



choice
TRAVEL

Destination Guide: Thailand

What to know before you go
Essential preparation and planning tips
Accommodation and transport

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Who is CHOICE? Set up by consumers for consumers, **CHOICE** is the [consumer advocate](#) that provides Australians with information and advice, free from commercial bias.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

OVERVIEW

Best time to go, culture, language, health, safety, laws, watchouts, scams, emergency contacts and more.

Thailand is great for short trips, budget travel, luxury health spas and resorts, relaxing beach holidays, families, backpacking, and medical or dental tourism (read more on [cosmetic surgery](#) and [dental tourism](#)).

Travel-size tips

- › Australians can [fly to](#) Bangkok or Phuket in as little as six hours.
- › Australians [don't need a visa](#) to visit Thailand for less than 30 days, if they're visiting the country as tourists.

Know before you go

- › Thailand has experienced civil unrest and a military coup in recent years. Check with [smartraveller.gov.au](#) for the latest advice on safety in the area/s you're travelling to.
- › Despite the perceived party culture in Thailand, drugs are [strictly illegal](#) and convictions can lead to life in prison or even the death sentence.

- › Many tourists [rent scooters or motorbikes](#), but accidents are common and you may find out too late that you aren't [insured](#).

Best time to go

High season (dry season): November-March

Low season (wet season): July-October

Climate varies between the north and south of the country, and between the inland and beach areas. Check the [average temperature and rainfall](#) based on when and where in Thailand you're planning to travel.

- › Christmas falls in the middle of the high season when the weather is slightly cooler and the monsoons have ended. Expect crowds and inflated prices.
- › Some hotels shut down all together during the wet season, and boat services to islands may be delayed or cancelled because of storms.
- › The shoulder season (April-June) is also known as the 'hot season'. Temperatures may soar, but there's

usually less rainfall and fewer visitors.

- › Although most of Thailand is warm all year round, the northern upland regions, such as Chiang Mai, are much less humid and can sometimes get quite cold at night.
- › Northern Thailand, including Chiang Mai, experiences bad air quality from November to April when farmers burn off their crops. The smoke can cause breathing difficulties, eye irritation and can limit visibility.
- › Although the peak season is around Christmas and New Year, June can also be a busy time when European and Australian university students are on their mid-year holidays.
- › Songkran (Thai New Year) runs from April 13 to 15 and is celebrated with festivals and street parties. Accommodation is likely to be booked out well in advance.
- › The Loi Krathong and Yi Peng festivals usually fall in November ([dates change](#) each year) with locals and tourists launching glowing offerings into the sky and along rivers. The festivals attract huge crowds in most towns, Chiang Mai in particular.
- › Thousands of ravers hit Koh Phangan (Koh Phangan) for the famous [Full Moon Party](#) every month. If dance parties aren't your thing, check what the moon is doing before you visit.

Culture

- › Thailand is the 'land of smiles'. Confrontation is a much bigger deal there than in Australia so

avoid raising your voice or getting angry unless it's really a big deal.

- › Kissing in public, or doing anything more than holding hands, is considered inappropriate.
- › Homosexuality is legal in Thailand and is mostly accepted culturally, however public displays of affection are frowned upon no matter who is involved.
- › Thais are quite conservative and unfortunately women may attract stares or harassment if they wear revealing clothes.
- › Women and men should dress conservatively (long sleeves and long pants) when visiting temples and women should never touch the monks - not even their robes.
- › Thai people are extremely loyal to their king. Insulting or even joking about the royal family will not go down well, and it could even land you in jail.
- › Other taboos include touching a person's head, stepping over their outstretched legs, and entering a home or holy place with your shoes on.



- › Tipping isn't customary in Thailand but it is appreciated, particularly by low-income earners like hotel and wait staff.

Language

Most Thais speak little or no English, but you shouldn't have too much trouble communicating with people who work in the tourism industry.

The Thai alphabet is very different to our own, but signage is generally written in both Thai and English.

Make sure you have your hotel name and address written in Thai as well as English, in case you need to ask for directions or show a cab driver.

