

Thailand Travel Info & Traveling to Koh Pha ngan

Before Departing to Thailand

-Buy a plane ticket to Bangkok. The sooner the better as it will be cheaper if you buy early. Low season/the cheapest tickets are available in the months of March, April, May, October, and November.

-Make sure your passport has two blank pages and 6 months validity.

-Call your bank, tell them you will be traveling so your credit cards or debit cards won't be locked when you try to use them in a different country.

-Disable two-factor authentication on any online accounts you have. The problem with 2 factor authentication is when it tries to send a text message to your phone. Unless you are able to use the same phone number in Thailand, you may not have access to your accounts.

-Take photos of your passport ID page, credit cards/debit cards, or any important cards and store them on a secure cloud service. A good tip when traveling anywhere.

-Check visa requirements for your country. For many countries, a visa is not required to enter Thailand. One can enter and stay in Thailand visa-exempt for 30 days. This stay can be extended for another 30 days inside Thailand. Total stay of 60 days is possible without a visa.

-Another option is you can get a tourist visa at a Thai Embassy in any country before departing to Thailand. A tourist visa is valid for a stay of 60 days, and can be extended once for another 30 days. A total stay of 90 days is possible. For some people, the tourist visa is a lot of extra work and money for a mere additional 30 days, and they opt to not get it.

Arrival at Bangkok Airport BKK

-Bangkok has two main airports: BKK and DMK.

-If you are flying from an international country outside of Asia, you will probably arrive at Survanabhumi airport (BKK).

-There is also Don Meaung (DMK) airport, 40 km away from BKK that only serves domestic flights in Thailand and other southeast asian destinations.

-I recommend you exchange your cash into Thai baht upon arrival at the BKK airport. Usually airports don't have good exchange rates, but actually I have seen good rates at the "Super Rich" underground level (B Level), next to the Airport Rail Link Suvarnabhumi Station.

-It's hard to miss the booths where you can purchase a SIM card at the airport. The plans advertised at the airport are generally much more expensive than if you buy one from outside the airport. That said, they are still pretty cheap compared to what you find in any western world country.

-Thailand has three main cell phone carriers of SIM cards. TRUE, AIS, and DTAC. Personally I recommend TRUE as all 7-11's carry them and support the ability to top-up there.

-You can purchase a TRUE SIM card outside the airport at any 7-11. The cashier at the front should help you register it and set it up. I pay 200 baht (\$6) per month for unlimited data.

Getting to Koh Pha Ngan

-There are three practical ways to get to the island Koh Pha ngan from Bangkok. Either flight, bus, or train.

-Flight is most comfortable and convenient but also expensive if you're planning to land at the adjacent island of Koh Samui.

-A train will go to Surat Thani railway station. From Surat Thani Town, you can buy a bus+ferry combo ticket to Koh Pha ngan at the travel operator Seatran.

-I recommend traveling by bus since it requires the least planning. There are at least two bus companies that offer tickets directly to Koh Pha Ngan from Bangkok: Lomprayah and Raja Ferry.

-A bus+ferry ticket from Lomprayah is 1650 (\$46) baht for the VIP bus and 1350 (\$37) baht for the regular bus. Day and night buses are available that will make the 10 hour + trip. The

Lomprayah office and pick-up point is at Khao San road in Bangkok:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/hfzEonfEqXFZ9NJ59>

-You can book and purchase a ticket in advance online at <https://www.lomprayah.com/booking>

-To get to the office and pick-up point of Lomprayah, you will have to get to Khao San road. From BKK airport, one method of travel is to take the S1 shuttle bus. Buses are available outside of gate 7/8 on the level 1 of the Suvarnabhumi terminal. Price is 60 baht (\$2). The closest bus stop the bus arrives at is a 5 minute walk from Khao San road.

-Another bus+ferry transportation option to Koh Pha ngan is Raja Ferry.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/YF8dwaZ6LLX5Rp9Y6>

Arriving on Koh Pha ngan

-Coming from Lomprayah or Raja Ferry you will arrive at the passenger pier at Thong Sala, the main town of the island.

-From here it's a 10 minute vehicle ride and 10 minute walk to get to Dhammarato's place at Ban Tai.

-Walk down the pier from your boat and you will be greeted with numerous people who want to offer you a ride. A motorbike ride to Ban Tai will be 100 baht (\$3). A safer option is the songthaeo (a modified truck to carry passengers) for 150 baht (\$4.5).

