



The Ultimate Survival Guide To Thailand

By Alan Brewis

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Introduction

There is little doubt that Thailand well deserves its self-proclaimed title as '*The Land of Smiles*'.

Thai hospitality is arguably second-to-none, and the instinctive friendliness and tolerance of Thai people, together with a beautiful country steeped in history and culture, have made Thailand a holiday destination which has increased dramatically in popularity year-on-year.

However, it should not be forgotten that Thai culture is very different from Western/European culture in many ways, and it can therefore be easy to misunderstand gestures/tone of voice etc, or to unintentionally cause offence.

This book is not intended to be an all-knowing encyclopaedia on Thailand. There are many publications that already do that job quite admirably. Rather, this book is designed to provide the short-term holiday-maker with some essential basic information, and a few of the more common Thai phrases in a way that will hopefully help in understanding a little of the Thai culture - *and* encourage people to try to speak some Thai on their holiday. Hopefully this will add a sense of achievement and fun which would otherwise not be experienced.

Bearing this in mind, the language sections in this book do not go into great detail. For those wishing to learn more extensively about the Thai language, again, there is already a vast choice of excellent publications available.

There is little doubt that being able to speak even a few words and key phrases of Thai will add more enjoyment to any holiday in Thailand, and it can be guaranteed that your Thai hosts will greatly appreciate your efforts (no matter how bad!) and will respect you all the more for them.

‘Chock-dee’ (‘Good luck!’)

Alan Brewis

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General Information

The Thai Royal Family

It is vitally important for visitors to Thailand to understand that the Thai Royal Family is very highly revered by Thai people. One of the many things that makes Thailand so different and special is that, despite public opinions differing on aspects of politics and religion (as in most countries!), the Thai people are united 'as one' in their love and respect for His Majesty The King and The Royal Family. So much so in fact, that any actions, gestures, or comments which may (rightly or wrongly) be interpreted as disrespectful to His Majesty The King (or any other member of The Royal Family) can have serious consequences! This also goes for any representations of His Majesty or any other members of The Royal Family (e.g. Statues, pictures etc).

It is most unlikely that a Thai person would wish to seriously discuss anything in-depth about their Royal Family or Monarchy with a foreigner. However, with all due respect, I suggest that it would be prudent and wise to keep any personal opinions that may cause offence (or be misunderstood) entirely personal.

Religion

Although numerous religions and belief systems are represented in Thailand, it remains essentially a Buddhist country, and visiting some of the many beautiful Buddhist Temples ('Wat' in Thai) should be high on the *'Things To Do In Thailand'* list of any self-respecting tourist!

In most of the more popular holiday destinations you may well find that local 'Wats' have geared-up for tourists - providing refreshment and food stalls, souvenir stalls, ceremonial Thai dancing etc.

Almost without exception you will have many photo opportunities. However, in some Wats you may see signs forbidding the use of cameras, and this request should be respected.

When visiting a Wat you should dress modestly and respectfully. This means no bare chests for men, and no 'micro' fashion skirts, low cut tops, or bare shoulders for women.

Within the grounds of any Wat there will be buildings in which shoes/footwear should not be worn. If there are no obvious signs saying so, the numerous pairs of flip-flops and sandals outside the entrance should serve as a good indicator.

If you wish to enter the main building of a Wat (called 'Boat' in Thai) - which houses the statue(s) of Buddha - leave your footwear outside, and

remember not to step *onto* the doorstep, but to step over it to enter the building.

If you wish to enter any other buildings in the grounds of a Wat, firstly ensure that you are allowed to! There are private quarters for the male monks ('Pra!' in Thai), and female monks ('Mare-she' in Thai) which are obviously 'off-limits' to visitors. Look for indications that tell whether or not you can enter, but if there is any doubt, don't enter!

It is perfectly acceptable for any visitor to a Wat to enter the 'Boat' - whether for meditation ('Sa-ma-tee' in Thai), reflection, or simply to rest and relax for a while. However, when you are sitting on the floor, ensure that your feet are not pointing at an image or statue of Buddha, or at a Monk.

With this in mind, it is easy to avoid giving offence by sitting cross-legged on the floor, kneeling, or sitting with your legs to one-side and your feet pointing behind you.

If you come across a Monk in the grounds of a Wat, it would be considered respectful to 'we' as you pass them... ideally with your thumb tips just touching the tip of your nose whilst also bowing your head a little. (the traditional Thai 'we' greeting is covered in more detail later). Your gesture of respect will not go unnoticed, by either the Monk or any Thai person in the close vicinity -

although it is normal for such a gesture not be acknowledged, as Monks never wye to anyone except another Monk.

In some of the larger more popular Wats in Bangkok - which can, at certain times of the year be home to as many as 2/300 monks - it would be impractical to wye to every Monk you pass. It would, however, be considered respectful if you bow your head a little as you pass them... a simple and easy way to show respect.

Whatever your own personal opinion, belief or religion, it must always be remembered that images and statues of Lord Buddha are considered sacred by all Buddhists, and should always be shown respect. Having said that, it is, in some cases, acceptable to touch a statue of Lord Buddha, although in most Wats, touching the statues and images of Lord Buddha is strictly forbidden.

It should be obvious in most Wats whether touching the statues and images of Lord Buddha is allowed or not, however, if it isn't obvious, be guided by the actions of Thai visitors. If you have any doubt at all, the best option is to refrain from touching.

Special note!

It is strictly forbidden for male monks to have any physical contact what-so-ever with females. With this in mind it is crucial that any females (of any

age... even young children!) make absolutely sure that they do not ‘accidentally’ touch, or come into contact with, a male Buddhist Monk.

That said however, many monks (particularly in Bangkok and the larger towns) are learning to speak English, and, on the whole, quite enjoy talking to English speaking visitors (both male and female) - whether it be to practice their English in conversation, or to answer questions about Buddhism and/or their way of life.

Politics

As in the vast majority of countries throughout the world, ‘Politics is Politics’ and appears to be the same to any ‘outsider’... that is, complicated, confusing, and convoluted! It is highly unlikely that a Thai person would be interested in seriously discussing Thai Politics with a foreigner, as (just as in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland or anywhere else for that matter) discussing politics can be considered to be similar to ‘skating on (very) thin ice!’

This is a subject where personal opinions are best kept personal and—if asked— an admission of total ignorance on the matter (accompanied by the ubiquitous smile!) would be the safer and more diplomatic option!

Thai Life

Generally speaking, the vast majority of Thai people are quite philosophical about life. 'Taking things as they come'... and a tendency toward the philosophy that 'things happen for a reason' and that 'they are supposed to happen', is a basic tenet of Buddhist belief and Thai life.

Two words that you will probably hear fairly frequently during your holiday in Thailand are: 'Sabai' and 'Sanuk'.

'Sabai' can be interpreted as '*contented*' or '*relaxed*', whereas 'Sanuk' can be interpreted as '*to have fun*' or '*to have a good time*'.

Both 'contentment' and 'fun' are important to Thais, and your Thai hosts/friends will do their best to ensure you enjoy equal amounts of both!

Superstition

Most countries have their superstitions, and in this respect Thailand is no different from anywhere else. Whilst we in the U.K. have Friday 13th, black cats and four leaved clovers etc; in Thailand they have (for example) days when it is '*Good*' to do certain things (start a new business, move home etc) and days when it is '*Not good*' to do certain things (get your haircut, open a new shop etc). It

would be impossible to cite every instance of Thai superstition in this book, but I feel it warrants a mention if, for no other reason, than it may help in further understanding Thai ways.

Jy Yen-yen!

With the previous point in mind, it is definitely worth mentioning a phrase which may also help us 'Life In The Fast-Lane' westerners to understand another basic tenet of Thai life - that of 'Jy yen-yen'! Literally translated it means 'Heart cold-cold' (or 'cold heart'). However, whereas in the west this would be a fairly insulting thing to say to someone - meaning that they have 'no feelings' - in Thailand it is actually a compliment! Saying someone has 'jy yen' (or the even stronger 'Jy yen-yen') effectively means that this person is easy to get along with, doesn't get ruffled easily, and doesn't lose his/her temper easily.

As an example... if you are in a bus on the way to the train station to catch a train... and the bus breaks down, making you miss your train... no amount of shouting at the bus driver (or the bus!), or 'getting worked up' is going to bring your missed train back (or fix the bus!).

Someone having 'Jy yen' would be much more likely to stay calm and concentrate efforts in trying

to make other arrangements, or simply wait calmly until they can continue their journey - making the best of the situation.
This is 'Jy yen-yen'!

