

C A N D I D A T E   A D V I C E  
*Thailand*



THE ULTIMATE THAILAND SURVIVAL GUIDE



WELCOME TO THE LAND OF SMILES

**Your computer has too many distractions.....**

**Please print and study the enclosed information carefully**

## **Travel and Program Preparation**

Welcome! We are excited to have you join us in Thailand. Below you will find some information to help you prepare for your trip and during your stay. As always, 'Teach Abroad Thailand' program staff will be available 24 hours a day to answer additional questions and to provide assistance. We truly hope that your Thailand Experience will be a happy and memorable learning and living experience. We will do everything possible to make it so!

## **Your Obligations On The TEFL Course**

The TEFL course is designed to be a fun and interactive experience. Additionally you will have most of your nights and weekends free to explore the islands and beaches of southern Thailand. However, you will be expected to apply yourself to the TEFL training course, to make an effort to participate in all activities and to complete all required tasks. If your grammar or spelling is terrible then don't worry, you will be in good company!

## **Volunteer Program – Koh Samui**

Volunteers can teach for 4-6 weeks after training and accommodation for the duration of your stay is included in your package. You will be placed within a local school in one of many locations in Koh Samui however live in the Lamai area. We have 1-2 full time staff based on Koh Samui all year round to offer support and guidance throughout your stay.

All volunteers are placed with schools that are supervised by experienced English teachers who will provide you with ongoing training, advice and support throughout the duration of your placement. We usually have between 5-8 volunteers in Samui at any one time, so you will be part of a group of like-minded friends with whom you can explore the islands many stunning attractions and lively social scene.

You will usually teach around 5 days per week, Mon-Fri, between 8-4pm, which means that you will have plenty free time to explore the island, go snorkelling, take a scuba diving course or just chill out on one of the many stunning beaches. You will be teaching students of all ages, but the bulk of our students are Young Learners (4-12 years old). You may also have the opportunity to teach older students privately as there is a big demand for English tuition in Thailand. No degree is required for Volunteers.

## **Full-Time Teaching Program – Throughout Thailand**

Once you have completed your TEFL training, we will advise on how you can transfer from the training center to your teaching placement location. Upon arrival, you will be met by a representative from your host school. You will be working with one of Thailand's private or government schools. Your school will be supervised by experienced local teachers who will provide you with ongoing training in the use of professionally developed teaching materials and methods. You must be flexible in where you will be placed although your coordinator will do their best to accommodate you.

## **Teaching assignments**

A typical teaching load is 22 classes per week, depending on the school. In addition to actual time

spent in the classroom, participants are expected to devote time to Lesson planning, faculty meetings, and extra-curricular activities. Participants should assume a 35-40 work week.

### **Academic calendar**

The Thai academic school year begins in May. The first semester generally finishes in September and the second begins in late October or early November. The school year usually finishes in mid March. In between school sessions summer camps and specialized language programs are sometimes offered although most teachers prefer to go off travelling.

### **Accommodation**

The TAT program provides clean, comfortable & secure accommodation for all our participants during their TEFL course and volunteers for the duration of their program. Course trainees and volunteers will stay at our accommodation (just 5 minutes from the beach). Your furnished room will consist of a bed, air-con or fan, TV, fridge, toilet & washroom. Plumbing standards in Southern Thailand may not be comparable to what you would expect back home but you are assured that the rooms are very clean, comfortable and secure.

Please make sure you are respectful of the property and accommodation staff. When you leave the room, make sure the air conditioner and lights are turned off. Participants will be fined 500 baht each time they leave their air conditioner running in an empty room. It will be your responsibility to check out of your room at the end of your stay. Any damages to the room or missing hotel property will be charged directly to guests at the time of checkout.

Teaching candidates will be responsible for accommodation costs at the placement location. Housing is cheap in Thailand costing from 4,000 - 9,000 baht per month. In some cases the host school will provide housing or they will assist you in finding a suitable place.

### **Climate**

The average temperatures during your visit will be about 75 F. (low) and 89 F. (high) with high humidity and the strong probability of some rain showers. To cope with the hot humid climate, drink lots of (bottled) water, get adequate rest, keep in the shade when possible and wear a hat while in the sun.

### **Dress Code**

In Thailand, people dress conservatively especially in Bangkok. Cleanliness and neatness are highly prized.

