



Thailand etiquette dossier

Going to Thailand? You might like to remember a few pointers regarding how to behave

Religion

- Travellers are encouraged to experience religious festivals and visit temples and shrines but are asked that to follow religious rules such as removing shoes, showing reverence and respect to monks and refraining from taking photographs at certain sites.

Etiquette & Customs

- Patting someone (even a child) on the head is considered to be rude and insulting and open displays of affection (such as kissing and holding hands) are generally not acceptable even though you will see many men holding hands (this is a sign of friendship rather than sexuality).
- Anger, such as losing your temper and yelling will lead to a loss of respect and is highly unlikely to get you what you want!
- It is very important that you remove your shoes if you are visiting someone's house and you should avoid pointing the soles of your feet at anyone at all times. This may seem unlikely to happen but you could inadvertently do this while laying down or sitting with your feet up.
- The monarchy is held in very high esteem and you should remember to show absolute respect to the King of Thailand and never laugh or joke about him in any company.
- Contrary to popular impression, Thais are quite conservative and expect visitors to dress appropriately in formal public places. They are also discreet about showing affection, especially in public. Holding hands is considered taboo among the older generation.
- While Westerners tend to pick up subtleness in tone of voice to indicate someone's mood, Thais read more into your body language and approach. Emphasis is usually placed on passiveness and although they are used to foreigners being abrupt, it pays to smile constantly and go gently. Eye contact is a common and important method of placing strangers at ease and there is good reason why Thailand is known as 'the land of smiles'.