

# Thai Culture: A Journey Through Heritage and Traditions

Photo credit: Lets Tour Bangkok



# Thailand in Brief

**"Thailand in Brief"** has been prepared by the Thailand Foundation to support students, scholars, and the general public who wish to give presentations about Thailand to their audiences—for example, exchange program students and international participants.

The work presents some basic information about Thailand in 11 areas: **1) Geography, 2) History, 3) Politics and Government, 4) Economics, 5) Demographics, 6) Culture, 7) Values, 8) Thai People and Other Popularity That You May Know, 9) Misconceptions about Thailand, 10) Thailand's Role on the Global Stage, and 11) Rankings Related to Thailand.**

**"Thailand in Brief"** is produced in both **PDF file (.pdf)** and **Powerpoint Presentation (.pptx)** formats, consisting of xx slides. Users may download and select the topics they wish to present, and may rearrange the sequence of the slides as appropriate. However, the content of this document cannot be edited. Reproduction or use for commercial purposes without permission from the Thailand Foundation is not allowed.

**"Thailand in Brief"** will be updated every third quarter each year. For inquiries or further suggestions, please contact the Thailand Foundation at [info@thailandfoundation.or.th](mailto:info@thailandfoundation.or.th).

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# Thailand in Brief

**"Thailand in Brief"** จัดทำขึ้นโดยมูลนิธิไทย (Thailand Foundation) เพื่ออำนวยความสะดวกแก่ นักเรียน นักศึกษา และผู้สนใจทั่วไป นำไปใช้ประโยชน์ อาทิ ในการบรรยาย หรือให้ความรู้เกี่ยวกับประเทศไทยในด้านต่าง ๆ แก่ชาวต่างประเทศ เช่น กรณีนักศึกษาแลกเปลี่ยนที่ไปเรียนในต่างประเทศที่ต้องนำเสนอเรื่องราวเกี่ยวกับประเทศไทยในสถาบันที่ไปศึกษาอยู่ เป็นต้น

งานชิ้นนี้เสนอข้อมูลเกี่ยวกับประเทศไทยโดยสังเขป 11 ด้าน ได้แก่ **1) ภูมิศาสตร์** (Geography) **2) ประวัติศาสตร์** (History) **3) การเมืองการปกครอง** (Politics and Government) **4) เศรษฐกิจ** (Economics) **5) ประชากร** (Demographics) **6) วัฒนธรรม** (Culture) **7) ค่านิยม** (Values) **8) คนไทยและสื่อที่คุณอาจรู้จัก** (Thai people and other popularity that you may know) **9) ความเข้าใจผิดเกี่ยวกับประเทศไทย** (Misconceptions) **10) บทบาทของไทยในเวทีโลก** (Thailand's role on the Global Stage) และ **11) การจัดอันดับที่เกี่ยวข้องกับประเทศไทย** (Rankings related to Thailand)

**"Thailand in Brief"** นี้จัดทำเป็นสไลด์ จำนวน xx สไลด์ ในรูปแบบ .pdf และ .pptx สามารถดาวน์โหลดและเลือกใช้หัวข้อที่นำเสนอ และสลับลำดับการนำเสนอได้ตามความเหมาะสม อย่างไรก็ดี ผู้ใช้งานไม่สามารถดัดแปลงเนื้อหาในเอกสารได้ และห้ามผลิตซ้ำ หรือนำไปใช้เพื่อผลประโยชน์เชิงพาณิชย์โดยไม่ได้รับอนุญาตจากมูลนิธิไทย

**"Thailand in Brief"** จะได้รับการปรับปรุงให้ทันสมัยในทุกไตรมาสที่ 3 ของปี หากมีข้อสงสัยและข้อเสนอแนะเพิ่มเติม กรุณาติดต่อมูลนิธิไทย

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# Chut Thai – Traditional Thai Clothing

***Chut Thai*** (ชุดไทย) refers to traditional Thai clothing.

***Chut Thai*** can be worn for ceremonies, formal functions, cultural occasions, or even for fashion and recreation.

Photo credit: Bangkok Wedding Studio





# Some Elements of Thai Traditional Clothing



***Sabai***(สไบ)

Cloth/shawl worn across the chest



***Chong Kraben***  
(โจงกระเบน)

Lower garment wrapped around the waist



***Pha Sin*** (ผ้าซิ่น)

Traditional tube skirt



***Pha Khao Ma*** (ผ้าขาวม้า)

Multipurpose, checkered cloth



## Men's Clothing

***Chong kraben*** with shirt

Photo credit: Men Kapook, Pinterest



## Women's Clothing

***Sabai*** with skirt or ***chong kraben***

# Thai Silk



## Luxury Fabric

Thai silk is globally renowned as luxury fabric due to its fine quality, vibrant colors, and exquisite weaving patterns.

