

Bangkok, Thailand – Thammasat University Exchange Spring 2020 Handbook

The Thammasat University Exchange program is offered by the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in partnership with International Academic Programs (IAP) and Thammasat University. This IAP Program Handbook supplements handbook(s) or materials you receive from Thammasat University, as well as the IAP Study Abroad Handbook and MyStudyAbroad account. It is essential to also review the information contained your IAP Study Abroad Handbook and MyStudyAbroad account.

Questions about your program abroad (housing options, facilities abroad, etc.) as well as questions relating to your relationship with your host university or academics (e.g. course credit and equivalents, registration deadlines, etc.) should be directed to your Study Abroad Advisor or Program Leader.

This program handbook contains the following information:

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Contact Information

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Abroad

University of Wisconsin-Madison

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Emergency Contact Information

For questions or general concerns that do not involve the immediate danger or threat to the health or safety of a student, call the main IAP number **(608) 265-6329** between 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Calls received outside normal operating hours will be returned as soon as possible the next business day.

If an emergency arises after-hours or on weekends, you can reach the IAP Staff On-Call at **(608) 516-9440**. This number is **ONLY for emergencies**, otherwise, please call the main desk.

Program Dates

Spring semester: January 13, 2020 – May 25th, 2020

Schedule will be announced in welcome information from Thammasat University.

Orientation: A week before the commencement of the semester an orientation will cover accommodations, services available, description of the city and academic information.

Visit here to see the calendar:

<http://tueng.tu.ac.th/>

Preparation Before Leaving

Refer to the Pre-Departure Checklist in the Study Abroad Handbook for essential information.

Embassy Registration

Participants are encouraged to register for the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program](#) (STEP) that is a free service for all U.S. citizens. All program participants who are U.S. citizens can register at the U.S. Embassy before departure as this will help in case of a lost passport or other incident. You can register on-line at <https://travelregistration.state.gov>. If you are not a U.S. citizen, register at your home country's embassy or consulate.

U.S. Embassy in Thailand
American Citizen Services (ACS)
95 Wireless Road
Bangkok 10330, Thailand
Tel: [66] (2) 205-4049
Email: acsbkk@state.gov
ACS Homepage: <https://th.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/>
Current U.S. embassy in Thailand website: <https://th.usembassy.gov/>

Immigration Documents

Passport

A passport is needed to travel to Thailand and to obtain your visa. Apply immediately for a passport if you do not already have one. Passport information and application forms can be found on the U.S. State Department website (<http://travel.state.gov/passport>). If you already have your passport, make sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the length of your stay abroad.

Visa

First you must receive an acceptance letter from Thammasat University to apply for a visa. With the acceptance letter, you will apply for a non-immigrant “ED” visa. This may take a few weeks to complete. The “ED” visa will allow you to stay in Thailand for 90 days. At the end of this time, you can renew your visa until the end of your program with the University’s Verification Letter. If you are planning to travel abroad during your program, we recommend that you apply for a “multiple entry visa”. Please check the website of the Thai consulate for visa requirements. Students from UW-Madison can apply at the Thai Consulate in Chicago, even if they live out of state.

Students receiving **scholarship and financial aid**: Letter of scholarship award specifying amount and duration of award, issued by the financial aid office of the student applicant’s home institution. To request this letter, you can call the Office of Student Financial Aid and let them know that you need this for your visa for study abroad. They are typically able to prepare the letter for you with 1-2 business days and have it ready for you to pick up at their office.

Handling Money Abroad

The official currency of Thailand is the Baht (THB). You should bring some money with you in cash for incidental purchases as well as for bus and train fares. It is possible to convert almost any currency into Baht at the airport when you arrive. You will generally receive 1000-Baht bills when exchanging money, but be sure to **ask for small bills** at the airport so you can pay for a taxi without needing too much change. Otherwise, taxi drivers may not have enough change or may take advantage of you and claim they do not have any change.

