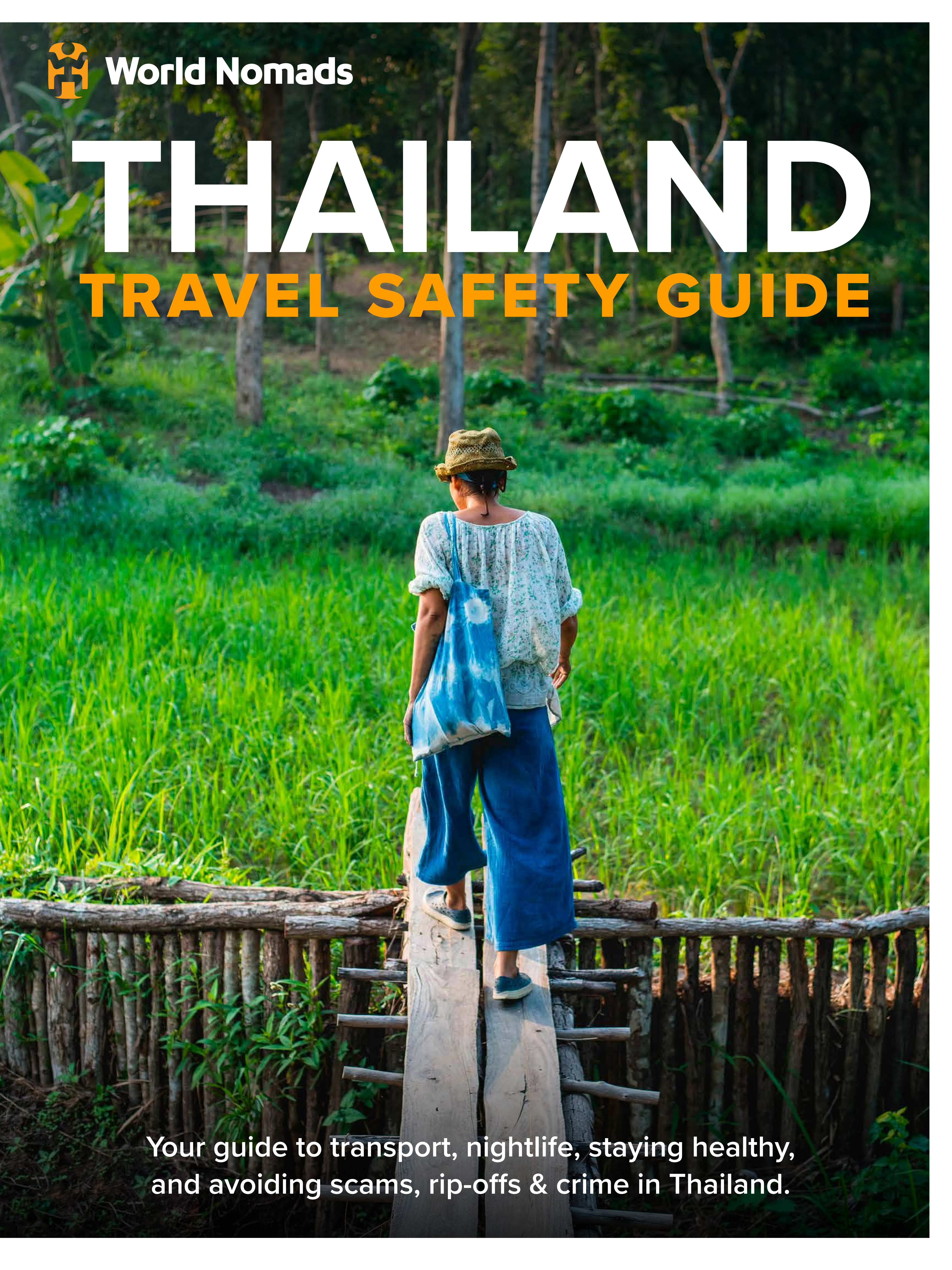


THAILAND

TRAVEL SAFETY GUIDE



Your guide to transport, nightlife, staying healthy,
and avoiding scams, rip-offs & crime in Thailand.

Welcome!

Our guide is full of tips, hacks, advice, warnings and travel alerts so you can have a safe but fun time on your trip to Thailand. The so-called “land of smiles”, Thailand is a country of friendly and hospitable locals who welcome millions of visitors annually. Its diverse scenery includes white sand beaches, lush tropical forests and island hideaways surrounded by warm waters teeming with exciting marine life. Then there’s the food – fresh, fragrant and delicious. While most travelers have a fun-filled and safe trip, there are things you need to be aware of to avoid potential trouble. Hopefully, you won’t encounter any of these issues, but it’s important to know before you go.

Thailand Cheat Sheet

Population

69 million

Size

 198,120 sq. mi
(513,120 sq. km)

Currency

Thai Baht (THB)

Religion

Buddhism

Official Language

Thai

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GENERAL SAFETY IN THAILAND

From weather and water hazards to rules around etiquette, and safety tips for women and LGBTQ travelers, here's our advice on how to get the best out of your trip to Thailand.

Is Thailand Safe?

Yes, Thailand is generally a safe place to visit. The usual rules for solo safety travel, for both men and women, apply including, the first rule for men everywhere, don't harass women. Dude, if she's not into you, she's not into you.

Get to know your surroundings and keep an eye on your belongings. Don't drink too much, as more often

than not it won't end well. Drunken arguments can end in a fight, you may be taken advantage of, your belongings become easy pickings for thieves and, in a worst-case scenario, you could be assaulted.

Staying in control also reduces your chances of making bad choices such as hopping on the back of a bike or scooter without a helmet, or going for a swim while drunk.

Weather & Natural Hazards

Thailand's monsoon season runs between July and October, and can result in flooding in many parts of the country, including Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Transport to the islands and on the mainland may be canceled or delayed due to ocean and weather conditions.

Peak travel season is between November and March when the weather is cooler and drier. Post monsoon season, Thailand's landscapes are lush and green.

The shoulder seasons are hot and dry, however coastal locations are cooled by ocean breezes.

Occasionally, Thailand experiences mild earthquakes but it's nothing to be too concerned about. It's not as seismically active as its southeast Asian neighbors Myanmar and Indonesia.

The risk of tsunamis is quite low, however Thailand was greatly impacted by the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and subsequent tsunami, which killed 8,000 people in the country. While an event of this scale is rare, Thailand now has a tsunami warning system. If you hear sirens while at the beach, run for high ground. If there's a substantial concrete multi-story building nearby, head for it and go as high as you can.

Water Safety

Drowning is the second biggest cause of death for travelers in Thailand, after road accidents. Usually because of poor swimming skills, getting caught in



Getty Images/Somnuk Krobkum

a rip or larking about in the water after dark or while drunk.

Phuket has patrolled beaches, but most of the country's beaches are unpatrolled. If you aren't familiar with the waves and currents of the ocean, swim at a beach patrolled by lifeguards. Safe swimming zones are marked with yellow and red flags. If an all red flag is displayed, the beach is not safe for swimming. Drownings often occur during the monsoon season, particularly in Phuket and Ko Chang, due to the dangerous conditions. The lifeguard flags and signs are there for a reason. Ignore them at your peril.

On a few of the beaches on Phi Phi Island, including Maya Bay, there are places where you can climb up the cliffs and jump off into the ocean. Some cliffs are as high as 52ft (16m). Injuries are common, including sprains, fractures, muscle tears and popped eardrums. You won't be surprised to learn you aren't insured for medical expenses resulting from cliff jumping, because it's deemed too risky. There are organized tours to the cliff jumping sites. Visit, just don't jump.

“If you aren't familiar with the waves and currents of the ocean, swim at a beach patrolled by lifeguards.”



Getty Images/Prasit Photo

Local Etiquette

Thais consider the head to be sacred and that it connects them with the divine, so don't touch anyone on the head. Feet are the lowest part of the body and considered unclean, so don't point your feet or expose the soles of your feet to anyone. If you sit on the ground, do it with your legs to the side instead of out in front of you. These two rules also apply in temples and around religious icons such as Buddha statues.

