



# **Families of Thailand**

## **Teacher's Guide**

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## Urban Script

### **Families of Thailand ----Rakkiaet 10 Years Old**

My name is Rakkiaet and I'm 10 years old.

We live along a canal in Bangkok, which is the largest city in Thailand. The canal is like a big city street and it's busy from morning 'til night.

I live with my 22-year-old brother, his wife, and my mother and father.

Mother has been up since 5 o'clock cooking. Many Thai dishes are very spicy. Mother uses all kinds of interesting flavors when she cooks. Here she's using leaves from a lime tree. I love the food she cooks with peanuts and coconut

We eat rice at almost every meal. Thailand grows its own rice and sells rice to other countries, too.

Besides making our breakfast, she's made rice, vegetables and fish to give to the Buddhist monks that stop at our front dock early each morning.

Almost everyone in Thailand is Buddhist. Some boys live as monks for a short time when they're young. Buddhists believe that life is a circle, like the seasons coming and going each year. And that people, too, live many lives. In each life we're rewarded or punished for the good or evil we've done in our past life. Thais believe in living peacefully with nature, with others, and with ourselves.

The monks give our family a blessing as they leave.

We bathe in the canal, often several times a day because the weather here is so hot.

About 7:30 we take a water taxi from our dock to school. We go to a Buddhist school, but most children go to public schools. School starts at 8 in the morning and gets out at 4. We have 3 months of summer vacation.

In Thailand we start kindergarten when we're 5 years old. Everyone in Thailand is required to go to school, and almost everyone in our country has

learned to read and write. The more educated people are, the more they are respected.

Everyone speaks and studies in our national language, which is called Thai. We also learn other languages, such as English.

One of the first things we do each day is sing our national anthem and raise the flag of Thailand. “Thai” means “free”, so Thailand means “land of the free”. Our country has remained free for many centuries. This is because our leaders have been very good at getting leaders of other countries to cooperate instead of fighting.

Older students check younger students’ hands and fingernails to be sure they’re clean.

We’re taught to get along with each other, not to show anger, and not to be loud or show off.

At noon we eat a meal that the school has cooked for us.

Even before I got up for school this morning, Mother had washed clothes, hung them outside to dry, and ironed the clothes she washed yesterday. She likes to get her ironing done early in the morning, before the weather gets too hot.

It’s about 7 when my Mother takes her boat and goes across the canal to buy bottled water and sodas. Then she goes grocery shopping at the floating market. This canal is smaller than the one we live on, and it’s full of boats carrying sellers and buyers. We can get almost anything we need here and at stores along the canal. Even though it’s crowded, people are always polite to each other. Good manners are very important in Thailand.

Some people sell food that’s already prepared, like this meat that’s cooked on a stick. And this soup. Mother buys fish for dinner.

While Mother shops, Dad makes and sells noodle soup from his boat. Everyone loves noodles, especially at noon.

My brother runs a water taxi on the canal. Every morning he goes out before sunrise to take people to work.

Now he's come home to eat and rest. But before he eats, he cleans his boat so it will be ready when he goes out to take people home from their jobs later in the afternoon.

When mother gets back from shopping at about 8 in the morning, she makes a meal. Everyone's hungry because they've been up since 5:30 this morning. After they eat, they rest for a while.

When I get home from school, Mother and I take a bath to cool off. I like to have a snack after school and just sit with my father on the dock. Then I do my homework for an hour or so.

When I finish my homework we have a special treat. My brother takes us downtown in his water taxi. On the way, we stop at a filling station to get gas for the boat.

I like all the traffic and new buildings in downtown Bangkok. We go to the Grand Palace, where the King of Thailand meets leaders from other countries. If a person is born king, it means he was very, very good and wise in his former lives. So we have great respect for our King, and for anyone in a position higher than ourselves, such as teachers and parents. In return for our obedience and respect, they give us protection and leadership.

In the park near the Grand Palace, lots of people fly and sell kites. People also sell birds in the park. We buy a bird and then let it go because we believe giving it freedom will bring us good luck!

