



ROAD TRAVEL REPORT: THAILAND



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO...

- Use great caution when driving, as standards are poor. Drivers involved in road crashes often flee the scene.
- Avoid driving during heavy rains, as poor driver behaviors tend to increase sharply.
- Main roads often have motorcycle lanes at the side. Be alert for cyclists and motorized carts approaching against the flow of traffic in these lanes.
- Be prepared to yield to larger vehicles.
- Motorcyclists often weave in and out of traffic.
- The spelling of the English equivalents for names of cities, roads, streets, districts, and provinces often varies considerably.
- Vehicle ownership is growing rapidly—5 to 10 percent annually.
- About 60 percent of ER admissions involve road crash victims.
- Four of five fatal road crashes involve mopeds or motorcycles.
- There are 12 road fatalities per 10,000 vehicles in Thailand, compared to 2.0 in the United States.



ROAD REALITIES

DRIVER BEHAVIORS

- Officials overseeing driver’s license tests are very lenient.
- Drivers and pedestrians view traffic violations as minor offenses.
- Behaviors that most frequently contribute to road injuries and fatalities include driving under the influence of alcohol, speeding, substance abuse, and non-use of seat belts and helmets.
- Drivers tend to speed and often fail to obey traffic laws, traffic lights and road signs.
- Passing on the right, although illegal, is very common. Drivers frequently pass on hills and blind curves.
- Drivers often fail to stay in their lane and frequently create a third lane in the middle of two-lane highways.
- Drivers of larger vehicles often assume they have right of way.
- Commercial drivers often pass other vehicles irresponsibly in mountainous areas and commonly use alcohol, amphetamines and other stimulants.
- Motorcyclists and motorized carts in motorcycle lanes frequently travel against traffic.
- Slow moving vehicles, making U-turns on national highways, cause collisions with oncoming traffic.
- Be alert when entering intersections. Motorcycle drivers tend to drift into the right hand lane (the wrong side of the road in Thailand) when making a right hand turn and then drift back into the left hand lane after completing the turn.
- Drivers tend to use the horn frequently in traffic. They often blow horns for good luck when passing a temple or roadside spirit house.
- The left turn signal means it is okay to pass. The right turn signal means someone is passing from the other direction.
- Vehicles tend to be poorly maintained.
- Social and economic losses associated with road crashes amount to about 2.13 percent of Thailand’s GDP.

GENERAL ROAD CONDITIONS

- All major cities are connected by major highways; some with four-lane expressways. Main roads and



highways are generally well maintained, however may be very congested in larger cities.

- Truck traffic is heavy on inter-city roads; overloaded trucks sometimes cause serious road crashes.
- Two-lane roads are common, especially in more remote areas. May be unpaved. Slow-moving trucks limit speed and visibility on these roads.
- Road shoulders may not be adequate and protective crash barriers may be lacking.
- Some road sections are poorly designed; others are too narrow for trucks and buses.
- Mountainous roads are narrow and lack barriers.
- Roads are often extremely slippery during the first heavy rain after a prolonged dry season. The rain forces oil in the pavement to rise to the surface, creating ice-like driving conditions.
- Poor drainage and inadequate maintenance leads to flooded roads.
- Road signs are generally in English and Thai Sandscript. Traffic signals, signs and lane markings may be inadequate.
- Traffic mix includes large numbers of slow moving vehicles, such as bikes with sidecars, tuk tuks, bullock carts and old, overloaded trucks in addition to cars, buses and newer trucks.
- Freely roaming animals may wander into traffic any time. In more rural areas, be alert for dogs sleeping on road surface.
- Mountainous provinces include the following:
 - Yala Province, bordering Malaysia; majority is mountainous.
 - Chiang Mai Province, 69 percent mountainous.
 - Chiang Rai Province, at the northern tip of

Thailand; nearly 90 percent mountainous.

- Tak Province, 70 percent is high mountains.
- Chaiyaphum Province, 50 percent mountains and forests; is divided in half by a mountain range running east-west.
- Main highways are poorly developed in the Uhai Thani province.
- Border Crossings may close at anytime.
 - Use only designated border crossings. Failure to do so can have serious consequences.
 - For more information see the “Crime & Security” section of this report.
 - Contact the Thai Embassy in Washington, D.C. or local Thai authorities for current border crossing status.
 - Detailed border crossing information is available at the end of this report and from Travel Forum. Website: <http://thaiborder.itgo.com/myanmar/>.

URBAN TRAVEL

- Condition and maintenance of roads is generally good.
- Streets in larger cities are often congested; tend to be narrow.
- Traffic signals, lane markings and road signs may be inadequate.
- Drainage systems are often inadequate or lacking; risk of flooding during heavy rains is often high.
- Freely roaming animals and animal-drawn vehicles increase road risk.
- Elephants, wandering in the streets of Bangkok and other larger cities, sometimes become involved in road crashes. In Bangkok, anyone spotting an elephant is asked to call the elephant helpline. Phone: 1362.

CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
BANGKOK	<p>Defensive driving is essential. Road crash rate is high; roads often very congested.</p> <p>Numerous one-way streets make getting around difficult.</p> <p>Vans and larger cars may be difficult to maneuver in the narrow streets and may be too tall or wide for some parking spaces.</p>	<p>Good, four-lane expressways link the city to nearby cities.</p> <p>Public transportation is well-developed; includes buses, taxis, motorcycle taxis and three-wheeled “tuk-tuks.”</p> <p>Buses run regularly except late at night and follow established routes. Obtain route maps at hotels and bookstores. Call #184 for intra-city bus route info.</p>



CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
<p>BANGKOK (CONT.)</p>	<p>Traffic mix includes buses, mopeds, motorcycles, bicycles, vending carts, trucks, pedestrians, three-wheeled “tuk-tuks,” and an occasional elephant.</p> <p>Drivers often run red lights, fail to stop for pedestrians in crossings, or drive on sidewalk when making a U-turn.</p> <p>Drivers and cyclists commonly pass on either side.</p> <p>Be alert for cyclists passing on the left when making a turn.</p> <p>Motorcyclists often weave in and out of traffic.</p> <p>Bus drivers tend to have little regard for passenger safety.</p> <p>Pedestrian travel is difficult. Sidewalks may in poor repair. Construction sites may not be fenced off.</p> <p>Pedestrians should use overhead walkways when available.</p> <p>Road travel is more difficult in the rainy season. Most of the city is only a few feet above sea level.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Street drainage systems are often inadequate. Only 20 minutes of heavy rain may exceed storm drain capacity. o Smaller streets tend to flood. Water may reach several feet; tends to dissipate rapidly. <p>Large potholes are common; damaged drain openings are not repaired until drier weather comes.</p> <p>Pollution is so great that some traffic police and pedestrians wear surgical masks in the street.</p> <p>Air-conditioned vehicles recommended due to high heat, humidity and pollution levels.</p> <p>To contact police—phone: 1155.</p>	<p>Non-air-conditioned buses are slightly less expensive, but tend to be overcrowded. Air-conditioned buses are cleaner and more comfortable; fares vary with distance traveled.</p> <p>Many major roads have “Bus-only” lanes to allow buses to move more quickly through congested traffic.</p> <p>Micro buses are air-conditioned. Standing is not allowed. They are fairly inexpensive. Routes include areas of interest to tourists and businesspeople.</p> <p>Taxis make up over 50 percent of the vehicle fleet. Official taxis have a “TAXI METER” sign on the roof and a yellow and black number plate.</p> <p>Taxis are often air-conditioned. Many are metered; negotiate fare before boarding if not metered.</p> <p>Taxi drivers seldom speak English. If possible, ask someone to write down your destination.</p> <p>Rental cars are available.</p> <p>Renting a motorcycle, moped, or bicycle or using <i>tuk-tuks</i> or motorcycle taxis for transport is not recommended.</p> <p>Skytrain is an overhead commuter train; fast and inexpensive. Has two lines; easy to use. Staff generally speaks some English. Fares paid with an electronically-read card.</p> <p>Bangkok Metro runs from the main train station, Hua Lamphong; passes under two major roads, Rama 4 Road and Ratchadaphisek Road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Links the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre, several hotels, shopping centers, and business districts. o Has 3 interchange stations connecting with the Skytrain and bus routes serving suburbs. o Pedestrian bridges are needed from Metro stations to Skytrain stations. o Escalators are lacking at some underground stations.



CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
BANGKOK (CONT.)	<p>Traffic is often congested. Increasing tourism contributes to traffic congestion.</p> <p>Streets that most often have serious flooding include Second Road, Beach Road, Sukhumvit Road, Soi Buakow, Soi Yensabai, Soi Post Office and Soi Yamato.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has Park and Ride facilities near subway. <p>Cycling in Bangkok:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has cycle lanes on 10 km of Pradit Manootham Road and 1 km of Petchakasem. More cycle lanes are planned. ○ Cyclists are permitted to ride on sidewalks. <p>Bikes may be taken on buses and the Skytrain. Don Muang International Airport (few miles north of city).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access by special elevated highway; traffic can be congested. ○ Air-conditioned airport buses provide efficient, easy transport along 3 routes to city center. ○ Minibuses and metered taxis are available. ○ Only use taxis from the official airport taxi stand. Unofficial taxi drivers may overcharge or rob tourists. ○ Groups may hire a minibus for travel to other cities; fee low. ○ Reliable 24-hour limousine service is available to downtown hotels. For information: Phone: 02-535 1111. ○ Major hotels arrange for a car and driver to meet flights.
CHIANG MAI (CHIANGMAI)	<p>Almost as congested as Bangkok. Rapid growth and a lack of urban planning contribute to traffic congestion.</p> <p>Inadequate enforcement of traffic laws contributes to congestion and high road crash rates.</p> <p>Be alert for cyclists; motorcycles and bicycles account for more than half of all traffic in the city.</p> <p>Pollution levels are high.</p>	<p>Public mass transportation system is very poor; number of transport vehicles, inadequate.</p> <p>Bus fleet consists mostly of red minibuses. Transport also supplied by pickup trucks modified to carry passengers and Daihatsu minibuses.</p> <p>Chiangmai International Airport: An elevated road is being constructed to the airport.</p>
CHONBURI	<p>Traffic problems almost as serious as Bangkok's.</p>	



CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
<p>PATTAYA</p>	<p>Traffic is often congested. Increasing tourism contributes to traffic congestion.</p> <p>Streets that most often have serious flooding include Second Road, Beach Road, Sukhumvit Road, Soi Buakow, Soi Yensabai, Soi Post Office and Soi Yamato.</p>	<p>Public transport system has deteriorated.</p> <p>Bus drivers are under-trained; some are involved in criminal activities. Report infractions to police.</p> <p>Free bus service provides transport along a fixed routed from Pattaya City Hall-Dolphin Roundabout-2nd Road-Central Pattaya Road-Beach Road-South Pattaya Road-Pattaya Second Road-Dolphin Roundabout-Pattaya City Hall. Service has helped to reduce congestion.</p> <p>Taxis, minibuses, and baht buses provide transport. Can be rented by the hour; can be hired for one-way or round trips throughout Pattaya.</p> <p>International car rental agencies are present. Using your passport as a deposit when renting from a local company is not recommended.</p> <p>Pattaya Airport</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Air-conditioned buses provide transport to Pattaya 3 times daily. o Taxis and limo services have higher fares.
<p>PHUKET</p>		<p>Phuket, Thailand’s largest island, is connected to the mainland by bridges.</p> <p>Tourist Police are readily available and will assist travelers in resolving disputes. Most Tourist Police speak English.</p>
<p>SAMUI ISLAND</p>	<p>Has one of the highest road fatality rates in Thailand.</p> <p>Tourists, unfamiliar with driving regulations in Thailand, and poor driving habits of residents are factors in high road risk.</p> <p>Roads are generally narrow and poorly maintained.</p> <p>Sand on road surface may reduce traction; be especially alert for sandy stretches if cycling.</p>	<p><i>Songthaews</i> (small, covered pickup trucks with passenger benches) Have fixed fares and are inexpensive. Destinations are fixed. They are posted: are on truck’s sides or front. Routes are not fixed. Tell driver your destination before boarding.</p> <p><i>Songthaews</i> serve as buses during day and taxis at night. Fares are much higher at night.</p> <p>Taxis are readily available in Chaweng and Lamai. They are more difficult to find elsewhere.</p> <p>Taxis may be called or flagged along main roads. Taxis are metered and have fixed fares based on distance traveled. If driver does not start the meter, agree on fare before leaving.</p> <p>Some international car rental companies have agencies on Samui.</p> <p>Local rental agencies’ vehicle maintenance may be inadequate.</p> <p>Local agencies may include an English-speaking driver for a small fee plus cost meals and accommodations for driver.</p>



CITY	PROBLEMS	USEFUL INFORMATION
SAMUI ISLAND (CONT.)		Samui Airport (5 km from Chaweng Beach). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Air-conditioned vans provide transport to beaches and resorts. Hotel vans are most convenient. Fares are often higher than public vans.

RURAL TRAVEL

- The condition and maintenance of rural roads is good.
- Rural road network is extensive; some roads are unpaved.
- Unsafe driving causes numerous road fatalities. Irresponsible passing is common in mountainous regions.
- Road markings, shoulders and protective barriers can be inadequate.
- Truck traffic is heavy, even in rural areas. Be alert for animal-drawn vehicles and freely roaming animals.

NIGHT TRAVEL

- U.S. Embassy strongly cautions against night travel.
- Exercise great caution when driving on rural roads or inter-city highways at night. Lighting is inadequate in many urban areas.
- The number of drivers driving under the influence of alcohol is highest in very early morning hours. Many offenders are tourists.
- Avoid overnight bus trips. Bus crashes are especially high at night.
- Night cycling is not recommended, particularly on secondary roads.

PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL

- Be alert for drivers running red lights, failing to yield to pedestrians in crossings, or using part of the sidewalk to make U-turns.
- Sidewalks are sometimes missing or in poor repair. Construction sites may not be closed off.
- The section of Bangkok’s Wireless Road in front of U.S. Embassy has a high rate of pedestrian road fatalities. Several American citizens have been injured crossing this street. Use the pedestrian bridge to cross.

SEASONAL TRAVEL

- The dry season is from March through May. The rainy/monsoon season is from June to October. Rainy periods can occur anytime. Winter is from November to February in the Highlands.
- Flooding can strand drivers for hours during heavy monsoon rains.
- Many parts of Thailand are prone to flooding during the rainy seasons or monsoons:
 - Some areas of Bangkok. Streets may resemble canals.
 - Samutprakarn province (also known as "Muang Pak Nam") Situated at the mouth of the Chao Phraya river, a flat alluvial plain.
 - Dangerous flooding is likely on Sukhumvit Highway in Pattaya City.
 - Western coast of Koh Chang Island in Trat province. Heavy storms are common May through October.
 - Samut Songkhram Province, at mouth of Mae Klong River. Connects with Bangkok via Highway 35. Is relatively flat; some areas are vulnerable to flooding.
 - Flash floods can be a problem in Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai and Ubon Ratchathani Provinces in northern Thailand.
 - Increased traffic levels and higher consumption of alcohol during holidays and major festivals contribute to the high road injury and fatality rates. Road risk is greatest in Nakhonratchasima Province during festivals, as hundreds of thousands of people travel through this province to reach Thailand’s 18 northeastern provinces.
 - Road travel is particularly dangerous on December 31 and January 1, New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day.



- From December 27, 2001 to January 2, 2002, 918 people were killed and 67,309 were injured. Alcohol was a leading factor in these road crashes.
- Motorcyclists accounted for about 80 percent of the fatalities; most victims were not wearing a helmet.
- During Songkran (Buddhist New Year celebration) traffic jams may stretch for hundreds of kilometers; road injury and fatality rates are high.
- In 2004, road safety education efforts reduced road crash fatalities during Songkran Festival from 840 in 2003 to 654. Even with this improvement, daily road crash fatality rates during Songkran were twice as high as normal in Thailand.
- The practice of throwing water at passing vehicles during Songkran increases road risk.
- insufficient planning and implementation of road safety plans
- lack of evaluation of various enforcement strategies
- Stringent road rules and regulations passed to improve road safety include increased penalties for failing to use seat belts and failing to wear helmets when riding on or driving a motorcycle.
- Seat belt and helmet laws and helmet laws are strictly enforced in Phuket.
- Police often set up road checks for proper vehicle documentation. Sobriety checkpoints are rare unless a road crash occurs.
- Police corruption is common. Call the Tourist Police when in need of police assistance.
 - Tourist Police act as tourists' advocates.
 - Officers speak English.
- Motorists may take advantage of police corruption and pay bribes or compensate the injured party to avoid consequences of irresponsible driving. Occurs even in cases involving severe injuries and/or fatalities.
- If involved in a road crash outside Bangkok, police may ask for a bribe before releasing you. Call Tourist Police if this happens; ask them to negotiate with police to resolve the situation.

POLICE ENFORCEMENT

- Driving regulations are poorly enforced; many drivers' licenses in Thailand are bought.
- Some factors contributing to the lack of adequate enforcement of traffic laws include:
 - insufficient training of officers and funding for equipment
 - lack of clarity in enforcement protocols and policies



ROAD REGULATIONS

- Traffic moves on the left.
- An International Driving Permit (IDP) is required. Contact AAA at www.aaa.com. An IDP is a legal identification document on which driving license information is translated into 11 languages, including English, and can only be used as a supplement to a valid driving license.
- The legal blood alcohol level is 0.5 mg/ml.
- Drivers and front seat passengers are required to use seat belts.
- Drivers entering a roundabout are required to yield to vehicles coming on the left. However, this law is frequently broken.
- Required vehicle documents include the following:
 - A valid insurance certificate
 - Road Tax stickers affixed to the vehicle
 - Copy of the registration papers. Under Thai law the driver of a vehicle is responsible for its documentation and condition.
- Third party insurance is required and must be purchased in Thailand. Full comprehensive insurance is strongly recommended. Often the most affluent driver is required to cover all expenses when involved in a road crash, whether or not at fault.
- If involved in road crash:
 - Non-residents are generally found at fault if a Thai national is also involved.



- Show IDP to police to ensure insurance coverage. Insurance companies do not cover claims from drivers lacking an IDP.