Remove your shoes (and sometimes socks) before entering a *wat* (temple), a private home or any building where you are directed to do so.

Pointing is considered rude. If you need to acknowledge someone, lift your chin in their direction.

The Thai version of shaking hands is known as a *wai*. This greeting is made by placing your palms together at heart level and bowing your head. Monks aren't expected to return the greeting.

Public Displays of Affection

Be discrete when making a public display of affection, like kissing, to avoid causing offence. Thailand is still a conservative country, particularly outside of urban centers. However, holding hands and hugging is seen as a sign of friendship, so you'll see Thais of all gender combinations doing it, so you can too – go for it!

Sexual Assault

While statistics show more women are assaulted than men; sexual assault

can happen to anyone, anytime and anywhere. Sexual assault is a traumatic experience especially if you are away from home and familial support.

If you are sexually assaulted, here's what you should do:

- Move to somewhere safe.
- Contact your travel insurance Emergency Assistance team or Embassy ASAP. They can advise you further on where to go for the best medical care and support, as well as contacting family etc. This is the best starting point, particularly if you are in a rural location, as some medical facilities may not be able to cater adequately for sexual assault treatment.
- We also recommend contacting the local police. A special branch of the Royal Thai Police, the Tourist Police is a force made up of expats and locals, charged with upholding the safety and well-being of travelers to Thailand.
- Avoid washing, brushing your teeth, or removing or washing your clothing in order to preserve evidence.

Female Travelers Street Safety

Thailand's unlit alleys, dark streets and back lanes can be as sketchy as the ones in your hometown – except here you don't instinctively know where the bad areas are. Don't walk alone on a beach at night, and that includes Sunrise Beach where the Full Moon Party is held on Koh Phangan. Catch a taxi back to your accommodation instead of walking.

The
National
number for
the Tourist
Police is

1155

“
Thailand's unlit alleys, dark streets and back lanes can be as sketchy as the ones in your hometown – except here you don't instinctively know where the bad areas are.”



Getty Images/Photography is my Life

Safe Accommodation

Choose appropriate accommodation. If you're traveling on a tight budget, the \$5 a night dormitory room might be tempting, but paying a bit extra, for a room which has a lock on the door, 24hr reception, clean facilities and linen, can mean the difference between getting your valuables pinched, being bitten by bed bugs, and getting an undisturbed night's sleep. Many hostels in Thailand have female-only dorms.

Drink Spiking

Drink spiking is one of the most common crimes in bar areas and nightclubs around the world, and it happens in Thailand, too.

- Don't accept opened drinks from strangers.
- Don't accept a drink you haven't watched being poured and prepared.
- Don't leave opened drinks unattended.
- If you're a wine or beer drinker, ask for the whole bottle with the seal intact and open it yourself.
- If you feel unusually drunk for the amount you've had, you may have been drugged. Leave the bar and ask for help. Get your friends to assist. Don't ask the bartender for help, he may be the culprit. Don't head back to your hotel alone in case the person who drugged you is following you.

Do Women Get Harassed in Thailand?

Thai society is hierarchical, and



Getty Images/Ascent/PKS Media Inc.

feminism hasn't cemented itself in society yet.

Just as there are western men who think all Thai girls are interested in sex, some Thais think the same of western women, largely due to the way women are portrayed in western movies, magazines, and other sexualized media.

Thai men can often misread signals from the way western women dress. However, it's highly unlikely you will be whistled at or harassed while out and about on the street. Being Buddhist, Thai people are generally shy and respectful of women.

But, if you do get harassed while traveling alone, ignore the comments and carry on walking. Walk confidently and always remain calm. Getting into an argument with a local who is rude to you will never end well.

What to Wear

Just because there are thousands of scantily-clad bar girls, doesn't mean you should dress the same. For all its openness and acceptance, Thailand

Females and Monks

Don't touch or give anything directly to a monk. Instead, set it on the ground in front of them or give it to a man to hand over.

Also, don't sit next to monks on public transport, and look out for monk-only areas in waiting rooms. Women are not welcome in some temples, so always check the signs.

If you pass a monk on the street, let him pass by you first.

is still pretty conservative. Women shouldn't go topless on the beach, and don't stray too far from the beach in your bikini. It's a good idea to carry a loose-fitting dress in your beach bag just in case you want to duck off to the markets.

When entering temples and royal buildings, make sure your shoulders and knees are covered. Keep a sarong in your bag in case you need to quickly cover up.

LGBTQ Travelers

Is Thailand safe for LGBTQ travelers?

Thailand is one of the most tolerant countries in southeast Asia, and has a thriving LGBTQ scene, particularly in Bangkok, Phuket and Pattaya.

The major safety issues affecting gay travelers are the same as those affecting all travelers: petty crime, unsafe roads, and those crazy bucket drinks.

In the major urban centers, especially those places frequented by tourists and in entertainment districts, LGBTQ travelers should have no trouble with being open about their sexuality. Indeed, there are very many LGBTQ-friendly hotels, nightclubs and resorts.

HIV/AIDS and Safe Sex

The HIV rate in Thailand is one of the highest in the world, due to a low and erratic adoption of safe-sex practices among men who have sex with men, injecting drug users, prostitutes, and the general Thai

population. The HIV infection rate is especially high among *Sao Praphed Song* (transwomen also known as ladyboys) sex workers. In 2016, it was estimated that 450,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in Thailand, and there were 16,000 deaths. The most common causes are unsafe sex practices, followed by drug injection.

The good news is that HIV/AIDS prevalence is on the decline thanks to early intervention and prevention initiatives; however, there is more work to do educating young people, particularly men.

Regardless of what camp you are in, always wear a condom and practice safe sex.

Legal Status

Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1956 and, in 2005, the Thai Defence Force lifted its ban on LGBTQ people serving in the military. Prior to 2002, the Thai government deemed people who are LGBTQ to be suffering from a mental disorder. In 2007, the government also amended sexual assault legislation to acknowledge that a victim of sexual assault or rape can be female or male (including those who suffer marital rape).

Despite Thailand's acceptance of the transgender community, there is still work to do in terms of equal rights. Transgender community members cannot legally change their identification documents to reflect their actual gender, and same-sex marriage is not legalized.



Getty Images/David Buffington

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The major safety issues affecting gay travelers are the same as those affecting all travelers: petty crime, unsafe roads, and those crazy bucket drinks.

Getty Images/Roy Wise



TRANSPORT

Thailand has an appalling road safety record, and rates second in the world for road fatalities per capita, behind Libya. Here's how to stay safe when traveling in Thailand.

Border Safety

Thai-Malay

Travel advisories from several nations strongly suggest you avoid this region because of bombings and armed attacks by insurgents in Yala, Pattani, Songkhla, and Narathiwat provinces.

If you are planning to travel by train from Malaysia to Thailand, or vice versa, the train line runs through a small section of Songkhla province,

however, thousands of people have done it without incident. The insurgents aren't directly targeting travelers, but they do attack bars, transport hubs, police stations and ATMs in towns where travelers may be passing through.

Thai-Cambodia

While there is a dispute between the two countries over the border

Koh Rin

You'd assume an operator offering tours to idyllic islands would have the proper authority from the government to do it. It's not always the case in Thailand.

Uninhabited Koh Rin Island is located 14.7mi (24 km) off Pattaya. Many boat operators offer tours to the island to relax and get away from it all for the day. Others offer it as a snorkeling and scuba diving spot. However, the Royal Thai Navy uses this area as a training ground! There is nothing enticing about military shells whizzing over your head, or finding unexploded ordnances while you explore underwater. Scratch this island off your bucket list.



Getty Images/VW Pics

location, and a risk of unexploded landmines, crossing this border is incident-free most of the time.

Watch out for the visa scam when entering Cambodia. Tuk Tuks and some buses will drop you off 650ft (200m) short of the border at what looks like the official place to obtain a visa. It's not. They'll charge you far more for the visa which costs \$30 USD down the road.

Thai-Laos

Use official border crossing points when traveling between Thailand and Laos, and make sure your passport is stamped or you may find yourself in a sticky situation with the authorities in either country.