## Modern Applications

Today, Thai silk is used in both traditional garments and contemporary fashion, showcasing Thailand's blend of heritage and innovation.

## Where to Purchase

Thai silk can be purchased through brands such as [Jim Thompson](#) or from craftsmen through organizations like the [Sustainable Arts and Institute of Thailand \(SACIT\)](#).

Photo credit: MGR Online





# Thai Art

Thai art is known for its **delicateness and intricate details**, often seen in traditional paintings, temple murals, and carvings, where every element reflects deep craftsmanship and cultural symbolism. In recent years, modern Thai art has flourished, blending traditional themes with contemporary styles.

Photo credit: DailyNews



# Thai Painting



## Traditional Painting

Traditional Thai painting follows the structured system of ***lai Thai (ลายไทย)*** patterns and is rich with deep symbolism that reflects religious beliefs and cultural values.

Pictured: Traditional Thai Painting at Wat Pho

Photo credit: UME Travel, bkstationery



## Contemporary Painting

Contemporary Thai painting blends traditional themes with global influences, featuring both realistic forms and abstract expressions to explore old and new concepts.

Pictured: Painted by Chalermchai Kositpipat

# Thai Sculpture

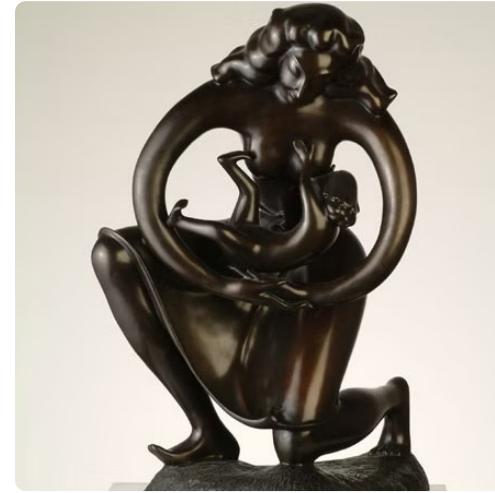


## Traditional Sculpture

Traditional Thai sculpture features idealistic forms with graceful postures and intricate details, most famously seen in elegant and serene Buddha statues.

Pictured: Buddha Chinnarat housed in Wat Phra Si Rattana Mahathat, Phitsanulok

Photo credit: Palungjit, Ratchadamnoen Contemporary Art Center



## Contemporary Sculpture

Contemporary Thai sculpture blends traditional elements with both realistic and abstract forms, reflecting modern perspectives while honoring cultural roots.

Pictured: The "Protector" sculpture created by Ajarn Khien Yimsiri

# Thai Handicrafts



## Benjarong Ceramics

Benjarong ceramics are traditional Thai porcelain of royal origin, known for their intricate hand-painted designs in vibrant colors and gold accents.



## Yaan Liphao Baskets

Yaan liphao baskets are finely woven Thai handicrafts made from a type of natural vine from Southern Thailand, prized for their elegant patterns and durability.



## Thai Nielloware

Thai nielloware is a traditional metalcraft featuring black inlay designs on silver or gold surfaces, admired for its delicate patterns and high craftsmanship.

Photo credit: Flickr, Nairobiroo, The Encyclopedia of Crafts in WCC-Asia Pacific Region



# Thai Spirituality

Thai spirituality is a complex blend of Buddhism, Hinduism-Brahmanism, and local animistic beliefs.

Pictured: Rajaguru gives the new King (Rama X) sanctified river water to bathe with during Coronation Ceremonies

Photo credit: Hinduismtoday







## Buddhism

- Over 90% of Thai people are Buddhist.
- Buddhist teachings greatly impact Thai social values and way of life.



## Hinduism

- Thais worship Hindu gods alongside the Buddha.
- Pictured: The famous Erawan Shrine in Bangkok, dedicated to Hindu God Brahma.