ATM/Debit Cards

ATM machines dispensing Thai baht are to be found at most bank locations, in airports, and in many shopping malls in urban centers of Thailand. Cards issued by U.S. banks and credit unions work at all ATM machines that are operated by a member of the same network as that of the issuing bank or credit union. Thai ATM machines all use the official government exchange rate. Check with your bank prior to departure to make sure you will be able to access your funds from abroad with an ATM card.

Traveler's Checks

For those who prefer to use traveler's checks, exchange counters that are operated by Thai banks are open 24 hours per day in the Bangkok airport. A passport is required so that the signature can be verified. There is a small service fee for each check cashed, but the banks all charge the same fee and all also follow the official exchange rate. Mini vans operated by the larger banks provide mobile exchange services in busy areas that tourists frequent around the city. With exchange services so readily available, it is not necessary to carry large amounts of cash. Larger denominations of traveler's checks get a somewhat better exchange rate, so either \$100 or \$500 checks are the most convenient for those who prefer to use checks. Thai banks usually ask to see the bill of sale for \$500 checks.

Packing

Pack light. Remember that Bangkok is a modern city and you can buy almost anything that you need there. Some items are more difficult for an average American to buy in Thailand, due to the small size of Thai people or unavailability. These items include: feminine hygiene products, shoes and undergarments. Also, most lotion/aloe and sunscreen in Thailand have whitening components in them. Other items to remember are insect repellent with DEET, a journal, malaria pills, and sheets.

Due to the hot temperatures and humidity, you will want to bring lightweight clothes. Thammasat students tend to dress nicely for school and students are required to wear uniforms. In public, women wear skirts or jeans (not shorts!) with casual yet nice shirts; men wear pants or shorts with nicer shirts. Remember that it is disrespectful to show too much skin at school. Depending on the time of year you are abroad, you may need slightly warmer clothes for cool nights during the cool season or travel to the mountainous northern region. Don't bring too many warm clothes - a light jacket and long sleeve shirt is enough.

Again, it is very hot and humid in Thailand, so you do not need to bring many pairs of jeans with you. Think lightweight material, and remember that textiles are a major industry in Thailand – you can buy clothes at low prices when you get there!

Electronics

Power in Thailand runs on 220V (volts), 50Hz (cycles) AC and use both the “europlug” with two round pins and plugs with two flat blades are used. Plugs with a grounding pin or with different-sized blades such as those found in United States are not compatible with sockets in Thailand. If you plan on bringing any appliances from the United States, keep in mind that they will require adapters/converters which you should purchase before departure. It would also be wise to check to be sure that charging units for electric razors, cell phones, cameras, etc. are compatible with 220V, 50Hz power.

Travel and Arrival Information

If you have requested and been assigned a Thai Buddy to help you adjust to life at Thammasat University, they typically reach out to you via email before your program. After providing your arrival information they will meet you upon arrival in Bangkok airport. Travel and arrival information will be provided in more detail in your Thammasat acceptance packet.

The Academic Program

Thammasat University

Thammasat University is the second oldest university in Thailand. It is located on Rattanakosin, an inner-city riverside island that houses world renowned palaces and temples, with the Grand Palace and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha at the heart of the old city. When Thammasat’s Tha Prachan campus opened in 1934, it was an open institution with a focus on teaching law and politics. Since then, the major fields of study expanded to 4 in 1949 and to 15 today, including Political Science, Economics, Engineering, Medicine, Dentistry, Journalism and Mass Communication, and more. Thammasat was the first university in Thailand to offer classes in the Liberal Arts.

The university ended its open status in 1960 and began requiring competitive entrance examinations. Even with entrance examinations, demand for education at Thammasat was high; in 1986 the university opened a second campus at Rangsit. Thammasat University is currently expanding outside of Bangkok, to different regions of the country. A third campus is located in Pattaya, in the eastern region, and a fourth campus recently opened in Lampang, in the northern region. Currently, Thammasat University is one of Thailand’s leading institutions of higher education, with over 18,000 undergraduate and 5,000 graduate students.