Health and safety

The Thai health care system has no reciprocal deals with Australia, which means if you get sick, you'll have to pay your own bills. If you find yourself in a public hospital, don't panic; the quality of care is good, although the waiting times may be long and the staff may not speak much English. Western-style private hospitals and clinics are common in cities and tourist areas. The bills can add up, and you may be asked to pay upfront or show proof of travel insurance.

- › Tap water is not safe to drink. To avoid sickness, particularly traveller's diarrhoea, drink bottled or boiled water, eat only cooked, fresh foods and ask for no ice in your drinks.
- › Mosquito-borne illnesses such as malaria and dengue fever are prevalent in parts of Thailand, so



remember to cover up and use repellent.

- › Many dogs, cats and monkeys carry rabies. Avoid contact with animals and consider a rabies shot before you go.
- › Medical tourism is a growing industry thanks to Thailand's lower hospital fees. Check CHOICE's guides to dental and cosmetic tourism to weigh up the risks and know how to spot a dangerous deal.
- › Thailand has experienced civil unrest and a military coup in recent years. Steer clear of street demonstrations and check with smartraveller.gov.au for the latest safety advice.
- › A University of Michigan [study](#) found Thailand's roads are the second-most dangerous in the world (Namibia won the top spot). If you're planning on driving, make sure you have the appropriate skills and insurance.
- › Violent crime is rare in Thailand, but you should still exercise caution, particularly in party areas such as Koh Phangan.
- › For the latest advice on risks including terrorism, conflict, natural disasters and potential outbreaks of

disease visit smartraveller.gov.au.

[Do I need vaccinations to travel to Thailand? > Page 7](#)

Tip: Have you registered your travel plans with smartraveller.gov.au and checked the latest safety advice on the region you're travelling to?

Laws and watchouts

Laws

- › Drugs are strictly illegal in Thailand. Don't be fooled by the party culture – drug convictions can result in the death penalty.
- › Some Australian medications may be considered narcotics under Thai law. Check the Thai government's [list](#) of controlled substances.
- › The legal drinking age is 20.
- › Thais don't drink and vote. If there is a local or national election happening during your stay, the sale of alcohol may be banned on election day, or even for the whole weekend.
- › It is illegal to deface images of the king – this includes damaging or even stepping on Thai money. Yes, this law is actually enforced and could land you in jail.
- › You must carry identification with you at all times.
- › Bribery is illegal. Still, you might find the [World Nomads guide to bribing Thai officials](#) an interesting read.
- › Littering can attract an on-the-spot fine of up to 2000 Baht.

› For road rules, see [Driving in Thailand > Page 16](#)

Watchouts

- › Many tourists have run into trouble with motorcycle and jet-ski hire. If you damage the vehicle (or even if the operator claims you damaged it) you could be up for a lot of money. Some tourists have even been arrested and detained until they paid up.
- › Pickpockets are less common in Thailand than in many other countries, but theft still happens. Keep your valuable close, and avoid flashing your cash.
- › Taxi drivers sometimes make unexpected pit-stops at gem stores and tour offices, or will even take you to the wrong hotel, claiming that yours has closed down. They are being paid a commission to do this. Stand your ground and insist that they take you to where you asked.
- › Bank card skimming and credit card fraud is a problem in Thailand, as it is in Australia. Cover the keypad with your hand as you enter your PIN, never let your credit card out of your sight, and let your bank know if you notice any unexplained



transactions on your statement.

- › Be careful using free Wi-Fi hotspots and avoid doing internet banking on untrusted connections.
- › See our list of tourist traps for more advice on avoiding common scams while on holiday.

Making a complaint

If you fall victim to theft or any other crime, contact the police (numbers below). The multi-lingual tourist police may be able to help you resolve disputes with businesses, but many tourists have complained that the police often side with locals.

Thailand has some [consumer protection laws](#) in place, but unfortunately they aren't upheld to the same degree as in Australia. Thailand's Office of the Consumer Protection Board has [guidelines](#) on how to lodge a complaint.

