THE GLOBAL EXPAT HUB
Country Relocation Guide

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Thailand

Your complete guide to moving abroad

Low daily costs, strong private healthcare and the happiest expats in the InterNations survey.

CAPITAL	CURRENCY	LANGUAGE	REGION
Bangkok	Thai baht	Thai	Southeast Asia

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WHY THAILAND

An honest snapshot

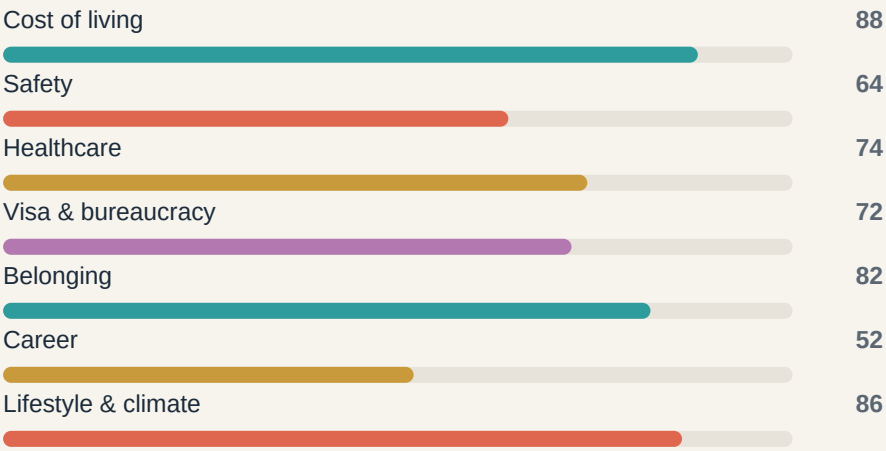
Thailand is scored the same way as every country on The Global Expat Hub: seven weighted dimensions combined into one liveability score, kept independent of any advertising. Here is how it rates, and what that means for a move.

75 /100

Liveability score

Safety rating: 64/100

Region: Southeast Asia



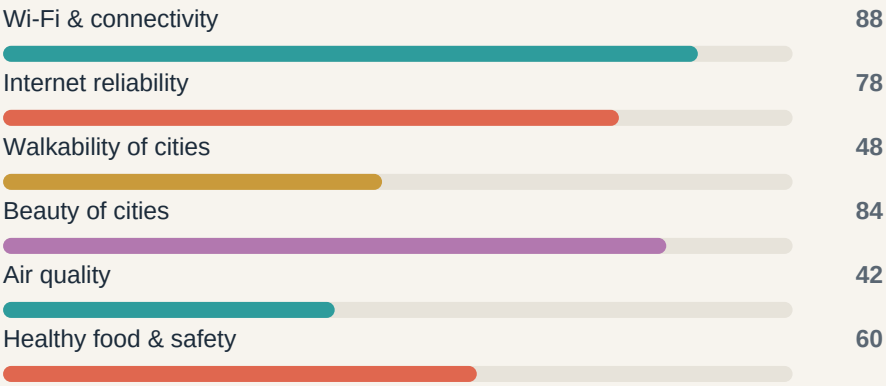
Scores are editorial estimates for planning, not legal, immigration or financial advice.

THAILAND BY THE NUMBERS

Cost of living & essentials

Worth of the dollar	$1 ≈ ■32.9 (Thai baht)
Utilities (85 m² flat)	$80/mo · electric, water, sewer, garbage
Home internet	$20/mo
Mobile / eSIM	$12/mo local · travel eSIM ≈ $12/10GB
Fuel	$1.15/litre
Doctor visit	$25 (private)
Emergency room	$150
Dental	$30 / $45
Cost to give birth	Public $300–800 / private $2,500–6,000
Life expectancy	77 years
Unemployment	1%
Adult literacy	94%
Rural land	$3,000–15,000 rural (foreigners cannot own land outright)

Connectivity, walkability & beauty



English day-to-day	Basic
Remote-work time zone	Hard for US, partial EU (early hrs)

LIVING IN THAILAND

Climate, law & getting around

Tropical; hot season Mar–May, monsoon Jun–Oct, cool dry season Nov–Feb. The south stays humid all year.

27°C	30°C	29°C	28°C
81°F · Jan	86°F · Apr	84°F · Jul	82°F · Oct

Rainfall	about 1500 mm (59 in) a year
Snow	None
Severe weather risk	50/100 — Monsoon flooding, occasional tropical storms, rare tsunamis on the Andaman coast
Time zone	ICT (UTC+7); 12 hours ahead of New York in winter
Drive on the	Left
Taxes (property)	Land & Building tax 0.02–0.3%; primary home under ~$1.5m exempt
Taxes (income, local)	None
University	Not free; public $1–4k/yr, international programmes $5–12k/yr

Official law & sources

Legislation: Office of the Council of State (Krisdika) — https://www.krisdika.go.th
US Embassy: https://th.usembassy.gov · Wikipedia law overview available on the country page.