**ROAD WATCH****SOME DANGEROUS ROADS IN THAILAND**

ROAD	ROAD CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
HIGHWAY 108	Road has almost 2,000 curves in its 349kms.	Links Mae Hong Son town to Chiang Mai via Mae Sariang.
HIGHWAY 1095	Many mountains and hairpin bends to negotiate. Ongoing road repair.	Links Mae Hong Son town to Chiang Mai via Pai; shorter than Highway 108.
HIGHWAY 110 TO MAE SALONG	Some very steep sections; many hairpin turns.	Links Chiang Rai with Mae Chan. Continues to Mae Sai, the northernmost point in Thailand; then turns eastward to Chiang Saen.
ROUTE 1130 TO THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE	Steep, mountainous road; many hairpin turns.	Paved road; turns off of Highway 110 about 3 km north of Mae Chan. Runs to Doi Mai Salong in the Golden Triangle (where borders of Thailand, Laos and Mynamar converge). Ends at Santi Kiri near Mynamar border.
ROUTE 1149 TO THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE	Steep, mountainous road; many hairpin turns. Difficult, 17 km route.	Paved road; turns off of Highway 110 about 14 km north of Mae Chan. Goes into the heart of the Golden Triangle; leads to Wat Phra That Doi Thung.
MUKDAHAN ON MEKHONG TRAIL	Fast growing area. Has rutted, dirt roads.	
ROADS ON SAMUI ISLAND	Frequent road crashes.	
HIGHWAY 36 (PATTAYA TO RAYONG)	Drivers often pass on shoulder or drive in center of road against oncoming traffic.	

SOME ROADS UNDERCONSTRUCTION IN THAILAND

NAME	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
ROAD LINKING CHIANG MAI PROVINCE TO CHIANG RAI PROVINCE	Being upgraded to four-lane.	
ROAD LINKING CHIANG MAI PROVINCE TO LAMPANG PROVINCE	Being upgraded to four-lane.	



SOME ROADS UNDERCONSTRUCTION IN THAILAND (CONTINUED)

NAME	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
ROAD LINKING CHIANG MAI PROVINCE TO CHIANG RAI PROVINCE	Being upgraded to four-lane.	
ROAD LINKING CHIANG MAI PROVINCE TO LAMPANG PROVINCE	Being upgraded to four-lane.	

SOME SAFER ROADS IN THAILAND

NAME	CONDITIONS	USEFUL INFORMATION
ROAD FROM HANG DONG TO CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY	Many curves.	Expansion to four-lane is complete. A faster route to the International Convention Center in Chiang Mai.
HIGHWAY 35 (THON BURI-PAK THAO ROUTE)		Connects Prachuap Khirikhan Province with Bangkok by via Samut Songkhram Province. Take Highway 4 from Samut Songkhram Province.



ROAD RECOMMENDATIONS

TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

BUSES

- The safety of public transportation is fair.
- Public transportation options are generally limited in smaller cities and towns.

Bus number designations may be confusing. Buses are classified by color and number; buses with the same number, but a different color, do not run the same route. Residents may know which bus travels to a specific destination.
- Air-conditioned buses provide inter-city travel; charge reasonable fares.
- Buses tend to be overcrowded and are not well maintained. Enforcement of inspection regulations is inadequate.
- Buses are frequently involved in road crashes. Fatalities are often high.

- Bus companies gain a reputation for speedy service. This contributes to high road crash rates.
- Driver training is minimal.
- Driving under the influence of alcohol, speeding, ignoring traffic laws and driving irresponsibly are common among bus, mini-bus and mini-van drivers.
- Bus turnovers on tight corners and head-on collisions with trucks are often due to driver inexperience with a particular route.
- Bus drivers often must work long hours. Many take amphetamines to stay awake.
- Government-run buses (Baw Kaw Saw, an abbreviation for Borisat Khon Song) provide service to most areas in Thailand. Major destinations are linked by more comfortable “Tour buses” or “VIP” buses (*rot thua* or *rot ae*).
 - Tend to be slower and more uncomfortable than private tour buses.



- Are less likely to be in a road crash or targeted by robbers than private tour buses.
- Tourist Buses
 - Tourist bus drivers are often inexperienced; drivers are generally required to get between stops more quickly than safety allows.
 - Tourist buses are frequently targeted by robbers.
 - Khao San Road tourist buses tend to be slow. Package tours prices are high.
- When purchasing a ticket on a tour bus, select an aisle seat near the middle of the bus.
 - Most collisions are head-on or rear-enders.
 - Passengers in seats nearest front are most likely to be injured or killed even in relatively minor road crashes.
 - Minibuses provide short-distance transport between towns and cities. They are generally crowded and have poor safety records.
 - *Songthaews* (local buses) are common in smaller towns' drivers pack as many passengers as possible.
 - Many are small vans; some are pick-up trucks.
 - Seats are wooden benches, one on each side of a mini-van or pick-up truck.
 - Larger buses have three benches, one on each side and one down the middle.
 - Passengers may hang onto the back of buses, if all seats are taken.
- Often tuk-tuks, motorcycle taxis, bicycle-powered rickshaws, and pick-up trucks are the only public transport options. All have poor safety records in fast or congested traffic areas. They are not recommended.

