

FOZILDZHON FATULLOEV



WONDERFUL THAILAND



What do you need to know?
How to travel properly and
where to visit?



Фозилджон Фатуллоев

**Wonderful Thailand. What do
you need to know? How to travel
properly and where to visit?**

«Автор»

2026

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Wonderful Thailand. What do you need to know? How to travel properly and where to visit? / Ф. Фатуллоев — «Автор», 2026

This book is more than just a guide — its a vivid journey through wonderful Thailand. Learn how to behave in temples and markets, follow important local laws, and discover the best beaches, routes, and street food. Detailed chapters cover visas, transport, and safety. Its a reliable companion that will make your trip bright, respectful, and truly meaningful.

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INTRODUCTION

My name is Abu, I've lived in Thailand for many years and am deeply familiar with this amazing country. I wrote this book to share my experiences traveling in Thailand. This book is not just a story, but a detailed, lively, and practical guide that will help you navigate your way around, understand local traditions, laws, and lifestyle, choose the best route, and avoid many common mistakes.

The success of any trip depends largely on respect for the country's culture, attention to detail, and an open mind. Every detail matters—from a friendly sawaddy to the subtleties of temple etiquette—and understanding these nuances will make your stay more comfortable. Be open to new experiences and learn to appreciate local customs—this will reveal the best side of Thailand.

Thailand is more than just beaches and islands. Ancient temples and centuries-old history, smiling people, and a surprisingly diverse cuisine await you here. Buddhism and spirituality permeate everyday life, and the locals' everyday routines are no less captivating than any exotic landscape. Look beyond the popular tourist routes, and you'll realize that the true charm of Thailand often lies in the mundane details.

The book is structured by topic, like a detailed step-by-step guide: you'll find everything from visa formalities and route planning to tips on visiting markets, temple etiquette, and renting a bike. This approach allows you to use it both when planning your trip and as a reliable reference during your trip. Each section is dedicated to a specific aspect, so you can quickly find the information you need and avoid missing anything.

I'd like to point out that I have a guide named Max, who has lived in Thailand for many years, helping me with my trip. He can accompany travelers and help with trip planning—contact him at +66 834 577 402.

I wish you an inspiring and safe journey. May respect for culture, attention to detail, and an open mind be your companions, and may the diversity of Thailand provide you with a wealth of vibrant experiences.

Chapter 1. Thailand: Where to start

1.1 What kind of country is this and why does it captivate you at first sight?

Thailand is a country that surprises from the very first moment: with its warmth, vibrancy, contrasts, and a surprisingly relaxed atmosphere. It blends ancient traditions with modernity, high technology with religious tranquility, bustling markets with meditative nature. It's more than just a vacation destination—it's an experience that will last a lifetime.

General information about the country

Thailand, officially the Kingdom of Thailand (Kingdom of Thailand), located in the very center of Southeast Asia. Due to its geographical location, the country is an important transportation, economic, and tourist hub between Indochina and the Malay Peninsula.

Square: approximately **513,120 km²**, making Thailand comparable in size to France or Ukraine.

Population: about **70 million people** (as of 2025), with a concentration in the central part and megacities.

Capital: Bangkok (*Cruel Thap Maha Nakhon*) is the largest city in the country with a population of more than **10 million** Human.

State language: Thai, although English is widely spoken in tourist regions.

Religion: more **94% of the population** Theravada Buddhism is practiced by the rest. The rest are Muslim (especially in the south), Christian, and Hindu.

Form of government: constitutional monarchy The head of state is the king (currently Rama X), and executive power is exercised by an elected government.

Monetary unit: Thai baht (THB). 1 US dollar $\approx$ 36 baht (rate may vary).

Geography and climate

Thailand stretches from north to south and is divided into 6 major regions:

1. **North-** mountainous, cooler, with temples and tribes (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai)

2. **Center-** a fertile valley with Bangkok and ancient capitals (Ayutthaya)

3. **Northeast (Issan)**— a culturally rich but little-known region with authentic villages and Khmer temples

4. **East-** the sea coast and islands, including Koh Chang

5. **South-** tropical beaches, resorts and national parks (Phuket, Krabi, Phi Phi)

6. **West**— jungle, waterfalls, the River Kwai and the border with Myanmar

The climate is tropical monsoon. Three seasons are distinguished:

Hot(March–May): up to $+40^{\circ}\text{C}$

Rainy(June–October): hot and humid, especially in the south

Chill(November–February): comfortable temperature, best time to visit

Why is the country so valued?

1. Culture and Traditions

Thailand is one of the few Asian countries that was never colonized. This has allowed it to preserve its unique, distinctive culture. The country is known for its gentle, respectful manner, reverence for the king and Buddha, festivals, and religious rituals. Every tourist here encounters a respectful, calm attitude and a sense of friendliness.