## Animism

- Animism is the original belief of the Thai people.
- Believe in spirits that inhabit nature, object, places, and more.

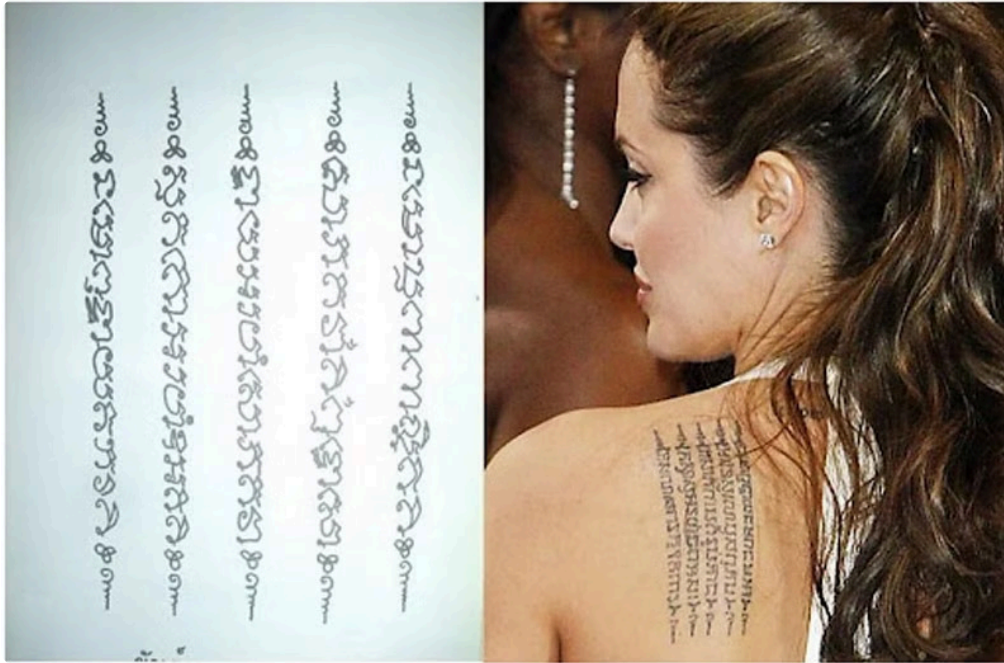
Photo credit: kalyanamitra, Thaizer, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre

## Thai Amulets (พระเครื่อง)

- Depict sacred figures such as the Buddha and famous monks.
- Worn on the body or venerated at homes and business places.
- Believed to grant protection and bring good luck.
- Some prized amulets can reach **millions of dollars!**



Photo credit: Thairath



## Sak Yant: Yantra Tattoo (สักยันต์)

- **Yantra** are sacred symbols and geometric patterns in Hindu and Buddhist beliefs.
- Yantra **tattoos** depict numbers, symbols, patterns, figures, prayers, and spells, believed to grant protection, charm, and prosperity.

Photo credit: BrandAge



# Spirits and Supernatural Forces

Belief in spirits or ***phi***(ผี) is deeply rooted in Thai culture. Spirits can be associated with places and natural features, or can represent ancestors and deceased individuals. **Spirit houses** are found inside homes and businesses, where people honor the spirits for blessings and protection.



Photo credit: Wazzadu





## Spirit Houses

Dwelling place for the spirit that protects the land



## Sacred Trees

Old trees are believed to be the dwelling place of spirits

Photo credit: Areeya Property Public Company Limited, Pattaya Unlimited

# Thai Festivals

Thailand is home to numerous festivals reflecting seasonal changes, Buddhist traditions, local ways of life, and openness towards other cultures.

Photo credit: Everyday Bangkok Hostel



# Songkran

***Songkran*** (สงกรานต์) is the traditional Thai New Year festival, celebrated annually from **April 13–15**. It marks a time of renewal, family gatherings, and religious observances, as well as the famous water splashing festivities.

## Activities

- Water splashing
- Pouring water on the hands of elders to show respect
- Bathing of Buddha statues
- Merit-making at temples

Photo credit: Britanica





# Loy Krathong

**Loy Krathong**(ลอยกระทง) is celebrated on the night of the full moon in **November**. People gather around rivers, canals, and lakes to float decorated baskets called **krathong**(กระทง), made from banana leaves, flowers, candles, and incense.

