

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

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WELCOME TO THAILAND

Thailand, one of the world's most vibrant and fascinating tourist destinations, has for a long time captivated people from around the world. A rich cultural tradition, a wealth of natural beauty and wildlife, geographical and cultural diversity add to its allure.

The word "Thai" means "land of the free" even though it is more well known as "the land of smiles". When visitors arrive in this kingdom, they are greeted with warm hospitality, polite courtesy and of course a smile. This country of approximately 60 million people is also the only country in Southeast Asia that has never been colonized.

➤ **Geography**

Geographically well-positioned in the center of Southeast Asia, Thailand covers an area of 514,000 square kilometers, and has 4 distinct regions: the North, Central Plains, Northeast and the South. It is also a gateway to Indochina bordering Lao P.D.R. in the north and northeast, and Cambodia in the east. Other countries that share borders with Thailand are Myanmar to the north and west, and Malaysia in the south.

➤ **Climate**

Being a tropical country, the kingdom's climate is generally hot and humid throughout the year. There are three seasons: cool (November – February), hot (April – May) and monsoon rains (June to October).

➤ **History**

According to historians (Cummings 1997, pp. 10 –19), the Thai people originally founded their kingdom in Southern China and slowly migrated south into what is Northern Thailand today to establish their first capital, Sukhothai (1238 - 1378). The Sukhothai Period is considered as a prosperous era of Thai history, as it was during this time that King Ramkhamhaeng created the Thai alphabet.

In 1350, Ayutthaya became the capital and it was also during this period that Siam (the old name of Thailand) began diplomatic and commercial relations with foreign countries, especially those from Europe. This period of trade and prosperity lasted for 417 years. After 1767, as a result of a Burmese invasion that destroyed Ayutthaya, the capital was once again moved to Thonburi, which was closer to the sea and more convenient for foreign trade, as well as a better defense position against possible attacks by the Burmese.

In 1782, the capital was moved across to the east bank of the Chao Phraya River to Bangkok where it still stands today. This was the beginning of what is known as the Rattanakosin Period, as well as the beginning of the Chakri Dynasty. This era, which has continued up to the present, has seen Thailand progress through various social and economic developments including compulsory education, transportation links with neighboring countries and an enacted constitution for the benefit of all Thai people. The nine Chakri monarchs of which H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the present reigning king have brought about these reforms.

➤ **The Monarchy**

The Royal Family is deeply revered by the Thai people, so it is very important that visitors also show respect. Here is some advice:

- ◆ Don't in any way make any jokes or say anything sarcastic about the monarchy.
- ◆ Stand up when the Royal or national anthems are being played.
- ◆ Don't damage or tear anything that has a portrait of the King; it is against the law and you would get into serious trouble – just to put it nicely.

➤ **Religion**

Thailand accepts the practice of all religions, and Thai law has some special sections regarding religious offenses. Here are some tips.

- ◆ All Buddha images - old or new - are sacred, so don't climb, sit on to take a photograph or do anything else that might show a lack of respect. Also as the Emerald Buddha is the country's most sacred Buddha image, don't take photos. In other temples, churches and mosques ask for permission first.
- ◆ Thais always 'wai' (a gesture that you put your two hands together and bow) to show respect to a monk when they come face to face with him. A foreigner can show some sort of polite gesture, but don't get upset if the monk doesn't return it.
- ◆ Buddhist monks cannot touch or be touched by a female, or even accept anything from the hand of one.
- ◆ On a bus, train, boat or plane, a female cannot sit next to a monk even if it's the only seat free.
- ◆ When sitting in a temple or with a monk, keep your feet pointed away. The usual way to do this is to sit with your legs folded to one side with the feet pointing backwards.
- ◆ Dress neatly. Don't wear shorts, sleeveless singlets or go topless when going into any ancient or modern place of worship. Women should also wear a bra.
- ◆ In a Muslim mosque, males should wear a hat and females should be well covered with slacks or a long skirt, a long sleeved blouse buttoned to the neck and a scarf over the hair.
- ◆ While walking around a temple compound, it is OK to wear shoes but not inside the chapel where the principle Buddha image is kept or where there is an altar with a Buddha statue. If entering a mosque, take off all footwear.
- ◆ Don't enter a mosque if a religious ceremony is taking place.
- ◆ For Christians, if you wish to attend a church service, check first to see whether it will be conducted in English or Thai.
- ◆ **NOTE: If you wish to take a Buddha or any religious image back to your country, please check with the Fine Arts Department first and get the correct documentation. Don't believe what tour guides or shopkeepers tell you.**

GENERAL TIPS ON THAI CULTURE

The dos and don'ts of Thai culture are not clearly defined, and in some parts of the country including Bangkok, certain cultural traditions are still quite strong. Here are some pointers.