Nung, Song, Sahm! (1,2,3!)

Three bits of advice that may help you develop 'Jy yen-yen.'

1. Smile! In Thailand a smile is worth a thousand words (or more!)... in almost every situation!

2. NEVER lose your temper or shout at/get angry with a Thai person. It will get you nowhere, and...

(a) ... most certainly will *not* persuade a Thai person to help you or change their mind about something, and...

(b) ... you will lose respect and...

(c) ... you will be labelled as someone having 'Jy lawn' ('hot heart'), with behaviour not-becoming of a respectable and mature adult. 'Sweet

talking' and gentle persuasion is much more appropriate... whatever the problem!

3. Learn some basic Thai words and phrases to accompany your smile... it really can make all the difference!

Sex, Nudity and Chest Hair!

Whilst some of the major tourist hot-spots in Thailand have a burgeoning reputation for a developing sex industry (Bangkok, Pattaya, and Phuket for example)... contrary to popular belief, Thailand is *not* all 'Girlie-bars' and 'Sex shows'. In fact, whilst most westerners are fairly open-minded about sex, nudity, topless sunbathing etc, the ordinary Thai person is most definitely not!

For instance, whilst bikinis are now readily accepted in Thailand as beach-ware, although you will almost certainly never see a Thai woman wearing one (t-shirts and shorts being their more modest choice), bikinis are simply NOT appropriate anywhere else—in town shopping for example. The same goes for bare-chested men too—ok on the beach or within the grounds of your resort, but considered disrespectful anywhere else. In fact, in some parks around Bangkok it is actually illegal for men to walk around bare-chested, and doing so could well result in your being arrested.

****Special note for ladies!*** Sunbathing and/or swimming topless anywhere but in specifically

designated areas (and there are not that many) - whilst not strictly illegal - is an act that will not gain you much (if any!) respect from the local Thais.

Generally speaking, Thais (both male and female) find the sight of topless women, 'thongs', and 'posing pouches' incredibly embarrassing. If you must sunbath topless, wear thongs etc, it is sensible (as well as polite!) to stick to the beach. Even a short walk to a beach-side bar (for example) should result in you 'covering up' respectably.

Meeting and Greeting

Showing respect is of paramount importance in Thai society... from children towards parents/adults... between adults... from adults towards those in higher positions in society... and from everyone towards Monks, members of The Royal Family (including their images, statues etc), and Buddha (again, including images, statues, temples etc).

With this in mind it is important to realize that the famous Thai 'wye' (putting the palms of your hands together in a prayer-like fashion and bringing them up in front of your face) is not only a Thai gesture of greeting, but also one of respect.

A wye from any Thai person should always be returned, and although you may at first feel a little self-conscious in doing so, you will find after only a short time that it will become second-nature to you! Besides... it's a wonderful reminder that you are not 'just' on holiday... you are on holiday in a wonderfully different culture. Make the most of it!

As a general rule, a wye from children to an adult should be returned by the adult with a wye at upper-chest or neck level.

A wye from a Thai adult should be returned with a wye in front of your face, with your thumbs just touching the tip of your nose.

There are actually quite strict rules about 'wying', depending on a person's 'position' in society. However, as a holiday-maker you would not be expected to know these intricacies, and therefore returning a wye with the tips of your thumbs just touching the tip of your nose would be the best option (and considered more than respectful enough for the vast majority of situations).

If you find yourself in a situation where you need to wye to a group of people, the general rule of thumb would be to wye to the eldest/most important person first, but then to keep your hands up to your face and simply turn your head to look at the others from one side of the group to the other in a kind of sweeping 'all-inclusive' wye.

But...

There are a few occasions when it would be considered both respectful and polite for you (as a foreigner) to wye to a Thai adult before they wye to you... for example, when you are meeting (or being introduced) to someone for the first time... particularly if they are considered important by your Thai hosts (having a high social status for example), or if they are elderly (or even simply older than you). In situations like this, where you wye first, you will delight the Thai people present, particularly the actual person you wye to. Watch their face light-up as you show your respect not just for Thai ways, but also for them. You will immediately gain respect yourself, and your respect of Thai ways will be greatly appreciated.

Not only but, also...

The Thai wye is also the traditional way to say 'Thank-you' to someone who has helped you in some way, or given you something (a gift for example). Again, thumbs to nose would be more than adequate.

Shoes and Feet!

If you are visiting a Thai home (any home), do

remember to slip off your shoes/footwear before entering... leaving them outside the door. There very, very few exceptions to this rule!

As taking your shoes off and on will be a regular necessity during your time in Thailand, bear this in mind when packing! Lace-ups of any kind will present you with a problem, and it's not polite to make others wait while you untie/tie-up your shoes!

Footwear that can easily (and quickly) be slipped off and on is ideal... slip-on shoes or sandals for example (or even flip-flops for the less formal situations).

Always dress modestly and respectfully when visiting a Thai home. It would be considered far better to over-dress or to be overly conservative, so leave the shorts and bikini tops back at your hotel/resort!

When you are sitting with other people, ensure that your feet aren't pointing directly at anyone, and never use your feet to point at anything (yes, I know it sounds a bit obscure, and that you probably would never do such a thing, but it's important enough to warrant a mention!).

If you are sitting on the floor, it is easy to avoid offence simply by sitting cross-legged, or with your legs to one side and your feet pointing behind you.

*** *Special note for ladies!*** Wearing a short or

‘above knee-length’ skirt could make things a little awkward if you go anywhere that requires you to sit on the floor. Long, loose skirts/dresses are easier to manage, thereby avoiding the very serious social gaff of flashing!

Young love!

Although it is becoming increasingly more common to see young Thai couples walking hand-in-hand on the streets of Bangkok, displaying physical affection to a member of the opposite sex in public is still frowned upon by many Thais, particularly the older generations.

However, displaying affection to same-sex friends is both acceptable and a much more common sight. It is perfectly normal to see same-sex friends - both male and female - walking with their arms draped over each other’s shoulders, or holding hands.

If you are fortunate enough on your holiday to make a good friend with a Thai of the same sex, don’t feel embarrassed or offended if they grab your hand or put their arm around your shoulder when walking with you... whether you are male or female, they are simply saying “This is my friend.”

Health Insurance

At the risk of sounding patronizing, it is absolutely crucial to ensure you have more than adequate health insurance before you leave for your Thai holiday. Of course, the hopes are that you will never need it... BUT—to misuse an old cliché—‘health insurance is one of those things that is better to have and not need, than to need and not have.’

There really is very little point in trying to get cheap (or cheaper) health insurance by not disclosing ALL relevant information. The last thing you want is for your health insurance to be invalidated... particularly if you are unlucky enough to be in a situation where you need to claim!

An invalid health insurance could prove to be a very expensive problem indeed!

If you need to bring any prescription drugs/medication into Thailand with you, it is also worth bringing a copy of your prescription (or the tear-off part for repeat prescriptions). It proves your need is genuine... helps the pharmacy if you need to buy any of your medication whilst in Thailand... and, last but certainly not least... avoids any potential problems that could arise as far as bringing drugs into the country.

Special note!

Many Health Insurance policies exclude cover for

driving motorbikes (some completely... whilst some may provide cover up to engine sizes of 50cc), and/or dangerous sports (jet-skiing, rock climbing, Para-gliding, scuba-diving etc).

If you intend to hire/ride a motorbike, or have an active holiday - double check your policy to ensure you have adequate cover (or take out extra cover... just in case!).

If you are serious about renting/driving a bike or car whilst on your holiday in Thailand, don't miss the relevant sections in this book!

Pharmacies

All Pharmacies in Thailand must have at least one qualified Pharmacist, and those in the more popular holiday destinations will undoubtedly speak very passable English.

On the whole you will find pharmacy staff both friendly and knowledgeable and able to get most prescription drugs - although the more obscure or specialist medications may have to be ordered from a local hospital (or, in a worst case scenario, from Bangkok).

You will find that Thailand has an equivalent of most U.K. prescription or non-prescription drugs, and will dispense these on request with little

problem. However, for certain medications the Pharmacist may ask that you see a G.P. and obtain the equivalent of a prescription before dispensing.

Doctors

Unlike the U.K., many of the Doctor's surgeries may only be open for consultation at limited times. The usual reason for this is that the Doctor, as well as having his/her own practice, may also work in other areas, and, in many cases, may also work at a local hospital!

You may even find that the Doctor is actually a senior member of hospital staff, and, in some cases may even be a consultant!