In spite of the heat, most Thais don't wear short-shorts or sleeveless upper wear in places other than beaches or at swimming pools. It's appropriate that you have some conservative clothing to wear in public. Shorts should be knee length and shirts should not be low-cut. You can find clothing at prices far below those of Western countries. Light weight ready-made skirts, for example go for about 200 baht (around \$5.50)

***Beware: Asian sizes tend to be smallish!***

**During your TEFL course, casual dress is acceptable.** You will be in an area frequented by foreign travelers, so western-style dress and beach-wear are the norm. Shorts, tank-tops, and flip-flops are all fine.

Beware: your TEFL classroom will be air-conditioned, so a light jumper or long-sleeves may come in handy.

Once you begin your teaching placement, proper business attire will be required. Please make sure you have comfortable casual dress shoes, collared shirts or blouses, trousers or knee length skirts, and a couple ties for men.

### **DRESS CODE for PALACES/ TEMPLES**

Thai palaces and residence temples prohibit entrance in shorts, short skirts, tight revealing clothing, clothing that is torn or has holes, and sleeveless/low cut shirts.

Proper Dress for Visitors to Bangkok's Grand Palace and other royal palaces:

This is the dress-code, as issued to the public. It is strictly enforced and applicable to both men and women:

1. Shorts, short skirts, tights & tight fitting trousers may not be worn as outer garments.
2. See-through shirts and blouses, as well as quarter length trousers may not be worn.
3. Sleeveless shirts or vests can not be worn as outer garments.
4. Sandals without ankle covers or heel straps and socks should not be worn.
5. All shirt sleeves, whether long or short, cannot be rolled up.
6. Sweat shirts, sweat pants, wind-cheaters, pajamas & fisherman trousers may not be worn.
7. Women must wear below knee-length dresses. Slacks/jeans are not permitted.

If any of your clothing is not acceptable, Palace Security will loan you appropriate alternates, for which you are required to leave a deposit. Note: ancient temples that do not hold public religious ceremonies ("non-living temples"), do not enforce these dress codes.

### **Food**

Food from the street vendors In Thailand is cheap, tasty and safe. Always aim to eat when the food stall or restaurant is busy. Thai food offers an enormous range of dishes and a subtle blend of flavors. The country possesses an abundance of vegetables and fruit, herbs and spices.

Not all Thai food is spicy hot - indeed many dishes contain no chili (red or green) at all. However, as you begin to adjust to Thai food, it's wise to request that your dish be served "not spicy" mai phet or more to the point, "hold the chilies" mai sai phrik. You can always add spicy condiments later if you wish.

Drink only bottled or purified water. Water served in restaurants and food-stalls is purified and ice will also be made from purified water. If you have doubts about a restaurant's water, order bottled water and drink from a straw.

Thai, Northern Thai, Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Western food is available everywhere.

<http://bangkokpost.net/entertainment/restaurants/>

<http://www.northernthailand.com/cm/recipes/thai-recipes/>

### **Getting around town**

Thailand boasts a variety of public transportation options. Songthaews and tuk-tuks can be flagged down and will take you where ever you want to go for between 20 to 60 baht. Motorcycle taxi drivers are marked by colored vests and are the best option if you need to get somewhere in a hurry when there's traffic.

In Bangkok metered taxis, air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned local buses, underground subway, and above ground sky-train also make travel and orientation easy and convenient.

### **Health & Safety Tips**

Be careful when crossing the roads especially if you're not used to cars driving on the left hand side of the road. Look BOTH ways every time, as motorbikes sometimes do not follow the normal rules. If you see a motorbike coming towards you, STAND STILL. Do not try to jump out of the way as they will avoid you - trust me! If you decide to hire a motorbike, always wear a helmet and don't ever drive whilst drunk.

**Be careful when getting out a car/taxi as motorbikes often pass on the inside of the road. Look behind you each time before you open any car or taxi door.**

- Safeguard your passport, credit cards, cash, travel ticket.
- In tourist areas be on guard against pick-pocketing & purse-snatching.
- Drink lots of bottled water, sport drinks or carbonated drinks. Don't drink tap water. Don't wait until you are thirsty before you drink some water. Get into the habit of drinking bottled water throughout the day.
- Protect yourself from insects by wearing long-sleeves and using repellents.
- Protect yourself from the sun: wear sun-cream, hats, sunglasses, and avoid strenuous outdoor activity between 10:00 am and 3:00PM.

