

## Bangkok, Thailand Pre-Arrival Briefing



The Grand Palace of Ratanakosin Island

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## I. Country Description

**Thailand** (officially the **Kingdom of Thailand**), formerly known as **Siam**, is a country located at the center of the [Indochina](#) peninsula in Southeast Asia. It is bordered to the north by [Burma](#) and [Laos](#), to the east by Laos and [Cambodia](#), to the south by the [Gulf of Thailand](#) and [Malaysia](#), and to the west by the [Andaman Sea](#) and the southern extremity of Burma. Its maritime boundaries include [Vietnam](#) in the Gulf of Thailand to the southeast, and [Indonesia](#) and [India](#) in the Andaman Sea to the southwest.

The country is a [constitutional monarchy](#), headed by King [Rama X](#), the [tenth king](#) of the [House of Chakri](#), who, having reigned since 2016, after [a passed away of King Rama IX](#) the world's [longest-serving](#) and the [longest-reigning monarch](#) in [Thai history](#). The king of Thailand is titled Head of State, Head of the Armed Forces, the Upholder of the Buddhist religion, and the Defender of all Faiths.



Total population in Thailand is 69 million, and Bangkok alone has 9.7 Million inhabitants. The Thai labor force is characterized by a strong work ethic, low absenteeism, and high technical capability.

### **Language:**

The official language of the Thailand is Thai, although English speaker can be found in major hotels and restaurants.

## II. At the Airport

You will be arriving at the *Suvarnabhumi* International Airport. Below is a map of the terminal. There will be clear blue signs that will indicate the route to get to Immigration and Customs. After you go through immigration and retrieve your luggage you will go through customs.



### **Money exchange – Airport:**

This service is available in the airport. Be sure to bring U.S. Dollar to exchange for local currency which is Thai “Baht”. Average exchange rate is 1 US\$ = 33 Thai Baht.

### **Airport Taxi:**

After exiting Immigration, turn right and go down to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, turn right and exit the gate number 4, and you will find “Public Taxi” service counters outside of the arrival terminal. You will be asked the direction and received ticket for taxi airport surcharge at **50 THB, excluding toll fee and metered charge**. Approximate total charge from airport to the hotel in central city (e.g. the Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20) will not exceed 500 Baht, depending on traffic. No receipts are given by taxi.

### III. Accommodation

#### Hotel Information:

Address:



#### Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20

19/9 Soi Sukhumvit 20, Klongtoey, Bangkok 10110, Thailand

Tel: +66 (0) 2 009 4999 Fax: +66 (0) 2 009 4900

Complimentary shuttle Tuk-Tuk will drop-off guests at the top of Sukhumvit Soi 18. From there, it is a 5-minute walk to BTS Asok and MRT Sukhumvit stations. The shuttle Tuk-Tuk will be able to pick you up at the drop-off point. Please call the hotel in advance for this arrangement. Daily operating time is between 07:00 – 22:00 hrs.

#### Recommended transfer from the airport to Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20

Public taxi at Suvarnabhumi Airport is most recommended for safety reason. It is located on platform of passenger terminal on the 1st floor between gates 4 and 7. Fare is charged according to the traveled distance by a meter plus a fee of 50.00 THB for the driver. Toll fee is not included and you may prepare some cash around 100.00 THB. The total cost for one way should not exceed 500.00 THB or around 15.00 USD.

#### Map of Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20:



**FOR TAXI: โรงแรมโนโวเทล ซอยสุขุมวิท 20**

## IV. Safety & Security

### ***Crime:***

While you may have seen news of violence in Southern Thailand, near the border with Malaysia, and also the recent political conflict in Bangkok, Thailand, Bangkok is still considered safe. Foreigners have never been targeted in the recent political conflict. As anywhere precautions should be taken with wallets and purses, and in crossing the streets with motorcycles and vehicles.

### ***Natural disasters:***

Thailand is in a tropical zone which is subject to the influences of monsoons and tropical hurricanes resulting in natural disaster impacts, such as floods, landslides, droughts and wildfires etc.

During the rainy season (September to November) occasional flooding and landslides occur in rural areas and some city streets become temporarily impassable due to flooding. September and October normally have the heaviest months of rainfall. You should monitor regional weather forecasts and take local advice, and plan accordingly.