Although this is not the case in every situation, it is surprising to find such highly qualified and respected personnel giving up their valuable time to work at a local level and with local people.

Needless to say then the quality of service, generally speaking, is quite high, particularly in tourist areas, where you can also expect medical staff to speak English to a greater or lesser degree.

Normally a surgery will dispense its own medications on instructions from the Doctor, and - compared to U.K. prices - you will find that they are quite inexpensive.

Hospitals

Much of what has already been said about Doctors can also be said of Thai hospitals too. Many hospitals in the more popular tourist areas will actually be geared-up for foreigners (and their insurance policies!), and some of them provide services that are not just quick and efficient, but would also put many a U.K. National Health hospital to shame!

If you are unfortunate enough to require the services of a hospital whilst on holiday in Thailand, you may (the situation varies from hospital to hospital) have to pay some money up-front (until your policy is checked out to see if you have appropriate cover), or get permission from your insurers (normally a fax). Any money paid up-front can normally be claimed back from the hospital once your policy has been approved by your insurers - assuming you are adequately covered.

Recreational Drugs

This section could easily be summed up using only one word...

DON'T!

However, in all conscience I couldn't leave it at that, and, with a little further clarification will explain why.

If you get caught bringing drugs into Thailand (or out of Thailand for that matter!) you **WILL** spend time in a Thai prison! Although Thailand still holds the option of executing drug smugglers, normally, for foreigners, this is commuted into a life sentence. **IN THAILAND A LIFE SENTENCE MEANS 50 YEARS** - and you WILL serve 50 years!

Even if you are repatriated back to the U.K. (normally only after 8 years) the arrangement between the U.K. and Thailand is that the remainder of the sentence **MUST** be served! There is only one other alternative... and that is that you are pardoned by His Majesty the King of Thailand. A pardon is both unlikely and very rare, and most certainly **NOT** to be counted on as a way out unless you have spent a very long time in prison, or have particular reason to claim clemency - although even then there is absolutely no guarantee of release.

If you get caught in possession of illegal drugs whilst on holiday, you also have a big problem. Forget all the stories about paying on-the-spot fines and getting away with it - the fact of the matter is that these days you will almost certainly be arrested and spend time in a Police Station cell before being

moved to a prison , where one of two things will happen:

(1) Your lawyer arranges bail for you (normally around the thousand pounds plus mark), and then you have to wait until your case ‘comes up’ ... or

(2) You stay in prison until your case comes to court (can be up to 5/6 months), where you will be sentenced and/or fined heavily.

Even if you can arrange Bail, the chances are that your passport will be confiscated and you will not be able to leave the country until everything is sorted out. This means - case heard in court, any sentence served, any fine paid, Lawyer’s bill paid etc.

You also run the risk of being blacklisted from Thailand, and having notes on your offence linked to your passport number.

Just in case there are not enough exclamation marks and capital letters in the former paragraphs to give you strong hints about how foolish bringing drugs into Thailand is... I will continue with a mention of the now infamous Full Moon Party held every month on Koh Phangan island in the Gulf of Thailand.

EVERY MONTH a number of foreigners are

arrested by under-cover police for possessing/dealing drugs (normally ecstasy, amphetamines, or marijuana). Those arrested are a great boon for Thailand's anti-drug policy, and are quite often paraded on TV. soon after arrest.

Although the U.K. has recently downgraded the offence of possessing marijuana, the fact that you come from a country that has a softer approach cuts absolutely no ice with Thai authorities. If caught, you can expect to spend a LOT of money, and a LOT of time before your life can get back to anything approaching normal, if, indeed it ever will!

* **DON'T** bring any illegal substances into Thailand!

* **DON'T** take any illegal substances OUT of Thailand!

* **DON'T** indulge yourself whilst on holiday in Thailand - no matter how tempting!

* **DON'T** buy any drugs whilst on holiday in Thailand! Thailand has a lot of under-cover police around AND people who will sell you drugs and then inform police for the reward.

FINALLY - purely for my conscience...

DON'T

It really is NOT worth the risk.

Money!

Currency in Thailand is the Thai ‘Baht’, and, as with all currencies, exchange rates vary on a day to day basis.

Cheque cards and credit/debit cards are now almost as much a part of Thai life as they are for us in the U.K., and, as such, there is little need to bring much, if any, Thai currency with you on your holiday—isn’t technology wonderful?

ATMs (cash points) are a common feature in almost any large town in Thailand - even more so in those that are frequented by tourists. The ATMs in Thailand recognize every major credit/debit card, making the withdrawal of cash (in Thai baht) very easy indeed. However, be aware that although some U.K. banks offer free A.T.M. use whilst abroad, most do not, and there is normally a fixed charge for this service... (at time of press this is around the £2.50 mark).

The ATMs are identical in every respect to those we have in the U.K. except for the names of the

representative banks. Simply insert your card as normal and select the 'English language' option when it appears on the screen. From then on it is simply a matter of entering the amount you wish to withdraw and waiting the short time it takes to verify your details.

There are only a very few exceptions when your card may not be recognized - for example, ATMs belonging to the smaller banks which may only provide services at a local level. However, these are now few and far between.

Most of the ATMs have a maximum daily amount able to be withdrawn. At time of press this varies between 10,000 baht and 20,000 baht (c150 pounds - 300 pounds), depending on which bank's ATM is used.

Special note!

Just as you would do back in the U.K., take precautions when using an ATM machine. Ensure your 'PIN' number is kept secret during use, and don't waste any time in putting both your cash and your card away safely and securely!

As a point of interest, be aware that Thai ATMs dispense the cash first and then give the card back! We tend to be creatures of habit, and in the U.K. the card is given first before the cash... therefore

we are in the habit of receiving the cash and then walking away—you would be amazed how many people take their cash and walk away leaving their card behind!

If you need to withdraw more than the daily cash amount allowed by ATMs, you will have to go to one of the major banks to do so. Most banks that have even light contact with tourists will, in all probability, have a member of staff who is able to speak English at a level to understand your request.

Getting your cash is a fairly straightforward process which requires you to show both your passport and your credit/debit card, and normally to fill in a simple form with your personal details. These are then checked by bank staff, and, assuming you have the available funds, your cash is then dispensed.

Internet banking is essentially exactly the same as if you were in the U.K. Simply look for an e-mail centre/shop (you won't have to look far!) and log on as you would normally do.

Again, as per using your ATM card, be aware that others may be able to see you type in your password/security information, as well as see your account details as they are displayed on screen, so taking a little care to keep your details private is in order.

E-mail/internet charges are very cheap compared to U.K. rates. The current charge has remained unchanged for almost 5 years at 1 (one) baht per minute. However, in Bangkok and the other larger towns, the rate can be up to 4/5 baht per minute if you use the rather trendier Internet Café/shopping mall centres.

If you do need to exchange money or change Travellers' cheques etc, do so only at registered money changing outlets, as changing your money anywhere else (many small shops, supermarkets etc will advertise this service) may well cost you an arm and a leg for service charges!

Try to keep some smaller denomination notes handy to pay for odds and ends. Paying for a 20 baht can of soft drink with a 1,000 baht note in a small local shop will not be appreciated!

Shops at a local level will almost certainly not have card swipe facilities, although some of the bigger stores in places like Bangkok, Pattaya, Hat Yai etc may have. Generally speaking though, shopping transactions tend to be cash only.

Trains, Planes, and Automobiles

Compared to the U.K., travelling around Thailand

by train or bus is remarkably inexpensive. With a couple of deep breaths and a bit of bravery, it is also relatively easy... although initial impressions can make it look daunting. The chaos that is part and parcel of every train and/or bus station is actually misleading... the term 'organized chaos' may be more appropriate, and booking a train or bus ticket is really just a simple matter of finding the correct booth!

In most stations, giving a member of staff the name of the place you wish to travel to is usually all that is needed to get you pointed in the right direction and to the correct booth.

If you are travelling by bus, the most luxurious option (and most expensive) will have only 3 large seats across the width of the bus - as opposed to the normal 4 smaller seats. All buses (except the cheapest wooden-seated 3rd class buses) will have reclining seats, air con. and toilet facilities. They will also provide a snack of some sort, as well as a bottle of water during your journey. If you are travelling at night, you get a blanket too!

Normally, at some point, the bus will stop for a short period (30 minutes or so) at a food stop, where a basic Thai-style meal will also be provided free of charge.

Many bus services travel through the night as well

as day, giving you the option of a bit of ‘fly-by’ sightseeing during the day, or sleeping (night buses). However, those of a nervous disposition may find the Thai ‘driving style’ rather nerve racking, and may prefer travelling by night when the roads are less busy - although it has to be said that accidents involving tourist buses are mercifully quite rare.