If your gripe is with an Australian tour operator, airline, or booking site, check [choice.com.au](#) for the [usual procedures](#) for making a complaint or seeking compensation.

Emergency contacts

If dialling from an Australian mobile phone, use the country code +66.

- › **Tourist police:** 1155

Note: The tourist police usually aren't actual police officers, but they're your best bet at getting English-speaking help in an emergency.

- › **Police:** 191 (some operators speak English and can

redirect your call to the necessary service).

- › **Ambulance and rescue:** 1554
- › **Fire:** 199
- › **Private air ambulance:** +66 2 586 7654

Bangkok Angloinfo has a [full list](#) of Thailand's emergency numbers (operators may not speak English).

Hospitals

Most cities and tourist areas have western-style medical care available at a higher price than the public system. Contact the tourist police if it's an emergency, or check [this list](#) of hospitals and clinics provided by the US embassy in Thailand.

Tip: Many hospitals offer private ambulance services. Consider calling the hospital before you call for a public ambulance.

Australian Embassy

[thailand.embassy.gov.au](#)

37 South Sathorn Road, Bangkok

+66 2 344 6300

Facebook: [australiainthailand](#)

Twitter: [@AusAmbBKK](#)

[Honorary Consuls](#) can provide limited assistance in Chiang Mai, Phuket and Koh Samui.

24-hour Australian Consular Emergency Centre:

+61 2 6261 3305 (from overseas) or 1300

555 135 (within Australia) or SMS +61 421

269 080



WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Visas, vaccinations, phone roaming, SIM cards, internet, power adapters, money, travel insurance, handy apps and more.

Visas and passports

Australia is one of a number of countries granted a tourist visa exemption by the Thai government. Australian passport holders can enter Thailand without a visa and stay for up to 30 days, provided they:

- are visiting for the purpose of tourism
- arrive by plane (visitors who arrive by land can only stay 15 days without a visa)
- have a passport valid for at least six months.

If you want to stay in Thailand for longer than 30 days, you'll need to [apply](#) for a visa in advance. You can't apply to extend your stay if you entered the country without a visa. Tourist visas are available for 30 or 60 days and are valid for three months from the date that they are issued.

Visa rules may change. For up-to-date information check with the Thai embassy: canberra.thaiembassy.org/visa

Vaccinations

You may need vaccinations before you travel to Thailand. Your doctor might recommend shots for hepatitis A, typhoid, rabies or other diseases, as well as malaria prevention tablets. Check The Travel Doctor's [Thailand fact sheet](#) and ask a doctor for advice based on your own health and travel plans.

Tip: Some vaccinations need to be given four to six weeks before departure, so get in early.

[More advice on health and safety in Thailand > Page 4](#)

Phone and internet

Global roaming and coverage

Thailand has excellent mobile phone coverage and there are very few parts of the country where you won't get a signal.

Australian mobile phones will work by connecting with local GSM networks, but if you use your phone more than occasionally, you're likely to see some big bills.

Check with your telco for roaming prices:

> [Telstra](#)

> [Vodafone](#)

> [Optus](#)

> [Virgin](#)

Tip: Switch off data roaming on your phone before you leave Australia. Likewise, switch off your voicemail and ask friends and family to text you rather than calling (you'll be charged if you answer incoming calls).

Local SIM

You can save money by using a Thai SIM card rather than your Australian account. Most Australian handsets only work on a GSM network - SIMs from Thai telcos AIS, dtac and Truemove TrueMove should all be compatible. (Check [the WhistleOut guide](#) for more information on phone/network compatibility.) SIMs and credit can be bought at Thai airports, convenience stores and phone shops.

Travel SIM

Pre-paid travel SIMs are another option, particularly if you're travelling to a number of countries or you like to be organised before you go. They can be found at some Australian travel stores, phone stores and post offices, or ordered online before you leave. Rates are unlikely to be as cheap as on a local SIM.

Remember: Your phone will need to be unlocked to accept a SIM from another network.

[Beat global roaming bill shock](#) – our guide to unlocking your phone and changing your global roaming settings.

Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available in most hotels and some cafes and bars, but speeds may be slow and you may have to pay. To search for free hotspots try [wificafespots.com](#) or download an app such as [WeFi](#) (Android or PC) or Wi-Fi Finder ([Apple](#) or [Android](#)). Popular tourist islands like Koh Phi Phi and Koh Samui have plentiful Wi-Fi, but if you're going off the beaten path to somewhere more remote, you may have trouble getting online.

Power plugs

Standard voltage: 220V

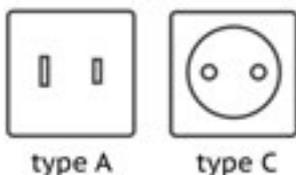
Frequency: 50Hz

Thailand uses a slightly lower voltage than Australia's 230V, and the same 50Hz frequency. The 10V difference between countries is only small, so it's unlikely to cause a problem with any appliances. Most



laptops, phones and chargers are designed to work on multiple voltages and frequencies, so they should be compatible (check how they are labelled if you're concerned).

Power sockets:



Thailand's power sockets and plugs are different to Australia's, so you will need an adapter. Since the country uses two different types of socket, a universal adapter is best.

Money

Currency: Baht (THB / ฿) (1 Baht is made up of 100 Satang)

Check xe.com for the latest exchange rates.

Important: Tell your bank about your travel plans two weeks before you leave. Card activity in a foreign country could be mistaken for fraud and you could find your account frozen.

ATMs

Cash machines are easy to find in cities and tourist areas, but remember you'll be charged a transaction fee and a conversion fee for using your Australian card. Some ATMs may not recognise foreign cards. If

you're going off the beaten track, ATMs may be hard to come by so take some extra cash.

Credit cards

Credit cards are accepted in most hotels, high-end restaurants and tourist shops (again, you'll be charged a conversion fee) but cash is still king on the street.

Money changers

Money changers charge no fees or commissions in Thailand, so you'll almost always get a better rate if you change your Australian dollars once you're in the country (although you may want to take a few Baht just to cover your first few hours in the country). Exchange rates will likely be higher at the airport than in banks or booths in towns.

Travellers' cheques

Travellers' cheques aren't so common these days, and you'll have trouble finding many places that can cash them - foreign exchange booths and banks are your best bet. According to Tripadvisor, only American Express travellers' cheques are accepted in Thailand.

Travel money cards

Travel money cards work in a similar way to travellers' cheques, only they're more versatile and are used just like debit cards. They can be pre-loaded with foreign currency and cancelled if lost. finder.com.au reports that OzForex, American Express, Travelex and Suncorp cards don't accept Thai Baht.

Tip: Carry at least two credit/debit cards and more than one cash currency (Australian and Thai). Split



your money and cards between separate bags. That way if you lose one, you have a back-up.

Taxes may come as a surprise on some bills. A 7% VAT is applied to all goods and services, and will sometimes not be included in the advertised price. Many hotels and restaurants will also add a 'service charge' or 'hotel tax'. You may be able to [reclaim VAT](#) when you leave the country.

For more advice, check the CHOICE [travel money guide](#).

Travel insurance

Travel insurance is essential. Buy insurance at the same time as you book your trip, that way you'll be covered if you have to cancel for some reason before you go.

To choose the best cover, see CHOICE's travel insurance [reviews and comparisons](#).

Ask your insurer about exclusions that may affect you, including scuba diving, jet-skiing, motorcycle or scooter accidents, as well as pre-existing medical conditions.

Be aware that anything that

happens to you while [under the influence](#) of drugs or alcohol is unlikely to be covered by insurance.

Tips:

Keep a print-out of your travel insurance details with you at all times while on your trip.

Share your insurance details with family or friends before you leave.

Handy links and apps

Consider adding these links and apps to your phone, tablet or laptop before you go.

Tip: If possible, choose apps that work offline so they won't chew up your mobile data or stop working when you're in remote places.

➤ [Travel apps](#) such as [Triposo](#) include maps and info about popular destinations. The apps work offline, so they won't chew up your mobile data.

