



Living in and Travelling to Thailand Personal Protection

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Most of us live and work in Thailand by choice. We enjoy the country, the climate, the people, and the advantages they offer. Although Thailand is an idyllic destination, like all countries, Thailand has its share of criminal and unscrupulous activity (though arguably less than many comparable countries around the world). Before you, or your guests, or visitors venture out around the Kingdom, it is important to know the threats and what personal security measures you should utilize. The information below is a compilation of crimes frequently reported by foreigners in Thailand:
Transportation.



Taxis: Taxis are routinely the choice mode of transportation and are normally considered safe; however there are dishonest taxi operators. Proper taxi operators must use a meter and the meter must start at **35** Thai Baht. [NOTE: Often taxis parked in front of a hotel or tourist attraction will try to operate off the meter and negotiate a rate – or worse surprise you with the rate once you arrive at your destination.]

If your taxi driver does not wish to use the meter, or wants to negotiate a rate – you can rest assured you are probably going to pay more and it is a good practice to avoid such taxis and instead flag down an available passing taxi. While in the taxi, tell your driver your destination politely, confidently, clearly and slowly. Do not engage the taxi driver in unnecessary conversation. There are also taxi drivers who will try to talk you into visiting a select shop offering a special deal “only for today” – this may be a gold shop, or a tailor, or a massage parlor – to name a few. (In such instances there are no special deals, the taxi driver receives a commission on any money you spend in the establishment he takes you to.) Refuse to go and if the driver keeps pushing it, get out of the taxi and select another. Lastly when you get in a taxi it is a good practice to make note of the taxi company, taxi number, and the driver’s name.



Baht Buses: Baht Buses are pick-up trucks with a covered back and benches. Each city in Thailand has a specific color for their Baht Buses. Baht buses can be either a very affordable or a very expensive means of transportation. Select Baht Buses go along a fixed route; others park and wait for customers. If a Baht Bus is parked and you wish to use it the cost can start at a minimum of 200 Thai Baht depending on your destination – even if it is less than one kilometer; conversely if a Baht is on the move and picking up and dropping off customers along its route, the traditional fee is about 10 Thai Baht.



Tuk-Tuks: Unlike taxis and Baht Buses there are no meters or fixed rates for using a tuk-tuk. You need to negotiate a rate with the Tuk-Tuk driver (preferably up-front before you get in the Tuk-Tuk. Like select taxi drivers, some Tuk-Tuk drivers may also try to talk you into going to a shop for a special deal. Do not let them talk you into going anywhere you did not already plan to go.



Motorbike Taxis: Although not the safest mode of transportation, motorbike taxis can get you to your destination at a normal reasonable rate in a quicker fashion, especially in those cities that are prone to traffic congestion. If you select a motorbike taxi, negotiate the rate in advance. Wear a helmet (not always offered) and keep your elbows and knees close to the bike as motorbike taxis tend to ride between stationary and slow-moving vehicles.

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Carrying Cash: Pickpockets are not common in Thailand, but they do exist. Take the usual precautions with wallets, purses, and day packs that you would take in any crowded areas. Do not "flash your cash" and be discreet when opening your wallet/purse to pay for something. Learn from the locals, they are cautious to the point of being secretive when reaching for their cash. Splitting up your money also can be a good idea. Carry a small amount of instant access cash in your preferred receptacle, and carry the balance (along with your credit cards) in a more secure place (money belt, hidden pocket, etc...).

Jewelry: The best advice is do not wear expensive jewelry, but if you feel compelled to wear it, do so discreetly if possible. If riding on a motorbike or in a Tuk-Tuk or Baht Bus keep your necklace tucked well inside your clothing. Thieves are very adept at snatching jewelry from passengers – especially necklaces from your neck. It is not uncommon in busy areas for two thieves riding on a motorbike to come up along you and the rider on the back to pull the necklace off another in a Tuk Tuk, on another motorbike, in the back of a Baht Bus, or even while you are walking along the pavement. [Note: Thai people are just as likely to be the victims of this type of theft.]