2. Tourism and accessibility

Thailand is among the top 10 most visited countries in the world.

Tourist flow (before the pandemic): more **39 million people**(2019)

2024: more **28 million tourists**

The most frequent guests are tourists from China, India, Malaysia, South Korea, Russia, Germany, France, Great Britain, the USA and Japan.

What attracts:

Diverse nature: jungles, islands, mountains, waterfalls, beaches

Affordable prices: from \$10 per day to luxury hotels

Traditional cuisine is among the top most delicious cuisines in the world.

Service and hospitality: from massages to street food

Infrastructure: good roads, convenient transport, Wi-Fi even in villages

3. Variety of experiences

Thailand is suitable:

For families— due to security and all-inclusive hotels

For backpackers— thanks to inexpensive housing and street food

For elderly tourists- due to the calm rhythm and climate

For digital nomads— due to cheap Internet and coworking spaces

For nature and adventure lovers- through diving, hiking, safari

About the capital - Bangkok

Bangkok— not only the political and economic capital, but also the cultural heart of the country. It is a city of contrasts:

Here, 5-star hotels sit side by side with street cafes.

Glass skyscrapers rise above golden temples

There are boats on the Chao Phraya River and a high-speed metro underground.

Bangkok's main attractions:

Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Kaew)

Royal Palace

Temple of Dawn (Wat Arun)

Street markets (Chatuchak, Khao San Road)

River cruises and viewing platforms

1.2 Geography and climate: when to go to avoid getting caught in the rain

When planning a trip to Thailand, it's important to understand one simple thing: the climate is tropical, and rain is not an exception, but a completely normal natural phenomenon. But this isn't a reason to cancel your vacation. The main thing is to know where and when to go to get the most sun and the least amount of weather surprises.

General geography

Thailand is located in the center of Southeast Asia and has an elongated shape from north to south. This geography results in significantly different climates and natural features across the country. This gives tourists the opportunity to choose between beach holidays, mountain hikes, cultural itineraries, and tropical expeditions—all in one country.

The regions of Thailand are conventionally divided into six natural zones:

1. North (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Pai) - mountainous terrain, moderate temperatures, cool nights in winter.

2. Northeast (Issan) - plateau, dry climate, rural culture.

3. Central Thailand (Bangkok, Ayutthaya) – plains, hot climate, dense development.

4. East coast (Pattaya, Koh Chang) – sea, sandy beaches, popular resorts.

5. Southwest (Phuket, Krabi, Phi Phi, Khao Lak) - Andaman coast, picturesque islands.

6. Southeast (Samui, Phangan, Tao) - Gulf of Thailand, calm sea and tropics.

Seasons in Thailand

In most regions of Thailand, there are three main seasons:

· Cool season (November – February): the least humid and most comfortable for tourists. Temperatures range from 25 to 32°C. In the north, nights can be cool.

· Hot season (March – May): temperatures rise to +35...+40°C. The air becomes dry and sultry.

· Rainy season (June–October): Associated with the monsoons, the rainfall is highest, particularly in August and September.

What is the rainy season?

The rainy season in Thailand doesn't mean continuous downpours. It typically features short but intense rainfalls lasting 1-2 hours a day, mostly in the evening or at night. Daytime sunshine can be common. This time of year is characterized by lush greenery, fewer tourists, and lower prices for accommodation and excursions.

When and where to go: by region

West coast (Phuket, Krabi, Phi Phi, Khao Lak):

The best time to visit is from November to April. The rainy season lasts from May to October and is characterized by particularly heavy rainfall. January and February are ideal months for beach holidays and boat excursions.

East coast (Samui, Phangan, Tao):

The best time is from February to September. Rains arrive later, most often in October–November. Summer is often sunny and calm, especially compared to the west coast.

Northern Thailand (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai):

The cool season (November–February) is comfortable for excursions, hiking, and festivals. March through May is hot and can be smog-ridden due to seasonal agricultural fires. Rain is possible in summer, but the scenery is especially picturesque at this time.

Central Thailand (Bangkok):

The city is open to visitors year-round. The climate is mildest from November to February. April marks the peak of the heat, with temperatures reaching 40°C. Summer rains refresh the air, but flooding is rare.

Features affecting planning

- The period from November to February is the most popular for travel. This is peak tourism: excellent weather, high season, and higher prices.
- During the rainy season, ferries and excursions to the islands may be cancelled.
- April marks the celebration of Songkran, the Thai New Year. It's one of the hottest, but also most joyful periods of the year, when the streets become the scene of massive water battles.

Practical advice

- Before your trip, it's worth checking long-term weather forecasts for each region separately—differences between coasts can be significant.
- When traveling during the rainy season, it's worth taking a light waterproof raincoat, shoes with non-slip soles, and waterproof covers for your equipment.
- During the hot season, you should drink plenty of water, avoid prolonged exposure to the sun, and choose accommodation with air conditioning.