We stop to watch traditional Thai music and dancing. Then we visit the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Here on special days of the week, people pay their respects to Buddha and his teachings.

When we get home, my brother's wife buys hot coffee and iced coffee for dinner. We usually eat about 9 o'clock. We're having the fish and vegetables Mother bought this morning at the floating market.

After we eat we like to sit together and watch what's happening on the canal as the sun goes down. Soon it's dark, and mother closes up the house and we get ready for bed.

Goodnight!

## **Rural Script**

### **Families of Thailand ---- Akeem 7 Years Old**

I live in a village along the sea in Thailand. My name is Akeem and I am seven years old. I live with my mother, father, and 5-year-old brother. We have a new baby brother who's two weeks old.

Mother and Father get up early - even before the sun comes up - so they can get a lot done before my father goes out fishing.

The first thing mother does is heat the water to give the baby a bath. The midwife came to help mother when she had the baby. When the midwife came, my younger brother and I went to stay at our grandma and grandpa's house. My mother says that we'll stay there a few more nights until the baby is a little older.

While mother bathes the baby, Father goes to the village well to get water. Most of the time we bathe and wash clothes at the well like everyone else, but while the baby is small, we do these things at home.

When Father gets back, he mends his shirt while Mother cooks breakfast. Our stove is made from a big used can, and it burns coconut husks or wood from the beach for heat.

My brother and I come home so we can get ready for school.

While we have breakfast, Dad hangs clean clothes out to dry on the line behind the house.

When we go to school, we have to cross a busy road, so before my father goes fishing, he walks with us to help us cross. Then we go the rest of the way by ourselves.

While I'm at school, Mother takes a bath. Then she washes clothes. The baby drinks milk from her breast.

Most of the people in our village fish for a living. Father fishes with my grandfather and six other men. They work together and share what they earn. My father says they have fished for all kinds of things, like lobsters

and pearls, but these days they dive for the beautiful small fish that live in the coral reefs. They sell the fish to a company that sells them to stores all over the world, where people buy them to keep in their aquariums

My father says diving is dangerous, so everyone must do their job well.

Usually three men dive and two work on fixing nets and taking care of the fish until it's their turn to dive.

When the divers are under water, they breathe air through hoses that are connected to an air pump. My grandfather watches to be sure air bubbles keep coming from each diver. The bubbles show that the divers are getting air.

The boat follows the divers as they swim from one place to another under water. The boatman and my grandfather have to be very careful that the engine and propeller doesn't get tangled in the diver's air hoses.

At noon, Mother and our neighbors have lunch together in the shade from our house. A friend holds the baby so Mother can eat and relax. Everyone brings her own food.

It's lunchtime at school, too. We like to play a game where each team tries to throw a ball into a basket, while the other team tries to stop them.

Then we get back to our studies. We love Thailand very much, and the first and last thing we do each day is put up and take down our flag.

When we get home from school, my friends and I have lunch on the back steps where we can see everything that's going on. Mother says our houses are built up high so they can catch the cool breezes and avoid the mosquitoes near the ground.

We like to swim while we wait for the fishing boats to come in. Then we can see what they've caught.

Dad counts the bags of fish they have to sell today.

Mother's cutting fish to cook for dinner. A friend visits while the rice cooks and Dad has a snack. Then he brings more water from the well.

It's beginning to get dark, so Dad lights a lantern. We sit and talk together for awhile before my brother and I go to our grandparents house to sleep. While Mother gets the baby ready for bed, Dad has his supper.

It's easy to clean our bamboo floor, because sand falls right down to the ground through cracks between the poles.

Father takes a bath. Then he and Mother visit with their friends in our yard.

The little net tent keeps mosquitoes away from the baby.

Dad puts out the lantern and closes the house before they go to bed.

Goodnight!

## Glossary

**baht:** Basic unit of Thai currency

**Buddhism:** People who practice Buddhism believe that life is a circle like the seasons, coming and going each year, and that people, too, live many lives. In each life we are rewarded or punished for the good or evil we've done in our past life.

