of Thailand, is linguistically identical to Lao. Thai has borrowed a number of words from languages such as Mon (Myanmar) and Khmer (Cambodia). Ancient languages also continue to influence Thai. Just as English relies on Latin

and ancient Greek for coining new words or formalising rules of grammar, Thai has adopted Sanskrit and Pali as linguistic models. More recently, English has become a major influence on Thai, particularly in words related to technology or business.

The elegant characters of the Thai script are a source of fascination for those experiencing the language for the first time. The curved symbols seem

## at a glance ...

**language name:**

Thai, Siamese

**name in language:**

ภาษาไทย *pah-sǎh tai*

**language family:**

Tai

**approximate number of speakers:**

25–37 million

**close relatives:**

Khampti, Khmer, Lao, Lue, Mon, Nhang, Shan, Zhuang

to run together but they are all divisible into distinct alphabetical units. There are 44 consonants which are classified into three categories depending on the kinds of vowels they are associated with. Vowels are indicated by symbols, or combinations of symbols, that may appear before, after, above, below or even around the consonant. The Thai government has instituted the Royal Thai General System of Transcription (or RTGS) as a standard method of writing Thai using a Roman 26-letter alphabet. You'll notice its use in official documents, road signs and on maps. The system is convenient for writing but not comprehensive enough to account for all the sounds in Thai. In this book we have devised a phonetic system based on how the language sounds when it's spoken.

The social structure of Thai society demands different registers of speech depending on who you're talking to. To make things simple we've chosen the correct form of speech appropriate to the context of each phrase. Thai is a logical language and despite some challenges, rattling off a meaningful phrase is easier than you might think. This phrasebook includes the script next to the pronunciation so that when all else fails you can open the book and point at what you want to say.

This book contains the useful words you'll need to get by as well as fun, spontaneous phrases that lead to a better understanding of Thailand and its people. The contact you make using Thai will make your travels unique. Local knowledge, new relationships and a sense of satisfaction are on the tip of your tongue, so don't just stand there – say something!

### **abbreviations used in this book**

<b>f</b>	feminine
<b>inf</b>	informal
<b>m</b>	masculine
<b>pl</b>	plural
<b>pol</b>	polite

Just about all of the sounds in Thai exist in English. While some people may find it difficult to pronounce Thai words, persistence is the key. Locals will appreciate your efforts and often help you along. Smile, point and try again. You'll be surprised how much sense you can convey with just a few useful words.

## vowel sounds

Thai vowel sounds are similar to those in the English words listed in this table. Accents above vowels (like à, é and ò) relate to the tones (see next page).

symbol	english equivalent	example
a	run	bàt
aa	bad	gàa
ah	father	gah
ai	aisle	jài
air	flair	wair-lah
e	bed	bén
i	bit	bìt
ee	see	bee
eu	her or french bleu	beu
ew	new with rounded lips	néw
o	hot	bòt
oh	note	đoh
or	for	pôr