1.3 A little history without being boring: from kings to rubber

The history of Thailand is not a series of dates and battles, but the journey of a people who managed to preserve their independence, culture, and dignity in a region where most countries experienced colonial rule. Understanding the key historical stages helps one gain a deeper understanding of the country: its respect for the king, love of Buddhism, tolerance, and unique way of life.

Prehistoric and early period

People inhabited the territory of modern-day Thailand tens of thousands of years ago. Archaeologists are discovering Paleolithic sites and traces of ancient civilizations. Unique ceramics dating back over 5,000 years have been discovered in Ban Chiang, on the Issan Plateau. This demonstrates that the culture in the region developed independently and profoundly.

The first true states in Thailand emerged around the first millennium CE. Among the earliest were the Dvaravati (Mon Kingdom) and the Khmer Empire, which controlled the central and northeastern parts of the country in the 11th and 12th centuries.

The emergence of Siam

Thai history proper begins in the 13th century, when the Tai tribes migrated from southern China. In 1238, the first Thai state, Sukhothai, was founded. It is often called the "cradle of Thai civilization." It was here that the foundations of the language, writing, Buddhism, and cultural norms that have survived to this day emerged.

In the 14th century, Sukhothai was replaced by Ayutthaya, a powerful kingdom that lasted for over 400 years. It conducted active trade with China, India, Persia, and later with Portugal, France, and Holland. Its capital, Ayutthaya, was one of the largest cities in the world in the 17th century until it was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767.

Rattanakosin Kingdom and Bangkok

After the fall of Ayutthaya, General Taksin founded a new capital, Thonburi. But power soon passed to the Chakri dynasty, which rules to this day. In 1782, King Rama I moved the capital to the other bank of the Chao Phraya River, founding the city of Bangkok (Krung Thep).

This marks the beginning of the Rattanakosin era. Particularly significant are the reforms of King Rama V (Chulalongkorn), who reigned from 1868 to 1910. He modernized the country, abolished slavery, developed education, and established diplomatic relations with European powers.

Uniqueness: a country that was not colonized

Unlike its neighbors, Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that **was never a colony**. In the 19th century, royal diplomacy skillfully navigated between France and Great Britain, agreeing to territorial concessions while maintaining internal independence. This is where the country's English name, "Siam," originated.

Siam officially became Thailand in 1939, meaning "land of the free." The name emphasizes national pride and independence.

20th century: from absolute monarchy to a modern state

In 1932, a bloodless revolution resulted in the transformation of the absolute monarchy into a constitutional one. Since then, the country has developed into a parliamentary state with a strong role for the king.

In the mid-20th century, Thailand balanced between East and West, cooperating with the United States but remaining neutral in most conflicts. The Vietnam War and regional instability had a profound impact on the economy and domestic politics.

Rubber, tourism and economic growth

In the second half of the 20th century, Thailand became one of the Asian "tigers." The country actively developed agriculture (particularly the export of rice and natural rubber), and then light industry and tourism.

The following played a special role in the economy:

massive export of rubber grown in the south of the country;

construction of infrastructure and expansion of international airports;

the development of the hospitality industry - from the beaches of Phuket to the temples of Chiang Mai.

Today, tourism contributes up to 20% of the country's GDP, and Thailand is among the top ten most visited countries in the world.

Monarchy today

The current King Rama X (Vajiralongkorn) ascended the throne in 2016 following the death of his father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX), who had reigned since 1946 and was greatly loved by the people.

The monarchy plays a symbolic and cultural role in society. Portraits of the king are displayed in churches, hotels, and on the streets. The country's laws strictly protect the honor of the royal family.

Thailand's history is one of freedom, resilience, and adaptability. There are no harsh remnants of a colonial past, but rather a deep cultural continuity. Understanding the key stages of history will help tourists not just look, but see: the temples bear the imprint of Ayutthaya, rituals the roots of Sukhothai, and architecture the balance of East and West.

In the next chapter, we will begin to talk about traditions and holidays, which are not just an adornment of culture, but its living heart.

Chapter 2. Traditions You Fall in Love With

2.1 Holidays and Festivals: Songkran, Loy Krathong and How to Participate Respectfully

In Thailand, holidays are more than just colorful events; they reflect the spirit of the people. They combine religion, family values, folk beliefs, and modern culture. Thais don't put on ostentatious shows "for tourists"—most holidays are genuinely and sincerely important to locals. And if you participate in them respectfully, you'll feel how open and warm this culture is.

Let's look at two of Thailand's main and most beloved holidays: **Songkran And Loy Krathong. Songkran is the Thai New Year.**

When it happens: annually from **April 13–15**, but in some regions (especially Chiang Mai) celebrations can last up to 5-6 days.