The Mekong riverbank in Vientiane is heavily patrolled by both Thai and Lao border security because of smuggling activities. Take care when traveling around here because a curfew applies. If you are found out-and-about after 10.30pm, you may be detained and questioned, which is about as much fun as it sounds.

Thai-Myanmar

Clashes have occurred between armed ethnic groups and Myanmar military forces. Drug traffickers operate in the area, and bandits have attacked travelers. The rules and regulations regarding tourism are forever changing, so check the current land crossings available at <https://www.go-myanmar.com/>.

Tuk Tuks

Riding in Tuk Tuks is fun, but can be uncomfortable; anything longer than 30 minutes will start to feel painful.

Bargain your fare before you board, or risk being asked to pay an eye-wateringly high fare.

Tuk Tuk drivers drive really, really fast, and the tiny vehicles offer no serious accident protection. Keep your hands, arms and feet inside the vehicle. Hold on to bags and purses tightly, as passing motorcycle thieves may see an opportunity to grab your stuff before speeding off.

We share more information about common scams by Tuk Tuk drivers, later in this guide.

Motorbikes, Scooters & ATVs

Do I Need a License?

Yes! Yes! Yes! You must have a license; one from home (best paired with an international driver's permit) or you can get one in Thailand, and it has to be for the class of vehicle you're intending to hire.

If you don't have a motorbike license back home, you don't magically acquire one by flying into Thailand. The fact that a shop rented you a bike without asking for your license doesn't mean you don't need one.

What About a Scooter Under 50cc?

Only some European countries and Vietnam have done away with licenses for under 50cc engines. Besides, no one should be seen on a vehicle with an engine as powerful as a sewing machine!

But Everyone's Doing it!

If you tried that stuff on your parents we're pretty sure they'd want to know if you would jump off a cliff if everyone else was doing it. Listen to your parents!

Check the Bike Over

In the Gulf of Thailand islands, there is a scam where you rent a motorbike and, when you return it, you get hit up for damage that was already on the bike. The easiest way to avoid this is to photograph any scratches before you accept the bike.



Getty Images/ Nina Hilitukha

Do I Have to Wear a Helmet?

Yes! Yes! Yes! It's Thai law that you must wear a helmet while riding. Just remember, travel insurance doesn't cover illegal activity, so if you get a head injury from a motorbike crash and you were NOT wearing a helmet, it's very unlikely you'll be covered for your medical treatment.

Plus, it's common sense – statistics show not wearing a helmet is the most common way to die in Thailand. Wearing closed-in shoes is also a good idea. And, yes it's hot, but a shirt and pants will offer some protection from the elements, too.

Am I Covered if I Injure Myself on a Motorbike?

Injury from a motorcycle accident is one of the most common claims received by insurers.

If you suffer serious injuries, and you need medical evacuation, the cost could run to \$100,000 or more.

Don't be fooled, the insurer will check if you have a valid license (forging that international permit isn't looking so smart anymore).

“
If you don't have a motorbike license back home, you don't magically acquire one by flying into Thailand.”

Taxis

While a Tuk Tuk ride can be a bit of an adventure, their popularity is on the wane. Many travelers now prefer to pay a few extra baht and travel in the relative comfort of licensed, air-conditioned taxis. The ride might be smoother, but there are still a few things to keep in mind:

- Look before you open the door for any passing motorbikes on both sides of the road. Remember, anything can happen on Thai roads and traffic can pass on both sides of a vehicle.
- Make sure the meter is on. If you are riding in an unmetered cab, and haven't negotiated the fare from the get-go, it could turn into an argument at the end of the ride. If the driver refuses to use the meter, get out and find one that will. The fares they quote are always at least double the metered fare.

Buses

While the occasional bus accident does hit the headlines, the vast majority of travelers survive their bus journey unscathed. The biggest danger to passengers is robbery. Make sure you keep all valuables close and secure – even while you sleep. Do not stow anything of value in the luggage compartment. On some dodgy bus services, the driver will stop to let an accomplice into the luggage area beneath the bus while the passengers are asleep. He's gone with all your gear by the time you all wake up at your destination.

There are lots of private bus companies vying for your patronage in tourist centers like Khao San Road, Chiang Mai and Pai. The legality of some of them is questionable, and a few scrimp on maintenance. Stick to the public bus service, the Transport Company or other reputable companies, like Lomprayah.

Trains

Trains are probably the safest way to get around Thailand if time is on your side, as they are not always punctual. Again, accidents are not as likely as theft. It's doubtful if any overnight train anywhere in the world is secure while you snooze, so take padlocks, bike chains, cable ties, or whatever you prefer to secure your bags.

Ferries

Traveling by boat is how most people get from the Thailand mainland to outer islands. Others travel along the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok to dodge the road traffic. Whether it's a longtail, speedboat or ferry,



Getty Images/Singkamc

“
The biggest danger to passengers is robbery. Make sure you keep all valuables close and secure – even while you sleep.”

“

Do not expect cars to give way, even on crosswalks or where there's a pedestrian lantern.



Getty Images/Roevin

traveling on a boat can be a pleasant way to see Thailand, but it can also be dangerous. Like its road safety record, Thailand also has a poor maritime safety record.

What you may be used to back home in terms of enforcement and regulation isn't always the case in Thailand, with travelers often caught out in bad situations. But you can take preventative measures to ensure your boat ride is as safe as possible. Monsoon season is one of the worst times to travel by boat due to the inclement weather and dangerous ocean conditions. Authorities will often close national parks and islands for safety reasons.

Many boats don't carry life jackets, or don't have one for every passenger. If you suspect any of the following applies, choose another boat:

- If a boat looks poorly maintained, it probably is.
- If a boat runs out of space for everyone getting on, it's probably overloaded. Don't be afraid to ask to get off if you feel the boat you are on is unstable.

- If the crew cannot show you where the life jackets are, they probably don't have them.
- If the boat is leaving and the weather looks dodgy, avoid it.
- If the boat captain, or any of the crew, appears under the influence of alcohol, don't get on.
- Avoid traveling by boat at night. The ferry terminals (piers) in Phuket and Krabi are packed with touts offering good deals on the ticket price. It's certainly a good deal for them, they'll add about 50% to the price you can get by walking a few feet to the official booking office.

Pedestrian Safety

Walking is the best way to get up close and personal in any destination, but in busy towns and cities, especially Bangkok, might equals right. Do not expect cars to give way, even on crosswalks or where there's a pedestrian lantern. Motorbikes will also mount the footpath, and go the wrong way down one-way streets. It's like a game of ice hockey – and you're the puck!



Getty Images/Christophe Archambault

SCAMS & MONEY

From financial rip-offs and card skimming to scams involving jet skis, Tuks Tuks, touts, gems and even seafood, here's what to look out for so you're not taken for a ride.

Withdrawing Money

Every ATM and over-the-counter cash withdrawal at a bank will cost 200 THB in Thailand – that's a steep \$6 USD. You can reduce this by minimizing the number of times you withdraw cash and taking out large sums. If you do this, make sure you have somewhere safe to secure it on your person – yep, that means wearing an itchy, ugly money belt.

Counterfeit Currency

Fake 1,000 THB notes, each note the equivalent of around \$30, are in circulation. It's a big deal to get duped by one of these.

How can you tell if you have a dud note? Genuine 1,000 THB notes feature the following:

- A watermark of Thailand's King Bhumiphol in the white space on the right-hand side of the note. The

watermark can be seen if held up to light. Fake bills usually will not have this watermark.

- On the opposite side of the note, there are six markers, which have a metallic sheen. Fake bills will usually not contain this feature, or if they do, the markers will not have the sheen.
- A genuine note feels dry and smooth. Counterfeit bills feel greasy or slippery.
- A genuine bill is sturdy and made with strong materials. A counterfeit bill uses cheap paper and is easily frayed or torn.

Card Skimming

Card skimming is a growing problem all over the world. Stick to ATMs in banks and hotels, and keep the receipts they issue.