TAXIS

- Many taxi drivers are very helpful and can be hired by the day for longer trips; fees are reasonable.
- Taxis are poorly maintained. Tend to be overcrowded. Inspection regulations inadequately enforced.
- Irresponsible driving is common. Drivers do not observe traffic signals, road signs or speed limits and tend to weave dangerously in and out of traffic.
- Drivers often fatigued from excessive hours on duty.
- Airport limousines or licensed taxis can be hired from the airport's official taxi rank.
- Metered versus unmetered taxis and mini-buses:

- Metered taxis have a "TAXI METER" sign on the roof.
- Be sure the meter is set back to zero before embarking.
- Unmetered taxis generally charge higher fares.
- Tuk Tuks (*sam lors*)—Three-wheeled taxis are not as common now. They are prone to falling over and offer no protection to passengers or drivers. They are not recommended for safety reasons.
 - Drivers tend to speed.
 - Drivers commonly leave the scene of a road crash.
 - Have few safety systems to protect passengers or drivers.
 - Generally more expensive than taxis; agree on fee before boarding.
- Motorcycle taxis are not recommended due to high road crash risk. Drivers commonly leave the scene of a road crash.

RENTAL VEHICLES

- Rental cars are available in Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Can be rented with a driver.
- Use internationally recognized rental agencies. Vehicles from lower cost local agencies may be poorly maintained.
 - Do not judge a vehicle on the basis of external appearance alone.
 - Inspect the vehicle for mechanical deficiencies carefully before accepting.
 - Check the vehicle carefully for any damage or missing accessories and document problems before signing the rental agreement.
- Read insurance provision in rental contract carefully before signing.
 - Basic insurance includes only minimum coverage of medical expenses for driver and passengers in driver's vehicle.
 - Paying an extra fee for Collision Damage Waiver (CDW) is recommended.
- Basic insurance does not include coverage for the following:
 - Mechanical damage to driver's vehicle or any other vehicle involved.
 - Medical expenses for parties in other vehicles



- Compensation to any injured parties for loss of earnings
- Theft of the vehicle.
- When driving, always carry the contact card of the rental agency.
 - If involved in a road crash, police ask for contact card, passport and proof of insurance.
 - Lack of these documents may result in imprisonment until all financial matters relating to the road crash are settled.
 - Having the contact card keeps you out of jail while rental agency's insurance agents resolve the claim.

TRUCKS

- Drivers often fail to obey traffic signals, road signs or speed limits.
- Driving irresponsibly and driving under the influence of alcohol are common.
- Drivers frequently fatigued from excessive hours on duty. Truckers are often paid by the number of completed trips and may be fired if they do not speed.
- Trucks are often older, overloaded and poorly maintained. Enforcement of inspection laws is inadequate.

BICYCLES & MOTORCYCLES

- Travel by motorcycle is not recommended.
- Motorcycles are a primary means of transport for many residents.
- Many main roads have a narrow motorcycle lane.
- If planning inter-city cycling, be aware that the roads between Chaweng and Lamai have some very steep sections.
- Cyclists should keep to the extreme left of the road unless passing.
- Motorcycle lights must be ON anytime the vehicle is being operated.
- The law requiring motorcyclists and their passengers to wear helmets is seldom enforced. Wearing a helmet is strongly recommended for safety reasons.
- Rental bikes are readily available.

- Motorbike rental agencies often do not supply helmets and seldom tell renters helmets are required.
- Carrying motorcycle insurance provides little actual coverage. If involved in a road crash, the driver generally must pay for all damages/losses.
- Rental motorcycles and scooters are available at beach resorts are usually less than 50 cc mopeds. They are not registered as vehicles and cannot be insured.
- Some larger motorcycles cannot be insured.
- Motorcyclists are Thailand's most vulnerable road users. They account for 75-80% of road injuries and 70-90% of road fatalities annually.
- Seven of eight Americans killed in road crashes in Thailand in 2003 were riding a motorcycle.
- Road crashes involving foreigners riding motorcycles are frequent. Chief factors include:
 - Lack of experience
 - Renting too high powered a motorcycle
 - Lack of familiarity with local road conditions, especially the extremely slippery conditions typical during the first rain after a prolonged dry season.

