



# **Families of Thailand**

## **Teacher's Guide**

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## Table of Contents

Families of Thailand Script	2
Glossary	8
Discussion	9
Questions	10
Answers to Questions	11
Quiz on Some Things We've Learned	12
Introduction	13
The Land and Climate	13
Animal and Plant Life	13
The People	13
History	14
Factbook	15
Website	24
Recipes	25
Activities	26

## **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!

### **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 has never been ruled by another country.
2. In Thailand people would admire you if you told them you had the highest grades in your class.
3. Thai girls often live for a year or two as monks when they are young.
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.
5. Thais usually fight to defend their freedom.
6. Thais would think you are rude if you criticized the King.
7. The official language of Thailand is English
8. Most people in Thailand are Buddhists.
9. In Thailand, showing anger is bad manners.
10. Most people in Thailand can read and write.
11. The families we saw like to sleep late in the morning because the weather is so hot.
12. "Thailand" means \_\_\_\_\_
13. Bangkok is the largest city in \_\_\_\_\_
14. Thailand grows and exports what food? \_\_\_\_\_
15. 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 king cobra.

### **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. Half 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, close to ten million visitors came to visit Thailand in 2000.

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 dinners 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 thousands of years. Successive waves of peoples from 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 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. 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.

In the 19th century, Siam remained independent by deftly playing off the French who were in Vietnam against the British who were in Burma. 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

Over recent months, 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 will form 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.

# Thailand Fact Book



## 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:* 34%

*permanent crops:* 6%

*permanent pastures:* 2%

*forests and woodland:* 26%

*other:* 32% (1993 est.)

**Irrigated land:** 44,000 sq km (1993 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:** 61,230,874

*note:* estimates for this country explicitly take into account the effects of excess mortality due to AIDS; this can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and changes in the distribution of population by age and sex than would otherwise be expected (July 2000 est.)

**Age structure:**

*0-14 years:* 24% (male 7,386,231; female 7,107,010)

*15-64 years:* 70% (male 21,102,363; female 21,714,411)

*65 years and over:* 6% (male 1,726,043; female 2,194,816) (2000 est.)

**Population growth rate:** 0.93% (2000 est.)

**Birth rate:** 16.86 births/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Death rate:** 7.53 deaths/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Net migration rate:** 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Sex ratio:**

*at birth:* 1.05 male(s)/female

*under 15 years:* 1.04 male(s)/female

*15-64 years:* 0.97 male(s)/female

*65 years and over:* 0.79 male(s)/female

*total population:* 0.97 male(s)/female (2000 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 31.48 deaths/1,000 live births (2000 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:**

*total population:* 68.55 years

*male:* 65.29 years

*female:* 71.97 years (2000 est.)

**Total fertility rate:** 1.88 children born/woman (2000 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% (1995 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 Thaksin Shinawatra (since January 2001)

*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)

*elections:* House of Representatives - last held 17 November 2000

*election results:* House of Representatives - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - NA

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

**Political parties :** Democratic Party or DP (Prachathipat Party); Liberal Democratic Party or LDP (Seri Tham); Mass Party or MP; National

Development Party or NDP (Chat Phattana); New Aspiration Party or NAP (Khwamwang Mai); Phalang Dharma Party or PDP (Phalang Tham); Social Action Party or SAP (Kitsangkhom Party); Solidarity Party or SP (Ekkaphap Party); Thai Citizen's Party or TCP (Prachakon Thai); Thai Nation Party or TNP (Chat Thai Party); Thai Rak Thai Party or TRT

**International organization participation:** APEC, AsDB, ASEAN, CCC, CP, ESCAP, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCs, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Inmarsat, Intelsat, Interpol, IOC, IOM, ISO, ITU, NAM, OAS (observer), OPCW, PCA, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNIKOM, UNITAR, UNMIBH, UNTAET, UNU, UPU, WCL, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WToO, WTrO

**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:** After enjoying the world's highest growth rate from 1985 to 1995 - averaging almost 9% annually - increased speculative pressure on Thailand's currency in 1997 led to a crisis that uncovered financial sector weaknesses and forced the government to float the baht. Long pegged at 25 to the dollar, the baht reached its lowest point of 56 to the dollar in January 1998 and the economy contracted by nearly 10% that same year. Thailand entered a recovery stage in 1999; preliminary estimates are that the economy expanded by about 4% - most forecasters expect similar growth in 2000. Beginning in 1999 the baht stabilized and inflation and interest rates began coming down. The Thai government has cooperated

closely with the IMF and adhered to its mandated recovery program, including passage of new bankruptcy and foreclosure laws. The regional recovery boosted exports, while fiscal stimulus buoyed domestic demand. While slow progress has been made in recapitalizing the financial sector, tough measures - such as implementing a privatization plan and forcing the private sector to restructure - remain undone.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$388.7 billion (1999 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 4% (1999 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$6,400 (1999 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:**

*agriculture:* 12%

*industry:* 39%

*services:* 49% (1997 est.)

