

Thailand - OVERVIEW

Updated: April 21, 2014



Country Name Long Form: Kingdom of Thailand

Government Type: Constitutional Monarchy

Languages Spoken: Thai, Burmese, English

National Flag



Thailand is a Tier III Country. Significant security measures are necessary.

	Overall Assessment	Political Violence	Crime	Terrorism	Travel Safety
Thailand					
Key: (L) Low – (M) Medium – (H) High – (C)Critical					

POLITICAL CONDITIONS

Political Violence is rated at HIGH in Thailand

Anti-government protests – which sporadically attracted a few hundred to several thousand peaceful demonstrators – gained energy in November 2013 after the government passed a blanket amnesty bill that would have benefitted the highly controversial self-exiled former Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra. Since January 2014, demonstrations have blocked seven intersections and one to two bridges. Demonstrations have largely been festive occasions, with free food and musical performances but a string of nightly shootings and two daytime grenade attacks in late January raised concerns that the political conflict could turn increasingly violent.

Violence associated with anti-government protest activity since November 2013 has resulted in over 10 deaths and over 571 injured from incidents including drive by shootings, bombings, grenade attacks, physical confrontations. Political demonstrations are frequent in Thailand. Many are scheduled on the anniversary of political events, and others happen with little warning. Demonstrations can attract tens

Thailand - OVERVIEW

of thousands of participants and often cause severe traffic disruptions, especially if they include processions from one site to another.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is assessed as LOW

A major terrorist attack has not taken place in Thailand in recent years, although the threat remains viable. Terrorist attacks have been planned in recent years by groups attempting to target Israeli and other foreign targets; however only several minor incidents have occurred. The targets were suspected to have been Israeli diplomats in Bangkok, with this making the first attack in recent years that is believed to have been conducted by an external group. While the threat to terrorism exists and is a concern for those within the country, attacks of this nature are generally rare in Bangkok. Overall, as Thailand continues to be invested in Western and international interests, there are concerns that the threat of terrorism could increase.

RULE OF LAW / CORRUPTION

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2013 gave Thailand a score of 35, indicating that the country has medium levels of corruption. The CPI rates countries by the perceived levels of corruption in their public sector, with the least corrupt country receiving a maximum score of 100.

CRIME

Crime is assessed as MEDUIM

Crime threat in Bangkok and other Thai cities remains lower than that in many U.S. cities, crimes of opportunity such as pick-pocketing, purse-snatching and burglary are not unusual. Across Thailand, U.S. citizens have been robbed of their valuable and other possessions after soliciting the services of commercial sex workers. Thieves also victimize travelers on long distance bus routes. Police may refuse to issue reports to foreign victims of theft, requiring them instead to travel several miles to a central Tourist Police station.

Violent crimes against foreigners are relatively rare. However murders, rapes and assaults do occur. These crimes happen most often at night. Frequently, victims, both male and female have been drinking and are often alone or separated from traveling companions.

KIDNAPPING

Armed kidnappings are rare in Thailand but the potential threat, albeit small, still exists.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Thailand - OVERVIEW

Sexual motivated violent incidents, committed by both Thai citizens and visitors, are most likely to occur at parties, discos or beaches, such as the full moon party on Phangan Island. Some victims find that Thai authorities do not handle their cases with as much sensitivity or consideration for privacy as they would expect in the United States.

NATURAL DISASTERS

The monsoon season for the majority of Thailand occurs from mid-May to October and is characterized by rainy, warm and cloudy weather; the heaviest rains tends to occur in September and October. Flooding is possible during this time, particularly in October when the ground reaches saturation and unpaved roads may be rendered impassable.

Thailand is also prone to tropical storms, which generally occur from June to November. Tropical storms can however, occur at any time.

STANDING TRAVEL ADVICE

- Do not touch the head of others, as this portion of the body is considered sacred.
- Feet are considered dirty and should not be used to point.
- Instead of shaking hands, Thais sometimes place their palms together and raise their fingertips with the chest or face. This is called wai. Visitors are not required to wai waitresses, doormen and other people who wai you as part of their job.
- Stay in groups, travel in a caravan consisting of two or more vehicles, and stay on the main roads.
- Ensure that someone not traveling with you is aware of your itinerary.
- Avoid hotels that do not have adequate security.
- Intercity travel after dark anywhere in should be avoided.
- It is preferable to stay in the main tourist destinations.
- Pay close attention to your surroundings, especially when walking.
- Official taxis are a suitable means of travel in daylight hours in urban areas. It is highly recommended that taxis be arrange through your hotel, or program office. Negotiate the price in advance.
- Women should be especially careful when traveling alone and avoid staying out late without a trusted male escort.
- Make sensible security precautions to mitigate the risk of petty crime, particularly pick pocketing and bag snatching.
- Carry a photocopy of your passport when traveling to avoid losing it in a robbery.
- Do not resist if you are being robbed and avoid eye contact and to not make any sudden movements. Victims have been killed when they resisted attack or refused to give up their money or other valuables.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times and keep a low profile.
- Never leave your belongings unattended.
- Carry bags close to your body and make sure the fasteners are secure.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash or wearing expensive jewelry or valuables.
- Leave all important documents in a safe or safe deposit box at your hotel and only carry certified copies.