➤ [Currency conversion apps](#) help you work out costs in Australian dollars.



- › [Language translations apps](#) can help with communication.
- › Search for free Wi-Fi hotspots at [wificafespots.com](#) or download an app such as [Wefi](#) (Android or PC) or Wi-Fi Finder ([Apple](#) or [Android](#)).

Tip: To save a map onto your mobile device for offline use, select the area on Google Maps then select 'Save offline map' from the menu and follow the directions on the screen. Your GPS positioning will still work on the saved map, even when you don't have access to the internet. Alternatively, download the Google Maps app, go to 'Offline maps' in the menu and select a city.

Websites

- › [tourismthailand.org](#) (Thailand's official tourism website).
- › [smartraveller.gov.au](#) for the Australian government's latest advice on the safety of the region you're travelling in.
- › [xe.com](#) for the latest currency exchange rates.
- › [lonelyplanet.com](#)
- › [tripadvisor.com](#)
- › [virtualtourist.com](#)
- › [wikitravel.org/en/Thailand](#) for crowd-sourced information on culture, travel tips and more (may not always be accurate).



ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE AND AROUND

Flights to Thailand, airport guides, key destinations, transport, car hire, accommodation, tours and more.

Flights

Flight time from Australia: 6+ hours

- › The main airlines that fly directly between Australia and Thailand are [Virgin Australia](#), [Qantas](#), [Jetstar](#), [Thai Airways](#), [Turkish Airlines](#) and [Emirates](#).
- › [Non-stop flights](#) are available from Sydney, Melbourne or Perth to Bangkok or Phuket.
- › Other airlines, such as budget carriers [AirAsia](#) and [Tiger](#), run indirect flights from Australia to Thailand, including to Krabi, Hat Yai and Chiang Mai.
- › Domestic flights and ferries connect with popular tourist destinations.
- › You can compare fares on airline booking sites such as [expedia.com](#), [skyscanner.net](#), [kayak.com](#) or with a travel agent. See our tips on [booking flights](#).

At the airport

Most Australian tourists won't need [a visa](#) to enter Thailand if they're visiting for under 30 days.

Passing through immigration and customs should be straightforward, but will depend on queues and whether or not officials take an interest in [you or your luggage](#).

Airport taxes are generally included in the cost of your ticket, but this may not always be the case - particularly if you are transiting in Thailand for less than 24 hours. Check with your airline or travel agent.

VAT refunds for eligible goods (but not services) can be [claimed](#) at the airport upon departure.

Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK)

- › 30km east of CBD.
- › Taxis are available outside gates 4 and 7 on the first floor. Fares should be metered plus a fee of THB 50 for the driver.
- › A number of car hire desks are located on the second floor, gate 8. See the [airport website](#) for a list of companies and their contact details.

- The [Airport Rail Link](#) can take you to the CBD in 30 minutes, stopping at six stations. There are faster express trains coming to the airport.
- [Bor Khor Sor](#) and [BMTA](#) buses, as well as [public vans](#), depart from the airport's Public Transport Centre, running to a range of locations.
- A [free shuttle bus](#) connects various areas of the airport, including the Public Transport Centre.
- Free bus transfers to [Don Muang Airport](#) depart regularly ([see timetable](#)) from the second floor, gate 3. The journey takes between 45 minutes and two hours, depending on traffic.
- Airport website: suvarnabhumiairport.com

Phuket International Airport (HKT)

- 30km to Phuket town. 40km to Patong. 35km north of [Ratsada Ferry Terminal](#) (to Koh Phi Phi, Koh Lanta, Krabi, Ao Nang).
- Metered taxis are available outside the main terminal. Fares include a 100 THB airport

surcharge. Check the [airport website](#) for estimated journey costs.

