

Welcome to

Thailand

Short Term Mission Handbook

Thailand 2008

Country Orientation

Customs ,Tips and Suggestions for an Enjoyable Trip :

Smile.....land of smiles; do not display or show anger (considered sign of immaturity); people read non verbal communication very well!

Wai (greeting with hands together)...adults do not wai children, beggars, service workers, younger ..just nod and smile ...Christians can nod to monks.

No kissing...considered dirty...even parents sniff their kids...don't offend a mother by kissing her baby!!

No licking of stamps, envelopes, fingers, etc...considered repulsive.

Feet...considered lowly part of body...don't use to point at anyone or anything...do not step on coins or money (His majesty's photo is on it)...remove shoes when going into a home...people often eat and sleep on the floor in rural areas and it would be like wearing shoes on your bed or dining table!!

Head...most respected part of body....don't reach over anyone's head without excusing yourself first..(i.e. removing something from an overhead compartment)...don't wave your hand over someone's head...don't put your hand on someone's head... however a very small child will not be offended if you touch their head...hairdresser may ask permission before touching your head...NEVER step over anyone, even a child lying on the floor....impolite to stand upright next to an adult who is sitting down in a room (exception of course is in overcrowded buses and trains) as your head would be much higher than their head.

Actions: standing with hands on hips is bad manners (portrays a stance of bigger, better than you attitude or ready to confront or challenge). Using fingers to point is bad manners...“point” with your chin. Beckon with fingers pointing down....don't yell across a distance....considered ill mannered.

Beggars...best not to give money as oftentimes a middle man gets the money by using the beggar as a front.

Topics to avoid: politics, Buddhism and royalty should not be discussed especially in publicvery sensitive subjects... Remember we are guests and do not want to offend in any way...His Majesty's picture will be seen in the highest, most honorable place in homes and offices...remember do not point!! King Rama V is comparable to American President Lincoln for having freed slaves, etc...he has been deified as such and his picture may be worshipped in many places.

Questions about your age, weight, cost of something, marital status, your income per month are not considered personal matters...just a show of interest in you...answer graciously with a smile but it is not necessary to tell all or answer directly. Do not feel offended...it is common curiosity.

Bangkok: certain areas of town may have stricter enforcement of laws...littering may bring a fine of 2,000 baht and jay walking can likewise cost you a fine....the local people may do it but tourists/visitors may be watched more closely. So cross at the pedestrian crossings looking BOTH ways because vehicles don't always drive on the side they should (left side in this country)...vehicles have right of way...your life is in your hands!!

Travel by taxi in Bangkok is by the meter...don't give a 500 baht bank note and expect to get change back...use smaller notes but be generous, not stingy to the last baht....on trains and buses the seats are given to children, elderly and monks first....monks usually sit in the very front or very back seats so as to avoid contact with women...a woman may NEVER sit next to a monk or allow her clothing or self to touch a monks or his robes...it would be unforgivable...

Bargaining...street vendors and small shops will like to bargain with you for your purchases...once you start bargaining however...you are almost obligated to buy so don't start if you really don't want it!!! Merely asking the price is no problem. Always smile and don't bargain too hard...we are here to build relationships up NOT be cheapskates or cause hard feelings...

Dress...you will be treated as you are dressed...short shorts and tank tops and rubber thongs are not considered proper in public on the street even if you are hot!! Dress modestly and not too casually ESPECIALLY if you are visiting someone or going to an office of some kind...to do less than that is to show disrespect for the people you are meeting or going with...if you are attending a funeral it is proper to wear black or black and white in respect for the family....leave your expensive jewelry at home and keep in mind that any jewelry worn in public can be an attraction to a thief.

Body odor is TERRIBLY offensive to the people...shower daily or more often if possible...it is not a joking matter.

Strings...American friendship strings on the wrist or neck may be considered the same as local spirit strings to ward off evil....to avoid misunderstandings and be a clear witness for Christ it is advisable to remove them while on mission trip....The same goes for body piercing jewelry (the exception is women can wear pierced earrings)...the Christian community has a hard time to accept the western world's standards and it can cause confusion of the message we want to get across...

Summary

Taking note of the above tips and suggestions will give you a better image/ministry in the eyes of the local people....it is not a matter of one culture being better than another...we are just different cultures and need to respect beliefs and practices in a country where we are guests and visitors...We are ambassadors of the Lord as well as our country...Doing our best is a big part of our witness and especially when there is a language barrier...God bless you and enjoy a wonderful visit to The Land of Smiles!!