Taxis

You will almost certainly require a taxi from the airport to either the train station, bus station, or your hotel, and (similar to the U.K.) there are two kinds! There are the ‘***Taxi-Meters***’ - licensed cars with a ‘Taxi-Meter’ sign on the roof and a meter which (by Law) they must use for every fare... and the ‘***Taxi-cabs***’ which do not have meters, and often charge up to 3 or 4 times more than a metered taxi would charge! The law forbids Taxi-meters from soliciting customers, so these licensed cars tend to queue outside the airport or station etc in the taxi-rank, waiting for customers.

On the other hand, the cabs without meters have no such legal restrictions, and try very hard to solicit customers before they actually get to the taxi-rank holding the licensed taxi-meters! Due to the fact these cabs can’t park on the official taxi-ranks, they

usually have to park a short distance away, and tend to be very successful with tourists that arriving in Thailand for the first time! My advice is simple... ALWAYS travel in a licensed and metered Taxi-meter!

If you are travelling by Taxi-Meter in Bangkok, your journey may involve travelling on one of Bangkok's 'Toll' roads. If your driver uses one of these, it is perfectly normal for him/her to ask you for the cost of the Toll (usually not more than 30/40 baht), as this would not be included in the metered fare. The cost of the Toll is displayed on large sign boards on the approach, and so can easily be checked.

All-in-all you will find Taxi-meters cheap to use and, depending on the time of day, very exciting! Driving in Thailand (and particularly Bangkok) can be akin to either an exciting fairground ride or a 'Mad Max' race - whether you are in rush hour traffic or not! Those of a nervous disposition may wish to keep their eyes peeled to the floor rather than the road!

Trains

Where possible, travelling by train in Thailand can be a great alternative to travelling by bus. Ticket prices and journey times tend to be pretty similar,

but the train is the better option by far for those who may find travelling by road just a little too 'exciting', and - if travelling by night - the option of a fold-out 'sleeper seat' is available.

There are two alternatives when booking a sleeper seat - a lower bunk, where the seat converts into a bed... and an upper bunk which is latched to the carriage ceiling. The lower bunk has the advantage of the train window (providing both cooler air and a view), whilst the upper bunk has a small wall or ceiling mounted fan (which may, or may not, be in working condition!).

Both bunks will be prepared and laid out by a train attendant with clean sheets, a pillow and a blanket - usually around 8.00pm. The train also offers food and drinks (both non-alcoholic and alcoholic), and all-in-all, is considered the more comfortable and smoother option by most travellers. However, don't forget to take into account the possible need of another journey when you get off the train, from the railway station to your ultimate destination.

Buying your rail ticket couldn't be easier, as the main station in Bangkok has huge LED signs, in both English and Thai, showing destinations and platform numbers. Simply head for the booth which has your destination written above it. Each booth will have numerous destinations listed above its window, so tell the ticket clerk where you want to

go... just to be on the safe side!

Even in rural rail stations, it is simply a matter of stating your destination and paying for your ticket. You will find most staff friendly and helpful. If you worry about getting on the wrong train, show your ticket to one of the rail staff, and they will point you in the right direction. Your ticket will show you both the carriage and the seat number.

Flying high!

Depending on your ultimate destination in Thailand (and of course your budget!) an internal flight may be yet another option open to you.

Flights are now available to, or close to, some of the more popular holiday destinations, and again, compared to U.K. prices, are relatively cheap. Certainly they are by far the quicker option, cutting, for example the 12 hour train journey from Bangkok to Suratthani down to less than one hour's flying time!

Your travel agent should be able to organize these internal flights for you when you book your holiday. An added attraction to this option is that you may also have the choice of booking your luggage straight through from the U.K. to your final airport.

If you didn't, or couldn't, book an internal flight whilst booking your holiday, it is relatively painless to organize after you land in Bangkok. Simply make your way to the Domestic Terminal from the International part of the airport, and book/pay for your ticket. Staff at the International part of the airport will advise you on how to make your way over to the Domestic section.

Internal flights tend to be pretty regular these days, so there is usually only a short waiting time after booking until your flight.

Renting cars and motorbikes.

Motorbikes and cars can be rented in most areas that are popular with tourists. The motorbikes that are available vary from 100cc/125cc fully automatic scooter type bikes (no gears or clutch—simply twist the throttle and off you go) - to the semi-automatic moped-type bikes (foot change gear lever but no clutch to worry about) - and then up to the fully-fledged motorbikes that we are more familiar with in the U.K. which can range anywhere in engine size between 250cc and 1000cc.

The fully automatic and semi-automatic bikes can be rented for as little as a couple of pounds per day. The bigger bikes are obviously more expensive - depending on their engine size.

Motorbikes are terrific for local sightseeing and shopping trips, being economical as well as easy to park, and they are by far the most popular mode of transport...

HOWEVER... ... a very serious word of caution!

The code of conduct that we are used to seeing in the U.K. (as written in The Highway Code, and enforced by police) simply does NOT exist in Thailand... where traffic rules are rarely enforced, particularly in the more rural areas.

Driving tests are NOT mandatory in Thailand, nor is having a driving licence, and it is quite common to see children as young as 10 years old driving around on motorbikes!

Although there is a (sort of) road tax license, many bikes have never had one since the day they were bought, and you will even see numerous motorbikes and cars driving around with no license plates!

Although the general rule of driving is 'drive on the left' (as in the U.K.), there is an unwritten clause that goes something like '...unless it is inconvenient to do so, in which case drive on whichever side is easier for you'!

It is a very common sight to see motorbikes and cars heading towards you on the 'wrong' side of the

road simply because they are ‘not going too far and it makes things easier’!

Cars and lorries, as well as motorbikes, drive at break-neck speeds (ignoring any speed restrictions); tail-gate each other with only inches between them; overtake on blind bends; overtake on the inside—‘undertake’? —drive at night with no lights; rarely use indicators etc!

Add to this general mayhem a pretty relaxed attitude to drink-driving and a total disregard for other road users, and you STILL only have around 25% of the full picture!

If I am painting a rather bad picture of driving conditions in Thailand, it is with just cause. Unfortunately, many tourists get to see the inside of a Thai hospital for entirely the wrong reasons (are there any ‘right’ ones?), and, sadly, some never get to make the journey home.

In short, driving a car and, in particular, riding a motorbike in Thailand, should only be undertaken by EXPERIENCED drivers/riders, as it can be extremely dangerous to your health!

If, against all common sense, you do decide to rent a motorbike, be aware that MOTs also don’t exist in Thailand, and that rented motorbikes particularly rarely receive any preventative maintenance or get serviced regularly. They are (sometimes) only

washed and cleaned before being handed over to the next 'rentee'.

If you are not able to competently check the motorbike over yourself, get someone who can (ask around in your resort/hotel). Wheels, tyres, brakes, steering, lights and chain adjustment should be checked before a leg is cocked over any machine.

NEVER be tempted to rent a bike that is outside your experience. If you haven't ridden a motorbike before, Thailand is most definitely not the place to learn!

If you have only limited experience, you should not be renting a bike anyway, but if you do, stick to the smaller fully automatic bikes. If you have always wanted to ride a 'big' bike but never have, don't be tempted to rent one in Thailand... stick to the smaller bikes, and ALWAYS wear a helmet! If you are not offered a helmet, ask for one!

Once on the road, drive carefully, have eyes in the back of your head (i.e.: use your mirrors!) and be prepared for that huge cement lorry coming towards you on the wrong side of the road around the next blind bend!

It is very rare for motorbikes to have any insurance included with the rental, and if you damage your bike - or, even worse, cause or be involved in an accident, be prepared to lose a lot of money (even

more so if you injure a Thai person)!

TIP!

Take a ride around your local area on a motorbike 'Taxi' before you rent a bike. It will give you an idea of both the roads *and* the way other people ride/drive.

Cars - usually the smaller jeep-type models as opposed to saloon or hatchback cars - can usually also be rented anywhere there are tourists. Sometimes insurance is included, sometimes it is an optional extra, and sometimes it is simply not mentioned. Whatever the situation, seek clarification BEFORE you drive off into the tropical sunset!

It is also a very good idea to take a walk around the car being rented, along with the person you are renting from, before committing yourself or handing any money over. Check the vehicle for scratches and bumps etc, and make a note of them (or take photographs). This ensures you are not held responsible for them when you hand the car back - a common way for the less scrupulous car rental places to supplement rental income from tourists. It is also worth clarifying the petrol/diesel situation. Do you have a full tank to start with? Are you expected to return the car with a full tank?