Restaurants skimming cards isn't a problem in Thailand as it is in some other countries. As for anywhere, have a travel credit card with limited funds available.

Rip-Offs

Thailand is cheap, really cheap, unbelievably cheap – if you're a local. Everyone else is fair game. You will pay more for everything.

Have a look at price boards or menus written in Thai and English, the numerals are easy to spot in the Thai script, so you'll see how much extra you're paying.

You can call this a rip-off and let it bother you, or you can call it an unofficial tourist tax and cop it with grace.



Getty Images/ Jeff Greenberg

Fake Baht Scam

This is a scam on a scam. When you attempt to pay for goods with a 1,000 Baht note, the shopkeeper will claim it is counterfeit. The shopkeeper takes it out the back to inspect more closely, but that's when your genuine note is swapped for a counterfeit. You put the counterfeit away and pay for your goods with another note. You just paid double the asking price AND you got stuck with a counterfeit note.

Never let banknotes out of your sight, or if you're handing over big denomination bills, have a look at the serial numbers first and let the shopkeeper see you do it.

Jet Ski Scams

A common scam in many parts of Thailand, criminal gang-controlled jet ski operators will demand payment from unsuspecting travelers for alleged damage to the rented equipment. Of course, the damage already existed and was covered up. If you refuse to pay, you might be forcibly marched to the nearest ATM.

“
Thailand is cheap, really cheap, unbelievably cheap – if you're a local. Everyone else is fair game. You will pay more for everything.”

“

Official tourist information kiosks in Bangkok are red, steer clear of others pretending to be official.



iStock/Art Siberia

Resistance is futile and often painful.

Jet skis were banned by the Governor of Phuket in 2014, however, enforcing the law rarely happens. It's probably best to give them a wide berth altogether.

Tuk Tuk Scams

Watch out for the friendly driver who will find out the purpose of your trip – shopping, sightseeing or finding accommodation – and will then tell you:

- The shop you are heading to is expensive and a bargain can be had somewhere he knows.
- The temple you want to see is being repaired or is closed, but there's a “Big Buddha” close by.
- Your hotel is closed or no good, but there's a better one available that he just happens to know about.

Usually, these claims are untrue, and the driver gets a free tank of fuel for delivering you to an over-priced shop, unspectacular temple or shoddy hotel.

If you end up going with the driver, spend five minutes politely browsing

but don't lose your head and buy the so-called gems, or the pricey souvenirs. Then you'll get delivered to your real destination for “free” or at least the cost of a few minutes of your time.

Also, Tuk Tuk drivers may give you change in scrunched up notes. By the time you've unfolded the bills, and worked out you've been short-changed, the Tuk Tuk is gone.

Tout Scam

Touts and travel agents, acting as middlemen or fixers, will inflate the price of tickets astronomically.

Often it's hard to spot them because they've set themselves up in official-looking offices with names very similar to the legitimate business.

Official tourist information kiosks in Bangkok are red – steer clear of others pretending to be official.

Gem Scam

You learn from a series of seemingly random strangers that there's an incredible bargain to be had buying

precious gems. Your own greed gets the better of you and you agree to take a look, but of course, all the strangers were in on the game, and you've paid thousands of baht for some nice pieces of glass.

Photo Scam

This is a common scam in Patong. Most ladyboys are very friendly around the streets and bars. While you might like the idea of a great photo of you arm-in-arm with one of the entertainment district's best-known residents. However, once the picture is taken, they often demand money, sometimes very aggressively. This can be a strange and frightening experience, particularly if a throng of angry ladyboys threatens you. See this one coming and try to sidestep it unless you are willing to pay for a photo.

The same approach applies with touts trying to get you to have a photo taken with animals, including iguanas and Javan slow lorises. The animals, which are often drugged and poorly treated, are placed on you for comedic purposes, your picture is taken, and then the handler demands payment. If you take part, you are participating in cruel animal exploitation.

Sombondee Seafood Scam

The Somboon Seafood restaurant chain is good value with great food. The Sombondee Seafood Market is over-priced and poor quality. Taxi

and Tuk Tuk drivers get a commission for delivering you to the door of the latter establishment.

Free Gift Scam

A local approaches you and places a bracelet around your wrist as a gift, or hands you a bag of free bird seed and encourages you to feed the birds. They then demand payment and, if you refuse, hand back the item or refuse to take more, they make a scene to attract attention. Their hope is you will pay to avoid embarrassment.

Avoid getting caught out by refusing anyone who tries to put something on you, offers a gift or tries to give you something. Be firm but polite and keep on walking. Saying Mai Aow ('don't want' in Thai) with a smile can also help.

If the vendor is persistent, tell them you are calling the police. Authorities are cracking down on these scam artists, so the threat should be enough to get them to leave you alone. Call 1155 for the Tourist Police.



Getty Images/NurPhoto

“
The animals, which are often drugged and poorly treated, are placed on you for comedic purposes, your picture is taken, and then the handler demands payment.”



Getty Images/ Thanathorn Pinyokarnjanakul / EyeEm

CRIME & LAW

From bag snatching, prostitution, digital safety and drugs to police bribes, underage drinking, smoking and littering, there are many ways you might be breaking the law in Thailand.

As with any destination, it's the seedy areas where most crime takes place, from robberies to drugging to getting ripped off. If you want to avoid these issues avoid the seedy areas of town.

The best rule to go by is to employ common sense. Don't leave your bag unattended or unzipped. Put your wallet away after purchases and don't make a show of how beautiful you think baht look in your purse. If your

room has a safe, use it. If it doesn't, use a locker or the hotel safe.

Ride-By Bag Snatching

This is when a motorbike zooms by and the passenger riding pillion grabs your bag from your shoulder. Wearing your bag across your body isn't much of a deterrent. The thief could drag you and the bag until the handle breaks or cut the strap with a knife.

Either way, the risk of being injured is high.

How to beat the bag snatchers:

- Only carry the cash you need for the day.
- Leave credit cards, passports and tickets back at the hotel. If there is a safe, use it.
- If you have a camera or a phone, put it in a pocket, not the bag (and download photos every day so you don't lose memories).
- Always carry your bag on the shoulder away from passing traffic.
- Do NOT try to hang onto the bag if it's grabbed. If there's nothing of value in your bag, it'll be easier to let the thieves have it and avoid a confrontation or injury.

Prostitution

Thailand has a reputation for a liberal attitude toward sex and sex work. Sex tourism is big business, which is interesting because sex work is actually illegal – yes, you could've knocked us over with a feather when we heard that, too. Paying for a prostitute could lead to your arrest, detention or being open to extortion.

In 2017, the Thai Prime Minister announced a crackdown in Pattaya, a place notorious for its rampant sex tourism, with raids on its nightclubs and illegal brothels.

Being drugged and robbed after taking a 'new friend' back to your room is a common story. Most confusingly for outsiders, the lines between fun and business can be a

little blurry. We'll leave you to sort out your own moral boundaries, but be aware that many women and girls are trafficked from neighboring southeast Asian countries and forced into prostitution.

Be aware that HIV/AIDS infection rates among sex workers are very high. Always practise safe sex.

Digital Safety

Identity theft and fraud are common crimes against travelers, but there are things you can do to keep your information and devices safe from prying eyes and hackers:

- Make sure all your devices have the latest software and security updates. Turn off any file sharing.
- Avoid using public WiFi where possible. It is rarely secure, and criminals see it as an easy way to get your important information. Avoid accessing online banking on public WiFi.
- Turn off the WiFi signal and Bluetooth to your phone when not in use.



Getty Images/Paula Bronstein

Death Island

This is the name given by social media users to the island of Koh Tao, following the murders of at least six travelers in recent years, most notably a British couple in 2014.

The beautiful little island is a haven for scuba diving, and all-night parties that rival the famous Koh Phangan Full Moon parties.

Amid rumors that the island is controlled by the Thai "mafia", the families of victims claim police are protecting the culprits, who remain at large.

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Consider taking a 'burner' phone you don't care about with you, that way if it is stolen your information is safe on your main phone back home.



