



GROUP TRAVEL 2008 PRE DEPARTURE INFORMATION GUIDE TO THAILAND

Thank you for choosing Jetabout Asia Vacations for your journey into Thailand.

Much has been said and written about the beauty of Thailand and the Thai people. One of the joys of a visit to Thailand is that despite its development, visitors have a special opportunity to experience the magic of the country and the authenticity of the Thai spirit. To assist with your travel arrangements we have prepared the following pre-departure information. Please read this carefully before you travel to Thailand and be mindful of some of our suggestions while you are traveling.

WHAT TO EXPECT

Thailand is a country with enough variety and captivating diversity to satisfy even the most discerning of travelers. It is a kingdom spread over 514,000 sq km with a population in excess of 61,000,000. A country which, unlike its neighbors in Southeast Asia, was never colonized by a European power.

Travelers to Thailand can explore deserted stretches of spectacular coastline, visit mountainous terrain in the north, stop at traditional hill tribe villages, see classic pagodas and temples, and experience famous Thai hospitality. This is a country of fascinating traditions, an intriguing history, and a warm, open approach to the presence of foreigners.

The travel industry in Thailand has been growing at a rapid pace for some time now and the country offers many facilities and services at western standards. However, traveling throughout the more remote areas of Thailand may involve some bumpy road conditions, trains that are prone to delay, and some clean but simple accommodation.

RESPONSIBILITY

Information herein was correct at the time of preparation; however the rapid development of tourism in Thailand has the potential to make some of the information in this guide irrelevant. This information is intended as a guide only and Jetabout Asia Vacations is not responsible for any inaccuracies. This document does not, in any way, alter the booking terms and conditions in our Jetabout Asia Vacations brochure. Please contact us with your comments if you find during the course of your travels that the information in this guide is incorrect or out of date.

VISA REQUIREMENTS & DEPARTURE TAXES

Of all the countries in which we operate tours, Thailand is perhaps the most visitor-friendly in terms of arrival. Holders of passports from Australia, New Zealand, the USA, UK and Canada do not need visas for stays of up to 30 days in Thailand.

To enter Thailand you will require a passport valid for at least six months from the time of entry. Tourist visas for stays of thirty days or less are issued on arrival at Bangkok airport. An arrival/departure card will be issued to you on the plane prior to your arrival in Thailand. The departure section of this card must be retained until your departure from Thailand. Please ensure this is kept in a safe place while in Thailand.

Please note that it is now law in Thailand to carry your passport at all times. For tourists, a photocopy will suffice on most occasions but the photocopy must be of both the entry stamp with arrival date in Thailand and also the page with photograph and personal details. Some bars or other establishments where entry is strictly controlled will only accept your original passport. If you fail to carry either your passport or a copy, this can result in a brief period spent in custody whilst the police establish your identity. Please also note that pick pocketing can occur in major cities and please take all due precaution when carrying your passport.

ARRIVAL INSTRUCTIONS

The ground operator taking you through Thailand is **Travel Indochina**.

If your arrival transfer from Bangkok airport to your hotel is provided by Travel Indochina (refer to your booking voucher), exit the customs hall and turn right in the direction of 'ATTA Group Exit' (if arriving in terminal 1) or turn left in the direction of 'ATTA Group Exit' (if arriving in terminal 2). Please then look for a Travel Indochina sign with your name on it. In the event that you do not see your driver, please go to the ATTA service counter and present your booking voucher, and your itinerary with emergency contact details. ATTA staff will assist you.

If you have no airport arrival transfer pre-arranged, metered taxis or Thai Airways Limousine taxis are available at the airport. Look for the 'Airport Taxi' company - or wait and they will find you (make sure the meter is turned on when you begin). You should not pay more than 500 baht to your hotel in Bangkok.

INSURANCE

Local medical facilities across developing Asia are often unable to provide the full range of medical services that are available in developed countries, making evacuation a requirement in many non-life threatening medical emergencies. The costs of evacuation as well as international standard care are extremely high. In the most serious emergencies, travelers may not be positioned to authorize payment for an appropriate medical response that is urgently required. This may delay or prevent the provision of critical and possibly life-saving medical attention.