The riverside campus provides a unique mix of bustling city life and calm riverside getaways. Campus is small, about a 5-minute walk from one end to the other. Thammasat is near the backpackers’ district (Khao San Road) and within walking distance of several cultural centers, government agencies and international

organizations, including the Grand Palace, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, and the National Museum. Thammasat offers students many great opportunities to get involved in clubs and sports on the Rangsit campus, such as Judo, climbing, soccer, tennis, skate boarding, fencing, kayaking, cooking, Thai boxing, dancing. There is also a “volunteer club” on campus that does community service in surrounding communities. Many of the campus housing facilities also organize outings and social events for their residents. There is a strong sustainability focus and messaging all over campus (e.g. reduce plastics, use bikes, etc.).

The Exchange Program

Services are available to international students from any program through the International Student Services (ISS) office, located in the Dome Building. The ISS office arranges trips for international students, holds dinners, and organizes sporting competitions between the international programs. They can also arrange a Thai buddy if you choose. This student buddy would contact you before you arrive in Thailand, and would be a great resource as you navigate Thailand.

Registration

Students will complete registration after arrival in Bangkok, prior to the start of classes. More information on the registration process will be given at the orientation.

Course Information

This program is held in Thammasat University. At least 50% of courses must be through one faculty. There are many faculties, including the Faculty of Economics, Business Administration, Political Science, Liberal Arts, and British and American Studies, and more. These programs are for Thai students as well; thus, your classes will be a mix of Thai students and international students.

Class Schedules

Most classes are typically held two days a week for an hour and a half, while a few classes are only one day a week for three hours. Classes are offered Monday through Saturday, but the majority of classes are scheduled for Tuesday through Friday. The hour-and-a-half blocks run from 8:00 am continuously through 5:00 pm.

Classes Available

Course offerings are in English and vary depending on the semester you are abroad. Thai Studies courses are offered fall semester only.

Central Course Catalog

1. Start from the Office of the Registrar page:
<http://web.reg.tu.ac.th/registrar/home.asp>
2. In the upper right hand corner, click “ENG” to translate the page to English.

3. On the left column of the page, select “Course Search”.
4. Under “Semester”, select the term you will be enrolling in.
5. Semester 2, 2019 is the semester that is currently in progress. To see courses from the past spring semester, you would select Semester 2 of 2018.

Classroom Culture

Class sizes are much smaller; the majority of courses have 20 to 40 students enrolled. PowerPoint presentations are common, and overhead projectors and videos are other teaching methods used in the classroom. Classroom culture at Thammasat University is very different from that at UW-Madison.

- Both students and professors tend to be 10 to 15 minutes late for class every day, and are sometimes 45 minutes to an hour late. Classes rarely start at their scheduled time due to the lack of passing time between classes and the general feeling in Thailand that relationships are more important than time.
- Students will answer their cell phones during class, and try to hide it by putting their hands over their mouths; professors also occasionally answer their cell phones during class.
- Group projects are very popular in Thailand.
- Course difficulty and expectations vary from one professor to another, just like at the UW-Madison.

Tutoring or other academic assistance

Some departments have faculty who offer tutoring sessions two times a semester, right before the mid-term and again before the final exam. Faculty also have six hours per week of office hours so students are encouraged to contact their professor if they need extra assistance in a class. Private tutoring is also available, but it's self-paid and not widely offered in English.

School Uniforms

School uniforms are required at Thammasat University. However, how often and when you have to wear them depends on the faculty teaching your courses. For example, for classes in the Faculty of Economics, uniforms are required only during exams; Business Administration classes require you wear your uniform to all your classes; Thai Studies classes never require a uniform.

Men's Uniforms

- White button-down shirt, tucked in
- Black or navy blue pants
- Belt buckle with university logo
- Black shoes with socks

Women's Uniforms

- White button-down shirt, tucked in
- University logo buttons and pin on left side of collar
- Black or navy blue skirt
- Belt buckle with university logo
- Black shoes with heel strap

The university logo buttons, pins, and belt buckles are available at Thammasat's book store. You can easily buy the shirts and bottoms near the University (near Khao San Road) for a reasonable price (about \$5). Although we are not used to wearing school uniforms here at UW-Madison, it is beneficial for you to wear them early in the semester in Thailand. You will quickly earn local people's respect and friendship because they will recognize you as a Thammasat student rather than just another tourist.