**canal:** A man-made waterway or artificially improved river used for irrigation, shipping or travel.

**Cooperate:** To work together with someone to do a job

**Midwife:** A woman who helps another in childbirth

**monks:** A religious group, such as Buddhists, who live in a monastery, a place devoted to the practice of their religion.

**Propeller:** An electric fan shaped machine that helps push boats through the water

**Thai:** The national language of Thailand. "Thai" means "free". Also a native or citizen of Thailand

## **Discussion and Activities After Viewing**

- Ask the class to make a list or draw how their families and school are similar and different than those in the video.
- Invite someone from Thailand to visit the class to talk about growing up in Thailand, to play a traditional Thai instrument or do a classical Thai dance.
- Discuss Thais' belief in peaceful solutions to problems between countries. Ask if this has worked for Thailand. (If necessary, point out that it must have been successful because Thailand has never been ruled by another country.) Ask how the children have used peaceful solutions to solve a problem they had.
- Not all Thais live in the traditional ways shown in the video. Many people, especially in Bangkok (Thailand's capital) and in resort areas, live in modern homes and apartments and dress in "Western" style clothing. Discuss the various kinds of families in the USA, such as Amish families, Native Americans, and Eskimos, and those in many areas of the USA that have incomes below the poverty level and the differences in how they live.
- Ask the class to name some foods that the fishing family can get without going to the grocery store.
- Discuss clues in the video that show that the climate in Thailand is hot.
- What electric appliances do the children have in their kitchens? How does the Thai fishing family cook without those things?

Ask the children what they saw in the video that is unique to Thailand.

## Questions

1. What is Buddhism?
2. Why are there canals in the city of Bangkok?
3. Who is the king of Thailand?
4. Why does Akeem's father fish for tropical fish for aquariums?
5. Are many people in Thailand poor?
6. What kind of language is Thai?

## Answers to Questions

1. What is Buddhism?

Buddhists follow the teachings of Buddha. The Buddha believed in doing no harm, understanding the oneness of everything, self control, and self cultivation. Many Buddhists believe that after a person dies he may be reborn. In each life one is rewarded or punished for the good or evil that they have done in their past life. One can be reborn as a king, a fisherman or an animal. Many Buddhists are vegetarians and do not eat meat.

2. Why are there canals in the city of Bangkok?

Bangkok lies on the banks of the Chao Phraya river and there used to be many more waterways that ran through the city. Many of the waterways were filled in to make roads. During the rainy season, there are often floods because the city lies so low to the ground.

3. Who is the king of Thailand?

The king of Thailand is Bhumibol Adulyadej. He is a constitutional monarch and head of state. The premier actually governs through the parliament. The current Thai monarchy was established in 1782.

4. Why does Akeem's father fish for tropical fish for aquariums?

In some areas of the coastal Thailand, overfishing may have depleted the stock of commercial catch. So fishermen are turning to the colorful small tropical fish that are fancied by aquarium owners the world over.

5. Are many people in Thailand poor?

Thailand has a living standard of living similar to that of Mexico. Many of its people still work in agriculture where the earnings are low because of limited investment in machinery.

6. What kind of language is Thai?

The Thai language is monosyllabic and tonal. Each sound represents a word and each sound can have different tones. The alphabet is based on an ancient Indian alphabet.

## Quiz on Some Things We've Learned About Thailand

(Please circle the correct answer).

1. Thailand is one of the only countries that have never been ruled by another country. T or F
2. In Thailand people would admire you if you told them you had the highest grades in your class. T or F
3. Thai girls often live for a year or two as monks when they are young. T or F
4. Thais respect their parents, teachers and King because they believe their position is a reward for the good they have done in a past life. T or F
5. Thais would think you are rude if you criticized the King. T or F
6. The official language of Thailand is English T or F
7. Most people in Thailand are Buddhists. T or F
8. In Thailand, showing anger is bad manners. T or F
9. Most people in Thailand can read and write. T or F
10. The families we saw like to sleep late in the morning because the weather is so hot. T or F
11. "Thailand" means \_\_\_\_\_
12. Bangkok is the largest city in \_\_\_\_\_
13. Thailand grows and exports what food? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Draw a series of pictures telling Akeem's or Rakkiaet's story. Try to include as many details as you can remember from each part of the story.

