

Country Handbook: Thailand



Introduction

Travelling to see the work of Compassion and our local church partners firsthand is an unforgettable experience. On this trip, you'll see for yourself how children are known, loved and protected by their church communities and are being released from poverty in Jesus' name.

This Country Handbook is designed to start preparing you for your trip to Thailand. Please read it before you depart, and we'd also recommend that you keep it handy for easy reference.

We pray that God will bless your time in Thailand!

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Country Information



Thailand is called 'The Land of Smiles' and is home to stunning islands and beaches. Thai people are known for being positive, warm and family-oriented, and they take great pride in their culture.

Main languages:

Thai, English

Climate:

Tropical (hot temperatures, high humidity and abundant rainfall during monsoon season)

Main religions:

Buddhist (94.6%),
Muslim (4.3%), Christian (1%)

Currency:

Thai Baht



Compassion in Thailand

Compassion has been working to release children from poverty in Jesus' name in Thailand since 1970. 6.3 per cent of the population live below the poverty line.

Compassion's Child Sponsorship Program is tailored to be age-appropriate for each child.

Children **AGED 1 TO 3** receive home-based care.

Children and youth **AGED 3 AND OLDER** attend their local Compassion centre on weekends.



For more information on Thailand, scan the QR code or visit: compassion.com.au/where-we-work/thailand

Compassion assisted children in Thailand typically attend program activities at their local child development centres. Here is an example of what a typical program day looks like:

8:00am - A time of prayer and devotion.

9:00am - Spiritual lessons, in which children sing songs and learn Bible stories.

10:30am - Break time, when children can play in a safe environment and develop friendships. A nutritious snack is provided.

11:00am - Social-emotional lessons, covering topics from conflict resolution to developing healthy self-esteem and a godly character. Children often come from challenging home environments and are taught social and personal skills.

12:00pm - Lunch time, usually a meal of rice, vegetables and meat. Milk is provided for young children. Children who are malnourished receive additional food to take home each month, such as rice, eggs, canned fish and milk.

1:00pm - Health lessons, where children learn practical health and hygiene tips. An example topic is how to prevent malaria and HIV/AIDS transmission.

2:00pm - Letter writing and career planning. Older children work with local staff to identify their strengths and interests, and set goals for their future.

Children in Thailand also participate in extracurricular activities such as games and music, community sports days, as well as community service opportunities such as anti-drug campaigns.

Every year, parents are offered parenting classes and meetings to inform them about what their children are learning at the child development centre. Many programs also offer income-generation training for parents.

Cultural Considerations



Clothing

- **Women:** Please dress modestly, avoiding short or sleeveless clothes. Pants are generally acceptable; however, when attending church services, it is best to wear long dresses or skirts and shirts that cover your shoulders.
- **Men:** Shorts are acceptable in some places, but pants are most appropriate when visiting homes, child development centres, churches and temples.
- Slip-on shoes are recommended, as Thais do not wear shoes in their homes or in church.
- Predominant displays of red and yellow should be avoided as they can be associated with political parties.
- Tattoos should be covered when visiting churches.

Greetings

- Greetings usually involve shaking hands and smiling. Further touching should generally be avoided.
- Couples may hold hands, but it is best to avoid further affection, and all touching should be avoided when visiting local church partners or attending a church service.
- 'Where are you going?' is similar to 'How are you going?' in Australia. It is appropriate to respond with a phrase like 'down the street'; a detailed answer is not expected.

Eating

- In most settings, it's polite to allow guests, children and women to be served first.
- The most appropriate way to eat is to hold your spoon in your right hand and your fork in your left, using the fork to rake food onto your spoon.
- It is considered inappropriate for Christians to consume alcohol.

Emergency contact information

Local emergency number: 191

Compassion Thailand office: 011-66-53-266-426

Australian Embassy: +63 2 7757 8100

Language

- Useful Thai phrases:

Hello (to a male): Sawat dee krup

Hello (to a female): Sawat dee kah

How are you? (to a male): Sabai dee ru krub

How are you? (to a female): Sabai dee ru kah

What is your name? Kun cheu a rai?

My name is (female): Phom-chew

My name is (male): Chan

Do you speak English? Kun pood pa sa ang kgrit dai mai?

I do not understand: Mai kow jai

Thank you: Khob khun

Yes: Chai

No: Mai chai

- Language/phrases to avoid: swear words, 'stupid', comments on someone's race, size or age, criticisms of the monarchy

Body language

- Feet are considered the dirtiest part of the body—you should avoid displaying the soles of your feet when sitting.
- The head is considered the most sacred part of the body—you should avoid touching adults and children over 11 years old on the head.
- It is courteous to use only your right hand to pay for goods and pass or receive items.
- Smiling is an important part of the Thai culture. It is important to always keep a calm disposition.
- It is polite to keep your hands out of your pockets.
- It is considered rude to point at other people, but you can gesture towards someone by lifting your chin in their direction.

Tipping

- Among Thais, tipping is not practiced except when rounding payments up to an even amount. Tipping is common in hotels and restaurants frequented by tourists.



Key Challenges and Prayer Points

Many children in Thailand are vulnerable to human trafficking, sexual exploitation or forced labour. Please pray for God to protect children from harm and bring healing to those who have experienced trauma. Ask for wisdom and strength for our local church partners who are working to keep highly vulnerable children safe.

Thailand has experienced rapid social and economic development in recent years, yet inequalities are still vast. The people groups living in the nation's northern and western-most regions are particularly disadvantaged due to a lack of infrastructure and their status as an ethnic minority. Pray for God's justice to prevail.

Our local church partners are responding to the health problems in their communities with various education campaigns. There is a particular lack of education around HIV/AIDS. Please pray that the work of the local church will impact Compassion assisted families and the broader community.



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