

Do's and don'ts in Thailand

Thailand is not only a country filled with beautiful clothes, exotic cocktails and breathtaking beaches. It is also a land where the trade and customs are steeped in Thai history.



Wat Chai Wattanaram, Ayutthaya, Thailand. (Image: Heinrich Darm, via Wikimedia Commons)

"Thai people love it when foreigners come to our country and try communicating with us in our own language. The people understand that visitors have their own traditions and customs, but the more you know about what Thai's love and respect, the better your trip will be to the country that never stops smiling," explains Thamanoon Kuprasert, general manager of Central, Eastern and Southern Africa for Thai Airways International (THAI).

Below are a few do's and don'ts that will make your stay in Thailand unforgettable:

Do dress properly when visiting a temple - The temples in Thailand are very sacred and important to Thai people, so it is crucial for tourists to respect this blessed place. The best way to dress is to cover your shoulders and knees. Another tip to remember is to take photos on your knees as Thais find it disrespectful to be taller than the Buddha statues.

Do try and learn a few basic phrases - Thai people do not expect you to be able to speak their language, but the more Thai words you know the better. A few basic ones are: *Hello - Swasdee Krub, Thank You - Kob Koon, I want to go - Yaak Ja Pai.*

Do learn about their body language - Body language in Thailand is very important. A lot is said between Thai people by the way they smile or the level of the *wai* (bow) when meeting someone for the first time. One familiar form of non-formal communication in Thailand is known as *Yak Kiu* - a gesture of confirmation that involves raising the eyebrows up and down. The wiggly eyebrows are often accompanied with a slight smile. "Thais don't expect you to start practising *Yak Kiu*, but at least you won't be confused when locals are wiggling their eyebrows at you," explains Kuprasert.

Don't take Buddha images out of the country - It is against the law to take or send Buddha images out of the country unless you have got permission from the government. Thai people will sell you the statue and images, but will not tell you about the system.



Don't be too affectionate in public - Even though Thailand is known as an island paradise for couples, visitors must restrain from kissing in public and rather just hold hands as they stroll through markets or beaches. Try to keep the kissing for when you two are not in public.

Don't lose your temper - Thai people are well known for being happy and not losing their temper. This is known as *Jai Yen* (Cool heart). Foreigners should not raise their voices and get angry, so avoid confrontation as much as possible. Thai people are warm, hospitable, welcoming and friendlier and they choose to associate themselves with people who share the same temperament.

"There is so much to enjoy in Thailand and knowing these guidelines can only make it more enjoyable. Come book a flight with Thai Airways and experience Thai's culture and customs for yourself," concludes Kuprasert.

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