### **Jet lag**

We ask that you arrive a few days prior to the start of the program to give your body time to adjust. Vital to your body is drinking water and fruit juice at frequent intervals throughout your flight to avoid dehydration. (Coffee and alcohol increase dehydration and therefore should be avoided). To help adjust to the new time zone, try to stay awake during daylight hours when you first arrive in Thailand. Stretching and getting some minimal exercise in flight is strongly recommended.

[www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/](http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/)

### **Massages**

Thai therapeutic massage dates from the time of Buddha and can be a relaxing experience. One hour costs from 200 -350 B.

### **Money**

How much money to bring? Your expenses will be food, laundry, shopping, local transportation, communication, entertainment & perhaps travel during your free-weekends and holidays. Participants on our Full-time Teaching program will also be responsible for the deposit and rent for their apartments once they arrive at their teaching location.

The Thai unit of currency is the Baht, usually abbreviated to B.

<http://www.xe.com/ucc/>

Local food is safe and delicious: 20 -50 baht

Dining at international and seafood restaurants: 100 baht and up

Local beer: 50 – 70 baht

Bottled water: 5 – 10 baht

Public internet: 15 – 60 baht/hour

Laundry: 30 baht/kilogram

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Seat at the movies: 100 - 200 baht  
Group songtaew bus ride: from about 20 baht  
Studio apartment in Bangkok: 4,000 – 8,000 B/month. Deposit 2- 3 months rent

### **Newspapers/books**

The two main English daily newspapers are: The Bangkok Post and The Nation. At English-language bookstores (like Asia Books, Gecko Books, Bookazine, Suriwong Book Center, DK Books, Bookzone) you can find books, periodicals, etc.

### **Bathrooms/Toilets**

In the malls, hotels and restaurants of Bangkok and larger cities chances are that they will have Western-style flush-toilets. At times toilet paper is erratically supplied (best to have some with you!) and their toilets might have a separate water spray 'bum-gun'.

However, when stopping off at a restaurant, temple or gas station, they may have only Asian squat toilets. Nearby will be a ladle and a bucket of water, which are used to wash the body and to flush out the toilet after use. Paper is disposed of in a bin.

### **Shopping**

Prices are fixed only at department stores, malls, restaurants, and supermarkets. In all other situations it's up to you to use your bargaining skills to negotiate a price. Go shopping with a Thai and you'll have a definite edge. Bargaining is a game the Thais much enjoy, but remember that prices are much lower here, so be friendly & generous. Do not begin to negotiate a price if you have no intention of purchasing the object; this will only infuriate the vendor and waste his/her time. If the vendor agrees to the price you suggest, you are expected to buy it.

### **Tipping**

Hotel employees appreciate your thoughtfulness of a tip of 20 baht or so for their service to you. Be generous! Hairdressers appreciate a small tip, as do waiters in more Westernized establishments. A 5-10% tip would be fine. Tipping a taxi is not necessary.

### **Mail**

Incoming mail service tends to be slow. Airmailed letters from abroad can take from 6-12 days to arrive. Never have your family or friends send you cash or checks by mail (not even by registered or express mail). Outgoing airmail is quite okay. FedEx, UPS & DHL offer express service to Thailand but the best & cheapest choice is USPS Global Priority Mail.

Calling from Thailand to International Numbers

"THAICARD", or the CATPhone NET International card is a good option. Better still, is to use your mobile-phone which you will receive on arrival!

Also be aware that you can call via the Internet for free, or for 2¢ a minute to most international phones via "Skype" from a broadband connection using headset and mic:

[www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)

### **ATM cards**

ATM machines are to be found throughout Thailand and give information in Thai and English. Your [www.TeachAbroadThailand.com](http://www.TeachAbroadThailand.com)

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PIN number must be four numeric digits only. Before leaving, inform your local bank that you will be in Thailand and need your ATM card validated for overseas use. Be aware that many American banks now make a 3% add-on charge for withdrawals from overseas ATMs

### **Credit cards**

VISA and MasterCard are used widely in Thailand. Other US credit cards may not be accepted. Inform your credit card company that you will use the card in Thailand. Some Thai businesses make a 2-3% charge for using a credit card.

### **Electricity & Laptop Computers**

The electric current for the whole of Thailand is 220 V AC, 50 Hz. Dual-prong rounded plugs as well as two flat pin plugs can be used in sockets.

Most laptop computers work well with either 110v or 240v but first verify its electric voltage, and once in Thailand it's best to buy a power surge plug for the 220v current.