It is a condition of travel on Small Group Journeys that all travelers are adequately covered by travel insurance prior to arrival. Insurance should cover personal accident and medical expenses, evacuation and repatriation, baggage loss, and cancellation or curtailment of holiday. Insurance details must be supplied to us at the time of booking, and where they are not provided we reserve the right to cancel bookings and apply charges as per our cancellation policy (in the Conditions of Reservation section of our brochure and on our website). Travelers will be asked to present their insurance details upon arrival in Asia as part of a registration process, and in the event that possession of insurance is unable to be confirmed, in the

interests of the traveler and fellow travelers, Travel Indochina reserves the right to prevent participation in the journey. In such instances, we will assist with onward travel arrangements, however full cancellation penalties will apply.

Note that travel insurance 'attached' to credit cards is often limited in scope (eg. not covering serious medical, repatriation or evacuation expenses) and in any case is usually effective only if travel arrangements have been purchased with the card. Please note also that government regulations in Asia do not always require or enforce the possession of liability insurance by hotels, transport and other suppliers. Even when insurance is in place, it can be for very limited coverage only. Travel Indochina does its best to work with suppliers who possess liability insurance, however it is not always possible to find and contract with such suppliers.

MONEY

The currency in Thailand is the Baht (BHT). Current approximate exchange rate:

- BHT32 equals 1USD
- BHT30 equals 1CAD

You are advised to carry a mix of cash and travelers checks (USD and CAD are accepted at currency exchange bureaus throughout the country). Credit cards can be used in most shops and restaurants in major cities. Visa and Mastercard are the most commonly accepted cards. Cash advances can be obtained using these cards at major banks throughout the country, and at ATMs.

CLIMATE

Thailand spans several climatic zones resulting in substantial weather condition variations between the north and the south. Average temperatures in Bangkok range from 70 to 95 degrees Fahrenheit with most rain in October. In Southern Thailand, tropical conditions prevail, and there are two seasons - wet and dry. The wet season lasts from May to October and is characterized by high humidity levels and a refreshing afternoon downpour. Humidity in the south during the months of June and July ranges between 75% and 85%. Northern Thailand has four seasons. The months from December to May are 'dry' and it can be quite cool at night. The months of July and August are the wettest, in the north.

BAGGAGE & CLOTHING

Standard-sized bags (preferably soft bags), backpacks or soft cases only are permitted on our journeys. Your baggage should be clearly labeled and kept to a reasonable minimum. Luggage limits on airlines are strictly enforced and space on vehicles and trains is limited. Some flights booked through Travel Indochina (domestic and international) have a luggage limit of 20 kilograms (44 pounds) per person. You may be required to carry your own luggage at times where porters are not available - you should be capable of carrying your own bags on and off trains, and up and down stairs. If you are doing lots of shopping during your travels, it may be necessary for you to forward any excess to the city where your tour concludes, or ship purchases directly home. Keeping the amount of luggage you carry in check will ensure your safety and comfort, and the safety and comfort of your fellow travelers. Porterage is not included in the cost of your journey; please ensure you pay porters around \$1USD per person for carrying your luggage. Should you wish to avoid such payments, please carry and take responsibility for your luggage.

Comfortable, casual clothing made of cotton is best in tropical and semi-tropical climates, and packing one set of smart casual clothes is advisable. Laundry services are available throughout Thailand, although laundry costs in hotels can be expensive.

We suggest you bring:

- Flat walking shoes & sandals
- Hat & sunglasses
- Swimming attire
- Money belt
- Lightweight waterproof coat or umbrella
- Basic first aid kit
- Alarm clock
- Small torch (flashlight)
- Power adapter
- Women's sanitary products
- Slide film or any specialized camera equipment (print film is available in main towns)
- Ear plugs

ELECTRICITY

The electric current in Thailand is 220 volts at 50 cycles. Electrical plugs of the two-rounded pin type are the most commonly required. You will need to purchase a power adaptor suitable for this region prior to your departure. You may want to bring a small hair dryer - not all hotels provide one.