➤ **Phu Yai – Phu Noi and Phi – Nong**

Thai society is a hierarchical one where respect is given to one's superiors and elders. Social ranking can be set by various aspects such as age, wealth, status, personal and political power. For example, 'phu yai' status would include adults (vs. children), teachers (vs. students), seniors (vs. freshies), older siblings (vs. younger siblings), bosses (vs. employees), and so on. In return, 'phu yai' usually take care of or 'sponsor' 'phu noi' they have frequent contacts with, which are in the form of favors. Where possible 'phu yai' grants these favors; otherwise, they would lose face and social status. At any social event, 'phu noi' will always try to keep their heads lower than those of 'phu yai'. As a foreigner, when you meet someone who is a 'phu yai', the most courteous thing to do is to acknowledge them in a polite way.

So don't be upset if a Thai asks, "How old are you?" or "What do you or your parents do?" they are only trying to work out what your position in Thai society is.

➤ **Social Gestures**

Head : The head is considered by Thais to be the highest part of the body. As a result, don't touch anyone, including children, on that part of the body even in a friendly gesture. Also don't sit on pillows as they come into contact with a person's head. The only time you may see someone touching

another's head is to remove something that has fallen on that person's head, or when a young man or boy is going to become a monk and has his head shaved.

Feet : In Thailand, as the foot is the lowest part of the body, it is considered very rude to point your foot or any part of your foot at someone even if he/she is sitting opposite you.

Some other pointers :

- Make sure that your feet are not pointing toward a picture of any member of the Royal Family or a religious image.
- Don't put your feet up or stand on furniture, put them up in a cinema, or place them on books.
- Don't use your feet to push something or to open or close a door.
- If someone is sitting or lying down, don't step over their feet. If you are traveling around the country and encounter a sleeping traveler, give a gentle tap on the knee or if he/she doesn't wake up, push their legs to one side to make space for you to pass.
- Take off your shoes when entering a house.
- Don't step on the door threshold, step over it.

Hands : How you use your hands is also important.

- When giving or receiving things to others use either both hands or your right hand even if you are left-handed.
- Don't snatch.
- Don't point at people, especially with the forefinger.
- Don't throw anything to or at another person. Pass the item in a polite way.

Public Displays of Affection

This is frowned upon, especially in provincial areas. You may see a young couple holding hands but nothing more than that. Also don't hug someone to show your appreciation for something that he/she has done for you. A simple "thank you very much" is enough.

Dress and Nudity

- In general, dress modestly. When on campus at Chula, make sure that you are dressed appropriately as set out in the University's regulations.
- If you go to a government office, make sure that you dress neatly. Males should wear a shirt and long pants, and females a dress, skirt or long pants with a blouse.
- Don't wear sandals or slip-on shoes on formal occasions.
- Don't go topless and don't wear beach attire except at the beach. Females should also wear a bra.
- Don't sunbathe nude at the beach – it's illegal, and Thais find it very offensive. This also includes topless bathing.

➤ **Temper & Tolerance**

Thais are a gentle and tolerant race, so they generally don't get upset about the little things in life such as traffic jams, someone being late for an appointment or public phones being out of order. So losing your temper in any situation won't help – basically just stay cool, smile and you'll have no problems.

➤ **Other Titbits**

Don't sit on the hood or trunk of a car. It's considered impolite.

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➤ **Drugs, Touts and Scams**

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) receives over 1,000 complaints per year. The following are a few pointers:

Drugs

Don't become involved with any sort of narcotic drugs. Thailand has harsh penalties including death for drug offenses, and as you would be convicted under Thai law; your embassy would be unable to help you in this situation.

Also when traveling by train or bus anywhere in Thailand, be aware of 'friendly' people offering you a piece of candy or a soda, as it could be drugged. After you've lost consciousness, the thieves would take all your belongings, valuables and important documents.