Touts /Copyright Infringements: Be on guard to stores offering special deals for foreigners, or not open to foreigners, or touts (salespersons) offering you deals on the street. In such instances you are guaranteed to spend more money or the products are not genuine. Similarly brand name products are sold in brand name stores in the shopping malls, not by a street-side vendor. If you buy a Rolex watch, Nike shoes, or a Ralph Lauren shirt on the street you can guarantee it is a black-market copy. Although copyright laws may appear lax or selectively enforced in Thailand, you may have problems with your local Customs Officer when you return to your home country. You may wish to familiarize yourself with other common scams and cons visitors to Thailand may encounter at <http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowTopic-...>



New Friends: This can be a security concern in almost any tourist destination to include Thailand. While Thais are often very “friendly” people, it is not Thai custom to approach strangers and offer unsolicited advice or assistance. You should be cautious of anyone who approaches you “out of the blue”, irrespective of their nationality, offering unasked for assistance or wanting to be your friend. Encounters such as these have led to the recipient of the new-found friend to fall victim to at a minimum a scam, but also likely a crime. Don't simply trust a stranger based solely on the fact that they speak your language or say they from your home country. Con artists of all nationalities are “out there” scheming and cheating their way through life.

Moving Around at Night: Thailand caters to night life and each city has many markets, shopping venues, and night club areas that cater to tourists. Similarly each Thai city, to include the tourist destinations, has areas of the city that are predominantly exclusively Thai. While overall Thais are a gracious, welcoming people, there are select Thais who may not be so friendly to foreigners in their country - the same most likely applies to select people in your own country. Unless you are travelling with a local, it is recommended that you stick to the tourist areas and avoid the areas of the city that are predominantly for the locals. Avoid dimly lit and seemingly non-tourist oriented side streets and stay in well-lit areas where there are lots of people. If you have an uneasy feeling about an area, trust your gut instinct and avoid the area. Before going out, make a note of the Thai Tourist Police generic phone number which is 1155 and add it to your cell phone. The Thai Tourist Police is a special arm of the National Royal Thai Police and specifically trained to deal with common situations involving foreigners and many speak basic English.

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Going out at night



Not OK



OK

Travelers' Personal Security

Those visiting Thailand and even those living in Thailand often stay at one of the 1000's of hotels and resorts around the Kingdom. Security at these hotels range from security measures comparable to an Embassy to nonexistent. Regardless of the level of security at the hotels you stay at, it is important to understand that a hotel cannot guarantee your security; you are responsible for your own personal security and the security of your property. Does that mean you should travel with your own portable CCTV and intrusion alarm systems? No. [But if you like we can sell you such items ☺.] Without going to a lot of fuss and extra expense there are some simple security measures you can utilize to give added security protection when staying at a hotel.



Obviously when in the room keep the door closed and engage the dead bolt or chain. This is a deterrent and can stop most thieves, but not all. An added measure is to utilize a portable burglar alarm while asleep. Place one of your suitcases at the inside of your door and place a glass of water on top of the suitcase along the suitcase ledge. If the door is open the movement of the suitcase should cause the glass to drop causing enough noise to wake you.

When leaving the guest room during the day and you know housekeeping or room service will be entering your room, put your valuables in the room safe and make a mental note of how your property is positioned before you leave.

When leaving your room during the evening, leave your tv on loud enough so it can be heard at the door. [Some rooms require you to put the key card in an entrance slot to engage the room's electricity and then when you leave the electric is automatically shut off. If this is the situation at your hotel, ask for a spare card key - almost all hotels will give you one.]

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When using the hotel's facilities such as the pool, restaurant, or bar, your presence there is often an indication that your room is left unattended. Keep your hotel room number hidden from others. Be suspicious of strangers wanting to be your friends.

These are just a few simple steps you can make to add your own security measures to further protect yourself and your property.

Submitted for your consideration.