Also give the car a check over... checking tyres and tyre pressure, lights, brakes etc. If you can't do this, find someone who can!

Again, as per the advice regarding motorbikes... drive carefully, use your mirrors, and be prepared for that cement lorry! It may help to keep in mind the cost of even a very minor accident!

POINT OF INTEREST No. 1

So many tourists have been injured and left with scars after having accidents on motorbikes that these scars have become known as 'Thai tattoos'.

POINT OF INTEREST No. 2

Some areas in Thailand now test for drug/alcohol levels of people involved in accidents... whether injured or not. If illegal drugs or alcohol are found in your blood/urine, the accident could well be deemed your fault... whether it actually was or not!

Tips on renting a car or motorbike in Thailand.

- Check the brakes, tyres, lights etc *BEFORE* you drive/ride off! If you can't, find someone who can.
- Clarify whether insurance is included or available, if it is—buy it!
- Check for scratches/damage *BEFORE* you

drive off.

- Clarify the petrol situation BEFORE you drive off.
- Take some time to get used to the car/bike.
- Maintain 'Jy yen-yen' AT ALL TIMES!
- Be aware that tail-gating is normal behaviour. DO NOT play the 'slam on your brakes to frighten him/her' game! There is the distinct possibility that you will be blamed for the resultant accident... if you survive!
- Use your horn (a short beep) to warn motorbikes that you are about to overtake them.
- Be aware that a car flashing its headlights at you is warning you to get out of the way, and not - as in the U.K. - 'inviting' you!
- Don't EVER lose your temper or start shouting/gesticulating at another driver/rider (especially if they are Thai). Things could easily and quickly escalate way out of hand if you do.
- Expect the unexpected AT ALL TIMES (particularly that cement lorry!).
- DON'T rent a motorbike unless you are an experienced rider.
- ALWAYS wear a crash helmet if you are riding a motorbike.
- Stick to the speed limits... even if no-one else does!

- Be aware of dogs, holes in the road, bikes on the wrong side of the road, drunk drivers, drivers/riders that don't indicate, drivers/riders that don't know how to drive/ride, AND that cement lorry!
- Re: dogs! Be aware that most dogs get out of the way if you sound your horn... I say again... MOST dogs!
- ALWAYS wear a crash helmet when riding a motorbike—yes, I know this has already been mentioned, but you'd be amazed how expensive brain scans are... and whether you needed the scan or not, the chances are that if you weren't wearing a helmet, your health insurance is invalid... very, VERY expensive!

Post Offices

Post Offices in Thailand are very similar to those in the U.K. You queue, hand over your letter/postcard, they tell you how much it costs, you pay, you stick the stamp on, and then you either give it back to them to put in the appropriate sack, or you do it yourself!

On average, a letter or postcard sent by normal mail will take around 10 days to reach the U.K. There is an option which is a little more expensive, but takes only 3 days. The choice is yours!

On the whole, Post Office staff are courteous and friendly, and in the tourist areas, will probably be able to speak some English.

If you need to send things back to the U.K. (parcels and packages etc), you pay by weight, which can, at times prove to be relatively expensive... obviously depending on what you are sending back.

You will need to wrap your goods well... ideally with a layer of plastic as waterproofing... but don't bother addressing it, as you will need to buy an appropriate sized regulation cardboard box at the Post Office in which to send your goods.

When you buy your box, you will also be given a length of string - which you use to securely tie up the box - and sticky labels on which to write the address, description of contents etc.

You have a few choices as far as posting the box is concerned. Normal posting will take approximately 10 days, but there is also a quicker (and more expensive) option which takes around 4/5 days. If you are really in a hurry, there is an even quicker (and even more expensive) option that will take around 2/3 days.

The options available can vary from area to area, so it is always best to ask.

Some Post Offices also offer E-mail facilities—refer to the following section for more details.

Telephones and E-mailing

Unless you are in the more remote parts of Thailand, calling home and E-mailing should not be a problem. The general maxim tends to be... if there are tourists around, there will be a need for E-mailing/telephone facilities.

These facilities can range from a small corner shop with a single computer terminal/phone line, to full blown internet cafes with Broadband and multiple terminals. These days you may even find that your hotel or resort has E-mail/international calling facilities.

Most (if not all) E-mail shops will also offer international calling at fairly cheap rates too.

More and more Post Offices are now offering high speed (usually ADSL) E-mail/internet facilities. However, you will normally have to buy a swipe card which holds credit (usually 100 baht), which can be used in Post Office terminals nationwide. Although you cannot buy less than the 100 baht swipe card, the plus factor is that the charge rate is (at time of press) a whacking 50% cheaper than currently charged by most E-mail shops... which means twice as much time for your money!

If you are a regular internet user or E-mailer, and

you happen to be close to a Post Office providing this service, then this is definitely the option to go for. However, you will ONLY be able to surf the net or E-mail at the Post Office outlets... they don't give any access to disk drives or CD drives, so transferring information (pictures from camera to disk, downloads from the internet etc) is not possible. If you wish to do this, the ordinary E-mail/internet shops are the places to go. Some shops already have webcams and microphones installed, making real time video conferencing and 'Skype' type calling possible.

Apart from the afore mentioned Skype calling, there are a few more options available to those wishing to call home - apart from the most obvious (and expensive) one, i.e. using your own mobile!

International calling via land-lines has already been covered earlier, however, depending on how frequent your usage is, it may be worth considering buying a Thai SIM card for your mobile phone—assuming that it is unlocked and able to use one. If your phone isn't unlocked, nip into a mobile phone shop (you won't have to walk far!). There are very few mobile phones that cannot be unlocked by a phone shop in Thailand. However, there *are* particular problems associated with UK mobile phones bought on the '3' network, and also with some Motorola models.

All of the main service providers in Thailand offer 'Pay as you go' SIM cards for as little as 5 or so pounds... and they normally have a little credit included too, usually 50 baht.

Just as in the U.K., these SIMs can be topped up with top-up cards which are readily available (7/11 stores, Family Mart stores, mobile phone shops etc).

Both texts and calls to the U.K. are far cheaper than using your own SIM.

If your mobile phone directory is saved to your phone rather than your SIM card, and your phone is unlocked, the change to a Thai SIM is as simple as taking your old SIM card out, and replacing it with your Thai SIM card! Don't forget to keep your U.K. SIM card safe!

If you are thinking about taking advantage of the cheap prices of mobile phones in Thailand, be aware that some may not unlock for use in the U.K., and if you have any problems with any but the well-known brands (Nokia, Motorola etc), they could well be next to impossible to fix under guarantee. Your problems could be even more difficult if you have been unfortunate enough to have been sold a 'copy' by a less than scrupulous dealer!

To continue on the 'less than scrupulous dealer'

subject for a little longer... although it is easy to get most mobile phones unlocked in Thailand, it has been known for those 'less than scrupulous dealers' to take genuine parts out of your phone whilst unlocking it, and replace them with cheaper copied parts. The genuine parts can then be sold on for more than the copies that replaced them! With this in mind, it may be best to stay while your phone is unlocked, and not leave it overnight.

Eating and Drinking

If you like food, and especially if you like spicy food (as in chilli), you are in for a real treat in Thailand - although it has to be said that even if you don't like spicy food, you are still in for a treat, as there is a huge choice of non-spicy dishes, and even most of the spicy dishes are as equally delicious without the chilli!

If you are adventurous in your eating habits, you may also want to try some of the more unusual exotic delicacies that Thailand has to offer, such as grasshopper, silk worm cases, spider, grubs, snake, beetles, frogs, lizard etc! The choice varies, depending on which areas in Thailand you are visiting.

However, if your tastes are less adventurous, you can still tickle your taste buds by trying some of the

many fruits and vegetables that are available in Thailand. The range of fruits, in particular, is quite staggering, covering the full range from incredibly sweet to incredibly bitter. However, where the **Durian** fruit fits in I will leave up to you, as opinions differ wildly! Make a point of trying a piece... I guarantee that, one way or the other you will never forget the experience!

If you want to see the range of fruits and vegetables available in Thailand, simply take a walk around your nearest market. Be warned however, most markets open around dawn—some even earlier—so you will need to be up very early!

As in most Asian countries, the meals tend to revolve around either rice or noodles of some sort (and there are a myriad ways of cooking/preparing them both!), but it is the side-dishes that tend to attract most attention, and not just for their taste! Thailand is as famous for its food presentation as it is for its cooking, and you will see foods that have had (in some cases) hours of precise and skilful carving just to look good on your plate before you eat it!