The essence of the holiday:

Songkran is not just a calendar New Year. It is **the beginning of a new cycle according to the solar calendar**, when Thais give thanks to the old year and welcome the new. It's a time of purification: of homes, bodies, and thoughts. The main symbolism of the holiday is **water**, which washes away adversity and renews.

What does a holiday look like for a tourist:

Songkran on the streets is real **water war**. People bring buckets, water pistols, and barrels of cold water and douse passersby. Even police officers and monks (in certain uniforms) can get their share of the splashes. Foreigners participate equally with Thais. In popular tourist spots—for example, on Khao San Road in Bangkok or near the Old City walls in Chiang Mai—the festivities turn into noisy, multi-person celebrations.

What is important for a tourist to remember:

Do not pour water into the face and especially into the eyes of children, the elderly and monks.

Do not pour water on people in uniform or those who are clearly not dressed for participation (for example, with belongings, a phone, in uniform).

Do not use ice water - it can be dangerous.

It is prohibited to pour water in temples and on the territory of government institutions.

What does a tourist feel:

The first impression is one of delight. You suddenly become part of a game where everyone is equal, and where no one gets mad if they get splashed. Even if you don't usually like holidays, it's hard not to be infected with the joy here. It's a cleansing, therapeutic experience—good-natured, childlike, and infinitely alive.

What can you do to participate correctly:

Wear light clothing that you don't mind getting wet.

Put all documents, phone and money in a dry bag.

Don't take too much with you - you'll have to dry it anyway.

If you don't want to participate, don't go into the celebration area (they are known in advance).

Loy Krathong – the festival of light and water

When it happens: in November (the exact date depends on the lunar calendar), usually on the night of the full moon of the twelfth lunar month.

The essence of the holiday:

Loy Krathong symbolizes gratitude to water for all it gives. People launch small rafts (krathongs) decorated with flowers, candles, and incense onto the water to **ask Mother Water for forgiveness for the pollution**, and symbolically let go of your grievances, fears and sins.

What does the holiday look like:

Rivers, canals, and even fountains are filled with hundreds of lights. Thousands of people come to the banks of the river with homemade or purchased krathongs. Sometimes they attach a lock of hair or a nail clipping to them—a symbol of "letting go" of something personal.

In Chiang Mai, Loy Krathong is celebrated in parallel with **Yi Peng**— a northern holiday where they launch **sky lanterns** (khon fai), which rise into the sky by the hundreds. It's a mesmerizing spectacle—a true "night of wonders." Such lanterns are banned in Bangkok due to the danger they pose to aviation, but in the northern provinces—especially Chiang Mai—they are permitted on special days.

What is important for a tourist to remember:

Don't throw plastic or synthetic materials into the water - use biodegradable krathongs.

Do not launch sky lanterns without permission (fines may apply).

Don't make noise near monasteries - this is a time of silence and reflection.

Dress modestly, especially if you participate in rituals near temples.

What does a tourist feel:

It's a celebration of beauty and silence. It allows you to slow down, reflect, and truly experience the moment. For many tourists, it's the highlight of their trip: a night when the noise fades and only the shimmering light on the water remains. The symbolic act of launching the krathong is often perceived as a personal gesture—a farewell to worries and the beginning of a new era in life.

How to prepare and participate:

Buy a krathong in advance at the market (you can find rafts made from bread, banana leaves, and flowers).

Find a quiet spot by the river, away from the noisy crowds, and participate in the launch in a peaceful atmosphere.

If you're in Chiang Mai, don't miss the mass lantern launch, especially in the park near Nawarat Bridge.

Songkran and Loy Krathong are two opposing, yet equally important, festivals. One is noisy and joyful, the other quiet and contemplative. But both offer tourists the opportunity not just to observe, but to participate—honestly, respectfully, and with an open heart.

Thailand is not a museum. It's a country where a living culture awaits discovery. And if you're nearby these days, be sure to be not just a spectator, but a participant. Then you'll truly understand why people fall in love with these traditions forever.

2.2 Everyday Traditions

How Thais live on a typical day

Why Politeness Isn't Just a Form, It's a Way of Life

What does "sanuk" mean and how can you become part of it?

To understand Thailand more deeply, it's important to see not only its temples and beaches, but also the everyday lives of local people. It's in these everyday routines that the country's true soul is hidden—in a leisurely morning ritual with a cup of coffee on a plastic chair, in the way a neighbor passes you a mango from a tree over the fence, or in the way a market vendor smiles even if you haven't bought anything.

How Thais live on a typical day

For most Thais, the day begins early, especially in rural areas. By 5 or 6 a.m., the streets are already bustling with activity: monks are collecting alms, markets are starting to open, and schoolchildren in uniform are heading to class.