GETTING IN & STAYING

Visas & residence

- Destination Thailand Visa (DTV) for remote workers, 5 years multi-entry
- Long-Term Resident (LTR) visa for wealthy pensioners and professionals
- Non-Immigrant O-A / O-X retirement visas (age 50+)

Retiring in Thailand

Retirement visas from age 50 with a modest deposit or income requirement; Chiang Mai and Hua Hin are established retiree hubs.

Schemes that attract expats

- DTV five-year remote-worker visa
- Long-Term Resident (LTR) visa with 17% flat tax for high-skilled
- Thailand Privilege (Elite) visa 5–20 years
- Foreign income remitted taxed; new rules under review

Remote work & digital nomads

Destination Thailand Visa (DTV): 5 years, 180 days per entry, for remote workers and soft-power activities

PLAN · AFFORDABLE MOVE

Affordable Move

Estimated first-year setup

$7,700

You're moving on savings or a modest income, doing the paperwork yourself, and treating the first year as a test. You'll rent furnished, fly economy, ship almost nothing, and learn the language in group classes.

Ongoing monthly living for one adult on this tier: about $800/month, plus utilities around $80.

First-year cost breakdown

Scouting trip flights *one to two return tickets*	**$650**
Scouting trip stay *two to four weeks in the neighbourhoods you might live in*	**$650**
Visa, permits & translations *government fees, apostilles, translations; luxury adds an immigration lawyer*	**$650**
Relocation flights *one-way, with extra baggage*	**$650**
Moving & shipping *affordable: suitcases only; luxury: full container and white-glove*	**$700**
Housing deposit & first rent *deposit plus first month, scaled to the local rental market*	**$1,100**
Furnishing & setup *affordable leans on second-hand and furnished lets*	**$450**
Health insurance, first year *basic international cover through to premium global plans*	**$950**
Language classes *apps and group classes through to private tutoring*	**$200**
Local admin & first-month living *registration, SIM, transport, groceries before income settles*	**$1,000**
Contingency *10% of the total above*	**$700**
Total	**$7,700**

Timeline

Decide & research — ~8 wks

Shortlist two cities, read every section here, join local expat groups online, start a language app, open a savings tracker.

Paperwork — ~10 wks

Gather documents, get apostilles and translations, apply for the visa yourself, arrange basic international health insurance.

Scouting trip — ~3 wks

One trip, two to three weeks, in a furnished rental in your first-choice neighbourhood. Visit a supermarket, a clinic, a bus route and a coworking space.

Move — ~4 wks

Sell or store what you can't carry. Two suitcases each. Book a one-month furnished rental to land in, then find a lease locally.

Settle — ~8 wks

Register your address, get a SIM and a bank account, join group language classes, say yes to every meetup for two months.

AFFORDABLE MOVE · CHECKLIST

Your affordable move checklist

Tick these off as you go. Everything here is scaled to this tier and to Thailand's own prices, visa routes and timelines.

- [ ] Two-city shortlist with a written reason for each
- [ ] Visa route chosen and requirements printed
- [ ] Passport valid 18+ months
- [ ] Documents apostilled and translated
- [ ] Basic international health insurance quote
- [ ] Six months of living costs saved in cash
- [ ] Scouting trip booked in a furnished rental
- [ ] Furnished landing rental for month one
- [ ] Pet paperwork started (if applicable)
- [ ] Belongings reduced to two suitcases each
- [ ] Bank told you're moving; a no-foreign-fee card in hand
- [ ] Language app streak of 60+ days
- [ ] Group language class booked for week two
- [ ] Expat group memberships joined online
- [ ] Contingency fund kept separate and untouched

PLAN · MID-RANGE MOVE

Mid-range Move

Estimated first-year setup

$15,250

You have a steady income or remote job, want the move to be smooth rather than cheap, and will pay for help where it saves weeks. You'll ship some belongings, rent a proper apartment, and use a relocation agent for the hard parts.

Ongoing monthly living for one adult on this tier: about $1400/month, plus utilities around $80.