## **Introduction**

Thailand is famous for her beautiful beaches, her wonderful Buddhist temples and the hospitality of her people.

### **The Land and the Climate**

Thailand is about the size of France and a little bit smaller than Texas. Mountains run down the western borders, while rolling terrain predominates in the north and east. The center of the country is made of the vast alluvial plains created by sediments deposited by the Chao Phraya river system.

Monsoon rains occur during the summer months, while the winters are cooler and drier. The warmest and driest season is during the spring.

### **Animal and Plant Life**

Over a third of Thailand is forested, where the teak tree is the most commercially valuable. Other environments include swamp, grasslands and tropical rain forests. Notable animals include the elephant, the crocodile and the king cobra. Other large animals native to Thailand include the rhinoceros, tiger, leopard, gaur (wild ox), water buffalo, and gibbon. Thailand also has more than 50 species of snakes, including several poisonous varieties. Crocodiles are numerous, as are fish and birds. Other animals, such as the Schomburgk's deer of the central plain, have already become extinct.

### **The People**

The people of Thailand are both ethnically diverse as well as ethnically mixed. Many Thais have Mon, Burmese, Chinese, Malay or Khmer heritage. More than a third of the population still works in agriculture, but an increasing number are working in the industry. Thailand has welcomed foreign investment and many processing and manufacturing operations have been built. Tourism is a very large industry, almost 15 million visitors came to visit Thailand in 2007 and 2008 before the financial crisis and political turmoil negatively impacted tourism in 2009.

Buddhism is the dominant religion, and orange-robed monks and gold, marble and stone Buddhas are common sights. Many Thais spend a few years as Buddhist monks. The prevalent form of Buddhism practised is the Theravada school, which emphasises the potential of the individual to attain nirvana without the aid of saints or gurus.

A Thai meal is served all at once, permitting diners to enjoy complementary combinations of different tastes. A proper Thai meal should consist of a soup, a curry dish with condiments, a dip with accompanying fish and vegetables. Thai cuisine is pungent and spicy, often seasoned with heaps of garlic and chilies and a distinctive mix of lime juice, lemon grass and fresh coriander. Galanga root, basil, ground peanuts, tamarind juice, ginger and coconut milk are other common additions. Fish sauce or shrimp paste are mainstays of Thai dishes, and of course rice is eaten with most meals. Main dishes include hot and sour fish ragout, green and red curries, various soups and noodle dishes. Thai food is served with a variety of condiments and dipping sauces. Snacks and appetizers include fried peanuts, chicken, chopped ginger, peppers and slices of lime. There is an incredible variety of fruit available, either fresh or juiced. Sugar-cane juice, beer and rice whisky are favorite local drinks.

Some favorite Thai sports include Thai boxing, soccer and basketball.

## **History**

Man has been living in Thailand for tens of thousands of years. Successive waves of peoples from the west and the north have moved through the area. These include the Australoids, as well as the ancestors of both the Melanesians, and later those of the Indonesians and the Khmers. Since the first centuries CE, there has been influence from traders and teachers from India. The earliest civilization in Thailand is believed to have been that of the Mons in central Thailand, who adopted a Buddhist culture from the Indian subcontinent. The Mons seems to have been closely related to the Khmer. Since before the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Thais have been moving south to the area of northern Thailand. In the 13th century, the Mongols destroyed the state of Nan Chao in what is now southern China. Many of the Thai living in Nan Chao moved south into what is today Thailand. They met a Khmer culture moving from the east, the Sumatran-based Srivijaya culture moving north as well as the Mons. The Thai slowly pushed their way south, absorbing many of the original inhabitants and establishing several small

states. Thai princes created the first Siamese capital in Sukhothai, later centres in Chiang Mai and, notably, Ayuthaya.

The Thais also warred with the Burmese. The Burmese invaded Siam in both the 16th and 18th centuries, capturing Chiang Mai and destroying Ayuthaya. The Thais expelled the Burmese and moved their capital to Thonburi, across the river from present day Bangkok. In 1782, the current Chakri dynasty was founded by King Rama I and the capital was moved across the river to Bangkok. The Thais were able to complete their control over all of present day Thailand and more.