It is no understatement to say that some of the food carving you will see in Thailand could justifiably be called pieces of art!

Vegetarianism/Veganism

Most Westerners tend to assume that Thailand, being essentially a Buddhist Country, revolves around a mainly Vegetarian diet. However, rather surprisingly, being a Vegetarian or Vegan is not quite as easy as most would think (although it is certainly not a problem).

Most meals have a large meat element of some sort or another, and, unless you state otherwise, it is almost certain that you will be assumed to be a meat eater.

However, that said, Vegetarianism automatically comes with a badge of respect, as being something worthy of praise—due to the fact that Lord Buddha himself was Vegetarian.

In Thailand, there are essentially two types of Vegetarian.

The stricter form of vegetarianism not only excludes meat and the eating of any other form of animal, insects etc, but also excludes the consumption of alcohol.

The term used to describe this is ‘Gin-jay’ (‘eat-vegetable’).

For those who would class themselves as vegetarian, but eat eggs and drink alcohol, the Thai term for this is ‘Mang-sa-wi-rad!’

Generally speaking, Thai are not familiar with

Veganism, therefore Vegans will need to make an extra effort for their requirements to be fully understood.

Whatever your dietary requirements are, once understood, you will find that most Thais will do their best to accommodate your needs.

Shopping

It can be said without fear of contradiction that shopping in Thailand is a wonderful experience!

Naturally the cheaper cost of the vast majority of things in Thailand adds a certain 'kid in a sweetshop' kind of mentality, but it is far more than just cheapness that makes shopping in Thailand such an adventure.

Quite simply, shopping in Thailand is FUN!

An early morning trip to the local market swamps ***all*** the senses, mixing strange exotic smells with the wonderful variety of shapes, sizes and colours of the produce on sale... some recognizable now that U.K. supermarkets import from all around the world, but many still wonderfully unrecognizable.

The smiles and banter of the stall owners, and their attempts to speak English (quite often far better than our attempts to speak Thai!) only add to the cross-cultural experience that ***is*** shopping in Thailand.

I would encourage every visitor to Thailand to make that dawn excursion to the local market, and to try (and buy) something you have never seen, or tasted, before. Just don't forget your camera!

Even the more everyday, mundane type of shopping expeditions - for gifts and souvenirs etc - can be just as much fun. However, many tourists these days seem to be under the impression that bartering and haggling with the seller to lower the cost of something, is both a requirement as well as some kind of a 'battle'... and a battle which they must win at all costs!

In actual fact it would be difficult to get any further away from the reality of the situation, which is that the haggling and bantering should be acted out as a game... a game which should be *played in fun*, and with a huge beaming smile on the faces of each of the 'contestants'!

This game is an unusual one in the sense that there should be no losers, but two 'winners', each finishing the game still in possession of their smiles!

As far as Thais are concerned, haggling, and its accompanying banter, is an opportunity to spend a little time having a bit of fun, ('sanuk') and getting to know someone. It is most certainly not a battle, and, if at any point it becomes serious, the whole purpose of the game is lost... along with the

goodwill and the smile of the seller!

At the risk of sounding a little patronizing, it is most likely that what you carry in your purse or wallet whilst shopping is considerably more than an average Market stall holder's income for a fair few months... so... if you have had a bit of fun, and got the price of something down a little bit... is it really worth losing the goodwill and smile of that stall holder by trying to push for another 5 baht reduction?

I hope that you can see that it is not.

In many places haggling is actually not appropriate, the price for something being 'fixed price', as many Thais would say. In these situations what you see on the ticket is what you pay.

This 'fixed price' situation is common in many shops, stores and food markets/stalls, where haggling would simply be met with a stare and a shake of the head.

A fairly basic 'rule of thumb' for us foreigners ('ferang' or 'felang' in Thai) to follow, is that the stalls and small shops which are specifically aimed at the tourist market (nick-nacks, bracelets, clothing etc) are normally open to a bit of gentle haggling, whereas the stalls and small stores aimed at providing everyday foods and goods to the local Thai population are generally not.

Whatever the situation, remember that it is supposed to be FUN!

Prison visits.

Sadly, there are many foreigners that inhabit Thai prisons up and down the country. Many are serving long or life-sentences related to drugs.

If you want to visit someone in a prison in Thailand, there is plenty of information help and advice on the internet. It is a relatively straightforward thing to do, and most foreign prisoners would welcome a visit, if for no other reason than the change of routine that a prison visit would bring.

Look on the website belonging to 'Prisoners Abroad', which has valuable information on foreign prisons. You will also find links to other appropriate websites, some of which have the names and details of foreign prisons. (You will need the name of a prisoner if you wish to visit someone in a Thai prison. It is not possible simply to turn-up and ask to visit 'someone British').

Speaking Thai - An Introduction

The Thai language consists almost exclusively of 'mono-syllabic' words, and initially may appear to be relatively easy to speak. For example 'Sa-wa-dee' - which is Thai for 'hello' or 'good morning' and made up of the 3 syllables (Thai words) 'sa', 'wa', and 'dee'. However, as well as having an 'alphabet' almost 3 times larger than our own (44 consonants and a whopping 32 vowels!), and sounds that we simply don't have letters for, some Thai words also have up to 5 different ways to pronounce them (using 'tones') ... each tone giving the word a completely different meaning!

However, don't lose heart, because the majority of words and phrases in this book are very common and, on the whole, will be understood by most Thai people to a great degree if they are pronounced phonetically (exactly as written).

This book uses a direct phonetic system in which you speak exactly what you see. This makes it easier and quicker to learn and is therefore ideal for

those who are on a short holiday in Thailand and wish only to dabble in the language.

The fact that you may not be pronouncing words 100% correctly does not detract from the fact that you are making the effort (which will be greatly appreciated) and that, to a greater or lesser extent, you will be understood.

To discuss and teach the intricacies and complexities of the Thai language is not what this book is about. This book is meant only as a very basic introduction to the Thai language, to give a little background on Thailand, and attempt to encourage you to speak a few Thai phrases whilst (and this is the most important bit) **having fun** speaking them to Thais and **NOT** being embarrassed about your efforts!

Notes on the phonetics used in this book.

The separate sounds (syllables) which go to make up a Thai phrase are separated by ‘-’ (a hyphen). Where a word of more than one syllable is not hyphenated, the syllables which make up the word are pronounced quickly after each other. As an example, we can use the English two-syllable word ‘today’, made up from the syllables ‘to’ and ‘day’ which are joined together.

All syllables and words in this book are pronounced at normal conversational speed, unless followed by ‘!’ (exclamation mark), in which case the syllable(s) or word(s) underlined are spoken quickly. As an example we can use the English word ‘Boo!’ (the underline and exclamation mark working together to come up with a word similar to the one used to scare friends you have just sneaked up on!).

‘Double’ letters denote an extended sound, for example the ‘oo’ as in ‘cool’, and the ‘ee’ as in ‘feel’.

The letter ‘i’ denotes the sound it has in the word ‘pit’.

The letter ‘g’ denoted the sound it has in the word ‘gun’.

Apart from the examples above, the rest of the letters and words in the language sections are pronounced exactly as seen, and if you see a phonetically written Thai word that looks the same as an English word, then you can pronounce it exactly the same! (e.g. ‘my’, ‘dye’, ‘loo’, ‘see’, ‘song’, ‘cap’, ‘pop’ etc).

Once you have learned the syllables which go to make up a phrase, try to ‘roll them together’ just as we would in English conversation.

As an example we can use the question “How are you?” which is made up of 3 separate

words/sounds/syllables. In normal conversation we would not pronounce it “How... are... you...?” with obvious gaps between the words, but ‘roll’ the words together. In this respect the Thai language is similar, so the sounds which go together to make up the question “How are you?” (“Sa-bye-dee-my?”) are also rolled together.

Politeness

The Thai language has a polite particle which has no direct translation or meaning in English, but can often be heard spoken at the end of a sentence or phrase.

The particle spoken by males is ‘*Kap*’, whilst the particle ‘*Ka*’ is spoken by females.

Whilst these particles are sometimes omitted in this book, they should always be used at the end of a sentence or phrase when speaking. Therefore the phrase for ‘good morning’ or ‘hello’, for example, should be “*Sa-wa-dee-Kap*” if you are male, and “*Sa-wa-dee-Ka*” if female.