A typical day might look like this:

- Early breakfast (often rice with something spicy or noodle soup)
- Work or study - usually with a lunch break in the shade or under a fan
- In the evening - rest, walks, housework, watching TV series, chatting on a bench

It is important to understand that **The rhythm of life of Thais is calm and not stressful**. Work is important, but it shouldn't destroy your inner balance. Thais tend to take their time, avoid conflict,

and don't resolve issues in anger. And even in noisy cities like Bangkok, you'll notice: no one pushes you on the subway, shouts in line, or stares. This isn't a weakness, but a cultural norm.

Why Politeness Isn't Just a Form, It's a Way of Life

In Thailand, politeness is built into every action. It is customary here **avoid open conflict**. Don't raise your voice, and don't show irritation in public. This isn't just etiquette—it's a sign of respect for others and for yourself.

Basic manifestations of Thai politeness:

- **Smile** In Thailand, smiling has many meanings: politely, to hide awkwardness, to avoid conflict, to express affection. It's a universal language.

- **The "wai" gesture** (palms folded in front of the chest with a slight bow). This is a traditional greeting and a sign of respect. It is used for elders, monks, teachers, and in formal settings.

- **Soft speech** Thai is a tonal and polite language. It has built-in endings and politeness formulas. Even when translating into English, Thais often add "sir" or "madam" or speak with a smile.

For a tourist this means:

- It's better to smile than to argue
- Do not raise your voice in public places
- Don't show aggression or impatience - it is perceived as a loss of face

In Thailand there is a concept **saving face**—it's respect for one's own and others' reputations. Humiliating, ridiculing, or arguing publicly is considered extremely impolite here. Therefore, most locals prefer to resolve disputes gently, without pressure.

What is "sanuk" and how to become part of it

Word **"sanuk"** (สนุก) is one of the key words in Thai culture. It doesn't just mean "fun," but **inner pleasure from the process**. In Thailand, it's believed that even serious work should bring "sanuk"—otherwise, why do it?

"Sanuk" is:

- Laughter while trading at the market
- The joy of singing karaoke with coworkers
- Ease at work when everyone is smiling
- Calm communication without heaviness and tension

For a Thai, "sanuk" isn't a goal for entertainment, but a way to make life enjoyable. Even if someone is fixing a car or making soup at the market, they can still derive "sanuk" from the process itself.

How can a tourist embrace this philosophy?

- Don't take everything too seriously, especially in everyday situations
- Allow yourself to be "in the flow" of the moment: laugh, sing, dance awkwardly - Thais will only support this
- Don't be afraid to try new things, especially food, phrases, gestures - even if it doesn't work out, the main thing is participation
- Communicate with locals with ease: even 2-3 words in Thai (for example, "sawadee krap/ka", "kop kun") open hearts

Daily life for Thais is a smooth flow of rituals, politeness, and ease. This is a society where haste, aggression, or displays of superiority are frowned upon. Kindness, respect, and the ability to find joy in every day are valued.

If a traveler tries to do more than just look at Thailand, but to live a little like a Thai—with a smile, patience, and ease—they'll not only get to know the country better. They'll take with them not only photographs but also habits that will stay with them for a long time.

2.3 The Royal Family

Why are there portraits of the king everywhere?

How to behave so as not to offend the feelings of Thais

Personal: How I understood the meaning of this tradition years later

One of the first things that surprises a tourist in Thailand is the number of portraits of the king. They hang everywhere: on building facades, along roadsides, in banks, cafes, hotels, schools, even small food stalls. These images are often decorated with frames, garlands, and yellow and gold fabrics. To someone unfamiliar with the context, this may seem unusual or even excessive. But in Thailand, respect for the royal family is not a political obligation, but a **deeply rooted part of national identity and everyday life**.

Why are there portraits of the king everywhere?

The monarchy in Thailand has existed for over 700 years. Since the founding of the Chakri Dynasty in 1782 (beginning with King Rama I), the institution of royalty has become not only a symbol of the state but also a source of national unity. During periods of instability, government changes, and economic crises, it was the kings who served as the "father of the nation," standing above political strife.

A special place in the Thai heart is occupied by **King Rama IX - Bhumibol Adulyadej**, who reigned from 1946 to 2016. He was respected for his modesty, dedication, and tangible actions: he personally visited remote villages, supported agricultural projects, invested in science and technology, and acted as a mediator in conflicts. For many generations, he became not just a monarch, but a moral compass.

Today on the throne - **King Rama X (Maha Vajiralongkorn)**, his son. Although public attitudes toward him are more reserved, the tradition of respect for the institution of monarchy remains. Therefore, images of the current king are often accompanied by portraits of the late Rama IX and even his wife, Queen Sirikit.

Portraits on the streets are an expression of **respect, not obligation**. Shop owners and minibuss drivers hang them out not because they're ordered to do so, but because it's the accepted practice: the king is a symbol of stability, continuity, and a spiritual center.