CRIME & SECURITY

- Petty crime and burglary rates have increased. Violent crimes against foreigners are rare.
- Petty crime is common in tourist areas. A popular scam is selling tourists greatly overpriced gems.
- Crime is lower in Bangkok than in many U.S. cities. Petty theft is common in Bangkok's Chatuchak Weekend Market.
- Police often refuse to issue reports on petty crimes. Contact central Tourist Police office for assistance.
- Only use official taxis. Crime risk and fares are lower.
- Taxi or tuk tuk driver involvement in serious crime is relatively rare, but caution is warranted.
 - Avoid arguing with drivers.
 - Taxi drivers seldom pick up additional passengers. Be cautious about getting into a taxi with passengers onboard.
 - Decline offers to go anywhere you have not requested. Drivers get a commission for taking potential customers to some businesses.



- Taxi driver may say a hotel has closed when it really hasn't. Driver then suggests an expensive hotel (one that pays the driver a commission per customers).
- If driver acts suspiciously or drives irresponsibly, do not hesitate to disembark.
- Do not accept cigarettes, drinks, candy or any food item from anyone unfamiliar. Even children may offer tourists drugged items in order to rob them.
- If possible, avoid dining alone. Do not leaving drinks or food unattended.
- Avoid trying to resolve disputes with business establishments. Seek Tourist Police's assistance. (Country-wide toll-free phone: 1155.)
- Drug traffickers may offer Americans free trips to Thailand and ask them to take gifts or luggage (containing drugs) back to the U.S. If caught, ignorance of the contents of the gifts or luggage is an unacceptable defense. Embassy officials cannot override Thai laws.

AREAS OF GREATEST SECURITY CONCERN

- Risk of terrorism is high anywhere in Southeast Asia. Exercise extra caution, especially in areas where citizens of Western nations tend to congregate.
- United States Department and British Foreign Service recommend against all but essential travel to the Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Songkhla provinces in southern Thailand, including the town of Hat Yai.
 - Incidents of criminally and politically motivated violence have occurred.
 - Exercise extra caution if travel is essential.
 - Bombing attacks have occurred in public areas, schools and government offices.
- Exercise caution in areas bordering other countries. Check with the Thai Tourist Police and the U.S. Embassy or Consulate General before traveling in border areas.
- Robbery is more of a problem in border areas.
- Enter neighboring countries only at designated crossing points.
- Inquire with Thai authorities to see if a specific border crossing is open.
- Licensed guides help trekkers avoid crossing inadvertently into neighboring countries.
- Tourists have not been targeted specifically for violence, but may be caught in the midst if violence occurs
- Problems in remote areas along the Myanmar-Thailand border include:
 - Conflicts between the Burmese Army and Thai security forces.
 - Activities of drug traffickers, bandits and pirates.
 - Armed conflicts between Thai security forces and drug traffickers.
 - Frequent border closures. Travelers in Myanmar may not be permitted to re-enter Thailand until border reopens.
- Traveling off-road in remote border areas is not recommended, even with a guide.
- There have been incidents of violence along the northern and eastern Laos-Thailand border.
- Cross only at official border crossings. Check open/closed status with Tourist Police, U.S. Consulate General in Chiang Mai, or U.S. Embassy in Bangkok.



EMERGENCY INFORMATION

TOURIST ASSISTANCE

- The availability of roadside assistance is poor.
- Emergency numbers:
 - Tourist Police—nation-wide toll-free number is 1155.
 - International SOS (an international emergency and roadside assistance organization) in Bangkok—phone: 02-256-7146.
- Tourist facilities are readily available.
- For further information contact the Thai National Tourist Organization's office in New York. Website: www.tat.or.th/index-shock.htm.
- Service station information:
 - Unleaded gas is readily available.
 - Mechanics provide adequate vehicle repairs.



- Labor is inexpensive, but the cost of parts for non-Japanese cars is high.
- Photography is not permitted in some villages; ask permission before photographing anyone.

MEDICAL CARE

- Medical care is good, especially in Bangkok.
- Congested roads and scarcity of ambulances often delay prompt medical care for road crash victims. Ambulances are not available in some provinces.
 - Emergency medical response system has been upgraded in some areas, reducing response times to 10 minutes.
 - Upgrading should be nationwide Dec. 2005.
- Medications, drugs, and alcoholic beverages may be more potent or of a different composition than similar ones in the US. This has caused serious problems/deaths of some tourists. Medications manufactured in Thailand by Western companies are generally safe.
- Registered pharmacists can read English and speak some English.
- Clerks in supermarkets or department store pharmacy counters are not pharmacists.