In the language sections, the female particle (where shown) will be in brackets thus... “*Sa-wa-dee-kap(ka)*”. It is better to over-use the polite particle than under-use it, so don’t forget to put it at the end of every sentence or phrase.

Me, myself and I

The Thai language has many alternatives for the word ‘I’ (me, myself), but the word most commonly used and understood is ‘*Pom*’ (for males), and ‘*Chan*’ (for females).

As an example, we can use the phrase ‘I am hungry’ which would be “*Pom-hue*” for males (‘*hue*’ meaning ‘hungry’), and “*Chan-hue*” for females.

Putting the correct polite particle at the end of this phrase would then give “*Pom-hue-kap*” for males, and “*Chan-hue-ka*” for females.

Summary!

‘I’ (me) for males is ‘**POM**’, and the polite particle is ‘**KAP**’.

‘I’ (me) for females is ‘**CHAN**’, and the polite particle is ‘**KA**’.

Language Section

General 'Everyday' Phrases

Hello/Good morning/afternoon.	Sa-wa-dee kap(ka)
How are you?	Sa-by-dee-my kap(ka)
I'm fine thank you.	Sa-by-dee kap(ka)
Thank you.	Kop khun kap(ka)
Thank you very much.	Kop khun mak
My name is	Pom(chan) cheur
What is your name?	Khun cheur a-lie
I don't understand.	Pom(chan) my-cow-jy
I understand.	Cow-jy kap(ka)
Do you speak any English?	Poot pa-sa Angrit dye-my
Excuse me/I'm sorry	Kor-tort kap(ka)
Never mind/It doesn't matter	My-pen-rye
'Quickly!'	<u>Lee-ow!</u> <u>Lee-ow!</u>
'Slowly!'	Cha-cha kap(ka)
Goodbye	La-gorn kap(ka)

See you again.	Pop-gan-my kap(ka)
Yes.	Chy/kap(ka)
No.	My-chy kap(ka)
I like this.	Pom(chan) shawp nee
I don't like this.	Pom(chan) my-shawp
Beautiful.	<u>Soo-eye!</u> Kap(ka)
Thailand is beautiful.	Pra-tet Thai <u>soo-eye!</u>
Can I have this please?	Kor-nee kap(ka)
Stop!	<u>Yoot!</u>
I don't want any thank you.	<u>My-ow!</u> kap(ka)
It is hot today isn't it?	Wan-nee lorn-na
Can you help me please?	Khun choo-ay pom(chan) dy-my
'HELP!'	' <u>Choo-ay!</u> <u>doo-ay!</u> '
I'm tired	Pom(chan) <u>ner-ry!</u>
I want to sleep	Hong-norn kap(ka)
I'm drunk	Pom(chan) mao
I'm very drunk	Pom(chan) mao-mak
Good luck	Chock-dee
Cheers (as in drinking)	Chon <u>gee-ow!</u>

Opposites

Expensive Pang Hot (spicy) Pet

Cheap	<u>Took!</u>	Cold ('Things')	Yen
Big	Yai	Fast	<u>Lee-ow!</u>
Small	Lek	Slow	Cha-cha
Like	Shawp	Day	Wan
Don't like	My-shawp	Night	Gan-kuern!
Want	<u>Qw!</u>	Clean	Sa-at
Don't want	<u>My-ow!</u>	Dirty	Sok-a-pok
Wet	Bee-ak	Delicious/Tasty	A-loy
Dry	Haeng	Not tasty	My-a-loy
Sit	Nang	Good	Dee
Stand	Yurn	Bad	My-dee
Drink	Deurm	Beautiful	<u>Soo-eye!</u>
Eat	Gin	Ugly	<u>Na-gleeut!</u>
Come	Maa	Soft	<u>Nim!</u>
Go	Bye	Hard	Kaang
Drunk	Mao	Wrong	<u>Pit!</u>
Sober	My-mao	Right (Correct)	Took
Strong	Keng	Left	Sye
Weak	Awn	Right	Kwaa
Young	Awn	Noisy	Noo-uk-hoo
Old (people)	Gair	Quiet (silent)	<u>Nee-ap!</u>
Old (things)	<u>Gow!</u>	Quiet (tranquil)	<u>Sang-up!</u>
Fat	Oo-un	Adult	<u>Poo-yai!</u>

Skinny	Pawm	Child	<u>Dek!</u>
Thick	Naah	Nice smell	Homm
Thin	Bang	Bad smell	Men!
Near	<u>Gly!</u>	Hot (temp.)	Lawn
Far	Yoo-gly!	Cold (temp)	Now

Person to Person - Phrases

What is your name?	Khun cheur a-lie
My name is...	Pom(chan) cheur
I come from (Country).	Pom(chan) maa-jaak (Country)
How old are you?	Are-you-tao-rye-pee
You are beautiful (to female)	Khun <u>soo-eye!</u>
You are very pretty (to female)	Khun <u>soo-eye!</u> mak
You are handsome (to male)	Khun law-mak
You have beautiful eyes	Daa-khun <u>soo-eye!</u>
I like your hair	Pom(chan)shorp pom-kong-khun
Do you have a boy/girlfriend?	Khun mee-fairn ler-yang
What would you like to drink?	Durm a-lie
Where do you work?	Khun tam-ngarn <u>you!</u> -tee-nye
Do you like this/that?	Khun shorp-nee/ <u>nan!</u> my
I like you	Pom(chan) shorp khun
Do you like me?	Khun shorp pom(chan) my
You look sexy	Khun doo <u>sek-see!</u> jing-jing
Are you happy?	Mee kwaam-suk-my
Would you like to dance?	Ten-ram <u>doo-eye!</u> Gan-my

I am having a good time	Pom(chan) sanuk-mak-mak
Shall we go somewhere else?	By tee- <u>oo-en</u> ! Gan my
I would like to stay with you	Pom(chan) yak-yoo-gup khun
Do you have a condom?	Khun mee-condom-my
I have a condom	Pom(chan) mee-condom
'Let's go!'	<u>Ba!/By-lee-ow!</u>
Show me	Cow doo-noi

Person to Person - Words

Cute	Na-lak	Mouth	Baahg
Beautiful	<u>Soo-eye!</u>	Neck	Core
Clever	Cha-laad	Hand	Murr
Sexy	Sek-see	Legs	Kaah
Want	<u>Ow!</u>	Backside	<u>Doot!</u>
Don't want	<u>My-ow!</u>	Dance	<u>Den!</u>
Kiss (on cheek)	Hom	Kiss (lips)	Joop
Love	Rak/Lak	Hug	Gord
Smile	Yim	Eyes	Daa
Happy	Quaam-suk	Sad	Saow
50/50	Ha-sip ha-sip	So-so	Choy-choy
Later	<u>Tee-lang!</u>	Now	<u>Dee-o-nee!</u>

Go away!	By- <u>lee-ow</u> !	Sit	Nang
Female (adult)	Poo-ying	Male (adult)	Poo-chy

Eating and Drinking - Phrases

I am hungry	Pom(chan) hue
I am thirsty	Pom(chan) hue nahm
Do you have?	Mee my
Can I have?	Kor
Can I have this please?	Kor nee kap(ka)
I don't like spicy food	Pom(chan) my-shorp pet
No chilli please	<u>My-ow</u> ! pet
What is this?	Nee a-lie
This is hot! (spicy)	Nee pet-mak
This is delicious	A-loy <u>jing-jing</u> !
That smells good	Hom-mak-mak
I am vegetarian	Pom(chan) gin-jay
I am vegetarian (but eat eggs)	Pom(chan) mang-sa-wih-rad
Do you have vegetarian food?	Mee a-han-jay-my
Is this vegetarian?	Nee-jay-my
I am full	Pom(chan) im-mak
Can I have the bill please?	Kep-tang kap(ka)

Excuse me	Kor-tort
Can I have a beer please?	Kor bee-a kap(ka)
Can I have some water please?	Kor narm kap(ka)
Where is the toilet?	Hong-narm-tee-ny kap(ka)
Thank you	Kop-khun-kap(ka)
Goodnight	Sa-wa-dee-kap(ka)
Goodbye	La-gorn

Eating and Drinking - Words

Knife	Meet	Ashtray	<u>Tik-ya-boo-lee</u>
Fork	Som	Cigarettes	<u>Boo-lee!</u>
Spoon	Chorn	Lighter	Fy-chek
Chopsticks	<u>Da-gee-ab!</u>	Plate	Jan
Bottle	<u>Koo-at!</u>	Bowl	Chahm
Glass	<u>Gee-ow!!</u>	Cup	<u>Too-aye!</u>
Water	Nahm	Beer	Bee-a
Cola	Cola-cola	Ice	Nahm-keng
Tea (hot)	Chaa-lawn	Tea (cold)	Chaa-yen
Coffee (hot)	Ga-fay-lawn	Coffee (cold)	Ga-fay-yen
Tomato sauce	Soss <u>ma-kra-tet!</u>	Salt	Glue-ah
Sugar	Naam-dan	Milk	Nom