### ***Road conditions / traffic accidents:***

Traffic drives on the left side of the road. Most drivers are well mannered, almost polite, be only up to a certain point. Despite this, traffic is rather hectic in and around busy in Bangkok where calm driving is not really appreciated.

On many rural roads or even in Bangkok's small alleys, you will find motorcycles and occasionally cars and maneuvering against (one way) traffic. This situation is complicated by the fact that many of Bangkok's roads change their one-way direction at certain hours of the day (without proper traffic signs).

### ***Precautions:***

- Do not ride in unauthorized taxis or share one with a stranger.
- Do not leave valuables in cars or tables in restaurants/cafes. Keep nonessential valuable locked in hotel safes when not in use.
- Use credit cards whenever possible and do not let credit card out of your sight.
- Avoid carrying large sums of cash.
- Carry photocopies of your passport instead of the original.
- Walk with your bag away from the street to avoid having it snatched away by motorcycle thieves.
- If you encounter someone gesturing or honking for you to stop, do not stop until you have found a busy place with plenty of lighting before determining the problem.
- If you feel uncomfortable in any situation, get out of it.
- Keep your smart phone on your person, preferably covered with a jacket or shirt.
- Travelers should pay close attention to their credit card receipts before signing and be very observant when handing someone their credit card.
- The best way to avoid being drugged is to watch your drink being poured, never accept a drink from someone that you do not know, and do not leave your open drink unattended.
- Avoid the higher-crime "Red Zones" of Nana, Cowboy, Patpong and Khaosan areas.

## V. Health

Visitors are likely to experience is a case of a traveler's stomach from exposure to new microorganisms in the food. It is recommended to drink only from "clear bottled water" which is readily available at any convenience stores, kiosks and restaurants. **DO NOT** drink directly from the tap.

Food in restaurants should be fine, but always check that any street food or seafood has been thoroughly cooked. Intense tropical sun is another thing to watch. Wear plenty of sunscreen and a hat to avoid getting sunburned. If you go out for a hike or other activity, take plenty of water and keep hydrated.

Malaria is not present in Bangkok area, it is a problem in rural Thai areas. Dengue is a significant problem in Bangkok and visitors should take necessary precaution to guard against mosquitoes bite.

### **Vaccinations:**

For individuals arriving from Africa, remember to bring your Yellow Fever vaccination card, as Thai authorities may ask for proof. If you do not have it, they will vaccinate you on the spot before allowing the entry into Thailand. Regarding other vaccinations or general health issues, please check with your physician regarding any recommendations and/or go to the CDC travel link for Thailand <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinationThailand.aspx>.

### **Hospitals:**

Bangkok is regarded as a "medical hub" for Asia, therefore, most doctors and nurses speak English. The two hospitals mentioned below are located close to **Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20**. The hotel can help you get a taxi should you need to make a visit. Both hospitals recognize CIGNA card.

ChildFund has established a corporate relationship with **Samitivej Sukhumvit Hospital** in the event of problem.

#### **SAMITIVEJ SUKHUMVIT HOSPITAL** (20 minutes by taxi, no traffic)

133 Sukhumvit 49, Klongtan Nua, Vadhana, Bangkok 10110

Telephone: +66 (0) 2022-2222

Facsimile: +66 (0) 2391-1290

Emergency: +66 (0) 2378-2222

E-mail: [info@samitivej.co.th](mailto:info@samitivej.co.th) : [www.samitivejhospitals.com](http://www.samitivejhospitals.com)

#### **BUMRUNGRAD INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL** (20 minutes by taxi, no traffic)

33 Sukhumvit 3 (Soi Nana Nua), Wattana, Bangkok, 10110 Thailand

Telephone: +66 (0) 2667 1000

Facsimile: +66 (0) 2667 2525

Emergency: + 66 (0) 2667 2999

Out-patient Appointment: +66 (0) 2667 1555

Dental Appointment: +66 (0) 2667 2300

General Appointment: Make an appointment

E-mail address: [info@bumrungrad.com](mailto:info@bumrungrad.com) : [www.bumrungrad.com](http://www.bumrungrad.com)

## VI. Transportation / getting around

The best way to get around Bangkok is with the BTS (sky train) and MRT (subway), which provide an easy way to get around to the many shopping, business and commercial areas in central Bangkok.