### **Culture**

Thailand has its own set of taboos and traditions, many linked with Buddhism and Animism. Thai society is based on hierarchic relations, the distinction between the "senior" and the "junior" position. Please note below some of these traditions which we, as visitors, should be aware of, and respect.

Thais are a warm, friendly, freedom-loving people, with a ready smile. They enjoy life and thrive on "togetherness". The traditional Thai greeting is a "wai" where the greeter presses the palms together in a prayer-like greeting, raising them to the level of chin, nose or forehead, depending on the level of respect and hierarchy. Those lower on the hierarchical scale should always "wai" those higher on the scale (e.g., students should wai teachers first and then teachers will return the wai, etc.).

### **The Thai King**

is not only loved but revered as a Buddha by his subjects, and the royal family are equally respected. Remember:

- publicly criticizing or defaming the King could get you arrested and is deeply offensive to Thai people.
- to rise with the rest of the audience at the beginning of a movie or sporting event during the Thai royal anthem
- all Thai coins and bank notes bear the King's image. Therefore handle the currency respectfully. (Never step on it or crush it.)
- postage stamps bearing the King's image must be right-side up on your envelope.

FYI, at 8:00 a.m., and 6:00 p.m., every day on Thai radio & TV stations the national anthem is played. The anthem is also broadcast at that time in all Thai public buildings, schools, hospitals and railway stations. During the playing of the anthem some people might stop what they are doing and stand still to show respect.

### **The Head**

is regarded as sacred. Avoid touching the head of a Thai person. Likewise, the foot (or soles of your shoes) should not be pointed at anyone or any religious image, and legs should never be propped up on chair backs or tables. When sitting on the floor in a temple or Thai home, your legs must be crossed or tucked away behind you to the side.



## **Shoes and footwear**

are regarded as unclean and should be removed before entering a temple or private home. Step over the threshold of a wat (temple) or home as you enter and exit, not on it.

In the temple visitors must be respectful of the Buddha images. Such images should not be touched or pointed at. Taking holiday photos in front of them can also be offensive, so much so, that cameras are forbidden in some temples.

Touching and public displays of affection between the opposite sexes is regarded as inappropriate by the majority of Thai people, as is kissing in public.

Shouting or showing anger is not appropriate in Thai culture. Confrontation is considered extremely rude and Thai people will avoid arguments of any sort. Thai people are taught to speak softly and never show excitement. It's always best to stay calm, relax and be patient. Do not show irritability or raise our voice to get your point across. If you lose your temper it will only reflect badly on yourself and it could very likely get you into trouble.

Thais use first names to address people even in formal situations. The polite form of address is the gender-neutral title Khun, followed by the first name. Every Thai person has a nick-name, generally of one syllable. Professors at schools and universities are addressed by the title Ajan followed by their first name, example: Ajan Dan.

## **Monks**

The monkhood is a respected institution that falls just below royalty in the social hierarchy. All Thai men usually become monks for a period of time at some point in their lives. As a sign of respect, Thai people will always offer their seat on public transportation to a Monk. It is prohibited for a monk to touch a woman or for him to receive anything directly from her. If a woman encounters monks, it is polite to allow them to pass by before proceeding. Also, if a woman has an offering for a monk she should use a middleman or place the item nearby for him to pick up.

## **Eating**

The spoon is used and the fork is only for loading food to the spoon. No knives are used with Thai dining. Chopsticks are used for certain Chinese dishes such as noodle soup. Beckon waiters, buses, taxis, etc. with the hand palm downwards, no waving!

## **Thai Language**

Thai is a tonal language and may be challenging to understand at first. Thai has 44 consonant letters and 32 vowel symbols including diphthongs. It uses no capitals and it is printed with few spaces between the words!

The Thai language is spoken throughout the Kingdom, however three Thai dialects are spoken widely: Northern dialect, Northeastern (Isaan) and Southern Thai. The Thai spoken in Bangkok & the area of Central Thailand is considered the official language.

If you can master a couple of words and phrases in Thai, people will be very appreciative of your effort!

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## TRAVEL REMINDERS

You'll need a signed passport, valid for at least six months beyond the end of the program. Make a copy of your passport's data page, visa, entry date, Thai departure card and keep those copies on you while in Thailand.

Luggage: Pack light. You are responsible for your bags, please don't pack more than you are comfortable carrying.

Photos: It's always helpful to have some extra passport-size photos (2" x 2") if you plan on traveling in the region for foreign visa applications.

Thai Visa: You should arrive with a valid NIB visa if you intend to work in Thailand or a tourist visa for the TEFL course or volunteering.