Limits and Load

UW-Madison students are required to take a minimum of 12 UW-Madison equivalent credits each semester. Your required UW-Madison credit load is 12 to 18 credits per semester, so keep this in mind when you plan your schedule at Thammasat.

Credits

Most credits at Thammasat are equivalent to UW-Madison; so three credits at Thammasat will be equivalent to 3 credits at UW-Madison. There may be exceptions depending on the department in which the course is taken. In general, one class hour per week for a 15 week semester equals approximately one credit. Exchange students are required to be enrolled as full-time students under the terms of their student visa. A minimal full-time enrollment is 12 credits per semester.

Transfer Credits

Thammasat University will send the Study Abroad Office your **official transcript**; you do not need to order them yourself.

Grade Scale

The grade conversion scale for this program is as follows:

| Thammasat University | UW-Madison Equivalent |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| A | A |
| B+ | AB |
| B | B |
| C+ | BC |
| C | C |
| D+/D | D |
| F | F |

University Facilities

Libraries

Thammasat's main library, Pridi Banomyong Library, is located on three floors below the riverside courtyard. Amongst thousands of books in Thai, there is a collection of books written in English. Although the collection is relatively small, it is sufficient for papers and group projects you will do for class.

Pridi Banomyong Library hours:

Monday-Friday 8:00 am - 8:00 pm

Saturday 9:00 am - 6:00 pm

Sundays & holidays Closed

Be sure to dress respectfully when you go to the library; you will be denied entrance if you wear shorts or a tank top. Backpacks are not allowed in the library. Lockers are available to rent with your student ID. You also need your student ID to enter the library and check out books. You will get a student ID from the BE International Office, but it may take a while to get.

University Bookstore

The University Bookstore is located near the Tha Prachan gate. You can buy your textbooks for class, as well as notebooks, pens, binders, and other office supplies at the bookstore. The buttons and belt buckles required for your school uniform and other university merchandise can also be purchased here.

Bookstore hours:

Monday-Friday 8:30 am - 7:00 pm

Saturday 9:30 am - 3:30 pm

Sunday & holidays Closed

Cafeteria

The cafeteria is open-air and located along the riverbank. Food there is quite good and very affordable. A plate of food costs on average 20 Baht. There are vegetarian and halal options in the cafeteria as well. Private food stalls can be found on and very near campus; several good restaurants are also nearby.

Recreational Facilities

Facilities as well as the Sports and Recreational facilities are also available in the campus. Some may be charged but on the student rate. A student is recommended to carry the student ID card when requesting the use of services.

Bus services

Tha Prachan campus

There is mini-bus operated between Tha Prachan to Rangsit center. It costs 40 Baht (one round) and leaves every 20-30 minutes. Mini-bus will operate from 6.00

am - 6.00 pm. No operation on Sunday. During the university's break, the service still available but less frequency. The mini-bus station is near the front gate opposite Sanam Luang Field.

Rangsit campus

A shuttle bus is freely available around the campus for all students.

Living Abroad

Thailand

Thailand sits in the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, surrounded by Myanmar to the west, Laos to the North/Northeast, Cambodia to the Southeast, and Malaysia to the South. Thailand's population is about 65.5 million people. Thailand has four distinct regions: the mountainous North, the dry, poor Northeast, the fertile Central Plains, and the limestone-encrusted rainforest-covered tropical South. Thailand is hot and humid year-round. Tropical monsoons dictate three seasons throughout the year: hot (March-May), rainy (June-October), and cool (November-February). Average temperatures, depending on the region and time of year, range from 75-95 degrees Fahrenheit. Very little rain falls during the hot and cool seasons.

Thailand has been run under a constitutional monarchy since 1932. The government is controlled by the nationally-elected House of Representatives and prime minister. The King appoints all judges who sit on the Supreme Court, acts as a figurehead for the nation, and is revered by Thailand's citizens. Be aware that making a critical or defamatory comment about the royal family is punishable by a prison sentence of up to 15 years per offense. This is called Lese majeste.