Getty Images/Manan Vatsyayana

- If possible, use a VPN when jumping online.
- Make sure your device has a tracking app on it. If in the event of it being stolen, you may be able to see where it is. Another handy tool is a wiping application. If your device falls into the wrong hands, you can remotely wipe all the data.
- Use strong passwords and/or biometric (fingerprint) protect your devices.
- Consider taking a 'burner' phone you don't care about with you, that way if it is stolen your information is safe on your main phone back home.

Drugs

It's likely you'll get offered cannabis, cocaine or ecstasy at a city club or beach bar. The dealers know you're not going to be a repeat customer, so their duty of care is low.

All drugs are illegal in Thailand and the law is very harsh if you're caught. The death penalty is a possibility, but it's more likely you'll spend a very long time in an atrocious prison where you'll soon start thinking that

the death penalty would've been better.

Your embassy can suggest legal representation, but they cannot get you out of jail.

Military Law

The Thai military took power in Thailand in 2014, and occasionally imposes curfews or martial law. The normal legal processes do not apply to these orders. Obey the law or face the consequences.

Dealing With Police

The Thai police have been charged with “cleaning up” Thailand, so they're in no mood to put up with any shenanigans. They are serious dudes. Be respectful. See below for advice on the ethics of attempting to bribe the police.

Thai law requires that travelers carry ID at all times, but don't take your valuable passport out with you. Instead, use a photocopy, or other photo ID.

You'll find the friendly volunteer Tourist Police all over the country.

They speak several languages and will assist you if you run into trouble, and act as go-betweens with authorities. You can speak to them by calling 1155.

Bribing Police

It's illegal to offer a bribe, and we do not condone or endorse illegal behavior. While still rife in official circles, the Thai government is making in-roads into stamping out the use of bribery. There are likely to be more police who not only refuse to accept bribes, but may charge you for offering one.

But, we've heard there are those who have no problems with illegally bribing a police officer. They report that they have more success if they're subtle with the bribe, referring to it as a "special fee" to speed up a process, or an "on-the-spot fine", or by offering to "help" the official in some way. They say it's useful to think about it as paying honor and respect to the status of the officer.

What's the Going Rate for Honor and Respect?

It's common knowledge that a bribe – sorry, we mean an expression of honor and respect – is about the same as the fine would be, minus a discount for saving the officer from the paperwork. Most traffic infringements are between 200 and 500 THB (\$6-\$16 USD).

Again, it is illegal to offer a bribe, and we don't condone or endorse illegal behavior.



Getty Images/NurPhoto

Offending the Royals

Insulting the king or royal family is illegal in Thailand. Penalty: possibly sharing a cell with a cop briber (!). Under the extremely strict *lese majeste* laws, it's a serious offense to defame, insult, threaten or defile any image of the Thai royal family. Travelers should be careful not to say or do anything that might be construed as offensive to the royal family. This could include stepping on a fly-away THB note or defacing an image on a THB note. So don't scrunch up bills or draw funny glasses on His Majesty.

Photography

Taking photos is generally allowed in Thailand, however there are some places where you can't, including some temples. While others are more relaxed, it might still prohibit photographing images or statues of Buddha. Check before snapping away in temples (if permitted) and avoid taking photos of people praying or worshipping.

If you want to take a photo with or

of locals, including monks, always ask the person first.

Taking photographs of the Thai royal family is also a no-no, as is taking photos of military posts and border points.

Drones

Thinking about putting your drone in the air for some cool holiday snaps or footage? There are regulations around the operation of drones in Thailand, whether for recreational or commercial use.

You will need drone insurance, and will also have to apply for a permit from the Civil Aviation Authority Thailand (CAAT) well in advance of your trip. The application can take anywhere from 75 to 104 days to approve, so be organized or otherwise you may spend up to five years in jail or be fined 100,000 THB.

Underage Drinking

The legal drinking age in Thailand is 20. Good news for American travelers, and some from certain Canadian provinces, not so good news for the majority of visitors who come from countries where the drinking age is 18.

This is a law that Thai police are increasingly enforcing under the current regime. Teenage revelers can expect to be refused service at bars and clubs as owners want to protect their license.

Smoking

Smoking is banned on at least 24

beaches across Thailand, including Phuket, Krabi, and Koh Samui.

Get caught smoking or dropping butts on the beach and you could be hit with a 100,000 THB (\$3,000 USD) fine. Ouch!

Littering

You can be fined up to 2,000 THB (\$60 USD) if you're caught littering. Members of the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority (BMA) enforce this fine – you can ask to see their license. This law also applies to chewing gum, so use a trash can.

Strange Laws

Every country has its own quirky laws, but these are the most unusual we've come across.

- Not wearing underwear. Penalty: well, first of all, having some cop doing an underwear check! Then a heavy fine. Why is this so? Don't ask, just put on some clean ones.
- Not wearing a shirt while driving. Penalty: don't know, we're too busy asking why, why, why? But if you're leaving the beach on a motorbike or rental, best to put on a shirt.



Getty Images/ Kiyoshi Hijiki

Visas and overstaying

Thailand is pretty generous with allowing visa-free entry, or issuing visa-on-arrival.

North Americans, some South Americans, most Europeans, Australians, New Zealanders, South Africans and citizens of most southeast Asian countries get visa-free access.

Check with the Thai consulate in your country of residence for a definitive answer.

If you want to stay longer, and you hold a visa that allows a "visa run", you can hop across the border and back, but you're limited to two a year.

If you overstay your visa, expect to be fined 500 THB (\$15 USD) per day up to a maximum of 20,000 THB (\$600 USD) and have your passport stamped as an overstay. Overstay by more than 90 days and you will be banned from entry for a year.



HEALTH

From food and water safety to jellyfish, mosquito-borne diseases, tattoos, and air pollution, Thailand has plenty of conditions that can make you unwell.

Medical Treatment

If you get sick in Thailand, you're in a good place as there's a network of public and private hospitals. The private ones, especially in Bangkok, offer an excellent standard of care. Medical tourism is big business here.

But, if you have an unexpected illness or injury, don't just cart yourself off to the nearest hospital – call your travel insurance provider's

Emergency Assistance team. They generally have the knowledge about the best hospital in your area and want you to go there. Or they may deploy a doctor to you.

Emergency ambulances are run by individual hospitals. The number for Bangkok's excellent Bumrungrad Hospital is +66 2011 5222.

Outside of Bangkok, call 1669 but the service is notoriously inefficient,

and often drivers don't give way to ambulances. Unless you are seriously injured and require paramedic assistance, it might be quicker to make your own way to hospital.

For minor ailments, there are pharmacies throughout Thailand but, if you are planning to head into the country areas, you may want to take a travel first-aid kit with you.

Medications which may be legally obtained (either over the counter or prescribed) in your home country may not be legal in Thailand. Check with the Thai Embassy in your country before departure. If the medication you take is considered illegal, consult your doctor for an alternative. Carry your medication in original packaging as well as a doctor's letter outlining the purpose and dosage of each medication.

Vaccinations

While there are no recommended vaccinations for Thailand, you may want to consider the following:

- Routine vaccinations – MMR, Polio, Diphtheria, Tetanus (check that these are up to date)
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B
- Typhoid – if you are planning to spend a considerable amount of your trip in rural locations.
- Rabies – while the risk to travelers is low, the rabies vaccination is worth considering if you plan to visit remote locations, work with animals or take part in activities which may put you at risk of animal bites.



Getty Images/Pakin Songmor

Mosquito-Borne Diseases

Being located in the tropics, Thailand has a hot climate. Throw in humidity and monsoonal rains, and it presents a perfect environment for diseases and other health hazards to flourish.

The following mosquito-borne diseases have been identified in Thailand, with some endemic (they're everywhere) to the country:

- Malaria
- Zika Virus
- Dengue Fever
- Japanese Encephalitis
- Chikungunya.

Currently, there are no commercially available vaccines for these diseases so the best way to protect yourself is with bite prevention.