- A number of [car hire companies](#) operate from Phuket Airport, but remember you may get a cheaper rate if you hire a car in town.
- The air-conditioned [Airport Bus](#) runs to Phuket town via a number of other stops.
- Minibuses and limousines can be organised from within the terminal, or a shuttle service can be booked in advance (try phuket.com or phuketshuttle.com) - a good option if you need to request child seats.
- Many hotels offer a pre-arranged airport transfer.
- Airport website: phuketairportonline.com

Scam alert: If your driver tells you your hotel is “closed” and offers to take you somewhere else, or if they stop at a travel agency to “confirm your booking”, you’re probably about to get a hard sell on a tour or an alternative hotel. Stand your ground and never feel obligated to buy something you don’t want.



Key destinations

Airports		
Bangkok	Suvarnabhumi Airport	(BKK)
	Don Muang Airport	(DMK)
Phuket	Phuket International Airport	(HKT)
Chiang Mai	Chiang Mai Airport	(CNX)
Hat Yai	Hat Yai Airport	(HDY)
Koh Samui	Samui Airport	(USM)
Krabi	Krabi Airport	(KBV)
Surat Thani	Surat Thani Airport	(URT)
How to get to...		
Koh Phi Phi	Ferry (90 minutes) or speedboat (45 minutes) from Phuket.	
Koh Samui:	International flight or flight from Bangkok (50 minutes) or from Phuket (55 minutes), or ferry from Koh Phangan (20 to 50 minutes) or from Surat Thani (65 minutes to 2 hours 50 minutes).	
Koh Phangan:	Ferry from from Surat Thani (90 minutes to 3.5 hours) or ferry from Koh Samui (20 to 50 minutes).	
Koh Tao:	Flight from Surat Thani (70 minutes) or ferry from Surat Thani (6.5+ hours).	
Krabi:	International flight or flight from Bangkok (80 minutes) or ferry from Phuket (about 2 hours) or car/bus/taxi from Phuket (3+ hours).	
Koh Lanta:	Ferry from Krabi (2 hours).	
Surat Thani:	International flight or flight from Bangkok (70 minutes) or ferry from Koh Samui (2+ hours) or Koh Phangan (90 minutes to 3.5+ hours).	
Chiang Mai:	International flight or flight from Bangkok (75 minutes). Train/bus/car from Bangkok (10+ hours).	
Pattaya:	Car/bus/taxi from Bangkok (1 hour 30 minutes).	
Hat Yai:	International flight or flight from Bangkok (90 minutes).	

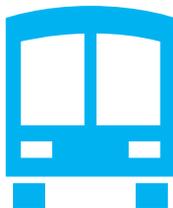
Tip: rome2rio.com is a great resource for working out how to get from A to B by any means of transport, anywhere in the world.

Getting around

Tip: Check if you need to pre-book any tickets.

Buses

Buses connect all major towns, cities, airports and tourist areas. Most are cheap and clean, and some are air conditioned. For a higher price, 'VIP' buses offer extra comfort and an on-board toilet for long-distance trips. Buses departing from the state-run BKS stations are the most reliable. There's usually no need to book ahead, but you can buy tickets in advance from bus stations or travel agents, or via the international site 12go.asia (for a small fee).



Tip: [Lonely Planet](#) warns: "We do not recommend using bus companies that operate directly out of tourist centres, like Bangkok's Th Khao San, because of repeated instances of theft and commission-seeking stops."

Trains

Trains connect much of Thailand, from Bangkok to Chiang Mai in the north, Hat Yai in the south, and on to Malaysia and Singapore (the Australian government currently [advises against](#) travelling to the southern border regions). Trains can take you to the Cambodian and Laos borders where they connect with buses. The train at Surat Thani connects by bus to Phuket and Krabi, and by ferry to Koh Tao, Koh Phangan and Koh Samui. Train tickets can be bought at stations, but if you want to book ahead, try 12go.asia or a travel agent. The official [State Railway website](#) only shows timetables and doesn't take bookings.



Ferries and boats

Ferries and boats serve popular tourist islands such

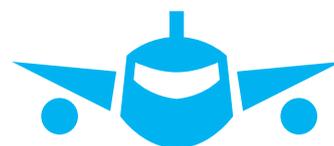
as Koh Phi Phi, Koh Samui and Koh Phangan. They also connect some coastal mainland towns, such as Phuket and Krabi. Ferry and boat companies are privately run, so



prices, booking procedures, speeds and even safety standards will vary. Often ferry tickets cannot be booked in advance and some boats may be overloaded at peak times. If you're concerned, ask your hotel, travel agent or a local tourist information service for a recommendation.