How to behave so as not to offend the feelings of Thais

Thai society holds the monarchy in high regard and **insulting the royal family is punishable not only by moral condemnation but also by criminal punishment**. Thailand has a strict law protecting the honor of the monarchy, called "lese majeste," which stipulates that public statements against the king or his relatives can result in a prison sentence.

To avoid misunderstandings, it is important for tourists to:

- **Never joke about the king or his family.**, even in private conversation.
- **Don't touch money with your feet**, because the king is depicted on the banknotes and coins.
- **Do not pass by a portrait or flag carelessly, with a cigarette or jokes.** Better - restrained and calm.
- **When the anthem is played in public places (for example, in the subway or cinemas), you must stand up.** This is a sign of respect, not a political gesture.
- **If you accidentally drop a portrait or a banknote with the king's image, it's best to pick it up carefully, without pressing it with your foot.**

These rules seem strict, but they're not difficult if you understand them. For Thais, the king is a respected elder, and for many, a spiritual leader. And if you show respect for this value system, you'll be reciprocated with kindness.

Personal: How I understood the meaning of this tradition years later

When you first arrive in Thailand, you might see respect for the royal family as merely a formality. But the longer you spend time among Thais, the clearer it becomes: this isn't fear or blind obedience. It's part of a cultural logic in which people value stability, hierarchy, and the role of symbols.

Understanding comes in simple scenes. When a farmer in the north hangs an old, faded portrait of the king on a bamboo wall in his house—not out of fear, but out of gratitude. When a teacher

tells children about projects supported by the king with genuine inspiration. When monks at a temple recite prayers in memory of Rama IX on his birthday—without orders from above.

This isn't a cult of personality. It's a way to maintain national ties and a sense of community in a very diverse, multilingual, and regionally diverse country. And respect for this is part of what makes traveling in Thailand not just interesting, but truly profound.

Chapter 3. Religion and Temples: Beauty in Silence

3.1 What is Buddhism in Thai?

– Monks and morning rituals

– Why a smile here is more than just an emotion

Buddhism in Thailand is more than just a religion. It's a way of life, a way of looking at the world, a form of social structure. More than 90% of Thais practice it. **Theravada**— the oldest and most conservative school of Buddhism, preserving traditions dating back to the time of the Buddha himself. But in Thailand, Buddhism is intertwined not only with philosophy but also with everyday culture—from morning greetings to street layout, from school discipline to wedding ceremonies.

Here, Buddhism cannot be spoken of as something distant. It lives in every corner: in the gold of temples, in the offerings at the tree, in the morning silence on the bench in front of the house.

Monks and morning rituals

Every morning, starting at 5-6 o'clock, people walk along the streets of villages and towns. **monks in saffron robes** They walk barefoot, in complete silence, without looking passers-by in the eye, with a metal bowl in their hands. This is **spindatabhat**, a ritual of collecting alms. Thais prepare food and flowers in advance so they can respectfully present their offerings to the monks, making a short bow.

This ritual is more than just feeding the spirit guides. It symbolizes **humility and gratitude** When accepting an offering, a monk expresses no emotion and asks for nothing. It is an act in which the giver receives spiritual merit. Even the poorest people participate—not out of fear of the gods, but out of an inner need to purify themselves.

Monasticism in Thailand is a path that many men take at least once in their lives. Typically, young men become monks after school for one to three months to gain spiritual experience, bring merit to their families, and learn discipline. This is not perceived as a rejection of life, but rather as an important stage in its development.

Monks are respected and protected by law. They are not to be touched, especially by women. They are not to be insulted, criticized, or interrupted in meditation. Special seats are reserved for them on public transportation.

Temples as a cultural center

There is one in every district **watt** A Buddhist temple serves not only as a religious but also as a community center. Festivals are held here, children are taught, and local affairs are discussed. Temples range from small, almost village-like, to grandiose ones, such as Wat Arun or Wat Pho in Bangkok.

Thais visit temples not according to a schedule, but rather on an inner impulse. Some come to pray, others simply to sit in the shade. There are no strict obligations, but there is a general culture of respect.

It is important for a tourist to know:

- Shoes are not allowed in the temple. They are left at the entrance.
- Clothing should be modest - no bare shoulders, short shorts, or tops.
- Taking photos isn't allowed everywhere and not always. It's best to ask.
- A Buddha statue is not a souvenir. You cannot sit with your back to it or use it as decoration.

Why smiling here is more than just an emotion

In Thailand they often say that **A smile is the way to balance**. It is not always a sign of fun, but a way to express respect, gentleness, and acceptance of the situation. In Buddhism, it is valued **calmness, patience and inner clarity**—and the smile becomes an instrument of this state.

