

Thailand



Capital:	Bangkok
Population:	64.6 million (approx)
Religion:	95.5% of the population adheres to the national religion of Theravada Buddhism. Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs account for the remaining 4.5%. Confucianism is also prevalent among the Chinese population.
Government:	Constitutional monarchy.
Ethnic Groups:	75% Thai, 14% Chinese, 11% other, including Khmer and Mon minorities. Indigenous groups include the Karen (hill people), Semang, Lana and Chao Nam (coastal nomads).
Language:	Thai is the official national language, also known as Siamese. A number of Chinese dialects, Malay and some English as well as several regional tongues are also spoken.
Currency:	Thailand's unit of currency is the baht, indicated by the symbol 'THB'.

- Located in the west of the Southeast Asian Indochinese Peninsula, the northern and western areas of Thailand are mountainous, while the central plain is the most fertile and densely populated area.
- From the 13th century to the early 20th century, the country was called Siam. The name was changed to Thailand in 1939. The name Thai means 'free'.
- Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia never to have been a European colony. The country consistently remained free of European rule (a point of great national pride to the Thais) and signed trade treaties with both France and Britain under the rule of King Mongkut and his son, King Chulalongkorn.
- Nearly 10% of the population lives in Bangkok, the country's capital and largest city.
- Continuing rapid industrialisation is resulting in massive congestion in Bangkok and a serious depletion of natural resources. Tourism is an important contribution to the economy but some aspects of tourism cause enormous difficulties. It is, for instance, the largest golf destination in Asia, but the number of courses is aggravating Thailand's serious water shortage.

Business and Social Etiquette

- Punctuality is a sign of courtesy. Foreigners are expected to be on time.
- The conventional greeting wai is made by placing both hands together in a prayer-like position, bowing slightly, and saying wai (pronounced 'why'). Thais will shake hands with westerners, but they will be pleased if you greet them with their traditional greeting.
- Business cards should be presented and received with both hands. If possible, have a translation printed in Thai on the opposite side. Titles are very important to Thais.
- Dress for success. The Thais are impressed with appearance because it indicates that you are of the upper class.
- Your initial meeting with Thai business people may be over lunch or drinks, so that they can get to know you. However, do not expect to discuss business over lunch.
- Always make prior appointments. The best times to schedule business appointments are 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Remember to allow for sufficient travel time in getting to and from any appointments in Bangkok as traffic congestion can cause lengthy delays.
- Be flexible and patient in your business dealings. Recognise that the Thais do not follow the same relentless work schedule that other cultures do. Allow sufficient time to reach your goal.
- In communications with Thais, give close attention to being thoughtful and considerate. For example, inquire about the health of a Thai and his or her family, or offer to do a favour. There is no need to go overboard however. For Thais, it is the thoughtfulness and appropriateness of a gesture that is important.
- Your openness in communicating with Thais will be appreciated, so long as you are pleasant.
- Never lose your temper or express anger to a Thai in conversation, and don't be overly assertive. The result is strongly counterproductive.
- Thais avoid confrontation at all costs. They will never say 'no', but will instead make implausible excuses or pretend that they don't understand English. Likewise, they find it difficult to accept a direct negative answer.
- If someone begins laughing for no apparent reason in a business meeting, change the subject. He or she is embarrassed.
- Never touch anyone – especially children – on the head.
- Never point your foot at anyone. Footwear should be removed before entering a private home or place of worship.
- To entertain a small group, take them to a western restaurant in a large hotel. Always include Thai wives in business dinners.
- If you are invited for a meal, bring flowers, cakes, or fruit. Gifts are not opened in the presence of the giver.

Language

- Thai names follow the English style; given name followed by family name. People rarely use their family name. They prefer to use given names in formal situations and often use nicknames in informal situations.
- A Thai given name should always be prefixed with Khun (or 'Ajarn' if the person is a teacher/academic) unless invited to do otherwise. For example, Khun Piyarat (Mr Piyarat) and Khun Boonrit (Mr Boonrit). Mr, Mrs or Miss are also acceptable but Khun is useful as it is not gender specific or an indication of marital status.

English	Thai	Phonetics
Hello	Sawat dee khrap	Sah-waht dee kahp (to a man)
	Sawat dee kha	Sah-waht dee kah (to a woman)
Good morning	(same)	(same)
Good evening	(same)	(same)
Good bye	(same)	(same)
Yes	Khrap	Kahp (to a man)
	Kha	Kah (to a woman)
No	Mai khrap	My kahp (to a man)
	Mai kha	My kah (to a woman)
Please	Dai prod	Dye prod
Thank you	Khob khun khrap	Cob koon kahp (to a man)
	Kohb khun kha	Cob koon kahp (to a woman)
You're welcome	Yindee	Yin-dee
I don't understand	Pom mai kaojai	Pom my dah-o-jye (to a man)
	Dichan mai kaojai	Dee-chahn my kah-o-jye

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