In the 19th century, Siam remained independent by deftly playing off the French who were in Vietnam against the British who were in Burma. But they lost parts of their land to the colonial powers. Many immigrants from China came to Thailand between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. King Mongkut, whose story is depicted in the musical comedy King and I, led a movement to modernize the country. In 1932, a peaceful coup converted the country into a constitutional monarchy, and in 1939 Siam became Thailand. During the Second World War, the Thai government allowed Japanese troops to occupy Thailand. After the war, Thailand was dominated by the military and experienced more than twenty coups and countercoups interspersed with short-lived experiments with democracy. Democratic elections in 1979 were followed by a long period of stability and prosperity as power shifted from the military to the business elite.

In the 1990s the country was rocked by military coups and scandals. In 1997 the Thai baht pretty much collapsed, dragging the economy (and many other South-East Asian economies) down. The International Monetary Fund stepped in with a bailout package of austerity measures that slowed Thailand's growth dramatically and hit the poor hardest. By the turn of the new century, Thailand's economy had stopped going into free fall, but rebuilding had only just begun. Genuine attempts to weed out corruption seem underway, but more economic reforms are needed to before foreign investment will come back in. Thailand's position as the region's strongest economy as well as central location, gives it an influential role among its neighbors.

The relatively new Thai Rak Thai Party (Thais Love Thais), led by Thaksin Shinawatra, emerged as a force in Thai politics and saw many sitting MPs defect to its ranks. In parliamentary elections (January 2001), Thai Rak Thai

trounced Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai's democrats and formed a new coalition government in Thailand's first election under a new constitution designed to reduce electoral fraud. Nonetheless, allegations of corruption caused the Electoral Commission to run revotes in sixty-two constituencies.

In September 2006, the military led a bloodless coup and took over the government. New elections at the end of 2007 led to a return of the Thai Rak Thai Party. The upheavals have disturbed the image of Thailand as a beacon of democracy in Southeast Asia. Growth returned in 2008 as Thailand continued to ride in boom in commodities and the rise in the Chinese economy.

The anti-THAKSIN People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) in May 2008 began street demonstrations against the new government, eventually occupying the prime minister's office in August. Clashes in October 2008 between PAD protesters blocking parliament and police resulted in the death of at least two people. The PAD occupied Bangkok's two international airports briefly, ending their protests in early December 2008 following a court ruling that dissolved the ruling PPP and two other coalition parties for election violations. The Democrat Party then formed a new coalition government with the support of some of THAKSIN's former political allies, and ABHISIT Wetchachiwa became prime minister. Since January 2004, thousands have been killed as separatists in Thailand's southern ethnic Malay-Muslim provinces increased the violence associated with their cause.

# Thailand Fact Book



- Introduction
- Geography
- People
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- Transportation
- Military
- Transnational Issues



## Introduction

**Background:** A unified Thai kingdom was established in the mid-14th century; it was known as Siam until 1939. Thailand is the only southeast Asian country never to have been taken over by a European power. A bloodless revolution in 1932 led to a constitutional monarchy. In alliance with Japan during World War II, Thailand became a US ally following the conflict.

## Geography

**Location:** Southeastern Asia, bordering the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Thailand, southeast of Burma

**Geographic coordinates:** 15 00 N, 100 00 E

**Map references:** Southeast Asia

**Area:**

*total:* 514,000 sq km

*land:* 511,770 sq km

*water:* 2,230 sq km

**Area - comparative:** slightly more than twice the size of Wyoming

**Land boundaries:**

*total:* 4,863 km

*border countries:* Burma 1,800 km, Cambodia 803 km, Laos 1,754 km, Malaysia 506 km

**Coastline:** 3,219 km

**Maritime claims:**

*continental shelf:* 200-m depth or to the depth of exploitation

*exclusive economic zone:* 200 nm

*territorial sea:* 12 nm

**Climate:** tropical; rainy, warm, cloudy southwest monsoon (mid-May to September); dry, cool northeast monsoon (November to mid-March); southern isthmus always hot and humid

**Terrain:** central plain; Khorat Plateau in the east; mountains elsewhere

**Elevation extremes:**

*lowest point:* Gulf of Thailand 0 m

*highest point:* Doi Inthanon 2,576 m

**Natural resources:** tin, rubber, natural gas, tungsten, tantalum, timber, lead, fish, gypsum, lignite, fluorite, arable land

**Land use:**

*arable land:* 28%

*permanent crops:* 6.9%

*permanent pastures:* 2%

*forests and woodland:* 26%

*other:* 32% (2007 est.)