About half of Thailand's labor force is in the agricultural sector, while the same sector contributes less than 10% of the nation's GDP. Tourism has been a growing industry since the late 1980s and has been a significant contributor to the nation's economic growth. Three-fourths of Thailand's population is ethnically Thai, while about 14% are Chinese. The national language is Thai and English is a very common second language, especially among the elite.

Thai people enjoy their food - food is a huge part of their culture. Thai food is renowned for its combinations of flavors, particularly spicy, sweet and sour. Tropical fruits are abundant and flavorful. Familiar fruits, such as pineapple, bananas, melons and oranges, as well as unfamiliar fruits, such as *lomyay*, *monkut*, lychee, rambutan and more, are popular throughout the country.

Meals in Thailand are leisurely and social and can last about 2 hours. It is common for groups of students to go out to dinner together after classes. The "Thai style" of going out to dinner is ordering many plates of all different dishes and sharing with everyone at the table. You eat with a spoon in your right hand and fork in your left, and use the fork to push food onto your spoon. Except in nice restaurants, it is not part of Thai culture to tip.

The *wai* is a greeting as well as a gesture of respect. Respecting one's elders is very important in Thai society, and greeting them with a *wai* is a way to show respect. To *wai*, you place your hands together - women, in front of your chest, men in front of your chin - and bow your head a little bit. You should *wai* to your professors when you see them, as well as any other people who are older or of higher status than you.

Over 95% of the population in Thailand practices Theravada Buddhism. Almost 4% of the population, primarily in the southern peninsula, are Muslim, and less than 1% of the population practices Christianity. Buddhism is an integral part of Thai people's daily actions and lives. It is very common to see people give offerings of food, flowers, or water to monks in the mornings. This is a common Buddhist practice to "make merit."

Socially, Thai men are expected to become a monk for some period during their lifetime. Males of any age can become a monk; even young boys can enter the monkhood as novices. Monks live and study in the temple complexes and live by very strict rules - there are 227 monastic rules that dictate how a monk can live his life. For example, monks can only eat twice a day and both meals must be eaten before noon. They can only eat the food that is offered to them in their bowl.

Note for women travelers: Monks are not allowed to touch women, so be aware of who you are passing in crowded places.

No alcohol is allowed on any university campuses in Thailand – it's a national law.

Bangkok

The city of Bangkok is the capital, largest urban area and primary city of Thailand. In the span of over two hundred years, Bangkok has grown to become the political, social and economic center of not only Thailand but for Indochina and South East Asia. Its influence in the arts, politics, fashion, education and entertainment as well as being a business, financial and cultural center of Asia has given Bangkok the status of a global city.

Bangkok has a variety of cultural performances and activities for the enjoyment of both tourists and locals alike. In your free time, attend a Thai puppet show or dance performance to learn traditional stories and see traditional dress, take a ride down the Chao Phraya River and connecting canals to view local river life, or visit one of the hundreds of Buddhist temples to learn more about Buddhism and observe religious traditions.

In Bangkok, food from street vendors is readily available at any time of the day. Many Thai people buy food off the street, because it is delicious, convenient and affordable. (Many apartments do not even have a kitchen for this reason – since Thai food requires so many ingredients, it can be economical to buy it from food vendors.) The Thai government has strict regulations that street vendors must follow, so buying food off the street is generally safe. Of course you must pay attention to and avoid meat that may have been in the heat too long, is undercooked, or otherwise looks unsafe.

Thai people enjoy shopping; you can shop at huge shopping centers, department stores, markets or vendors along the street - Thailand has it all and it is often inexpensive. Thai boxing is a very popular sport in Thailand, to watch as well as participate in. Audiences are very lively because gambling at boxing matches is common. Although for many Thais it is too hot to participate in outdoor sports, many people enjoy playing soccer, basketball or tennis.

Sanam luang, or the “Royal Garden,” is a large open field near Thammasat. Vendors sell kites and people of all ages go there to fly kites in the afternoons and evenings. There is also a large park in downtown Bangkok, where you can find people exercising, reading, studying or hanging out.

