

# YOUR COMPLETE THAILAND TRAVEL GUIDE



I am very partial to Thailand and would recommend it to absolutely everyone. The mixture of beautiful beaches, dramatic coastlines, cheap spicy food, and nature was so up my alley. There are many different places in Thailand that are very picturesque so it's hard to figure out where to go and in what order. This post will cover general Thailand, and you can go to my other posts for more information on **Bangkok**, **Chiang Mai**, and **Krabi**.

If you're trying to figure out if Thailand is for you, here's what you can expect / what most people come to Thailand for:

Amazing beaches

Temples to explore

Spicy Thai food

Longtail boat rides

Street food culture

Mountain hikes

Elephants

Cheap vacation

This may be controversial... but I would not consider Thailand a luxury vacation spot. Of course it can be if you stay in luxury hotels, but outside your hotel is nothing like Europe if that's where you are used to travelling. Thailand is a cheap destination so there are tons of backpackers everywhere as well. Just know this and you won't be surprised.

It's definitely best to spend at least a week in Thailand to make that long international flight worth it, and that's about how much time I spent. Of course longer is always better, but vacation days are scarce! Since you are already in Southeast Asia, see if you want to combine your trip with another country as well – here are the countries closest to Thailand: Vietnam, China, Cambodia, Singapore, Laos, and Japan.

## WHERE SHOULD I GO IN THAILAND?

This is always such a hard part of any trip! Thailand can pretty much be split up into three categories – cities (Bangkok), jungley areas (Chaing Mai), and the islands / coast (Krabi, Phuket, Koh Phi Phi, Ko Pha Ngan). For our one week trip, we did the top 3 which is usually my strategy. We did 2 nights in Bangkok, 2 nights in Chiang Mai, and 3 nights in Krabi. I thought all of this was a good amount of time, but in an ideal world I would have spent 1 more night in all three of them – especially Krabi. Because duh I love beaches!



*chiang mai*

*bangkok*

Bangkok

กรุงเทพมหานคร

Pattaya City

เมืองพัทยา

RAYONG

*koh pha ngan*

Gulf of Thailand

*phuket*

*krabi*

Google

Medan

Malaysia

## BANGKOK

**Bangkok** has really popular, really large temples and an amazing food scene. My husband and I are so obsessed with authentic Asian food so we loved Bangkok for all the food that we could get for SO cheap!

If you are not into Thai food or the thought of eating street food completely freaks you out, then think about whether Bangkok is for you. You can find temples in Chiang Mai and other regions and people tend to enjoy the smaller footprint of Chiang Mai a lot more. But for me I was one of the rare few that enjoyed Bangkok a ton because of all the cheap, amazing food options. I could have spent another day food touring around the city.



## CHIANG MAI

**Chiang Mai** is a great place to see and do absolutely everything that is quintessentially Thailand. You can do a cooking class, trek with elephants, see the tigers, hike up a mountain to temples (or just drive), and eat Thai food. It really has so much to offer. That's why I would recommend maybe skipping Bangkok if you are not super into food as Chiang Mai will have everything that Bangkok has but in a more rural setting.



# *Chiang Mai*

MOUNTAINS, TEMPLES, ELEPHANTS, KHAO SOI



KRABI



*Bangkok* Bangkok

RATCHABURI

PHETCHABURI

PRACHUAP KHIRI KHAN

CHUMPHON

RANONG

SURAT THANI

PHANG-NGA

NAKHON SI THAMMARAT

KRABI

TRANG

SONGKHLA

PATTANI

Gulf of Thailand

*phuket* *krabi*  
*phi phi islands*

*koh pha ngan*

*koh samui*

The coast can be split into the west and the east. The west is where you will find your traditional limestone karst environment (the gorgeous rocks jutting out of the ocean that you see when you google or search Thailand on Pinterest) and the east is more known for smaller islands and the Full Moon parties. We stayed in Krabi. Other areas you'll read about include Phi Phi Islands, Phuket, Koh Pha Ngan, and Koh Samui. Pretty much all of these are coastal locations! So how do you choose??

I picked **Krabi** through process of elimination according to what I was looking for. Koh Samui and Koh Pha Ngan were on the eastern coast of Thailand, and I was really in the mood for the picturesque limestone karsts, so that was an easy no. I was also traveling with my husband and not girlfriends, so the Full Moon party at Koh Pha Ngan wasn't really the vibe we were going for.

The Phi Phi islands seemed to have limited accommodation options and appeared to be very touristy – so I crossed that one off the list too. Also, Phi Phi is easily reached from Krabi or Phuket for a day trip.

The final question is the one most people face – Krabi or Phuket. I read that in a nutshell, Krabi is cheaper (accommodations are about half the price as Phuket) and had easier access to the Phi Phi and Hong islands. So that's how I chose it. Krabi was great for these reasons and I would recommend it! I didn't get to go to Phuket so I am not sure how it actually compares.