**Irrigated land:** 49,800 sq km (2005 est.)

**Natural hazards:** land subsidence in Bangkok area resulting from the depletion of the water table; droughts

**Environment - current issues:** air pollution from vehicle emissions; water pollution from organic and factory wastes; deforestation; soil erosion; wildlife populations threatened by illegal hunting

**Environment - international agreements:**

*party to:* Climate Change, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Marine Life Conservation, Nuclear Test Ban, Ozone Layer Protection, Tropical Timber 83, Tropical Timber 94, Wetlands

*signed, but not ratified:* Biodiversity, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Law of the Sea

**Geography - note:** controls only land route from Asia to Malaysia and Singapore

## People

**Population:** 65,998,874 (July 2009 est.)

**Age structure:**

*0-14 years:* 20.8%

*15-64 years:* 70.5%

*65 years and over:* 8.7% (2009 est.)

**Population growth rate:** 0.626% (2009 est.)

**Birth rate:** 13.38 births/1,000 population (2009 est.)

**Death rate:** 7.12 deaths/1,000 population (2009 est.)

**Net migration rate:** 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2008 est.)

**Sex ratio:**

*total population:* 0.98 male(s)/female (2009 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 17.48 deaths/1,000 live births (2009 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

*total population:* 73.1 years

*male:* 70.77 years

*female:* 75.55 years (2009 est.)

**Total fertility rate:** 1.65 children born/woman (2009 est.)

**Nationality:**

*noun:* Thai (singular and plural)

*adjective:* Thai

**Ethnic groups:** Thai 75%, Chinese 14%, other 11%

**Religions:** Buddhism 95%, Muslim 3.8%, Christianity 0.5%, Hinduism 0.1%, other 0.6% (1991)

**Languages:** Thai, English (secondary language of the elite), ethnic and regional dialects

**Literacy:**

*definition:* age 15 and over can read and write

*total population:* 93.8%

*male:* 96%

*female:* 91.6% (2005 est.)

## Government

**Country name:**

*conventional long form:* Kingdom of Thailand

*conventional short form:* Thailand

**Data code:** TH

**Government type:** constitutional monarchy

**Capital:** Bangkok

**Administrative divisions:** 76 provinces (changwat, singular and plural); Amnat Charoen, Ang Thong, Buriram, Chachoengsao, Chai Nat, Chaiyaphum, Chanthaburi, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Chon Buri, Chumphon, Kalasin, Kamphaeng Phet, Kanchanaburi, Khon Kaen, Krabi, Krung Thep Mahanakhon (Bangkok), Lampang, Lamphun, Loei, Lop Buri, Mae Hong Son, Maha Sarakham, Mukdahan, Nakhon Nayok, Nakhon Pathom, Nakhon Phanom, Nakhon Ratchasima, Nakhon Sawan, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Nan, Narathiwat, Nong Bua Lamphu, Nong Khai, Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Pattani, Phangnga, Phatthalung, Phayao, Phetchabun, Phetchaburi, Phichit, Phitsanulok, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Phrae, Phuket, Prachin Buri, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Ranong, Ratchaburi, Rayong, Roi Et, Sa Kaeo, Sakon

Nakhon, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon, Samut Songkhram, Sara Buri, Satun, Sing Buri, Sisaket, Songkhla, Sukhothai, Suphan Buri, Surat Thani, Surin, Tak, Trang, Trat, Ubon Ratchathani, Udon Thani, Uthai Thani, Uttaradit, Yala, Yasothon