**Population below poverty line:** 12.5% (1998 est.)

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

*lowest 10%:* 2.5%

*highest 10%:* 37.1% (1992)

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** 2.4% (1999 est.)

**Labor force:** 32.6 million (1997 est.)

**Labor force - by occupation:** agriculture 54%, industry 15%, services 31% (1996 est.)

**Unemployment rate:** 4.5% (1998 est.)

**Budget:**

*revenues:* \$20 billion

*expenditures:* \$23 billion, including capital expenditures of \$NA (1999 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:** 12.6% (1999 est.)

**Electricity - production:** 85 billion kWh (1999)

**Electricity - production by source:**

*fossil fuel:* 91.44%

*hydro:* 8.56%

*nuclear:* 0%

*other:* 0% (1998)

**Electricity - consumption:** 80.293 billion kWh (1999)

**Electricity - exports:** 138 million kWh (1998)

**Electricity - imports:** 700 million kWh (1998)

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

**Exports:** \$58.5 billion (f.o.b., 1999 est.)

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

**Exports - partners:** US 22.3%, Japan 13.7%, Singapore 8.6%, Hong Kong 5.1%, Netherlands 4.0%, UK 3.9%, Malaysia 3.3%, China 3.2%, Taiwan 3.2%, Germany 2.9% (1998)

**Imports:** \$45 billion (f.o.b., 1999 est.)

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

**Imports - partners:** Japan 23.6%, US 14.0%, Singapore 5.5%, Malaysia 5.1%, Taiwan 5.2%, Germany 4.2%, China 4.2%, South Korea 3.5%, Oman 2.6%, Indonesia 2.1% (1998)

**Debt - external:** \$80 billion (1999 est.)

**Economic aid - recipient:** \$1.732 billion (1995)

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

**Exchange rates:** baht (B) per US\$1 - 37.349 (January 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:** 5.4 million (1998)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** 2.3 million (1998)

**Telephone system:** service to general public adequate, but investment in technological upgrades reduced by recession; bulk of service to government activities provided by multichannel cable and microwave radio relay network

*domestic:* microwave radio relay and multichannel cable; domestic satellite system being developed

*international:* satellite earth stations - 2 Intelsat (1 Indian Ocean and 1 Pacific Ocean)

**Radio broadcast stations:** AM 204, FM 334, shortwave 6 (1999)

**Radios:** 13.96 million (1997)

**Television broadcast stations:** 5 (all in Bangkok; plus 131 repeaters) (1997)

**Televisions:** 15.19 million (1997)

**Internet Service Providers (ISPs):** 13 (1999)

## Transportation

### **Railways:**

*total:* 3,940 km

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

### **Highways:**

*total:* 64,600 km

*paved:* 62,985 km

*unpaved:* 1,615 km (1996 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

**Pipelines:** petroleum products 67 km; natural gas 350 km

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

### **Merchant marine:**

*total:* 299 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 1,834,809 GRT/2,949,558 DWT

**Airports:** 106 (1999 est.)

**Airports - with paved runways:**

**Airports - with unpaved runways:** 50

**Heliports:** 3

## Military

**Military branches:** Royal Thai Army, Royal Thai Navy (includes Royal Thai Marine Corps), Royal Thai Air Force, Paramilitary Forces

**Military expenditures - dollar figure:** \$2.075 billion (FY97/98)

**Military expenditures - percent of GDP:** 1.3% (FY97/98)

## Transnational Issues

**Disputes - international:** parts of the border with Laos are indefinite; maritime boundary with Vietnam resolved, August 1997; parts of border with Cambodia are indefinite; maritime boundary with Cambodia not clearly defined; sporadic conflict with Burma over alignment of border

## 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  $\frac{1}{2}$  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