HEALTH

Some of the diseases known to exist in Thailand include malaria, dengue fever, diphtheria, tetanus, and HIV/ AIDS. We recommend you take adequate preventative measures to minimize your risk of exposure to these health risks. We are a travel company and we are not qualified to provide detailed medical information appropriate to your individual needs. Western standard medical facilities are available in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Phuket but in most other areas of the country, medical facilities are basic. We therefore recommend you consult with your local doctor or a specialist travel medical centre for up to date health information on vaccinations and medicine for your trip, at least one month prior to departure.

We suggest you bring a simple medical kit. Your doctor should advise you what to include, but as a minimum we suggest you bring:

- Aspirin or paracetamol (for pain or fever)
- Antihistamines (for allergies and itches)
- Cold and flu tablets
- Something to stop diarrhea
- Something appropriate for nausea and vomiting
- Rehydration mixture (to prevent dehydration)
- Insect repellent
- Antiseptic and bandages
- Sunscreen and lip balm
- Antibiotics (discuss with your doctor)

As part of our registration process at the start of any trip with Travel Indochina, you will be asked to declare any serious pre-existing medical conditions or allergies.

FOOD & WATER

Thai cuisine is an exotic mix of the best ingredients and flavors that Asia has to offer. Fresh produce and seafood is plentiful, of good quality, and affordable. Thai food is renowned for being spicy and incorporates lots of garlic, chilies, lime, and lemon grass. Vegetarians are generally well catered for. Breakfast is included each day on our tours and is usually a mix of buffet and continental style. Lunch should cost around 3USD and dinner approx 6USD, depending on the restaurant. Bottled water is inexpensive and available everywhere. Do not drink the local tap water.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Thailand is generally a safe country and the usual commonsense safety precautions should be adhered to. We recommended that you take taxis rather than tuk tuks at night. Taxis are metered and inexpensive. You should leave valuables in hotel safety deposit boxes at all times and carry photocopies of your passport, credit card numbers, and airline tickets, and a detailed record of your encashed traveler's checks. These items should be kept in a safe place. Be wary of strangers offering you drinks and sweets and remember that Thailand has some very strict laws relating to drug use.

POST & COMMUNICATION

International mail is quite reliable and generally takes seven to ten days to reach its destination. Prices are slightly lower than western postal charges. International phone and fax charges are quite reasonable, and cheaper if made from a post office or telephone office. Reverse charge (collect) calls are possible but you may be charged a small fee. Email services are inexpensive and available in the major tourist areas, but connection is often slow.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Photo shops in main towns and cities are able to burn digital images to disc. These shops also sell memory cards and basic camera supplies. Print film is widely available in main towns and is of good quality at \$3USD to \$4USD per roll. Reasonably fast and inexpensive film processing facilities are readily available. Slide film and Hi8/V8 video cassettes are not widely available. X-ray machines at all airports in Thailand are film-safe.

HOTELS

Most of the hotels we use have private western style bathrooms, hot water, air-conditioning, satellite television, IDD telephones, laundry and other facilities. Some have swimming pools. Where possible we endeavor at passenger request to accommodate couples in double rooms. Please note however that on occasions during your journey, this may not be possible and a twin room will be provided. Some of our tours involve overnight stops at basic hill tribe villages, jungle bungalows, or a night on a simple but clean floating hotel.

Check in and check out times can vary but most hotels in Vietnam require guests to check out by 12 noon and do not allow check in until 2pm. Many hotels may allow an earlier check in or later check out subject to availability on the day.

TRANSPORT

On the road we generally use late model air-conditioned mini-vans or mini-coaches. Depending on the size of the group, we may use larger vehicles. Some tours include domestic flights on Thai Airways or Bangkok Airways. Some tours also involve a ten-hour rail trip between Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Accommodation is in a cooled sleeper carriage that is comfortable and modern. Sheets and blankets are provided and are clean and of high quality.