BTS has two lines and MRT has one line that run through the heart of the city. Trains run every 3 – 6 minutes from 05:00 a.m. (For BTS) and 06:00 a.m. (For MRT) to mid-night on daily basis. The cost is between 15 – 42 Baht, depending on the number of stops you take.

Taxis are metered, numerous and inexpensive. NO receipts are given by taxi. Fares are calculated based on the distance (K.M.). However, given the amount of traffic in Bangkok and depending on the time of day, BTS and MRT are quicker and more convenient since you may spend more time sitting in traffic.



*Bangkok taxis in various colors.*



*All licensed Bangkok taxis require the driver to post an identity card.*

Registered taxis (like pictures below – yellow plate with registration number clearly visible) are the safest way to travel in city. Sharing a taxi with strangers is not recommended, and passengers should sit in the back of the vehicle.



## VII. Practical Information

### Getting cash:

Thailand's currency is Thai Baht, which is approximately 33 Baht to a US Dollar. There are 24-hour money exchange counters at the airport just after the customs area (before final exit) and in downtown. Around Bangkok there are money exchange counters, as well as thousands ATMs (also found at the airport) which disburse Thai baht.

**Credit Cards** - hotels, restaurants, supermarkets and department stores in Bangkok will usually take credit, or even debit cards.

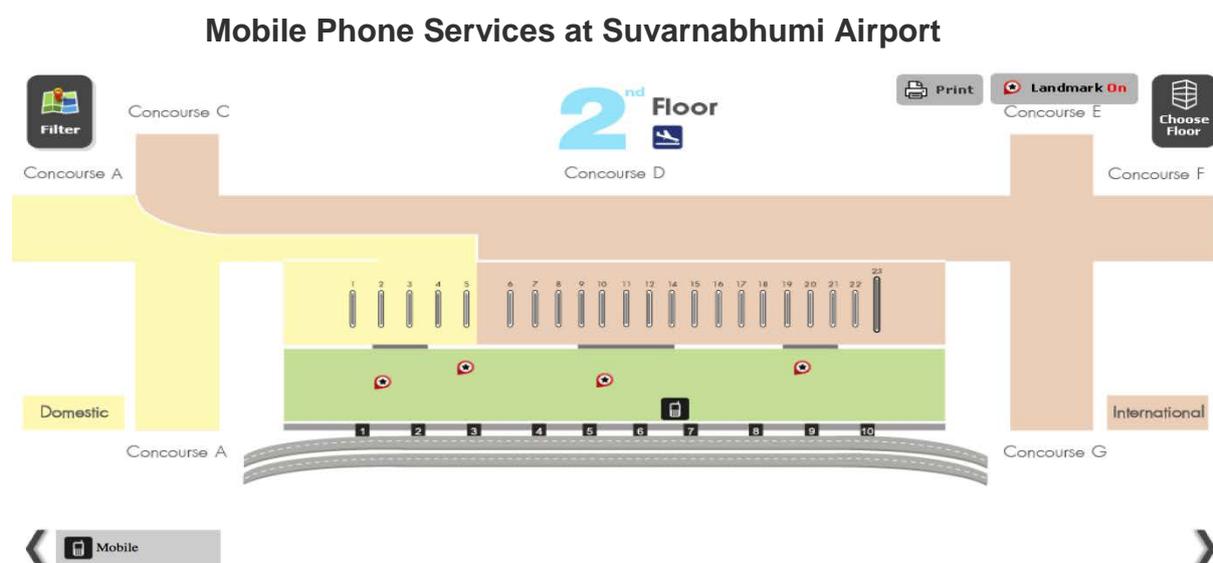
**ATMs** function on the Cirrus/Plus system, but they may not take cards with the Interlink symbol.

### Communications:

The new rule by the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) has been enforced since February 2015. To purchase a prepaid sim card in Thailand, personal details must be provided. Tourists who come to Thailand for a holiday and purchase a prepaid sim card will need to show their passport at the point of purchase in order to qualify as registered.

It is recommended to **purchase a local sim card upon arrival at the airport after custom**. Purchasing at a convenient store down town is not as easy as before due to the enforcement of the above new regulations.