**Independence:** 1238 (traditional founding date; never colonized)

**National holiday:** Birthday of His Majesty the King, 5 December (1927)

**Constitution:** new constitution signed by King BHUMIBOL on 11 October 1997

**Legal system:** based on civil law system, with influences of common law; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

**Suffrage:** 18 years of age; universal and compulsory

**Executive branch:**

*chief of state:* King Bhumibol Adulyadej (since 9 June 1946)

*head of government:* Prime Minister *cabinet:* Council of Ministers

*note:* there is also a Privy Council

*elections:* none; the monarch is hereditary; prime minister designated from among the members of the House of Representatives; following a national election for the House of Representatives, the leader of the party that can organize a majority coalition usually becomes prime minister

**Legislative branch:** bicameral National Assembly or Rathasapha consists of the Senate or Wuthisapha with a 270-member elected body; (members serve six-year terms) and the House of Representatives or Sapha Phuthaen Ratsadon with 360 members, (members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms)

**Judicial branch:** Supreme Court (Sandika), judges appointed by the monarch

**Diplomatic representation in the US:**

*chancery:* 1024 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20007

*telephone:* [1] (202) 944-3600

*FAX:* [1] (202) 944-3611

*consulate(s) general:* Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York

**Diplomatic representation from the US:**

*embassy:* 120 Wireless Road, Bangkok

*mailing address:* APO AP 96546

*telephone:* [66] (2) 205-4000

*FAX:* [66] (2) 254-2990

*consulate(s) general:* Chiang Mai

**Flag description:** five horizontal bands of red (top), white, blue (double width), white, and red

## **Economy**

**Economy - overview:** With a well-developed infrastructure, a free-enterprise economy, and generally pro-investment policies, Thailand appears to have fully recovered from the 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis. The country was one of East Asia's best performers from 2002-04. Boosted by strong export growth, the Thai economy grew 4.5% in 2007. Bangkok has pursued preferential trade agreements with a variety of partners in an effort to boost exports and to maintain high growth. By 2007, the tourism sector had largely recovered from the major 2004 tsunami. Following the military coup in September 2006, investment and consumer confidence stagnated due to the uncertain political climate that lasted through the December 2007 elections. Foreign investor sentiment was further tempered by a 30% reserve requirement on capital inflows instituted in December 2006, and discussion of amending Thailand's rules governing foreign-owned businesses. Economic growth in 2007 was due almost entirely to robust export performance - despite the pressure of an appreciating currency. Since 2005, however, a prolonged political crisis has weakened the economy; average annual growth dipped to a little more than 3% from 2005 to 2008. Investor and consumer confidence eroded, and Thailand's international image was damaged. Thai exports - mostly machinery and electronic components, agricultural commodities, and jewelry - continued to drive the economy, accounting for as much as three-quarters of GDP. The global financial crisis of 2008-09 severely cut Thailand's exports, however, with most sectors experiencing double-digit drops. In 2009, the economy contracted about 3.5%. The Thai government is focusing on financing domestic infrastructure projects and stimulus programs to revive the economy, as external trade remains weak and the persistent internal political crisis dampens foreign direct investment prospects.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$534 billion (2009 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** -3.5% (2009 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$8,100 (2009 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:**

*agriculture:* 12%

*industry:* 44%

*services:* 44% (2009 est.)

**Population below poverty line:** 10% (2004 est.)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

*lowest 10%:* 2.7%

*highest 10%:* 33.4% (2002)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** -0.9% (2009 est.)

**Labor force:** 38.06 million (2009 est.)

**Labor force - by occupation:** agriculture 42%, industry 20%, services 37% (2009 est.)

**Unemployment rate:** 2.7% (2009 est.)

**Industries:** tourism; textiles and garments, agricultural processing, beverages, tobacco, cement, light manufacturing, such as jewelry; electric appliances and components, computers and parts, integrated circuits, furniture, plastics; world's second-largest tungsten producer and third-largest tin producer