LOCAL TIME

Thailand is:

- 12 hrs ahead of Canada Eastern Time
- 15 hrs ahead of Canada Pacific Time
- 12 hrs ahead of US Eastern Time
- 15 hrs ahead of US Pacific Time

SHOPPING

Thailand is well known for its fabulous shopping. Ceramics, lacquer ware, silverware, wood carvings and jewellery are just some of the many good buys. Many travelers also have clothes tailored due to the low prices - standards vary. A few guidelines to follow when shopping:

- Except in department stores, bargaining is the norm. To get the best price you will have to haggle hard.
- Export of certain antiques and religious images (eg. Buddha images) is not permitted. Make sure you are aware of these regulations before purchasing.
- Fake reproductions are common. Make sure you know what you are buying, especially in the case of antiques.

MASSAGE SERVICES

Many countries in Asia are deservedly renowned for their massage techniques and the quality and value for money of these services. Unfortunately, many massage parlors including some in otherwise 'reputable' hotels are also linked to the paid sex industry. We advise you to check carefully before using massage services in Asia.

GROUP DYNAMICS

Our small group journeys provide you with a good balance of group activity and personal discovery. Travelers need to be aware of certain personal responsibilities when traveling with a group. Simple things like being ready at agreed times and keeping to schedule will ensure the smooth running of the program. Furthermore, the traditions and culture of the country you are visiting should be respected. Correct behavior includes wearing the appropriate dress when visiting religious sites and refraining from making comments or acting in a manner that would be viewed as unacceptable by your fellow group members or by the local people in the country you are visiting. Please ask your tour leader for further clarification of the issues mentioned above.

TOUR LEADERS & GUIDES

Providing the group tour reaches a minimum of seven passengers a western tour leader will guide you on your entire journey through Thailand. All our tour leaders have an in-depth knowledge of Thailand and an enthusiasm for the country that is contagious. Your tour leader is your link with Thailand and is there to ensure the smooth running of the trip. Your tour leader will try - wherever practicable - to cater for your individual interests. Local English speaking guides also accompany you on your tour. They impart local information about history, customs and culture that can only come from living in the area. Generally we have a different local guide for each city or region we visit and so local guides are usually only with the group for one to two days.

LANGUAGE

The Thai language is tonal and written in a Mon-Khmer script, which is very different from the Latin script. Because the language is tonal, the same spelt word can have several different meanings. This makes it fairly difficult to learn, but any attempt to speak the language will be well received by the local people. English is widely spoken throughout the country, especially in tourist areas. The Lonely Planet Thai phrasebook is recommended for those wanting to learn more about the language.

IMPORTANT DATES AFFECTING TOURING, AND COMPULSORY MEALS

01 Jan 2008 - International New Year's Day

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

21 Feb. 2008 - Makha Bucha Day

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

06 Apr. 2008 - Chakri Memorial Day

07 Apr. 2008 - Substitution for Chakri Memorial Day

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

13 to 15 Apr. 2008 - Songkran Festival Days

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

1 May 2008 - Visakha Bucha Day

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

05 May 2008 - Coronation Day

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

12 Aug. 2008 - H.M. The Queen's Birthday

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

23 Oct. 2008 - Chulalongkorn Memorial Day

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

12 Nov. 2008 - Loy Kratong Festival

Not a public holiday. Dates of this festival and compulsory meals rates at hotels TBA.

05 Dec. 2008 - H.M. The King's Birthday

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

10. Dec. 2008 - Constitution Day

Public holiday. Banks and public offices will be closed, as will some businesses.

24-25 Dec. 2008 - Christmas Eve

Some businesses will be closed but it is not a public holiday in Thailand and it should not affect touring. There will be compulsory Christmas Eve dinners at a number of hotels. The cost of these dinners must be settled directly with the hotel. At time of writing, 2006 compulsory meal rates had not yet been finalized. Please contact us for further information.

31 Dec. 2008 - New Year's Eve

There will be compulsory dinners at a number of hotels. The cost of these dinners must be settled directly with the hotel. At time of writing, 2006 compulsory meal rates had not yet been finalized. Please contact us for further information.

New Year's Eve is not a public holiday so there are no other effects on touring.

GROUND OPERATOR CONTACT DETAILS

The ground operator taking you through this fascinating part of the world is **Travel Indochina**. Travel Indochina has been running tours to Asia since 1993, and offers unique, innovative and exciting itineraries that allow you to experience the best a destination has to offer as well as giving you plenty of free time to explore.

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