You will find sim cards from one of these three mobile phone providers: **AIS One-2-Call, DTAC Happy, and TRUE.**



The international access code for Thailand is +66 and the outgoing international access code is 001 followed by the country code of the location being dialed (e.g. to dial Australia: 00161). All cellular numbers start with the number 0 and have 10 digits. Land line phone numbers have 9 digits.

Roaming agreements are in place with a number of international mobile phone providers and coverage is good in Bangkok. For best international calling rates, phone cards can be purchased at convenience stores throughout the country.

### **Time zone:**

Thailand Standard Time is 7 hours earlier than Greenwich Mean Time (GMT+7). Thailand does not operate Daylight-Saving Time.

### **Electricity:**



In Thailand 220 volts 50 cycles is typically used so it is necessary that you bring a universal adapter.

### **Weather:**

The local climate is tropical and characterized by [monsoons](#). There is a rainy, warm, and cloudy southwest monsoon from mid-May to September, as well as a dry, cool northeast monsoon from November to mid-March. The southern isthmus is always hot and humid. Average temperatures are around 30 – 40 degrees Celsius. Humidity is always high (more than 80%).

***“Bangkok is extremely hot, so take precautions against sunstroke and heatstroke, drink lots of liquids, and use sunglasses and sunscreen when going outdoors”***

### **Local customs / dos & don'ts:**

#### **Tipping**

In some restaurants 10% “service charges” are included in the meal. Otherwise, the usual amount for tipping is Baht 30.- or 1 US\$ if you eat in a restaurant. Tips are not required in the food court or street food vendors.

#### **What to Wear (Attire/Dress Code)**

Light casual clothes are recommended. ChildFund’s dress code is business casual. It is a good idea to carry a jacket or a shawl/wrap as indoor air conditioning is kept very cold in most offices and restaurants. To show respect for the Buddhist religion and culture, visitors of the Buddhist temples are required to observe proper dress code (no shorts or Capri pants, no bare arms).

**Don't say or act disrespectful** in any way towards the King or any member of the Royal family. **The King** and the Royal family are very highly regarded in Thai society, as evidenced by the pictures and displays of His Majesty and family everywhere.

**\*Lèse Majesté in Thailand:** Thailand’s Criminal Code has carried a prohibition against lese-majesty since 1908. It elaborates in Article 112: “Whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years.”

## Shopping:

### Department Stores

**Terminal 21:** The nearest shopping mall to **Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20** is located right next to the BTS “Asok” station, with connected walkways. There are plenty of choices for restaurants. The Food Court “**Pier 21**” on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor is very popular among tourists as well as Thais. This shopping mall is open from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

**Central Embassy:** Located near the BTS “Ploenchit” station with connected walkway. There are plenty of choices for restaurant as well. On the first floor, you will find an upmarket food court under the name “Eathai”. It offers local Thai cuisine from the different regions. Visitors to Eathai will be presented with a “food credit card” and can roam the spacious 200-seat zone, graced with live-cooking stations and sophisticated food kiosks, where you can place orders that are charged to your cards. The food is then delivered to your tables by Eathai staff. The mall is open from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. every day.

Further from **Central Embassy** just mentioned above, visitors will find numbers of shopping malls; for example, **Central Chidlom** at the BTS “Chidlom” station; **Central World** and **Narai Phand** when walking further from Central Chidlom. At the intersection of Central World, you will come to the **Four Faced Buddha** where people from various destinations in Asia are praying for good luck, blessing and thanking god. Walking further to the BTS “Siam” station, there are **Siam Paragon**, **Siam Center** and **Siam Discovery**, then **MahBoonKrong** or **MBK** at the BTS “National Stadium” station. Prices here are fixed for all goods at department stores except at MBK that you may prepare to bargain.

Another walking distance (15 minutes) from Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20, **EmQuartier:** is opened in May 2015. Coming out of Sukhumvit Soi 20, turn right, and walk towards to the BTS Phrom Pong station. It is located opposite to **Emporium** department store. Both stores have a connected walkway to the BTS “Phrom Pong” station.

## VIII. Useful contact information

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Mobile: +66 81 936 7455



### **Security Focal Points**

Meg Gardinier

Mobile: +1-917-226-8593

Humberto Flaco

Mobile: +1-915-249-8514

### **Emergency Phone Numbers**

Royal Thai Police: 191

Health & Accident Emergency: 1669

Ambulance and Rescue: 1554

Tourist Police: 1155