Another thought you might have while in Thailand (since it is SO far from the US) is whether you should tack on another city and make it a week and a half or two weeks. We were of this mindset and tacked on 2 nights in Singapore which was really fun! It was closest to Krabi which was our final Thailand destination which was why we picked it. Other options we were looking at included Hong Kong, Tokyo, or Hoi An.

Reading each of my Thailand posts will definitely give you a better feel for which ones you want to tackle, or if you think you want to look into some other regions.

As far as choosing what to do in what order, I would start in Bangkok as that's likely where you will be flying into. We ended in Singapore actually, but you can always fly back out of Bangkok. I always enjoy ending with a beach so we did Bangkok – Chiang Mai – Krabi – Singapore. Yes flying north to Chiang Mai and then back south to Krabi was kind of dumb, but it didn't bother us. All international flights land in Bangkok anyways so doing the whole north then south thing or vice versa is kind of unavoidable!

## WHAT TIME OF YEAR SHOULD I VISIT THAILAND?

If you are on this site, you may want to spend some time on the beach. That will narrow your window down to December – March. Remember that this is Thailand's summer! Thailand also has a legitimate monsoon season, so there would be no point in going to the beaches during this season. The ideal time is January – March for sunlight and no rain, according to the interwebs. We went after Christmas and the weather was great! Sunny skies and warm temperatures. Every day showed rain in the forecast and every day we got lucky and it didn't rain, so keep that in mind.

## IS THERE A LANGUAGE BARRIER IN THAILAND?

We never had any language barriers. Everyone spoke English here. It is very touristy, and that means lots of English! The Thai alphabet is impossible to phonetically pronounce so be happy about all the English!

## WHAT SHOULD I PACK FOR THAILAND?

Packing for Thailand can be very confusing!! It is extremely hot in the cities, but in order to access the temples you have to cover your knees and shoulders which means long pants. I would recommend breezy linen pants or loose athletic pants (not sweat pants, too hot! Not leggings, too tight!) with cotton, breezy tops. Feel free to wear shorts and slip on pants before temples too. I'll throw in some pictures of what I wore below for inspiration! Just focus on being cool. Many people were just wearing v-necks and long flowy pants – nothing super stylish. The temples in Bangkok did have robes you could rent and put over your clothes, but that grossed me out – you do you. Some temples let you put a scarf around your shoulders or legs but some don't which is why I just didn't risk it.

If you're going to do the whole elephant thing, those usually involve you getting in the water with them so be prepared to have a grubby outfit that can get wet.

On the coast, make sure you have swimsuits and sandals and cover-ups. In Krabi nobody dresses up for dinner so don't bring your "resort wear". Thailand in general is an incredibly casual country. We did read about some rooftop bars and upscale restaurants in Bangkok where you would need a smart outfit for, but we did not go to any of them.





## HOW DO I GET TO THAILAND?

The main airport is in Bangkok but there are also airports everywhere including in Chiang Mai, Krabi, and Phuket. We did a one-stop flight from Houston that had a layover in Tokyo. Non-stop flights to Bangkok were actually available but were more than twice what we paid, almost three times. I write in each city post about how to get to each place with a little bit of logistics too, so check those out for specific information.

Getting from city to city is very easy and cheap. Each of our one way flights were about \$30 a ticket. Trains are cheaper but take like 12 hours and we didn't have time on our side. Air Asia is a budget airline, so be prepared to pay extra for seat assignments and for a checked bag as the weight limit for a carry-on was like 10 pounds or something. Make sure to pay for the extras ahead of time.

**Check out Google Flights to book your flight**

## WHAT SOUVENIRS SHOULD I BUY IN THAILAND?

We didn't find anything worth taking home in Thailand. A lot of the souvenir shops just sell baggy pants with elephants on them or tank tops. We did end up bringing home some chili paste but that was it.

## IS THAILAND SAFE TO TRAVEL TO?

All the usual things apply – don't wear flashy jewelry, try and wear a purse that closes, stay away from alleys. We definitely never felt unsafe, but we also didn't make ourselves look like prey!

## MY PERFECT THAILAND ROUTE

### ONE WEEK

Sunday – arrive in Bangkok  
Monday – explore Bangkok  
Tuesday – fly to Chiang Mai  
Wednesday – day in Chiang Mai  
Thursday – fly to Krabi  
Friday – Krabi  
Saturday – Krabi  
Sunday – Fly home

### SLIGHTLY LONGER

Monday – Wednesday – same  
Thursday – day in Chiang Mai  
Friday – fly to Krabi  
Saturday – Krabi  
Sunday – Krabi  
Monday – Krabi  
Tuesday – Fly home

## HONESTLY, HOW MUCH DID YOU SPEND IN THAILAND?

### 10 NIGHTS

Total – \$2241 for 1 person  
Flight – \$788  
Transportation between cities and around cities – \$365  
Accommodation – \$516  
Food – \$335  
Entertainment (cooking class and boat tours) – \$122  
Misc (aka took cash out of ATM and don't remember) – \$115

Thailand is incredibly cheap. Food is cheap, transportation is cheap, and accommodation is cheap. We loved getting to see so much and eat so much for so little.