Domestic flights

Flights link Thailand's cities, towns and some islands. Almost all of



the country's airports can be reached via Bangkok. Airlines include Nok Air, Thai Air Asia, Orient Thai Airlines and Bangkok Airways. Search and book tickets through domesticflightsthailand.com or through an international search engine such as skyscanner.com or expedia.com.

Tip: Many domestic flights, particularly with budget airlines, depart from Bangkok's Don Muang Airport (DMK) which is about 45km from the main airport, Suvarnabhumi (BKK). Transport between airports can take between 45 minutes and two hours, depending on traffic.

Getting around towns and cities is best done on foot, bicycle, taxi or tuk-tuk (motorcycle rickshaw). Bangkok has an extensive bus and metro system. Taxis, tuk-tuks, minivans and private drivers are all readily available and can either be organised on the spot, or booked in advance via your hotel or travel agent. To avoid excessive haggling or rip-offs, make sure you have an idea of how much the trip should cost.

Tip: Taxis are generally metered whereas tuk-tuk

drivers will want to negotiate a price.

Car hire

Car hire is available from major airports, cities and tourist centres. Operators include Nu, Sixt, Budget, Thai Rent A Car, Avis and more. You will need an [international licence](#) – some companies may not rent to you without one, plus you run the risk of being fined by police or negating your insurance.



It goes without saying that you should make sure you and the vehicle are properly insured (through your travel insurance and through the insurance offered by the car hire company). Before you pay extra fees for vehicle insurance, check to see if you're already covered by your travel insurance for the same clauses.

Tip: Book with a well-known international car hire company. They're likely to be easier to deal with if you get into a dispute.

Find more tips in our [car hire guide](#).

Motorcycle and scooter hire is easy to find on the street in tourist areas. Most vendors are local small businesses and they may not check your licence (you'll need an international motorcycle licence), offer you a helmet (it's the law) or any kind of insurance (if you crash, you will probably have to pay for damages). Never leave your passport as collateral, and make sure your travel insurance covers you for injuries, as many policies exclude motorcycle or scooter crashes.



Warning: Foreigners have been arrested and detained by Thai police until they agree to pay compensation to locals for motorcycle or jet-ski crashes.

Driving in Thailand

Thailand's roads should be approached with caution. If you're planning on driving, make sure you have the appropriate skills, licence and insurance.



- › Vehicles drive on the left.
- › You need an [international licence](#) to drive in Thailand.
- › Seat belts are compulsory for those sitting in the front of the car. Child seats are optional.
- › The blood alcohol limit is .05%, or .02% for drivers who have held their licence for less than five years.
- › Mobile phones can only be used hands-free.
- › Right of way is generally determined by size of vehicle (ie. trucks trump cars, cars trump motorcycles, etc.)
- › There is no fast lane or slow lane on highways, and drivers will rarely indicate when changing lanes.

Accommodation and tours

Tip: Have you booked accommodation for at least the first night of your trip?

Accommodation ranges from beach shacks to five-star resorts and health spas. Prices may not be quite as low as in neighbouring Laos and Vietnam, but by Australian standards you can certainly grab a bargain holiday in Thailand.

Most hotels, resorts and hostels are easily booked online through sites such as [wotif.com](#), [booking.com](#) or a well-known local site such as [sawadee.com](#). Compare booking sites and the hotel's website (if it has one) to find the lowest price. Check reviews on [tripadvisor.com](#) before you book.

Tours can be organised through a travel agent or online through a major tour operator before you go (try [intrepidtravel.com](#) or [contiki.com](#)). But if you're only interested in short trips or day trips, you'll have more choice and probably find better deals once you're in the country.

If you prefer everything to be organised for you, consider a package deal from a travel agent such as [Flight Centre](#) which includes flights, transport, accommodation and sometimes even meals. ■