Medical care in Bangkok:

- St. Louis Hospital, 215 Sathorn Tai Rd. Phone: 2100-3348
- Bangkok Christian Hospital, on the west side at 124 Silom Rd. Phone: 233-6981
- Bamrungrad Hospital, 33 Sukhumvit Rd., Soi 3. Phone: 253-0251
- Bangkok Adventist Hospital ("Mission Hospital"), 430 Phitsanuick. Phone: 281-1422 or 282-1100
- Samitivej Hospital, 133 Sukhumvit, Soi 49. Phone: 382-0010 or 392-0061.
- Medical care in Pattaya:
 - Pattaya International Hospital. 255/1M.9. Soi 4, Pattaya Beach Road. North Pattaya. Phone: 0 3842 8374-5
 - Bangkok Pattaya Hospital. 301/M.6. Sukhumvit Road. North Pattaya. Phone: 0 3842 7751-5
 - Pattaya Memorial Hospital. 328/1M9. Central Pattaya. Phone: 38422-9422.
- Medical care in Chiang Mai:
 - Local hospitals, adequate for routine medical care.

- Patients with medical conditions requiring extensive testing are often transferred to Bangkok.
- Medical services in Phuket Town:
 - Three modern hospitals with 24-hour Emergency Room care. More critical patients may be transferred to Bangkok or Hat Yai.
 - SOS International services are available for medical evacuation to other countries.
 - Most hotels have access to 24-hour medical services.
 - Ambulance service is available.
- U.S. medical insurance is not always valid in other countries. Medicare and Medicaid do not cover medical expenses rendered outside the U.S. Medigap policies (plans C through J) cover 80 percent of what Medicare would cover in the U.S. for the first 60 days of each trip; a \$250 deductible applies. Maximum lifetime limit of \$50,000. Medicare Advantage may offer coverage for care abroad. Phone: 800-633-4227; website: <http://www.medicare.gov/publications/pubs/pdf/11037.pdf>.

EMBASSY INFORMATION

- The Royal Thai Embassy, 1024 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20007. Phone: (202) 944-3600; website: www.thaiembdc.org.
- The U.S. Embassy, 95 Wireless Road, Bangkok. Mailing address: APO AP 96546-0001. Phone: (66-2) 205-4000, fax: (66-2) 205-4103; website: <http://bangkok.usembassy.gov>.
- U.S. Consulate General in Chiang Mai, 387 Wichayanond Road. Mailing address: Box C, APO AP 96546. Phone: (66-53) 252-629; fax: (66-53) 252-633.

BORDER CROSSINGS

- Border crossings with Malaysia:
 - Tak Bai sub-district (Narathiwat province) to Kota Baru in Malaysia.
 - Su-Ngai Golok (Narathiwat province) to Kota Baru in Malaysia.
 - Betong (Yala province) to Keroh in Malaysia.
 - Sadao district (Songkhla province) to Changlun in Malaysian.



- Border crossings with Cambodia:
 - Aranya Prathet (Sakaeo province in the east) to Poipet in Cambodia, by land. Waiting times are generally short.
 - Ban Hat Lek (Trat province in the east) to Kong Kaob Kont in southern Cambodia, by boat.
- Border crossings with Laos:
 - Chiang Khong (Chiang Rai province in the north) to Huayxai in Laos, by ferry across Mekong River.
 - Nong Khai (Nong Khai province in the north-east) to Vientiane in Laos, by bridge over Mekong River.
 - Nakhon Phanom (Nakhon Phanom province in the north-east) to Thakhet in Laos, by ferry across Mekong River.
 - Mukdahan (Mukdahan province in the north-east) to Savannakhet in Laos, by ferry across Mekong River.
 - Chong Mek (Ubon Ratchathani province in the north-east) to Vaeng Tao and Pakse in Laos, by land.
- Border crossings with Myanmar:
 - Mae Sai (Chiang Rai province in the north) to Tachileik, by a bridge over Mae Sai River.
 - Ranong (Ranong province in the south) to Kaw Thaug (southern tip of Myanmar), by boat ferry crossing sea.
 - Mae Sot (Tak province in the north-west) to Mya Waddy, by a bridge over Mong River.
 - Sangklaburi (Kanchanaburi province) to Mon state in Myanmar, by road. Gaining entry into Myanmar via road is difficult. Contact a Myanmar travel agency to arrange entry.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT)
11769 Gainsborough Road
Potomac, MD 20854, USA
Telephone: 301 983 5252
Fax: 301 983 3663
Website: <http://www.asirt.org/>
E-mail: asirt@asirt.org

ASIRT is a non-profit humanitarian organization established in memory of Aron Sobel, age 25, who was killed along with 22 other passengers in a Pamukkale Bus Company crash on the roads of Turkey. © ASIRT 2005

Disclaimer: ASIRT provides this information as a service to the traveling public.

This report is intended to represent general road conditions, driving environment, quality of public transportation, medical care and emergency response. It may not be totally accurate in a specific location or circumstance.