### Immunizations – Vaccinations

Questions regarding immunization and health advice are best directed towards a professional travel doctor. These doctors are highly experienced in health matters for international travel and receive the latest information on each country.

While Thailand does not officially require any vaccinations for foreigners entering the Kingdom, we recommend visiting a travel clinic in your area for advice on vaccinations for Thailand. Also get their advice on protection and medicine against travelers' diarrhea. Inform your doctor that you will be in large cities, in modern a/c lodgings and will not visit: farms, livestock, bird/poultry markets nor travel in any border areas.

<http://www.traveldoctor.co.uk/clinics.htm>

[http://www.travelersvaccines.com/EN/Clinics/Clinic\\_locator.cfm](http://www.travelersvaccines.com/EN/Clinics/Clinic_locator.cfm)

## PACKING

Choose what you pack carefully. After completely packing your bags you should be able to carry them by yourself up and down one flight of stairs. If you cannot, you have too much. Travel light. Almost everything that you will really need is available here, especially clothes, toiletries and stationary. You do not need to pack a six month supply of shampoo and toothpaste!

Do not pack or carry anything that you can not afford to lose. Do not place cameras, computers, or valuable jewelry in your checked bags.

Insure laptop computers or other expensive equipment you plan to bring.

### Recommended Packing List

Documents

\_\_\_ Passport

\_\_\_ Non-immigrant visa (will appear as a bar-coded sticker in your passport)

\_\_\_ Vaccinations

\_\_\_ Credit cards and ATM cards

\_\_\_ Travelers' Checks

\_\_\_ 10-12 professional passport-size photos of yourself

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\_\_\_ photocopies of your passport's first two pages

#### Health Care

\_\_\_ Prescription medication that you are already taking and prescriptions

\_\_\_ Sunscreen

#### Clothing

\_\_\_ Lightweight conservative clothing (polo-shirts work well)

\_\_\_ Lightweight jumper or jacket

\_\_\_ Comfortable shoes for walking

\_\_\_ Beachwear for the southern islands

\_\_\_ Flip-flops/sandals

\_\_\_ Thin cotton socks

\_\_\_ Hat with brim for sun protection

\_\_\_ Swimsuit

\_\_\_ Thin cotton undershirts (great for wicking sweat under business attire)

\_\_\_ Several button-down collared dress-shirts

\_\_\_ Trousers/ dress slacks or skirts

\_\_\_ Ties for men (not required for volunteers)

\_\_\_ Yellow polo-shirt (can be purchased in Thailand)

Please note: Women's clothing sizes larger than an American size 8 can be difficult to find.

#### Important Basics

\_\_\_ Day bag

\_\_\_ Camera, batteries

\_\_\_ Small alarm clock

\_\_\_ Watch

#### Other Conveniences

\_\_\_ Flat sheets and pillowcases that you like

\_\_\_ Sewing kit, scissors (pack in checked bags)

\_\_\_ Small towel or sarong

\_\_\_ Sunglasses

\_\_\_ Backpack for weekend travel and short trips

### RECOMMENDED READING

- The Art of Crossing Cultures by Craig Storti
- The Dream of a Thousand Lives: A Sojourn in Thailand by Karen Connelly (Author)
- Travelers' Tales Thailand: True Stories by James O'Reilly
- A History of Thailand by Chris Baker (Author), Pasuk Phongpaichit (Author)
- Culture Shock! Thailand: A Survival Guide to Customs and Etiquette (Culture Shock! Thailand) by Robert Cooper and Nanthapa Cooper
- Thailand: A Short History by David K. Wyatt
- Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand by Kamala Tiyavanich
- Buddhadasa: Theravada Buddhism and Modernist Reform in Thailand by Peter A. Jackson
- It Rains Fishes: Legends, Traditions and the Joys of Thai Cooking by Kasma Loha-Unchit
- The Food of Thailand: A Journey for Food Lovers (Food Of Series) by Kay Halsey, Lulu Grimes, and Alan Benson
- Two Years in the Kingdom: The Adventures of an American Peace Corps Volunteer in Northeast Thailand by Blaine L. Comeaux
- The River's Tale: A Year on the Mekong by Edward Gargan
- Culture and Customs of Thailand (Culture and Customs of Asia) by Arne Kislenko
- Do's And Don'ts in Thailand by Kenny Yee and Catherine Gordon
- A Land on Fire: The Environmental Consequences of the Southeast Asian Boom by James David Fahn