Thailand - OVERVIEW

- Trust your instincts. If someone or something makes you uneasy, avoid the situation.

Important contact details:

International dialing code: +66

International dialing prefix: 001

Victims of crime in should contact the following phone numbers for assistance:

POLICE: The local equivalent to the “911” emergency line is 191

FIRE DEPARTMENT: 199

AMBULANCE: 1669

Tourist Police: 1155

Tourism Authority of Thailand: 1672

Note: Police, ambulance or fire department response may be unreliable in some parts of the country.

TRAVEL & ROAD SAFETY

- The infrastructure in towns and cities in Thailand is generally developed.
- The road system in particular compares favorably with that of other countries in the region.
- Power, telephone and internet services are all well-developed in the main urban centers.
- The lack of pedestrian crosswalks requires special vigilance for all pedestrians.
- Tuks-tuks are three-wheeled motorized vehicles that operate in much the same way as a taxi, except without a meter. Due to offering limited to no protection in the case of an accident or opportunistic crime, they are dangerous and should be avoided.

RECOMMENDED TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS

- No use of ATMs after dark.
- No use of Taxis unless pre-arranged from trusted local company.
- No traveling alone after dark.

HEALTH

Thailand has an adequate health infrastructure. Hospitals and clinics of a high standard are available in the capital Bangkok, although such facilities are limited in the rural areas and on coastal islands. Serious

Thailand - OVERVIEW

medical emergencies in the more remote areas may require evacuation via air ambulance. Many medical practitioners are Western-trained and are able to speak English.

- Tap water in Thailand is generally not safe to drink and sterilized or bottled water should be consumed. This applies to water used for brushing teeth, making ice or washing foods.
- Pasteurized milk can normally be found in major cities, hotels and resorts. Unpasteurized milk should be boiled before consumption, or powdered or tinned milk should be used as an alternative.
- Fruit and vegetables should only be consumed if they have been peeled or cooked.
- Undercooked meat and fish should not be consumed.
- Food from street vendors should be avoided as this carries a higher risk of causing illness.

The following vaccinations are recommended or required if travelling to Jamaica:

- Hepatitis A (recommended)
- Hepatitis B (recommended)
- Japanese encephalitis (recommended)
- Typhoid (recommended)
- Yellow Fever (required for travelers arriving from a country where yellow fever is present)

It is also important to ensure that routine vaccinations are up to date for diseases including influenza, chickenpox (or varicella), polio, measles, mumps, rubella, diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus.

Significant Diseases:

- **Malaria** – A life threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. Malaria is particularly prevalent in the rural areas bordering Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar. There is no malaria risk in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Chian Rai, Pattaya, Ko Samui and Ko Phangan.
- **Dengue Fever** – A life threatening parasitic disease transmitted by mosquitoes. It is prevalent throughout Thailand, particularly during the rainy season (May to November).
- **Japanese encephalitis** – A virus caused by infected mosquitoes in Asia and the western Pacific. This particularly occurs in the north of the country, from May to October. Annual outbreaks occur in the Chiang Mai valley and sporadic outbreaks have occurred in Bangkok.

HOSPITALS –

Bang Pakok 9 Hospital
362 Rama 2 Rd. (362 Rama 2 Rd.)
Jomthong 10150
Tel: +66 28 771 111

Thailand - OVERVIEW

Bangkok Hospital Medical Center
33 Sukhumvit 3 (Soi Nana Nua)
Wattana 10110
Tel: +66 26 671 000
Fax: +66 26 672 525
Website: <https://www.bumrungrad.com/>

US EMBASSY – CONSULATE LOCATIONS

United States Embassy Thailand

95 Wireless Road
Bangkok
Tel: +66 (0)2 205 4000
Fax: +66 (0)2 205 4103
Email: acsbkk@state.gov

USF INTERNATIONAL HOTLINE

USF 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 813-317-5815

AXA Assistance 24/7 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE LINE: 1-877-577-9504 / +1-203-399-5130 (Call collect from abroad)

ASSIST ID #: GLMN 04983932. <http://www.culturalinsurance.com/resources/>

* Information derived from CIA World Fact Book, US Department of State, OSAC, and Travel Guard. This travel overview summarizes some of the most important concerns; however, it does not negate the need for detailed trip planning.