Wear light-colored, long-sleeved clothing, apply a strong insect repellent, use a mosquito net while sleeping, and avoid standing water in ponds, pots and other containers. In the case of malaria, you may want to take antimalarials before heading to your destination, however, some

Blood Transfusions

Most, but not all, blood in Thailand is screened. Different provinces in Thailand take more care than others when screening blood for HIV, Hepatitis B, C etc. Although the death rate in Thailand from HIV/AIDS is quite low, it's something travelers should still consider. If there is the possibility you may need a blood transfusion, get in contact with your travel insurance emergency assistance team immediately. They can help you find a hospital where blood is rigorously screened.

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Don't drink tap water in Thailand, stick to boiled or treated water. Don't worry too much about ice as there's an extensive network of ice factories which use purified water.



iStock/Piyaphun

antimalarials work better than others, so have a chat with your travel doctor prior to departure.

Street Food Safety

You're going to find a variety of delicious food while traveling in Thailand, but is it safe to eat? On the whole, yes, but:

- Don't eat anything that's been sitting around, even for a short while. Fresh is best, so insist on the food being freshly prepared for you. If the street vendor won't cook you a fresh dish, go to another who will.
- Pick food stalls that have a lot of people at them, the locals quickly learn which ones are safe. A food stall that's popular will have a high turnover of produce, so nothing is left sitting around to go off.
- Look for stalls that look clean and fly-free. Look at the vendor's hands and utensils – are they clean?
- Ask for fresh chili rather than dipping into the communal chili bowl where everyone's hands have been. Gross!
- Don't forget to observe good

personal hygiene and wash your hands before eating.

- Seafood poisoning, Hepatitis A and diarrhea can strike any traveler. Carry a bottle of anti-bacterial gel to clean your hands and any utensils.

Can I Drink the Local Water?

Don't drink tap water in Thailand, stick to bottled, boiled or treated water. Don't worry too much about ice as there's an extensive network of ice factories which use purified water. The safe ice is easy to spot, it's tubular in shape.

Leptospirosis is a bacterial infection that gets into your body through cuts and abrasions when you're swimming, kayaking, and white water rafting. Also known as swamp fever, it was first recognized as an occupational disease of sewer workers – ew! Monsoonal flooding and poor piped sewerage in some parts of Thailand can also increase the risk of catching a bug.

If you have a cut, make sure you treat it with disinfectant from your

travel first-aid kit, and stick a plaster over it.

Be careful when you're washing your food, such as fruit and vegetables, or brushing your teeth. Always use clean, safe water.

Tattoo Safety

Getting a permanent tattoo is popular when traveling, particularly in Bangkok and Chiang Mai.

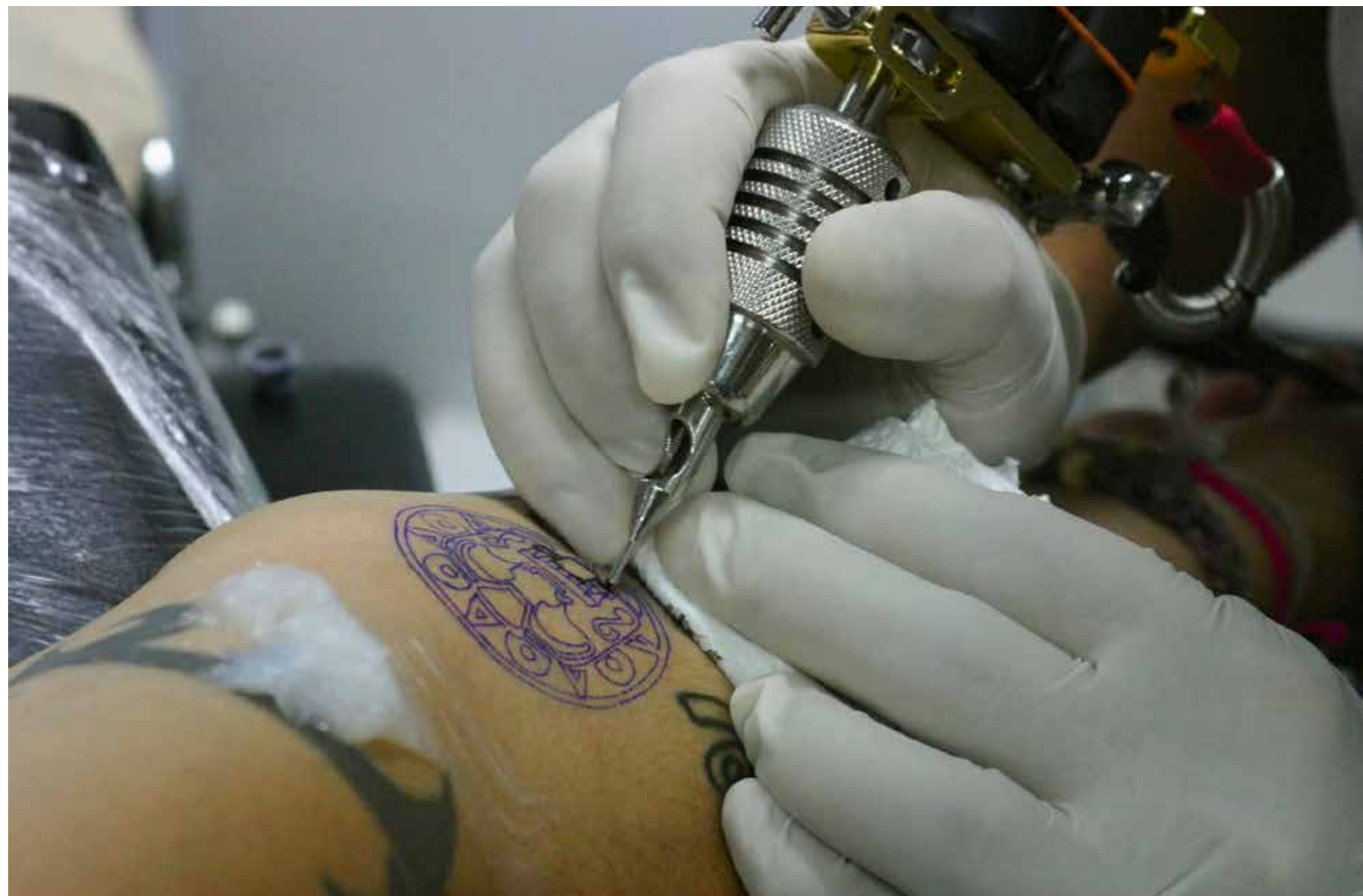
Whether you are getting a traditional Thai Sak Yant tattoo or a western design, it's important to check that the tattoo studio you are visiting is reputable and hygienic. Hepatitis B and C can be spread via unclean and unsterilized tattoo equipment and surfaces. Do your research and check out the place before going under the gun or traditional bamboo tool.

Box Jellyfish & Fire Jellyfish

Inflicting a painful and potentially fatal sting, these transparent cube-shaped, long-tentacled (reaching up to 10ft in length!) aquatic beasts are not to be messed with. Between 1999 and 2015, seven tourists died from box jellyfish stings.

Box jellyfish float into beach areas around Krabi, Phuket, Koh Phi Phi, with the highest instances of injuries and fatalities around Koh Samui and Koh Phangan. Their numbers increase during monsoon season.

Beachgoers don't realize they have been stung until the venom sets in because spotting the transparent



Getty Images/Glowimages

creatures is tricky. Symptoms can include severe pain, swelling, itching, difficulty breathing, sweating/fever and tentacle tracks appearing on the affected body area.

Seek urgent medical assistance to survive a box jellyfish sting. First-aid stations can be found at popular tourist beaches.

Avoiding swimming at night, wear a stinger suit, and swim at beaches with vinegar first-aid stations. Don't pick up any jellyfish which have washed ashore.

Fire Jellyfish are found in the waters around Krabi, Phi Phi and Koh Lanta. They have also been spotted in the waters off Ko Chang.

These purple and clear critters aren't as deadly as their box cousins but they still pack a nasty sting, even those which have washed up on the beach.