Thais smile when they feel awkward, when they don't understand something, or when they want to avoid conflict. This smile is both a defense against negativity and a gesture of goodwill. It's not a mask, but a cultural tool.

Monks also have a special "inner smile"—an expression of meditative calm. Even in strict silence, their faces can radiate peace. Not ostentatious, but soft, quiet, and very deep.

Buddhism in Thailand is more than just rituals, mantras, and temples. It's a sense of calm that permeates everyday life. It's respect for silence, for elders, for nature, for the moment. It's a culture where there's no room for shouting and pressure, but for acceptance and tolerance.

Understanding this way of life is not only the key to good tourist behavior, but also a way to experience your vacation differently: more mindfully, quietly, and with greater meaning. This is what makes traveling in Thailand not just a trip, but a spiritual experience—even if you've never considered spirituality before.

3.2 Main Temples:

Wat Arun, Wat Phra Keo, Doi Suthep and more

When to go, what to see, where to meditate

Thailand is a country of temples. There are tens of thousands of them. Some are modest rural structures with wooden roofs and dogs in the courtyard. Others are glittering golden palaces that look more like fairytale castles. But every temple, regardless of size, is a space of peace, beauty, and meaning.

A traveler should at least once not just stroll through a temple, taking photos, but truly stop, be silent, and look. Then comes the feeling that makes many return to Thailand again and again.

Wat Arun (Temple of the Morning)

Where is it located: Bangkok, on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River

Best time to visit: early morning or sunset

Peculiarities:

The name translates as "Temple of Dawn" - especially beautiful in the morning light.

The central tower (prang), over 70 metres high, is decorated with porcelain tiles and seashells.

You can climb the steep stairs to the top, with a view of the river and the old town.

Council: It's best to arrive before 9 a.m., before the tour groups arrive. The temple looks especially majestic from the river—you can reach it by boat from Tha Tien Pier. There are quiet corners outside for meditation, off the main tourist routes.

Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)

Where is it located: Grand Palace grounds, Bangkok

Best time to visit: weekday mornings

Peculiarities:

It is considered the most sacred temple in the country.

It houses the Emerald Buddha, a statue just 66 cm tall, carved from a single piece of jade.

You can only enter the building where the Buddha is located without cameras and in full compliance with etiquette.

The statue's clothing is changed three times a year, and the king himself makes the change.

Council: This is one of the most visited sites in Thailand. Arrive at opening time (usually around 8:30 AM), dress formally (cover your shoulders and knees), and leave your shoes at the entrance.

For a quiet viewing experience, sit on the floor near the wall—just be sure not to point your feet at the statue.

Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha)

Where is it located:Bangkok, near Wat Phra Kaew

Best time:afternoon (in the morning most people go to the Grand Palace first)

Peculiarities:

A huge statue of Buddha in a reclining position - 46 meters long and 15 meters high.

The feet of the statue are inlaid with mother-of-pearl, depicting the 108 signs of enlightenment.

The temple is also known as a center for traditional Thai massage.

Council:Stroll through the courtyard, home to hundreds of golden seated Buddhas. This is one of the places where you can truly experience tranquility. Tourists and locals often meditate here, especially in the small galleries along the wall.

Wat Doi Suthep

Where is it located:Chiang Mai Province, on a mountain west of the city

Best time:early morning or sunset, before 9:00 or after 16:30

Peculiarities:

One of the most revered temples in northern Thailand.

Situated at an altitude of over 1000 metres above sea level, it offers panoramic views of all of Chiang Mai.

A staircase of 306 steps, decorated with the bodies of two nagas (mythical snakes), leads to the main complex.

Council:It's especially peaceful here in the morning—you can see monks performing rituals and locals bringing lotuses and incense. It's easy to slow down, find a secluded corner, and simply sit in silence overlooking the city.

Wat Chalong (Phuket)

Where is it located:Phuket, southern part of the island

Best time:weekday mornings

Peculiarities:

The main Buddhist temple of Phuket, visited by both locals and tourists.

It houses holy relics (according to legend, a fragment of Buddha's bone).

The architecture combines traditional southern and central Thai elements.

Council:This place is a living temple, where real rituals and ceremonies take place. Approach with respect, especially if you're attending a ceremony. There's a tower on the grounds that offers views of the temple complex and surrounding area.

Where can I sit in silence and meditate?

Many temples, despite their tourist fame, have**quiet zones**, where no one takes photos, makes noise, or disturbs your privacy:

Internal galleries behind the central hall (bottom)

Small pavilions with seated Buddha statues

Gardens with ponds and benches, especially in northern temples

Areas with monks - if not prohibited, you can sit to the side and just observe

If you want to meditate:

Sit on the floor with your legs crossed, without pointing them towards the statues.

Close your eyes, breathe calmly, don't think about anything in particular.