First-year cost breakdown

Scouting trip flights *one to two return tickets*	**$1,000**
Scouting trip stay *two to four weeks in the neighbourhoods you might live in*	**$1,500**
Visa, permits & translations *government fees, apostilles, translations; luxury adds an immigration lawyer*	**$950**
Relocation flights *one-way, with extra baggage*	**$1,100**
Moving & shipping *affordable: suitcases only; luxury: full container and white-glove*	**$2,350**
Housing deposit & first rent *deposit plus first month, scaled to the local rental market*	**$2,050**
Furnishing & setup *affordable leans on second-hand and furnished lets*	**$1,200**
Health insurance, first year *basic international cover through to premium global plans*	**$1,600**
Language classes *apps and group classes through to private tutoring*	**$400**
Local admin & first-month living *registration, SIM, transport, groceries before income settles*	**$1,700**
Contingency *10% of the total above*	**$1,400**
Total	**$15,250**

Timeline

Decide & research — ~6 wks

Shortlist two or three cities, read every section here, book a consultation with a relocation agent, start language lessons.

Paperwork — ~8 wks

Documents, apostilles, translations; a lawyer or agent files the visa; comprehensive international health insurance arranged.

Scouting trip — ~3 wks

Two to four weeks across two neighbourhoods, in an aparthotel or boutique hotel. View apartments with an agent, tour schools if needed.

Move — ~5 wks

Partial shipment of furniture and personal items; sell the rest. Fly with pets in the hold or via a pet relocation service. Land in a serviced apartment.

Settle — ~6 wks

Agent handles registration and utilities. Lease signed within a month. Weekly private language lessons; join clubs and classes, not just expat groups.

MID-RANGE MOVE · CHECKLIST

Your mid-range move checklist

Tick these off as you go. Everything here is scaled to this tier and to Thailand's own prices, visa routes and timelines.

- ☐ City shortlist scored against the sections here
- ☐ Relocation agent or immigration lawyer engaged
- ☐ Visa filed with a tracked timeline
- ☐ Comprehensive international health insurance in place
- ☐ Scouting trip: two neighbourhoods, apartment viewings booked
- ☐ School applications submitted (if applicable)
- ☐ Moving quotes from three companies; partial shipment booked
- ☐ Pet relocation service booked
- ☐ Serviced apartment for the first month
- ☐ Bank account and money-transfer service opened
- ☐ Tax advice taken on residency timing
- ☐ Private language tutor booked
- ☐ Driving licence exchange researched
- ☐ Furniture and appliances plan for what's not shipped
- ☐ Contingency fund at 10% of the plan

PLAN · LUXURY MOVE

Luxury Move

Estimated first-year setup

$43,400

Time matters more than money. You'll hire a full-service relocation firm, an immigration lawyer and a buyer's or leasing agent, fly business, ship everything, and land in a home that's ready.

Ongoing monthly living for one adult on this tier: about $3250/month, plus utilities around $80.

First-year cost breakdown

Scouting trip flights *one to two return tickets*	**$3,050**
Scouting trip stay *two to four weeks in the neighbourhoods you might live in*	**$5,200**
Visa, permits & translations *government fees, apostilles, translations; luxury adds an immigration lawyer*	**$2,250**
Relocation flights *one-way, with extra baggage*	**$3,050**
Moving & shipping *affordable: suitcases only; luxury: full container and white-glove*	**$8,300**
Housing deposit & first rent *deposit plus first month, scaled to the local rental market*	**$5,700**
Furnishing & setup *affordable leans on second-hand and furnished lets*	**$3,650**
Health insurance, first year *basic international cover through to premium global plans*	**$3,550**
Language classes *apps and group classes through to private tutoring*	**$1,000**
Local admin & first-month living *registration, SIM, transport, groceries before income settles*	**$3,700**
Contingency *10% of the total above*	**$3,950**
Total	**$43,400**

Timeline

Decide & research — ~4 wks

Relocation firm briefed. Two private scouting itineraries prepared. Lawyer confirms the best visa route, including investor and talent options.

Paperwork — ~6 wks

Lawyer files everything; you sign. Premium global health cover with medical evacuation. Tax structuring advice before you become resident.

Scouting trip — ~2 wks

Private itinerary in a five-star or boutique property, drone and video previews of homes before you fly, viewings with a buyer's or leasing agent.

Move — ~4 wks

Full container with white-glove packing and unpacking. Pets flown with a specialist. Home leased or purchased and furnished before arrival.

Settle — ~4 wks

Relocation firm completes registration, utilities, schools, staff and vehicles. Private language tutor. Introductions to clubs and community.

LUXURY MOVE · CHECKLIST

Your luxury move checklist

Tick these off as you go. Everything here is scaled to this tier and to Thailand's own prices, visa routes and timelines.