Housing

There are options to live in a dormitory at both the Tha Prachan and the Rangsit center. If you are interested in that option, you must submit a housing application early, along with your application for the program. Not all students will receive dormitory housing.

Students not assigned a dormitory or not interested in applying are responsible for finding their own off-campus housing. Thammasat staff recommend arriving in Bangkok a few days early and stay in a nearby hotel or hostel while searching for housing. There are many options that are available to and appropriate for students. Every semester, few days after the orientation day, the program coordinator will also arrange the Apartment Hunting Day for students to go to check out the selected apartments in the area. You can also ask your Thai Buddy if they can help you with the housing process.

Locating housing is a question that many students have. Below are some housing options from Thammasat University faculty handbooks. These are to be used as a starting point, and please contact on-site Thammasat staff for more information about housing listings.

Housing options at Tha Prachan: <http://oia.tu.ac.th/images/InterStudents/Housing-Information/Housing%20List%20Tha%20Prachan.pdf>

Housing options at Rangsit: <http://oia.tu.ac.th/images/InterStudents/Housing-Information/Apartment%20list%20Rangsit.pdf>

Safety

Although traffic in Bangkok is heavy, getting around the city is not difficult. There are several different modes of public transportation that will get you where ever you need to go, which include buses, taxis, river taxis, and the metro.

Safety in Transportation

Bangkok is a very populated city and therefore has many forms of transportation which lead to crowded roads. There are many options for transportation, including public transport such as the Sky Rail, busses, and tuk-tuks. Be aware when crossing roads as traffic drives on the left side of the road. Students should be aware of traffic and should not ride motorcycles, though there are many motorcycle taxis in Bangkok.

When taking a taxi, be sure it is a metered taxi. Some taxi drivers require that you bargain with them, and will charge you expensive flat rates. Be sure that the driver turns the meter on, and if he/she does not, get out of the taxi.

Health

All students will receive health insurance coverage through Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). The cost of the insurance coverage is included in program fees. Please refer to your My Study Abroad account "Health and Insurance" tab or visit www.culturalinsurance.com for more information.

Communication

Calling internationally can be unreliable and expensive. Skype may be the best communication option when internet connections are available, strong, and secure. Visit www.skype.com for more information and to sign up.

When making calls, keep in mind time zone differences (www.timeanddate.com/worldclock). Country and city codes can be found online (www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/dialing.html). Some of the following steps can vary if you are using a calling card, landline, or cell phone.

To call *from* an international country *to* the United States:

- Dial the country *exit* code for the country you are in. Oftentimes this is "00."
- Dial the country *access* code for the country you want to reach. For the United States it is "+1" or "011."
- Follow with the area code and the local number as normal.
- **Thailand's** exit code is "001." To call to the U.S. from Thailand, the following format would be used:
 - 001-1-XXX-XXX-XXXX

To call *from* the United States *to* an international country:

- Dial the United States' exit code "011," the country code for the country you want to reach, the area/city code, and the phone number
- **Example:** Brazil has country code 55, Rio de Janeiro has city code 21. To call Brazil from the U.S., the following format would be used:
 - 011-55-21-XXX-XXXX
- Note: some countries employ varying numbers of digits for area/city codes and for telephone numbers. Don't be surprised if the number you are trying to call has more or less than the standard "three plus seven"
- The international code for **Thailand** is +66

ADDITIONAL RELEVANT INFORMATION/WEBSITES OF INTEREST

UW Madison International Travel:

<http://internationaltravel.wisc.edu/>

U.S. State Department Students Abroad:

<http://www.studentsabroad.state.gov/>

UW-Madison International Academic Programs

<http://www.studyabroad.wisc.edu>

U.S. State Department:

<http://travel.state.gov>

Center for Disease Control

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

Current exchange rates

<http://www.oanda.com>

Lonely Planet

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com>

Diversity Climate In-Country

Thai society is well-known for its hospitality and helpfulness towards foreigners, but students should be aware that some people may be very direct with their language and actions. Additionally, Thais may sometimes operate on stereotypes of individuals based on their outward appearances and be incorrect in their assumptions. However, this mostly stems from curiosity and misconceptions, and in general, most Thais will be considerably courteous and friendly.