Even 5-10 minutes in such silence provide inner renewal.

Thailand's major temples are more than just architectural gems. They are vibrant places where history, religion, art, and human spirituality merge. A visit to even one of these temples, with care and respect, can become more than just a tourist attraction, but a true moment of inner peace.

The main thing is to take your time. Just sit, look up, smell the incense, hear the ringing of the bells—and let Thailand speak to you without words.

3.3 Rules of Temple Etiquette

About shoes, shoulders, and selfies

How to feel respect, not just take photos

Thai temples are not museums or decorations, even if they look like architectural masterpieces. They are living religious spaces. People pray there, make offerings, meditate, teach children, bid farewell to the deceased, and take monastic vows.

Tourists are guests here. And as in any home, it's important not to act like hosts, but to show respect for those who spiritually "live" here. These simple rules will not only help avoid awkwardness but also truly experience the atmosphere of the temples.

Shoes - always remove

The first and perhaps most obvious rule:

Before entering any closed temple premises, shoes must be removed.

This applies to both the main hall (bota) and the auxiliary pavilions. Shoes are left by the stairs or on a special shelf. Sometimes you'll be given a bag to take your shoes with you. In the temple, feet are considered the lowest part of the body, a symbol of the earthly and impure—and bringing them inside is forbidden.

Tip:

- Wear shoes that are easy to take on and off—without complicated fasteners.
- Socks are allowed, barefoot is also allowed, but the main thing is that shoes remain outside.
- Don't touch other people's shoes or put yours on top of someone else's.

Clothes are modesty, not fashion

Even in the heat, the temple requires respectful dress. Bare shoulders, short shorts, and tank tops are inappropriate. In some places (for example, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok), you will not be allowed in at all if you violate the dress code.

Minimum for visiting the temple:

- Shoulders covered (T-shirt or shirt)
- Knees are covered (long pants, skirt below the knee)
- No deep cutouts, transparent fabrics, or slogans on clothing
- No hats or glasses inside the sanctuaries

If you're unprepared, you can often borrow or rent a light scarf or cape at the entrance. This isn't a formality. Modest clothing is a way to show that you're not just there to take a photo, but that you respect the sanctity of the place.

Photos are allowed, but not everywhere.

You can take photos inside the temples **not always**. This is usually allowed on the premises, but inside the main hall - **just no flash and no noise**, and not in every temple.

Peculiarities:

- **Never photograph monks without their permission.** This is considered rude.
- **Don't take selfies in front of a Buddha statue with your tongue sticking out, gestures, or poses.** Even if you're joking, Thais might take it as a serious insult.
- **Do not climb onto the statue's pedestal to take photos next to it.** This is taboo.

- **Selfie sticks and drones** inappropriate inside the temple complex, especially in the presence of pilgrims.

How to do it right:

- First, take a look around. If the locals are taking photos, it's okay.
- It's better to ask the staff or guide.
- Take photos with respect - without being intrusive or disturbing those praying.

What else is important to know:

- **Never point your feet at a Buddha statue.** If you are sitting, sit on your knees or bend your legs to the side.

- **Don't touch other people's heads, especially children's.** The head is a sacred part of the body in Buddhist culture.

- **Do not touch monks, especially if you are a woman.** Women are forbidden to touch monks or even pass objects from hand to hand.

- **Don't speak loudly or laugh out loud.** The temple has an atmosphere of silence and contemplation.

- **Turn off the sound on your phone.** It's better to put it off altogether and be in the moment.

How to feel respect, not just "look"

Maintaining external etiquette is important. But even more important is the internal attitude. Thais sense when you're "just taking a photo" and when you genuinely respect the space.

Try:

- Don't speak for 5-10 minutes inside the hall. Just watch.
- Sit down against the wall and watch what's happening.
- Listen to the sounds: the ringing of bells, the wind, footsteps - this is also part of the temple atmosphere.
- Make an offering: place a flower, buy some incense, or leave 20 baht in the box. Even if you're not Buddhist, it's an act of respect.

A temple in Thailand is a place worth visiting not only for its beauty but also for its inner silence. These simple rules are enough to show that you are not just a tourist, but a person capable of stopping, removing your shoes, covering your shoulders, and, for a moment, becoming part of a world that lives at a different pace.

And if one day you fall silent in a temple, not because you have to, but because you don't want to talk, then you have already touched the real Thailand.

Chapter 4. Manners and Mistakes of Tourists

4.1 What not to do – and why

- About the head, legs and loud arguments

- Simple phrases that will save you from awkwardness

For Thais, politeness isn't a ritual, but a way of life. Their smiles aren't a commercial gesture, but a way to live a stress-free life. In a society where respect, gentleness, and "not causing trouble" are important, rudeness or inappropriate behavior by a tourist provokes not so much anger as **shame**

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