-To get to Dhammarato's place, get off at Ban Tai and walk to the Big Yang Na Yai Tree:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/zknHWq5jFbw3twg27>

-From there, walk to Dhammarato's house: <https://goo.gl/maps/ujYXUJsaqwtLD1XY9>

Staying at a Wat

-There are many wats (temples) on the island to stay at. Potentially any one of the approximately 30,000 wats in Thailand are available for people to stay at. The wats on Koh Pha Ngan that members of Dhammarato's dhamma community have stayed at before are:

Wat Khao Tham

Wat Ba Saeng Tham

Wat Tong (Not on Google maps, but located behind Rama V monument)

-Do some exploring yourself to find a place you can call home.

-Be aware of Thai temple conventions and etiquette before staying at a temple. Some general guidelines:

1. You will need to get approval from the abbot before staying at a temple. Try to find him first or try asking one of the monks you see and mention you want to stay at the temple.
2. You may need to wear all white. This depends on the temple and the abbot.
3. The abbot may disallow use of personal devices (phones, laptops)
4. You may be expected to hold [8 precepts](#)
5. The temple may have a schedule you should follow for times of waking up, bintabaht (alms collecting), eating, chores, group chanting/meditation, etc.
6. The proper way to greet a monk is to put your hands together in a praying gesture, raise them to eyebrow level (called a wai). Instead of saying "hello"/"sawat dee krap" or "good morning", Thai people say "Nama sa gaan krap" (นมัสการครับ). It means something like "I revere you".
7. Wear clothing that covers your knees and shoulders.
8. Don't lay down or exercise in the meditation hall.
9. Take off your shoes before entering inside the ordination hall or other buildings deemed "sacred"
10. Don't point your feet at monks/nuns or buddha statues.
11. At mealtimes, don't eat before the monks eat.
12. If you're not sure what to do, follow what other people are doing.
13. Enjoy yourself, smile a bit!

Extending a visa/visa-exempt

-The tourist visa or visa exemption can be extended for 30 days at a Thai immigration office. The cost is 1900 baht (\$54). There are Thai immigration offices on Koh Pha Ngan and Koh Samui.

-The Immigration office location on Koh Pha Ngan:

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Ggb2wMqZYDjuCxVX6>

-You can only go do the extension one week before your current visa or visa exemption expires.

-Check the opening time before you go and make sure it's not a holiday. People start lining up slowly one hour before it opens. I like to be there early with all documents ready.

-To apply for the extension, you will need to fill out and submit 3 forms: STM.2 ,TM.7, and TM30. These documents can be found online and printed out, or paper copies are publicly available in a file cabinet at the Koh Pha Ngan immigration office.

-The total list of documents to be submitted are:

1. TM.7
2. STM.2
3. TM.30 (Your accommodation can usually provide this and print it out)
4. Photocopy of both passport ID page and Thailand entry stamp page
5. Photocopy of departure card (if you have one)
6. One recent 4x6 self photo
7. 1900 baht

-Photocopies and self-photos are available at the Thai Immigration office and various stores around Thong Sala.

-If you don't make the photocopies at the immigration office, the document (passport/departure card) must be vertically aligned on the page.

-All documents must be signed, even the photocopies.

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Border Run

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-A border run is an option if you want to stay in Thailand longer. It merely involves leaving the country and coming back the next day.

-There are many companies on the island and nearby island of Koh Samui that offer visa run services. This service cost around 4500 baht (\$120). Usually you leave to go to Malaysia, stay in a hotel one night and come back to the island 24 hours later. I recommend Mr.Kim visa services on Koh pha nga to do border runs.

-From what I hear, Thai immigration limits the entrance of foreigners into Thailand by land to 2 times yearly. So you can only do 2 of these visa runs per year. After 2 entries by land, you have to fly in.

-What is the limit of entries via flight? It appears to be up to the discretion of the immigration officer. From what I heard, the Thai immigration officer will give you a "warning" before they completely deny your entry. They will let you know if they think you've been staying too long in Thailand and will say something like "After your stay this time, you'll have to go stay in a different country for a while before you can come back."

-I have determined a good city to fly out to is Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The dhamma scene in Malaysia is abundant, as is the English language — not to mention many nationalities receive a 90-day stay entry stamp(no visa required). The neighboring countries of Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar all require a visa (at least for me).