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BANGKOK – THAILAND GENERAL INFORMATION

Bangkok is the **capital city of the Kingdom of Thailand** and the most populous city in the country. The city occupies 1,568.7 square kilometers in the Chao Phraya River delta in Central Thailand, and has a population of over eight million, or 12.6 percent of the country's population. Over fourteen million people (22.2 percent) live within the surrounding Bangkok Metropolitan Region, making Bangkok an extreme primate city, dwarfing Thailand's other urban centers in terms of importance.



Bangkok traces its roots to a small trading post during the Ayutthaya Kingdom in the 15th century, which eventually grew in size and became the site of two capital cities: Thonburi in 1768 and Rattanakosin in 1782. Bangkok was at the heart of Siam's (as Thailand used to be known) modernization during the later nineteenth century, as the country faced pressures from the West.

The city was the centre stage of Thailand's political struggles throughout the twentieth century, as the country abolished absolute monarchy and underwent numerous coups and uprisings. The city grew rapidly during the 1960s through the 1980s and now exerts a significant impact amongst Thailand's politics, economy, education, media and modern society.

The Asian investment boom in the 1980s and 1990s led many multinational corporations to locate their regional headquarters in Bangkok. The city is now a major regional force in finance and business.

It is an international hub for transport and health care, and is emerging as a regional center for arts, fashion and entertainment. The city's vibrant street life and cultural landmarks, as well as its notorious red light districts, have given it an exotic appeal.

The historic Grand Palace and Buddhist temples including Wat Arun and Wat Pho stand in contrast with other tourist attractions such as the nightlife scenes of Khaosan Road and Patpong.

Bangkok is among the world's top tourist destinations. It is ranked third after London and Paris in MasterCard's Global Destination Cities Index, and has been named "World's Best City" for three consecutive years by *Travel + Leisure* magazine.

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Climate

Like most of Thailand, Bangkok has a tropical wet and dry climate and is under the influence of the South Asian monsoon system.

It experiences hot, rainy and cool seasons, although temperatures are fairly hot year-round. An average low in December is around of 21°C.

Language

Thai, more precisely **Central Thai** or **Siamese**, is the national and official language of Thailand and the native language of the Thai people, Thailand's dominant ethnic group.

Thai is a member of the Tai group of the Tai–Kadai language family. Some words in Thai are borrowed from Pali, Sanskrit and Old Khmer. It is a tonal and analytic language. Thai also has a complex orthography and regional markets.

Currency

The baht is the currency of Thailand. It is subdivided into 100 satang.

1 USD = THB 30,6314

1 THB = USD 0,03254

Source: Oanda.com / 27.11.2012

You can retrieve Thai Baht at every ATM machine in the city. If you would like to change money you can also do so at the hotel reception, however remember that the rates at hotels are always higher than at a local bank.

Voltage

The voltage is 220 V 50 Hertz (Hz). You will require a voltage converter and an adapter if you are carrying a device that does not accept 220 Volts at 50 Hz.

Thai Cuisine

Thai cuisine is the national cuisine of Thailand. Blending elements of several Southeast Asian traditions, Thai cooking places emphasis on lightly prepared dishes with strong aromatic components. The spiciness of Thai cuisine is well known. As with other Asian cuisines, balance, detail and variety are of great significance to Thai chefs. Thai food is known for its balance of three to four fundamental taste senses in each dish or the overall meal: sour, sweet, salty, and bitter.



For further information please refer to Ady Nordman's travel tips for Bangkok (GGI Insider No. 62, November 2012) at <http://www.ggi.com/dynasite.cfm?dsmid=93916>

Please note that all individuals are responsible for their own travel arrangements and visa matters.

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