Touts and Scams

- Be aware of unauthorized people who offer their services as tour guides. All authorized tour guides must wear a registration I.D. from TAT.
- Be wary of anyone telling you that today is a special day with special discount sales, or that you can buy precious stones or jewelry and resell it at double or triple the purchase price. This most probably is a scam.
- When shopping for anything always remember to make price comparisons. In department stores, prices are usually fixed whereas in most other places you can bargain.

NOTE : The Royal Thai Government and other official agencies do not own, operate, subsidize or authorize any jewelry stores, nor do they have any promotions, shows or special sales. Furthermore, all Thai embassies and consulates worldwide are not responsible for the refunding of any goods that are bought in Thailand.

STUDYING IN THE BBA INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

The BBA International Program has many advantages when it comes to international education. Not only do exchange students have the opportunity to study with an international faculty from various parts of the world, but they also have the chance to live and experience another culture and make friends, which will benefit them long-term business relationships.

As well as this, exchange students will have access to modern facilities such as computer centers and a self-access center that can be found on campus. We hope the following will also help you in your transition in our program, and that your studies are both safe and enjoyable. Besides this information, if there is anything else that you need to know about, please contact our office.

- **Academic Year Calendar**

There are 3 semesters as follows:

BBA Summer Semester	June – July
BBA 1 st Semester	August – December
BBA 2 nd Semester	January – May

- **Visas**

A non-immigrant "ED" visa must be obtained before leaving your home country. This can be obtained from any Royal Thai Embassy or Consulate.

- **Health Insurance**

Exchange students are required to have insurance before travelling to Thailand.

- **Student Affairs**

While you are on campus, the BBA Office and/or our student committee will assist you in academic or personal problems either upon request or upon reference by faculty and/or staff. Off-campus field trips and extra-curricular activities are also arranged for students as part of their studies.

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- Dress Code

There is a University uniform that all students are required to wear. As students advance from freshmen to seniors, this code becomes more relaxed. (The black Chulalongkorn tie usually disappears after freshmen year.) Regardless, all students should be aware and adhere to this code. Uniforms can also be purchased at the University Bookstore for approximately 1000 Baht.

For Men

White shirt
Long black trousers
Black Chula tie and belt
Socks
Dress shoes

For Women

White shirt
Black knee-length skirt
Chula pin and belt
Polite casual shoes

MISCELLANEOUS

1. CUSTOMS :

- ◆ *Prohibited Items* : All kinds of narcotics, obscene literature, pictures or articles.
- ◆ *Firearms* : Importing of firearms and ammunition can be done only after a permit has been obtained from the Police Department.
- ◆ *Personal Effects* : A reasonable amount of clothing for personal use, toiletries and professional instruments may be brought in free of duty.
- ◆ *Cameras* : One still-camera or one movie camera can be brought in without duty. 5 rolls of still-camera film or 3 rolls of 8 or 16mm movie-camera film may be brought in free of duty.
- ◆ *Plants and Animals* : Certain species of fruits, vegetables and plants are prohibited. Permission of entry of animals coming in by air can be obtained at the airport.

Note : Vaccination certificates are required for all animals.

2. VACCINATIONS :

There are NO vaccinations required to be taken before entering Thailand unless you are coming from an infected area in which case a medical certificate would be required. Please check the latest regulations with your local health authority.

3. TIPPING :

Tipping is not a usual practice in Thailand although it is becoming more common. Most hotels and restaurants add 10% if no service charge is added to the bill. Also taxi drivers do not require a tip, but if the traffic is bad or if they drive extremely carefully, they'll appreciate the gesture.

4. MEDICAL SERVICES :

Bangkok has some hospitals with foreign and/or English speaking doctors and medical staff. If travelling outside of Bangkok, it may be difficult to find an English-speaking doctor unless you are in a large city.

5. DRINKING WATER :

In general, tap water is only good for showering and brushing your teeth, but don't attempt to drink it unless you want your stomach to have some extra friends – boil it first. Drinking water can be bought in any shop or street stall that sells beverages.

6. LITTERING :

In Bangkok, there is a strict law on littering. The fine is 2,000 Baht and will be imposed on anyone who spits or litters in public areas. So please drop your garbage into a bin.