- ☐ Full-service relocation firm engaged
- ☐ Immigration lawyer engaged; visa route confirmed
- ☐ Tax and estate advice taken before residency
- ☐ Premium global health insurance with evacuation cover
- ☐ Private scouting itinerary with home previews
- ☐ Buyer's or leasing agent appointed
- ☐ Home secured and furnished before arrival
- ☐ Full-container shipment with insurance
- ☐ Pet specialist booked door to door
- ☐ School places confirmed
- ☐ Vehicle purchase or lease arranged
- ☐ Private language tutor scheduled
- ☐ Banking and wealth management set up locally
- ☐ Household staff or property management if needed
- ☐ Contingency at 10%, held in local currency

PLAN · RETIREMENT MOVE

Retirement Move

Estimated first-year setup

$21,850

You're moving for good on a pension, savings or both, and the priorities are different: a visa that doesn't depend on a job, healthcare you can rely on as you age, a tax outcome that doesn't shrink your income, and a community you'll actually enjoy. Comfort matters more than speed; certainty matters more than either.

First-year cost breakdown

Scouting trip flights *one to two return tickets*	**$1,000**
Scouting trip stay *two to four weeks in the neighbourhoods you might live in*	**$1,500**
Visa, permits & translations *government fees, apostilles, translations; luxury adds an immigration lawyer*	**$950**
Relocation flights *one-way, with extra baggage*	**$1,100**
Moving & shipping *affordable: suitcases only; luxury: full container and white-glove*	**$2,350**
Housing deposit & first rent *deposit plus first month, scaled to the local rental market*	**$2,050**
Furnishing & setup *affordable leans on second-hand and furnished lets*	**$1,200**
Health insurance, first year *basic international cover through to premium global plans*	**$1,600**
Language classes *apps and group classes through to private tutoring*	**$400**
Local admin & first-month living *registration, SIM, transport, groceries before income settles*	**$1,700**
Retirement visa, lawyer & pension certification *immigration lawyer, apostilled pension letters, medicals, translations*	**$1,750**
Private health insurance, first year (age 60+) *comprehensive cover until public-system access*	**$3,250**
Tax & estate advice *double-taxation, pension treatment, wills*	**$1,000**
Contingency *10% of the total above*	**$2,000**
Total	**$21,850**

Timeline

Decide & research — ~10 wks

Shortlist two places using the retirement page, the healthcare and hospitals pages, life expectancy, climate and the 'by the numbers' section. Read the retirement-visa route and the tax scheme for pensioners. Talk to two retirees already there.

Paperwork — ~14 wks

Pension or income letters certified and apostilled, police certificate, medical, birth and marriage certificates translated. Apply for the retirement or passive-income visa with a lawyer. Quote private health insurance for your age with pre-existing conditions declared.

Long scouting stay — ~6 wks

Six weeks in the town you'd live in, in the season you'd like least. Register with a GP or clinic, visit the hospital, price a pharmacy run, join a club, test the walk to shops.

RETIREMENT MOVE · CHECKLIST

Your retirement move checklist

Tick these off as you go. Everything here is scaled to this tier and to Thailand's own prices, visa routes and timelines.

- ☐ Retirement, pensionado or passive-income visa route confirmed with a lawyer
- ☐ Pension and income letters certified, apostilled and translated
- ☐ Police certificate and medical done within validity windows
- ☐ Private health insurance in place for age and conditions, until public access
- ☐ Prescriptions and medical records for a year, translated summary
- ☐ Tax residency date, pension treaty and estate advice taken
- ☐ Home-country pension paid to a local or multi-currency account
- ☐ Six-week scouting stay completed, including the hospital visit
- ☐ Home rented before buying; at least one year
- ☐ Local will and power of attorney prepared
- ☐ Registered with embassy or consulate
- ☐ Community found: club, faith group, volunteering or class
- ☐ Plan for care needs: home help, assisted living options and costs
- ☐ Return-trip fund kept for family emergencies
- ☐ Contingency at 10%, held in local currency

PRACTICALITIES

Getting there & the calendar

Main gateway airports

Bangkok Suvarnabhumi (BKK), Bangkok Don Mueang (DMK), Phuket (HKT), Chiang Mai (CNX)

Low-cost carriers: AirAsia, Thai Lion Air, Nok Air, Scoot, VietJet

Fly long-haul into BKK, then hop domestically on AirAsia or Nok from Don Mueang for under $50.

Holidays & festivals

National day: King's Birthday, 28 July.

- Songkran water festival (13–15 April)
- Loy Krathong lanterns (November full moon)
- Yi Peng in Chiang Mai (November)
- Vegetarian Festival in Phuket (October)

BEFORE YOU GO

Three ways we can help

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Our job board is free for everyone. Browse remote and in-person roles that hire foreigners, filter by country, and apply directly. Employers post for a flat fee; you never pay to look. Start at theglobalexpathub.com/jobs.

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All figures are editorial estimates for planning and were current at publication in 2026. Tax rules, visa schemes and prices change; verify before you rely on them. This guide is not legal, immigration, medical or financial advice.

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