The act of floating a krathong symbolizes letting go of past negativity, paying respect to the Goddess of Water, and making wishes for the future

## Activities

- Krathong floating
- Sky lantern floating (in Northern Thailand)
- Merit-making at temples

Photo credit: Thairath, KKDay





# Phi Ta Khon

*Phi Ta Khon* (ผีตาโขน) is a vibrant and unique festival celebrated in Dan Sai District, Loei Province, in Northeastern Thailand. It usually takes place in **June or July**. Often called the “**Ghost Festival**,” locals dress up in elaborate ghost costumes with tall, colorful masks made from coconut husks and rice baskets.

## Activities

- Ghost parade
- Merit-making at temples

Photo credit: Bangkokbiznews





# Candle Festival

The **Thai Candle Festival** (เทศกาลแห่เทียนพรรษา) is a traditional celebration held to mark the beginning of Buddhist Lent (*Khao Phansa*), typically in **July**. The festival features elaborate parades of giant wax candles, intricately carved to depict scenes from Buddhist mythology, Thai literature, and local folklore. These candles are offered to temples to provide light for monks during the three-month rainy retreat.

## Activities

- Candle parade
- Merit-making at temples

Photo credit: My Life Graphic





# Modern Festivals

While Thailand holds its traditions close, its openness to global influences has led to the widespread embrace of international celebrations. In urban areas, New Year and Christmas are marked with festive cheer, while Valentine's Day is a beloved occasion for couples. Thailand also proudly celebrates Pride Festivals, reflecting its growing support for LGBTQ+ communities.

Photo credit: Nation Thailand





## Christmas

Christmas is celebrated mainly in urban areas and commercial spaces, where malls and streets are decorated with festive lights, trees, and ornaments. While it's not a public holiday or a religious occasion, it's embraced as a fun and joyful time for gift-giving, parties, and spreading cheer, especially among young people and families.

Photo credit: Thailand Insider, bangkokbiznews



## New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve in Thailand features fun festivities and world-class countdown events in major cities like Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Pattaya. At the same time, many people visit temples to pray, reflect, and make merit, hoping to start the year with good luck and positive energy.



## Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is a popular celebration, especially among students, young people and couples. In schools and universities, it's common for students to stick heart-shaped stickers on friends' uniforms as a playful sign of affection. Couples also exchange gifts, flowers, and go on romantic outings to mark the occasion.

Photo credit: Richard Barrow, Go Thai Be Free



## Pride Month

Pride in Thailand is celebrated with vibrant parades and events that showcase the country's diversity and support for the LGBTQ+ community, especially in cities like Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Thailand is the first country in Southeast Asia to **legalize same-sex marriage**, marking a historic milestone for equality and LGBTQ+ rights in the country.





# Thai Cuisine: The Harmony of Flavors

Thai food is one of the most well-known aspects of Thai culture. Celebrated for its bold and balanced flavors, many Thai dishes are now beloved by people all over the world.

Photo credit: realasset



# Characteristics of Thai Food

1



## Rice Culture and Food Sharing

Rice is the main staple of Thai people, forming the heart of almost all meals. Meals are typically eaten together, with rice served alongside a variety of shared accompanying dishes, reflecting the communal nature of Thai dining.

2



## Harmony of Flavors

Thai food is famous for its complex blends of flavors, such as sweet, sour, salty, and spicy.

3



## Global Fame

Many Thai dishes are now popular and beloved worldwide.

Photo credit: Expatica, De Siam Cuisine, Quandoo

# Famous Thai Dishes



## Pad Thai

A famous stir-fried noodle dish made with rice noodles, dried shrimps, tofu, eggs, peanuts, and a tangy-sweet tamarind sauce.



## Pad Krapao

A flavorful stir-fry made with minced meat, holy basil, garlic, and chili, typically served over rice with a fried egg on top.



## Pad See Ew

A savory stir-fried noodle dish made with wide rice noodles, soy sauce, Chinese broccoli, and your choice of meat.

# Famous Thai Dishes



## Tom Yum Kung

A hot and sour soup made with shrimp, lemongrass, lime, chili, and fragrant herbs, known for its bold and refreshing flavor.