Eating and Drinking - Foods

Fish	Blah	Cod	Blah-gow
Tuna	Too- <u>na</u> !	Shark	Blah-cha-laam
Squid	Blah- <u>meurk</u> !	Oyster	<u>Hoy</u> !-nang-rom
Shellfish	<u>Hoy</u> !	Crab	Boo
Lobster	Gung-mang-gon	Prawn	<u>Gung</u> !
Beef	<u>Ner-ah</u> !	Duck	Pet
Pork	Moo	Chicken	Guy
Plain Om'ltte	Kye-jee-ow	Fried egg	Kye-dow
Egg (Scram'd)	Kye-kon	Egg	Kye
Stuffed Omelette	Kye-yat-sy		
Bread	Ka-nom-pang	Butter	<u>Ner-ee</u> !
Chilli	Prik	Jam	Yam
Sticky rice	Cow-nee-ow	Rice	Cow

Shopping - Phrases

How much is this?	Nee tao-ry kap(ka)
This is pretty	Nee <u>soo-eye</u> ! mak
I like this	Pom(chan) shorp nee
I don't like this	Pom(chan) <u>my-shorp</u> ! nee
Can I look at this/that please?	Kor-doo-nee/nan noy
Do you have bigger/smaller sizes?	Mee-yai/lek-gwaa-my
Do you have different colours?	Mee-ly-see-my
Can I try this on please?	Pom(chan)-lorng-dye-my
Do you have a bag please?	Mee-tung-my-kap(ka)
Can I pick it up later?	Faag-why-gorn dee-ow-ma-ow
Do you have ?	Mee my
Can you make it a little cheaper?	Rot-la-car dye-my
That's too expensive for me	Pang-noy-kap(ka)
Can I have this please?	Kor-nee-kap(ka)
I'm just looking	Chom doo tao-nun
I'd like	Don-gahn

Shopping - Clothing

Clothing/clothes	Sur-pah
Shirt/blouse	<u>Seur-ra</u> !

T-shirt	Seur-shirt
Vest/singlet	Seur-gam
Dress	Choot-sek
Skirt	Gra-bong
Trousers	Gang-geng
Shorts	Gang-geng-ka-san
Suit	<u>Soot!</u>
Jacket	<u>Seur-a-kum!</u>
Hat	<u>Moo-wack!</u>

Shopping - Toiletries

Shampoo	Yaah-sa-pom
Hair Gel	Jel-sy-pom
Soap	Sa-boo
Razor	<u>Tee-gorn-noo-at!</u>
Perfume	Nahm-hom
Toothbrush	Bleng-see-fan
Toothpaste	Yaah-see-fan
Flannel	Pah-chet-naa
Sanitary towel	Pah- <u>ahn-a-my!</u>
Tampons	Luke-jee-up
Deodorant	Low-on

Toilet paper	<u>Gaa-daat-cham-la!</u>
Hair conditioner	Nahm-man-sy-pom
Hair dye	Yaah-yom-pom
Nail polish	Yaah- <u>ta-lep!</u>
Brush	Braang
Air freshener	Nahm-yaah-blap-a-gahd
Comb	Wee
Condom	Con-dom
Tissue	Gaa-daat <u>Tih-shoo!</u>
Sun block cream	Low-shan- <u>gan-daird!</u>
Mosquito repellant	Low-shan-gan- <u>yung!</u>

Shopping - Footwear

Shoes/sandals	Lorng-tao
Socks	Tung-tao
Stockings	Tung-nong
Flip-flops	<u>Lorng-tao-deh!</u>
Training shoes	Lorng-tao-gee-laah

Shopping - Jewellery

Gold	Tornɡ
Silver	<u>Nɡun!</u>
Necklace	Soy-core
Earrings	Dum-hoo
Bracelet	Gam-lie-murr
Ring	Wern
Watch	<u>Naa-lee-gaa!</u>
Sapphire	Nin
Diamond	Pet
Emerald	Yok
Opal	Mook-dah
Ruby	Tap-tim

Shopping - Miscellaneous

Swimwear	<u>Choot!</u> -wye-nam
Swim goggles	<u>Wen-daah-wye-nam!</u>
Spectacles	<u>Wen-daah!</u>
Copy (not genuine)	<u>Kong-lee-un-bearp!</u>
Leather	Nang-sat
Shop	Raahn
Market	Ta-laahd
Silk	<u>My!</u>

Cotton	<u>Ko-tohn!</u>
Beach towel	<u>Paah-Chet-doo-ah!</u>
Beach mat	<u>Sur-rah!</u>
Money	Ngun
Wallet/purse	Ga!-pow-tang
Handbag	<u>Ga!-pow-tur</u>
Rucksack	Bay- <u>sa-pie!</u>
Suitcase	<u>Ga-pow-dern-tang!</u>

Medical and Health Words

Ambulance	Fie-kor-tang
Hospital	Rorng-pie-a-baan
Doctor	<u>More!</u>
Pain	<u>Jep!</u>
Ache	<u>Boo-at!</u>
Headache	<u>Boo-at!</u> -hoo-a
Stomach ache	<u>Boo-at!</u> -tong
Dizzy	<u>Wee-an-hoo-a!</u>
(To) Vomit	<u>Oo-ahg!</u>
Diarrhea	Tong-see-ah
Tablets	<u>Yaah-met!</u>

Medicine	Yaah
Pharmacy	Laahn-kye-yaah
Emergency	Huck-chern

Body Parts

Head	<u>Hoo-ah!</u>	Neck	Kor
Eye	Daah	Nose	<u>Ja!</u> -mook
Mouth	<u>Baahg!</u>	Teeth	Fan
Tongue	<u>Lin!</u>	Arm	Kairn
Hand	Murr	Back	Lang
Chest	Kang-naah	Leg	Kaah
Spine	Ga-dook-sa-lang	Foot	Tao

Colours

Black	See-dam	Brown	See-nam-dam
Blue	See-fah	Green	See- <u>kee-ow!</u>
Gold	See-tornng	Grey	See-tao
Orange	See-som	Red	See-daeng

Pink	See-shampoo	Silver	See-ngun
White	See-cow	Yellow	See- <u>ler-rang</u> !
Purple	See-moo-ung	Khaki	Kaa-kee

Numbers

1	Nung	30	Saahm-sip
2	Song	40	See-sip
3	Saahm	50	Ha-sip
4	See	60	Hock-sip
5	Ha	70	Jet-sip
6	Hock	80	Pad-sip
7	Jet	90	Gow-sip
8	Pad	100	Nung-roy
9	Gow		
10	Sip		
11	Sip-et	200	Song-roy
12	Sip-song	300	Saahm-roy
13	Sip-saahm	400	See-roy
14	Sip-see	500	Ha-roy
15	Sip-ha	600	Hock-roy
16	Sip-hock	700	Jet-roy
17	Sip-jet	800	Pad-roy
18	Sip-pad	900	Gow-roy
19	Sip-gow	1,000	Nung-pan
20	Yee-sip		
21	Yee-sip-et	10,000	Nung-meurn
22	Yee-sip-song	100,000	Nung-sen
23	Yee-sip-saahm	1,000,000	Nung-lan
24	Yee-sip-see		
25	Yee-sip-hah		

NOTES:

Animals

Dog	Maa	Scorpion	<u>Maleng-bong!</u>
Cat	<u>May-ow!</u>	Lizard	Gin-gaah
Bird	Nok	Bat	Kan-cow
Buffalo	Kwy	Mosquito	<u>Yung!</u>
Snake	Ngoo	Butterfly	Pee-ser-rah
Spider	Mang-mum	Ant	<u>Mot!</u>
Monkey	Ling	Fish	<u>Blah!</u>
Elephant	Chang	Squid	<u>Blah-muhg!</u>

NOTES:

Time

Second	Win-a-tee
Minute	Na-tee
Hour	Sher-mong!
Day	Wan
Night	Gan-kuern
Week	Ah-tit
Month	Deu-un
Year	Bee
Today	Wan-nee
Tomorrow	Prung-nee
Yesterday	Moo-wan-nee
Next week	A-tit-nah
Last night	Moo-a-kuern

NOTES: