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Thailand(Heart Of Asia) Holidays

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HEART OF ASIA

One of the world's most popular cuisines. Beautiful beaches and islands. Friendly, charming people.

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Article Body:

HEART OF ASIA

One of the world's most popular cuisines. Beautiful beaches and islands. Friendly, charming people. Warm weather all year round. Cheap prices for most things. Colourful, enchanting temples. An exotic culture preserved through the ages in a country that has never been colonised. Where are we talking about? Thailand, of course!

WHY THAILAND

You can travel to Thailand, if you want to experience lovely smiles and gentleness of Thai people and scenic & cultural treasures of Thai land. Thailand certainly is the "land of smiles," which can make you smile, too. It's really is enamoring and exotic country, known for its inviting people, culture, scenery, cuisine, and overall lifestyle.

A FREQUENT CHOICE IN INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Located in the heart of Asia, Thailand has been captivating foreign visitors for decades. Previous visitors return year after year and as the word spreads, first-time visitors come flooding in. The number of foreign visitors to Thailand continues to increase and year after year, records are broken as international visitors flock to this fascinating country.

VACATIONS, MADE MEMORABLE ONES

Arguably the most exotic destination in South East Asia, Thailand offers travelers and holidaymakers a huge range of vacation possibilities. It doesn't matter whether you're a budget traveler wanting to explore a foreign land on a

tight budget, or a well-heeled traveler who wants to be pampered and experience the very best, Thailand has something for you. It is still quite possible to find a pristine stretch of beautiful white sand beach that you can have all to yourself. Lazing away the days on a hammock under a palm tree on a mile long beach, without anyone else in sight, swaying in the breeze under a cloudless sky as the waves gently break against the soft white sand. Such an experience can still be had. Welcome to Thailand!

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

This page could largely be separated into two separate sections. The first part gives general information about travelling in Thailand while the second part goes into detail about some of the places to visit and some of my feelings about them and experiences there.

Bangkok
Phuket
Ko
Samui
Ko Samet
Pattaya
Hua Hin
Isaan
Historic Places
Ko Chang

LEGAL LENGTH FOR YOUR STAY IN THAILAND

Visitors from most Western countries to Thailand get 30 days permission to enter Thailand upon arrival. This is not a visa per se. If you really like Thailand you can exit the country and re-enter immediately thus getting another 30 days. You cannot do this indefinitely and after spending 90 days in Thailand in a 180 day period you cannot return for 90 days, unless you apply for a visa at a Thai embassy or consulate outside of the country first. (There is more on the whole visa issue in the living and working section.) Holders of South Korean, Brazilian and Peruvian passports get 90 days permission. A lot of developing countries get permission to enter for a shorter period of time and visitors from some countries may have to apply in advance for a visa. You can apply in advance for a two month tourist visa which can actually be extended in the country for another 30 days at any Immigration office. The extension costs 1,900 baht. I believe that you may be able to get a multiple entry tourist visa although I personally believe that strictly for tourism purposes, three months is plenty.

LANDING IN THAILAND

Most people arriving in Thailand fly into Suwannaphum international airport in Bangkok. Your first time in Thailand, which may be your first time in Asia, can be more than a little confusing. You are more than likely jumping off the plane after a fairly lengthy trip and probably want to get to your hotel as soon as possible.

ACCOMMODATION

No matter what your budget, you can find something to suit. Thailand and indeed Bangkok has a huge range of places to stay. Whether you want the opulence of the Oriental Hotel, the filth of a Khao Sarn Road backpacker hole or somewhere in between, you will be able to find it in Bangkok. And right throughout Thailand, you will be able to find something to suit your needs, at least most of the time in most places. Bangkok's top end hotels continue to rate extremely highly. The Oriental Hotel, The Dusit Thani, The Peninsula and The Shangri-La are often mentioned when you hear the top hotels in the world being talked about. These are five star hotels in every sense and should suit the most demanding of travelers. Throughout Thailand, you have all of the big international hotel chains like Marriot, Sheraton, Regent, Hyatt represented. You also have some very good Thai hotel chains like Amari. And then you have got a lot of stand alone hotels. At the lower end of the range you have guesthouses. I gather that camping grounds are available in some places but having seen one snake show too many, I think I'll give that one a miss, thank you. Of the beaches and islands in Thailand, the most popular spots like Pattaya, Phuket and Ko Samui are oozing with a variety of accommodation options. But this is not always the case at some of the more off the beaten track type places. It should come as no surprise that the further off the beaten track you get, generally the harder it is to find quality accommodation. Even in some of the islands the quality of accommodation is not always that good - and sometimes the prices, while cheap by international standards, can be expensive by local Thai standards. Places like Ko Samet and Ko Chang are classic examples where, in my personal opinion, accommodation prices really are higher than they should be.

Khao San Road

If you're traveling on a budget then Khao San Road is actually extremely well located for anyone visiting Bangkok as it is walking distance to the river and the most interesting and historically significant parts of the city. The must see Grand Palace is about a mile or so away, easily walkable, even in Bangkok's oppressive heat. Thailand is not an expensive country to travel through and if you are on a real budget, you can do just fine. Let's look at the cost of accommodation in Bangkok first. A room in the top end hotels tends to go for 5,000 baht or more a night. The very best spots, like the Oriental may even go for twice this. As I mentioned earlier, hotels in Bangkok really are excellent and the top end places are just fabulous. My pick is the Sukhothai which has a

wonderful combination of Thai style with modern convenience. It is worth just going for a wander through as it really is that nice! As Bangkok can be quite difficult to get around due to the dreadful traffic conditions and the fact that the skytrain and underground only cover a small part of the city, one needs to think carefully about the area where one chooses to stay. The most popular areas are Sukhumvit Road, Silom Road, the Siam Square / Pratunam area, Banglampoo and the river. The prices of accommodation in Phuket and Ko Samui are much the same as in Bangkok. These are now big international beach resorts with many fabulous places to stay and as such the prices reflect what people are prepared to pay for them. On the other hand, Pattaya and Chiang Mai both have high quality accommodation available at prices which simply do not exist - at least what you get for that money - in Bangkok. This is one reason to visit Pattaya and Chiang Mai - you get very good value for money on your accommodation.

GETTING AROUND THAILAND

TRAVEL BY AIR

Thai Airways is the main domestic airline and airfares for flights within Thailand are fairly reasonably priced, the schedules are good with lots of flights to the most popular destinations. Further, the planes are generally in good condition. Thai Airways flies to most parts of the country, but not quite all. The notable exception of where Thai does not fly is the tropical paradise of Ko Samui. There is only one airline which flies between Ko Samui and Bangkok and that is Bangkok Airways who I believe own the airport at Samui. The fare to fly from Bangkok to Ko Samui on Bangkok Airways is more expensive than the fare on Thai to fly from Bangkok to Phuket, something which many people question, with some feeling that Bangkok Airways really stings you when you fly between Bangkok and Ko Samui. Bangkok Airways also flies to some neighbouring countries as well as operating domestic flights within Thailand, but it is the route to Ko Samui for which they are most famous. Bangkok Airways has tried to reposition themselves and now markets themselves as Asia's boutique carrier. .

TRAVEL BY CAR

Hiring cars or even a big bike is one way to get around Thailand. The quality of the roads in Thailand is generally pretty good. Car rental is fairly cheap in Thailand which is a little surprising given that the cost of buying a car in Thailand is much dearer than in the West. Generally, driving in provincial Thailand is easy, the drivers are less aggressive, there is much less traffic - and the further you get from Bangkok, the less traffic and congestion you find. However, wherever you go, signs are generally in Thai only. In a few places, and Pattaya is one exception, some road signs are in Thai. Fortunately street signs are in both Thai and English nationwide, something which I have been

extremely impressed with. Petrol in Thailand is reasonably priced and as at March 2007, the price is around 26 baht a litre for the highest grade, 95 octane petrol.

HIGH-LOW SEASONS, THERE'S NONE SO SERIOUS DIVISIONS:

The tourist high season runs from around late November through to mid April. At certain times, particularly Christmas, New Year, the Chinese New Year and Songkran the most popular beaches and islands can be extremely busy to the point that getting accommodation can become a bit of a problem. Hotels and even some guesthouses hike their prices - and people are willing to pay it. So if you are travelling over any of these periods it pays to book well in advance. The Songkran period really marks the end of the tourism high season for the year. There are a number of other holidays throughout the year and on some of these holidays nightlife areas and bars and discos can be closed - and the sale of alcohol is outlawed. Some bars slip the boys in brown a bit of cash so they can remain open. Generally speaking it is the Buddhist holidays and December 5th, the birthday of HM The King.