

Thai Culture

Most Thai people are Buddhist. Before opening a Thai business a monk will be invited to bless it. People believe that Buddha brings you luck and will light a candle, offer flowers and make a wish while praying. There are different kinds of Buddhist temples – Cambodian, Indian, and Chinese. The nearest Thai Buddhist temple is in Newcastle. In the Thai calendar you celebrate Buddha's dates of birth and death; they don't have Christmas.

Thai men must serve their country and before they get married they must be a monk for a few months.

Thai people celebrate New Year's in April 12th -14th by playing with water – throwing it at each other. Adults sit high up and children sit kneeling and the adults bless the children. This has become a popular tourist spectacle.

The main language is Thai. Different parts of the country speak different languages– about seven or eight different kinds!

Not every older woman can read and write, but that is changing and most people go to school now; English is mandatory. My mother's generation didn't have books, but wrote on slates. My grandparents will have written in a Thai/Arabic mix which no one uses anymore. The Thai alphabet is 46 characters and there are 24 vowels.

You have to pay for healthcare and medicine in Thailand. You have to pay for everything! The name of the currency is the baht.

Most people outside of Bangkok are rice, fruit or animal farmers -chicken, duck or buffalo.

Thai dancing is different all around the country. Where I am from it is done to faster songs than they do in the North. The dancing tells a story. In the South you put on a mask and do guardian mask dancing. In the North you put on long nails.

Thailand is the Land of Smiles – people used to be known for their friendliness and helpfulness. I don't know about this now!

Thailand used to be called Siam and Bangkok was Krung Thep (กรุงเทพฯ). It is still ruled by a King and Queen and also has a Prime Minister. Older Thai people love and respect the King and Queen because they used to go around to the villages and visit poor people and help them with food and clothing supplies. If the King and Queen walk past you have to sit on the floor. People would fall out with each other for loving the Royals (wearing yellow) or loving Taksin Shinelwatre (wearing red) the old Prime Minister.

Coming here the biggest thing to get used to is the weather – it is cold! Coming from Bangkok Cumbria seems deserted. You can't hear any traffic.

The thing I like least is the teenagers who throw stones at my house, call me names or blow things at me through straws. I am uncomfortable with teenage kids because of this. Some kids are as young as 8 or 9. I have called the police and they said they couldn't do anything because the kids were too young. Old people are very nice to me.

I miss my family and I miss Thai food. In Thailand we eat many more meals a day and much smaller portions. It is rude if you don't finish what you are given, but I find it difficult to eat so much at one sitting.

I had my son when I moved to Cumbria and so I met friends through toddler groups. At first everyone had conversations in English around me, but now I speak and understand very well and can participate better with friends.