**Industrial production growth rate:** -8.7% (2009 est.)

**Agriculture - products:** rice, cassava (tapioca), rubber, corn, sugarcane, coconuts, soybeans

**Exports:** \$137 billion (f.o.b., 2009 est.)

**Exports - commodities:** computers and parts, textiles, rice, automobiles

**Exports - partners:** US 11.4%, Japan 11.4%, China 9.2%, Singapore 5.7%, Hong Kong 5.6%, Malaysia 5.6% (2009)

**Imports:** \$106.4 billion (f.o.b., 2009 est.)

**Imports - commodities:** capital goods, intermediate goods and raw materials, consumer goods, fuels

**Imports - partners:** Japan 18.8%, China 11.2%, US 6.4%, UAE 6.0%, Malaysia 5.5%, Saudi Arabia 4.1%, Singapore 4.0% (2009)

**Currency:** 1 baht (B) = 100 satang

**Exchange rates:** baht (B) per US\$1 – 34.38 (2009), 33.599 (2007), 37.349 (2000), 37.844 (1999), 41.359 (1998), 31.364 (1997), 25.343 (1996), 24.915 (1995)

**Fiscal year:** 1 October - 30 September

## **Communications**

**Telephones - main lines in use:** 7.4 million (2009)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** 62.3 million (2009)

## **Transportation**

### **Railways:**

*total:* 4071 km

*narrow gauge:* 3,940 km 1.000-m gauge (99 km double track)

### **Highways:**

*total:* 180,053 km

*paved:* 178,385 km

*unpaved:* 1,615 km (2009 est.)

**Waterways:** 3,999 km principal waterways; 3,701 km with navigable depths of 0.9 m or more throughout the year; numerous minor waterways navigable by shallow-draft native craft

**Ports and harbors:** Bangkok, Laem Chabang, Pattani, Phuket, Sattahip, Si Racha, Songkhla

**Airports:** 106 (2009 est.)

**Airports - with paved runways:** 56

## Websites

[www.tat.or.th](http://www.tat.or.th)

[www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/south\\_east\\_asia/thailand/](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/south_east_asia/thailand/)

## Recipes

### **Bananas in Coconut Sauce ( [Kluai Buat Chi](#) )**

(Serves 20 over ice cream)

3 cups coconut milk (not coconut cream)

8 teaspoons sugar

8 large bananas

pinch of salt

Heat 3 cups of coconut milk in saucepan. Add 8 t. sugar and pinch of salt. Bring to a boil and simmer 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Stir in 8 bananas, peeled and cut in ½ inch diagonal slices. Return to boil for a few seconds. Serve alone (increase recipe) or over ice cream. Best if served immediately so bananas do not discolor. (Serve over vanilla icecream)

See, Extending the Table, p. 295

## **Coconut soup**

(serves approximately 20 young children)

4 13 oz. chicken broth  
4 cups water  
8 T lime juice  
4 t. fresh chopped ginger  
8 t. sugar  
4 14 oz cans coconut milk  
4 uncooked chicken breasts  
(optional) fresh cilantro  
(optional) crushed red pepper flakes  
(optional) can be served over rice

Mix 4 cans chicken broth with 4 cups of water, 8 tablespoons lime juice, 4 teaspoons fresh chopped ginger, 1 teaspoon salt and 8 teaspoons sugar. Cook for 5 minutes. Cut chicken breasts into thin slices.

Add chicken and 4 cans of coconut milk to hot mixture. Cook 8 more minutes.

Pour into bowls, and top with fresh cilantro leaves (optional) and a pinch of crushed red pepper (optional) for each serving. Can also be served over rice.

## Activities

### Making a Lotus Flower

Lotus flowers are common in subtropical and tropical Asia. They float on top of water like a lily pad.

#### Materials Needed:

Large white paper plate  
blue tempera paint in a dish or a lid,  
paintbrush  
Styrofoam egg carton  
Child safety scissors  
Orange and green construction paper  
Tacky glue

#### Instructions:

1. Paint the plate blue
2. Cut out cups from the egg carton
3. Cut around the edges of the cups to make the petals
4. Glue a dot of orange paper in the center of each flower
5. Glue the flowers onto the plate
6. Cut out leaves from green construction paper and glue them onto the plate next to the flower