

DESTINATION THAILAND



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Thai puppets are each a delicate work of art. Traditional Thai puppet performances are expressions of our warm welcome to all our distinguished guests.

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** Courtesy of Joe Louis Thai Puppet Theater.*



Amazing Thailand, Amazing Value

Thailand has long been a favoured location for tourists from all over the world. The country offers a wide variety of holiday destinations, ranging from white sand beaches, tranquil valleys and scenic mountains to a colourful nightlife. It is also known for its religious and cultural harmony as a land that enthusiastically celebrates festivals of all cultures and welcomes foreign guests with warm smiles and effusive hospitality.

Such diversity and renowned hospitality in addition to world-class accommodation and convention facilities have contributed to the continued success of the Thai tourism industry over a number of decades.

Tourism is one of Thailand's major sources of income. It constitutes approximately 6 percent of the country's GDP. In 2008, 14.54 million foreigners travelled to the country.

SPOT ON
THAILAND
Shining Through

International Tourist Arrivals to Thailand by Region 2003-2007

Region	Year					Total
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	
East Asia	6,199,719	7,070,821	6,711,602	7,944,758	7,981,205	35,908,105
Europe	2,283,913	2,647,702	2,708,102	3,324,846	3,689,770	14,654,333
The Americas	586,147	702,668	745,494	825,862	817,564	3,677,735
South Asia	391,064	469,099	519,174	605,261	685,574	2,670,172
Oceania	347,849	471,481	504,487	627,626	731,283	2,682,726
Middle East	206,234	292,690	305,566	406,015	453,891	1,664,396
Africa	67,183	82,788	72,916	94,422	104,941	422,250
Grand Total	10,084,112	11,739,253	11,569,346	13,830,796	14,466,235	61,679,717

Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand and Ministry of Tourism and Sports

Winning the Hearts of Tourists

Over the years, the Kingdom has topped numerous travellers' polls as being among the world's most tourist friendly countries. In May 2009, a CNN survey of 5,000 travellers found Thailand to be the best value for money destination in the Asia-Pacific region.

The accolades keep on coming. Earlier this year, Thailand was declared the Most Favored Asian Destination in the Go Asia Awards Survey. Bangkok and Chiang Mai were also voted third and fifth top cities in the world in Travel + Leisure's 2009 World's Best Awards. The prestigious Condé Nast Traveller pronounced Bangkok as the Best City of Asia in 2008, while Chiang Mai placed second behind the capital.





Land of Smiles

Thailand is widely known as the “Land of Smiles” because of its warm hospitality, friendly people and the contagious ‘Thai smile’ that make visitors want to keep coming back. Even in Bangkok, where the pace of life is faster, you can still see smiles on people’s faces as they go about their busy daily schedules.

Attractions

Thailand offers a number of tourist attractions. In the north, mountains, forests and indigenous hill tribes, while in the south, fantastic diving sites, sandy beaches and hundreds of islands welcome visitors. To the east and northeast, mysterious monuments of ancient kingdoms wait to be explored. In the central region, there are many World Heritage and historical sites, among which are the not-to-be-missed Grand Palace, the Temple of Dawn as well as other old temples adorned with golden stupas, the landmarks of Bangkok.



Rich Culture

What makes Thailand well-known among foreigners is its rich culture and warm hospitality. A lot of fun and colourful festivals, such as the Thai New Year or Songkran - the water festival and Loy Kratong, the festival of lights where candle-lit floral lanterns are floated down the rivers always draw visitors' attention. Thailand also offers a great variety of arts and crafts, from local wooden handicrafts and exquisite Thai silk to distinctively delicate jewel-studded nielloware that tell many stories about the culture-rich Kingdom.



Accommodation

Thailand has a full range of accommodation from well-known international hotel chains to chic boutique hotels, budget hotels, guest houses, serviced apartments and homestay accommodation run by locals. Most international hotel chains are located in main cities, such as Bangkok, Chiang Mai, Phuket and Pattaya, but are increasingly found in secondary cities across the country.



Food

Thai food is a primary delight for foreign visitors. Authentic, local cuisine, with its distinctive taste and enthusiastic use of fresh herbs and spices, is available at inexpensive street stalls as well as more pricey gourmet restaurants. Thailand also offers an impressive choice of international ethnic food as well as international fast food chains.



Shopping

In Bangkok, modern shopping malls offer international and local brands while Chatuchak Weekend Market, possibly the world's largest flea market, sells everything from food to fashion products, collectible items, plant and gardening products, household items and even pets. There are others, such as the night markets on Silom and Khao San roads, where visitors can enjoy a night out and a good bargain. In the provinces outside of Bangkok, floating markets, such as the





Damnoen Saduak Floating Market, offer stunning views of life on the river. Walking street markets can be found up north in Chiang Mai and down south in Phuket as well as in other smaller towns.

Transport

As one of Southeast Asia's travel gateways, Thailand has an excellent transportation infrastructure. The new Suvarnabhumi International Airport can accommodate 45 million passengers per year and will expand to handle up to 60 million in the future. Meanwhile, other international and domestic airports around the country offer international standard facilities and convenience to passengers. In addition, Thailand boasts a well developed highway, rail and bus network that allows convenient and safe land transport to all cities nationwide. International and local car rental services are also a convenient and viable option for visitors.





Government Policies

To promote and assist the tourism industry, the Thai government has introduced measures designed to reduce tourism-related fees and service costs, including visa fees, where applicable. At the same time, the government also considers the convenience, safety and security of foreign visitors a matter of highest importance. In addition to an effective Tourism Police force dedicated to helping tourists, measures have also been implemented and will be reinforced, where necessary, to address problems which may have an impact on their safety and convenience.