Photo credit: MICHELIN Guide, Kapook



## Massaman Curry

A rich and mildly spicy curry with Persian influence, made with tender meat, potatoes, peanuts, and aromatic spices.



## Green Curry

A creamy and spicy curry made with green chili paste, coconut milk, meat, and Thai basil, offering a vibrant and aromatic taste.



# Famous Thai Dishes



## Mango Sticky Rice

A popular dessert made with sweet sticky rice, ripe mango slices, and a drizzle of rich coconut milk.



## Thubthim Krop

A refreshing Thai dessert featuring crunchy water chestnuts coated in red syrup and served in sweetened coconut milk with crushed ice.



## Khanom Bueang

A crispy Thai crepe filled with sweet or savory toppings, often made with coconut cream, shredded egg yolk, and grated coconut.

Photo credit: OfficeMate, khunkaekanomwan, Kapook



# Nuad Thai: Thai Traditional Massage

***Nuad Thai*** (นวดไทย), or traditional Thai massage, is an ancient healing practice that combines acupressure, assisted stretches, and energy line work to promote physical and mental well-being. Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage, Nuad Thai is deeply rooted in Thai medicine and spirituality, focusing on restoring balance and harmony in the body.

Photo credit: Thailand Insider

# Characteristics of Nuad Thai

- **Focus on Energy Lines**

The practice is based on the concept of invisible energy pathways in the body, known as **sen (เส้น)** lines, with pressure applied to stimulate energy flow and restore balance.

- **Combination of Acupressure and Stretching**

Nuad Thai integrates rhythmic acupressure with assisted stretches to enhance flexibility, release tension, and improve circulation.

- **Holistic Health Benefits**

The massage promotes physical relaxation, relieves muscle tension, supports better posture, and enhances overall energy and well-being.

- **Rooted in Thai Healing Traditions**

Nuad Thai is deeply connected to Thai traditional medicine and Buddhist teachings, emphasizing mindfulness, compassion, and the balance of body and spirit.

Photo credit: Andamanda Phuket





# Wat Pho

Wat Pho is also considered a **center of *Nuad Thai*** where techniques of Thai massage and traditional medicine have been taught for centuries. This makes it a major hub for those seeking to learn or try out authentic ***Nuad Thai***.

Pictured: Statues of hermit at showing a posture of massage therapy at Temple of Reclining Buddha or Wat Pho, Bangkok  
Photo credit: Wat Pho





# Muay Thai: The Art of Eight Limbs

Muay Thai is Thailand's renowned martial art, known as the "Art of Eight Limbs" for its powerful use of fists, elbows, knees, and shins. Celebrated worldwide for its striking techniques, Muay Thai is also deeply rooted in values of respect, discipline, and self-improvement.

Photo credit: Naewna



# Wai Khru Ram Muay

*Wai khru ram muay* (ไหว้ครูรำมวย) is a traditional pre-fight ritual performed by Muay Thai fighters to show **respect to their teachers and the sacred forces they believe in**.

Combining graceful movements with symbolic gestures, the ritual reflects the fighter's gratitude, humility, and mental preparation before combat. It is an important cultural expression that connects Muay Thai to its spiritual and historical roots.

Pictured: Buakaw Banchamek Thai muay thai fighter and kickboxer  
Photo credit: Huahin Living





# Art of Eight Limbs

Muay Thai utilizes the fists, elbows, knees, and shins. Muay Thai techniques are traditionally divided into two categories: ***mae mai*** (major techniques) and ***luk mai*** (minor techniques). ***Mae mai*** includes the fundamental moves such as powerful punches, elbows, knees, and kicks that form the foundation of the art. ***Luk mai***, on the other hand, consists of more advanced or refined techniques, often involving counters, feints, and strategic movements used to gain an advantage over an opponent. Together, these techniques showcase the depth, precision, and tactical richness of Muay Thai.

Photo credit: bangkokbiznews



# Famous Muay Thai Stadiums



## Rajadamnern Stadium

**Rajadamnern Stadium** is the oldest Muay Thai stadium in Thailand, offering an authentic and historic atmosphere for fans to experience traditional Thai boxing.

Photo credit: Rajadamnern Stadium, muaythai2000



## Lumpinee Stadium

**Lumpinee Stadium** is one of Thailand's most iconic Muay Thai arenas, known for hosting top-level fights such as ONE Lumpinee and showcasing the sport's finest athletes.