Portuguese Man O' War (bluebottles) also wash up on many of Thailand's beaches, particularly during monsoon season. These are easier to spot than the box and fire jellyfish because of their blue-tinted

“**Hepatitis B and C can be spread via unclean and unsterilized tattoo equipment and surfaces. Do your research and check out the place before going under the gun or traditional bamboo tool.**”



Stock/Prime Images

“ Bangkok is one of the most polluted cities in Thailand, with industry and traffic creating smog, often resulting in warnings from authorities for people to stay indoors.

bodies and long blue tentacles.

Seek medical attention at a hospital or medical clinic if you are stung by a fire jellyfish or Portuguese Man O’War.

If jellyfish warning signs have been erected at local beaches, heed their advice and stay out of the water.

Burning Season

Like many Asian countries, Thailand struggles with air pollution. Bangkok is one of the most polluted cities in Thailand, with industry and traffic creating smog, often resulting in warnings from authorities for people to stay indoors. Peak tourist season also increases the amount of traffic smog in Thailand’s cities.

The burning season runs from March to May, particularly affecting northern Thailand. Farmers burn the fields in preparation for the next crop season, and the surrounding mountains act as a trap, keeping the smoke haze over Chiang Mai.

Aside from burn-offs in Thailand, smoke haze can be carried from the neighboring southeast

Asian countries of Indonesia and Cambodia.

Travelers who have respiratory issues or asthma should avoid traveling to northern Thailand during the burning season (instead visit southern Thailand), and should always carry the necessary medication while in urban centers such as Bangkok. A face mask of N95 grade may also help travelers breathe a little easier.

Black Henna Tattoos

You may see those black henna tattoos being offered by vendors - avoid them!

This is not henna, and the ink used contains a hair colorant dye which produces severe skin reactions including blistering and scars. Some vendors will also add pen ink, boot polish and kerosene to the ink.

The kerosene acts as a solvent ensuring the ink seeps deep into your skin. Exposure can also give you lifelong allergies to other dyes and inks.

There are traditional henna artists in Thailand who use the reddish-brown henna ink, so if you plan to get a temporary tattoo, do your homework beforehand make sure you are getting the real thing.



Thailand is well known for its party scene, but to have a fun time you need to beware of bar scams, drunks, the effects of the Full Moon Party, and drink spiking.

Bucket Drinks

Lined up in neat rows, filled with shiny bottles of Thai whiskey, vodka, gin and M150 (the Thai equivalent of Red Bull), buckets sit innocently gleaming at street stalls waiting for you. But buyer beware! The bucket is the deadliest of all concoctions in southeast Asia, and is a drink that is not to be taken lightly.

After just one or two of these

notorious buckets, the chances are things will get blurry! Share one between friends, if you must. Take it easy and drink responsibly.

Drink Spiking

Reports of drink spiking have been reported in bars in party spots around Thailand.

Here are some tips to avoid drink spiking:

- Always buy your own drink
- Keep an eye on your drink when interacting with groups
- Finish your drink before going to the toilet
- Don't get too drunk so you forget the above rules
- If you feel yourself getting drowsier than usual, leave immediately and get help. Call the Thailand Tourist Police on 1155.

Bar Scams

A night out in Thailand can be a surreal experience: there are go-go bars and outrageous entertainment at ladyboy cabaret shows.

- If you get talking to some bar girls, locals or ladyboys, keep an eye on your wallet.
- Pay as you drink. It's not uncommon for the bar to throw in a few extra drinks if you pay at the end of your night, leaving you with a hefty bill.
- Check your change when you receive it as some places will short change you.
- Watch out for gentlemen's clubs offering all manner of non-Thai debauchery. Drinks are very expensive, and you may find yourself coerced into forking over more money than you had in mind. It isn't inflation, it's extortion. "I think 2000 Baht for two drinks is a bit much" really won't cut it in these establishments.

Bar Girls

Shock horror, some bar girls have been known to rip off male travelers.

The ploy is to get the unsuspecting bloke roaring drunk or to spike his drink, and then take him back to his hotel where he is robbed. It's a good idea to stay at a guest-friendly guesthouse or hotel that has cameras and requires that all guest visitors register their ID on arrival. Make sure you also keep your valuables in the hotel safe.

Ladyboys

Most people have heard a story about a happy-go-lucky young buck who traveled to Thailand, got friendly with an absolutely stunning Thai lady only to discover at the most pivotal moment, that he got a little bit more than he bargained for. A chance meeting with a Thai ladyboy. Being a very inclusive and encouraging country, Thailand has made provisions to integrate ladyboys into Thai society, including school programs for emerging transgender children, exclusive toilet services for ladyboys in some places, and prominent inclusion in popular media

Yaba

If you feel yourself getting animated and speedy, your drink might have been spiked with Yaba. Known as the Madness Drug, this powerful stimulant is designed to keep you drinking at the establishment. Get immediate help and contact the Tourist Police on 1155.



Getty Images/Paula Bronstein

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Travelers gather every month on a beach on the remote Thai island of Koh Phangan. Their goal is to get wasted and dance the night away in front of a strip of bars and clubs, pumping out dance music until the sun comes up.



iStock/yupyan

including beauty pageants. In big cities, you will encounter ladyboys in every aspect of Thai life, from nightspots and bars to everyday jobs.

However, some ladyboys are known to travel in packs and seek out single or small groups of men, be flirtatious and touchy-feely. It's important to be very cautious. Big groups of ladyboys who are 'hands on' tend to be after one thing: your wallet and anything else of value.

In bars and nightspots, it's always a good idea to pay attention to your drinks. There have been reported cases of ladyboys spiking *farangs* (foreigners) drinks with sedatives to get what they want.

Drunk Farangs

A lot of *farangs* come to Thailand to get drunk. The worst behaved tend to be in the *sois* (streets of bars) in Bangkok, Phuket and Pattaya. Some will often start fights while attempting to avoid scams. Becoming aggressive or violent is a really bad way to get out of a scam: threaten one tout, Tuk Tuk driver or ladyboy and you

could find yourself in the middle of an angry crowd.

Keep your wits about you when encountering drunken or belligerent people; it can get nasty for everybody involved.

Songkran Festival

One of the biggest celebrations in the Thai calendar, the Songkran Festival marks the beginning of the Thai New Year with days of visiting temples, food, festivities and fun. It's especially popular in Chiang Mai, with celebrations lasting up to six days.

Any party sounds awesome to us, and Chiang Mai turns into one giant water fight.

Expect celebrating Thais to throw buckets of water on you, hose you with water guns, throw water balloons and use any other way possible to soak every human and beast in the city.

It's the same in many other parts of the country so, no matter where you are, join in and have fun – it's sure to be a joyful and wet experience you won't forget.

But remember:

- The water used by the Thais comes from the local river. The water is meant to symbolically wash away the bad, but it can also wash away your health as the water can be dirty and contain some nasty bugs. Some people have cast iron immune systems, some don't. Be aware.
- You don't want to leave the guesthouse or hotel and suddenly find yourself drenched by an excited Songkran celebrant as you get into a Tuk Tuk. Clothes dry, but your phone, backpack and other valuables can end up drenched. At this time of year, keep them locked up safe at your hotel or in a waterproof case.

Full Moon Party

Travelers gather every month on a beach on the remote Thai island of Koh Phangan. Their goal is to get wasted and dance the night away in front of a strip of bars and clubs, pumping out dance music until the sun comes up. Hundreds of thousands of participants over the past 25 years think it's the best party they've ever been to, making it an essential stop on the gap year/banana pancake/backpacker trail.

Many travelers survive the experience (albeit with a raging hangover the next day) incident-free, but there are some things you need to look for to have a safe, but fun time.

- Crime gangs operate at the Full Moon Party supplying drugs, ransacking accommodation for



Getty Images/4FR

valuables and are often in cahoots with the local police. Avoid paying exorbitant bribes or a potential trip through the Thai legal system by not taking drugs. Stay at secure accommodation and keep your valuables locked up.