Bangkok is a major tourist destination, thus a diverse array of people, activities and organizations exist within the city, even if it may take a little research to find what one is looking for.

Racial/Ethnic Minority

Some race-based prejudice exists in Thailand and offensive stereotypes of certain ethnicities may be heard or seen. Students of color may not initially be perceived to be U.S. American, but rather strictly African, Asian or Hispanic by some Thais. This may lead to increased visibility, curiosity and blunt questioning, but in most cases, it will not be meant to be harmful. Students may also have difficulty finding beauty products they use in the U.S., and certain facial creams contain skin lighteners.

Sexual Orientation

Thailand touts itself as a welcoming place for LGBTQ students, and there are many events, venues and establishments for LGBTQ individuals, especially in Bangkok. However, homophobia and discrimination does still exist in Thailand, and students may want to practice discretion when disclosing their sexual orientation in public and among peers.

Disabilities

Students with physical disabilities may find streets and sidewalks in Thailand very difficult to traverse due to uneven paving, lack of audio signals at crosswalks, and busy intersections. Many public facilities and transportation also still lack accessible accommodations, and though the Bangkok underground (Metro) is one exception (it has elevators and wheelchair locks), it is not perfect. Planning an itinerary ahead of time as best as possible may be helpful, and courteous Thai locals will often readily provide one with assistance, usually without being asked.

Religion

While the majority of Thailand's population is Buddhist, Thais are very tolerant and respectful of other religions. A few areas of southern Thailand are majority Muslim, and some clashes have occurred in these places, but this is not reflective of the whole country and many Muslims practice and live in peace in all parts of Thailand.

[Jewish Thailand](#) provides information on places of worship and kosher food availability in areas of the country.

Women

Women studying in Thailand should follow 'common sense' safety precautions as they would in the United States.

Past Participant Comments

Financial

"Thailand is incredibly affordable on almost all fronts. As long as you don't need Western amenities you won't have to worry about carefully budgeting."

"A great way to finance [your program] is tutoring private English lessons."

Health and Safety

"Additionally, if you use tampons, I would recommend buying enough for the whole duration as they were only sold in packs of 8 in Thailand and were very difficult to find."

"Sunscreen can be super expensive in Asia, so try and bring a decent amount. Same goes with Bug repellent"

"Thailand was super safe."

"I appreciated the safety information as well as the task that I had to complete before I left. Even though at the time it seemed like a waste of time it was helpful to know for emergency situations and thinking of ways to navigate a new country."

Additional

"A very, very good buddy system. I had two that helped me out with so many different things. The Thai students were very welcoming."

"The international staff at SIIT (the department of Thammasat I was studying in) were great. Very helpful, responsive and just generally on top of their work."

"Most exchange students are on the downtown campus...Being on the Rangsit campus was awesome, it was much cheaper and there were less westerners so I [was able to] branch out and meet more Thai friends."

"[At the Rangsit campus] Keystone and Dcondo apartments are both very nice."

"I took a housing tour after I arrived. I stayed in a hotel and signed a lease with a popular apartment with exchange students a couple days later. The apartment, Amarin Mansion, was very accommodating to exchange student and helped with immediate moving in and out. A slight rip off. Example, they charged \$60 for a cleaning charge taken out of the security deposit, an unnecessary amount in my opinion."

"Don't want to return I had such a great time. Career-wise it was great to understand a new culture and their values as well as how far American Western experience goes."

“Granted there is a large tourism industry, but where I lived I was one of the few non-Asian people around. It was well worth it to have a taste of what it is like to be in the minority ethnically.”

“Tesco sells gas hot plates for around \$20, could be a decent investment early in the semester as the majority of apartments in Thailand do not have kitchens (unless it's a family setting) due to food being available pretty much everywhere (and cheap!)”

“Rely on your Thai buddy and become good friends with them. [At the Rangsit campus] Almost everything will be a little different so keep trying things and don't feel defeated if it takes a few attempts to really figure things out.”