- Take only what you need for the party. The party is a ripe opportunity for pickpockets to separate phones and other valuables from their owners. Take a passport photocopy for ID and leave the real valuables locked up in the safe back at your accommodation.
- Bucket drinks abound at the Full Moon Party. Because they're cheap, the tendency is to buy a few of them. Because they're huge, it can be hard to keep track of just how much alcohol you've had. Take it easy, drink responsibly and look after each other. Being in control also means you can minimize any risk to your personal safety.
- Skipping the flaming rope is a Full Moon Party rite of passage. Unfortunately, not every traveler comes away unscathed. The day

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Avoid paying exorbitant bribes or a potential trip through the Thai legal system by not taking drugs.”

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Thinking about riding a scooter to and from the party? Best to give it a miss. Being under the influence, tired and trying to control a vehicle never turns out well for anyone.



Getty Images/ViewApart

after the party you'll see people with bandaged hands, legs and feet. They've either cut themselves on broken glass that litters the beach (wear shoes – not flip flops), or they've had an encounter with the flaming kerosene-soaked skipping rope.

- You're going to need transport to get to/from the party, but not all boats are safe. Many boats can become overcrowded with the rush of people pushing to get back to Koh Samui, don't have enough life jackets (or none at all) or are poorly maintained. Take it easy and chill out on the beach until the scheduled ferry service which kicks in from 7am.
- Thinking about riding a scooter to and from your accommodation and the party? Best to give it a miss. Being under the influence, tired and trying to control a vehicle never turns out well for anyone.
- If you have been to a dance party or rave before, you'll know the unwritten rules – take care of each other. Just because this is a beach party a long way from home

it doesn't mean you should let your guard down.

If something goes wrong, your travel insurance company will ask you some serious questions about what you were doing. Travel insurance is not a license to act irresponsibly, which pretty much rules out everything discussed so far. So skip the skipping rope, buy a beer instead of a bucket and leave the valuables at home, then you'll be around to come back to the best beach party in the world again and again.

As tempting as it may be to have a night time swim at the Full Moon Party, drownings have occurred when people are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. There are also rocks which can be submerged with the high tide, not something you want to dive onto or cut your feet on. Speedboats, water taxis and other vessels can lose control and people have been injured as a result.

Also, note that the water isn't warm because you are in the tropics – during the party, it gets used as a one giant urinal. Thailand. Gross!

Essential Insurance Tips

Thailand: turquoise waters, bucket drinks, lush jungles, and Tuk Tuks. Before you head off, here are our top 3 tips to help protect yourself and your gear.

Surviving Traveler's Diarrhea

Diarrhea can take down even the most seasoned of travelers, so if a local dish results in illness, our assistance teams can help find the nearest doctor to get you help. And, with World Nomads travel insurance, you can make a claim for reimbursement for these medical expenses (less any excess, which may apply), even if you're still traveling.

Travel insurance is designed for even the smallest medical emergency, and our assistance team can support you 24/7, even if you're held up in a squat toilet. If it's really serious, they can arrange for an emergency evacuation to the nearest hospital, and guarantee payments if necessary, so you have one less worry.

The danger with gastro is you can lose more fluids than you can keep down. Dehydration can be deadly, so even though you may have a trusty stash of Pepto-Bismol, don't rely on your own instincts or Dr Google for medical advice. Hospitals in Thailand (especially if you're near Bangkok or Phuket) see gastro all the time, and are well-equipped to

assist, and to make sure you don't have something more serious. In Thailand's remote areas, access to medical care becomes scarce, so that's where our assistance teams can help to ensure you end up in the most suitable medical facility. And remember, even if the local hospital doesn't seem as modern as you'd find at home, it doesn't mean that they can't help you get better and back on the road.

Riding Motorbikes & Scooters

Motorbike/scooter accidents are common throughout southeast Asia, and especially in Thailand. It's easy to hire a bike, so, it's not surprising that we see everything from exhaust pipe burns to injuries caused by horrific crashes, which can sometimes be fatal. If you're going to ride a bike anywhere in Thailand, it's essential that you know what your travel insurance covers, what it doesn't cover, and how to get help if you need it. Bring your driver's license from home (paired with an international driver's permit for the

Real-claim story

“During my last night in Thailand, I was mugged and my wallet was stolen. I was on the beach in Koh Phangan when a man came up to me, grabbed the wallet out of my hands and ran away. The wallet contained my iPhone, my American Visa debit/credit card, as well as \$3,500 THB. I didn't have time to file a police report because I had to get to the airport for my flight home. I was traveling over the next 34 hours without a phone, wallet or money and was unable to file the claim at that time.”

US resident in Thailand

class of vehicle you're intending to hire).

Importantly, you have to comply with local laws, and buy the correct plan or adventure sport upgrade (if applicable) for World Nomads to cover you to ride a motorbike or scooter in the class you're licensed to ride.

If you're injured in an accident while riding a motorcycle, there's cover for:

- Emergency medical expenses for treatment at the hospital or by a doctor at the local medical centre.
- Evacuation to more suitable medical facility if it's urgent, medically necessary and if you're fit to travel (by the most appropriate means including helicopter when necessary and available).
- Repatriation home if you're seriously ill or injured and unable to continue your trip.

If you're in need of a medical evacuation or repatriation, you or someone with you **MUST** contact our Emergency Assistance team immediately. Limits and exclusions to cover will apply on all plans so read the policy you choose carefully for full details. For example, for UK

Real-claim story

“A motorcycle came from behind me and stopped next to me, so I stopped walking. Two people wearing helmets were on the motorcycle. The driver was gesturing although I didn't know why, I didn't hear him/her say anything. I felt a slight pull on my bag and on my backpack strap, and then the motorcycle rode away out of sight. The motorcycle passenger had taken my bag. The strap of the bag must have been cut. I couldn't see a license plate. I continued to my hotel and reported the theft to the police the next day.”

Japanese resident in Thailand

and Irish residents who plan to tour around Thailand, please be aware that this policy doesn't cover you for motorbike touring when using a motorbike as your main mode of transport. This can't be added, even for an additional premium.

Theft

Theft is very common across Asia. It's a good idea to leave valuables at home, and, if you take out your camera, smartphone or money in public, be aware of your surroundings, and keep an eye out for passing motorcyclists. Before you travel to Thailand, store a copy your gear receipts or other proof of

Real-claim story

“My family and I took the overnight train from Bangkok to Chang Mai. At 3am, the train overturned, and about eight carriages disconnected from the main carriage. My husband used a table to smash through a small window and help people from the carriage on to the top of the train, and then to the train track where we waited for a rescue team. We only had slight injuries including bruises and glass cuts.”

Family from Qatar in Thailand

ownership, as you'll need to provide this with any claim if your gear is stolen. Contact your bank before departure to let them know how long you will be in Thailand in case of suspicious transactions, especially after you return home.

All World Nomads travel insurance plans will have some coverage for theft or if a carrier has lost your checked in luggage. However, with any insurance plan, limits, conditions and exclusions may apply, for example, if you have simply misplaced your gear or if your tech gets damaged. Generally, you need to be able to show that you took reasonable care to look after your gear. That means not leaving your gear behind or your camera in your checked-in baggage. You should carry your electronics and valuables with you at all times, and lock your gear up in a secure location when you can't take it with you. If your stuff is stolen, you will need a police report, or some other kind of report from an authorized representative

Real-claim story

“I was slipped a drug, taken in a taxi while my friend was in the toilet and beaten and robbed in Bangkok. The person stole my iPhone, camera, watch and wallet, and left me on the side of the road. I went to the BNH Hospital and also went to the police and obtained a report.”

Australian in Thailand

(e.g a property irregularity report from the airline or bus company if your bags were checked in), to validate your claim.

Will an excess or deductible apply to reduce my claim?

A policy excess is the amount you may be required to contribute towards your expenses before any payment can be made for claimable expenses. It can be deducted from the claimable expenses or a copy in conjunction with the insurer for the bills you receive. If your expenses for any event are less than the excess, then you don't get paid out. The policy wording will tell you when an excess does and doesn't apply.

All of the information we provide about travel insurance is a brief summary only. It does not include all terms, conditions, limitations, exclusions and termination provisions of the travel insurance plans described. Coverage may not be available for residents of all countries, states or provinces. Please carefully read your policy wording for a full description of coverage.

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