

**University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

# **Study Abroad**

## **Faculty-Led Immersion**



## **HMONG STUDIES IN**

# **THAILAND**

**SUMMER 2019**

***Program Guide***

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**CONGRATULATIONS** on being accepted to the UW-Eau Claire study abroad program in Thailand during Summer 2019! Living and studying in a foreign culture is both an exciting and a challenging experience. Past participants of study abroad report that the many advantages of international study include:

*Building upon existing foreign language skills*  
*Gaining new perspectives on a chosen academic field*  
*Increasing understanding of different cultures*  
*Enhancing personal development*  
*Developing different perspectives on U.S. culture*  
*Gaining self-confidence and independence*  
*Learning skills for the future international job market*

It is up to you to determine how you can best benefit from these possible advantages. This is your adventure!

This program guide is to be used together with the Faculty-Led Study Abroad Handbook. The Handbook has information that is valid for all faculty-led, short-term immersion programs. This guide will provide you with specific information for the Thailand program. It is designed to complement the Study Abroad Handbook, study abroad orientation and your individual pre-departure preparations.

Please realize that although this guide was written to help you better prepare for your time abroad, and all of the information available at the time of printing has been used, it is impossible for any single resource to answer all of your questions. We strongly encourage you to contact your faculty leaders, the Immersions staff, and other students on campus with your specific questions. You should also make use of the additional written and web resources listed toward the end of this guide.

Basic questions only you can answer include:

- 1) What are YOUR goals for this experience? Common objectives of students going abroad include advancement in future profession; wish to expand personal and academic horizons; need for a change; wish to challenge oneself with immersion in a new culture.
- 2) Given the way the program is set up, how can you best prepare to meet your goals? For example, if one of your goals is truly being immersed in the local culture but the program is quite short, how can you best meet your goal?

*The information in this guide was current at the time of printing, though changes may occur at any time.*

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## *The Program*

Thailand has the fourth largest population of Hmong people in the world (behind China, Vietnam, and Laos). Many Hmong families fled to Thailand after the Vietnam War resulted in a communist crackdown on wartime allies of the United States. Almost all Hmong people in the United States can trace their journey through refugee camps in Thailand.

This immersion program will allow students to learn about Hmong culture from a variety of perspectives and be able to connect the experiences of Hmong people in Thailand with those of Hmong descent in the United States (specifically Wisconsin and Minnesota). In addition, students will come to understand contemporary Hmong issues in northern Thailand and gain new perspectives on possible professional engagement with Hmong studies in fields such as international development, education, business, journalism, and academia.

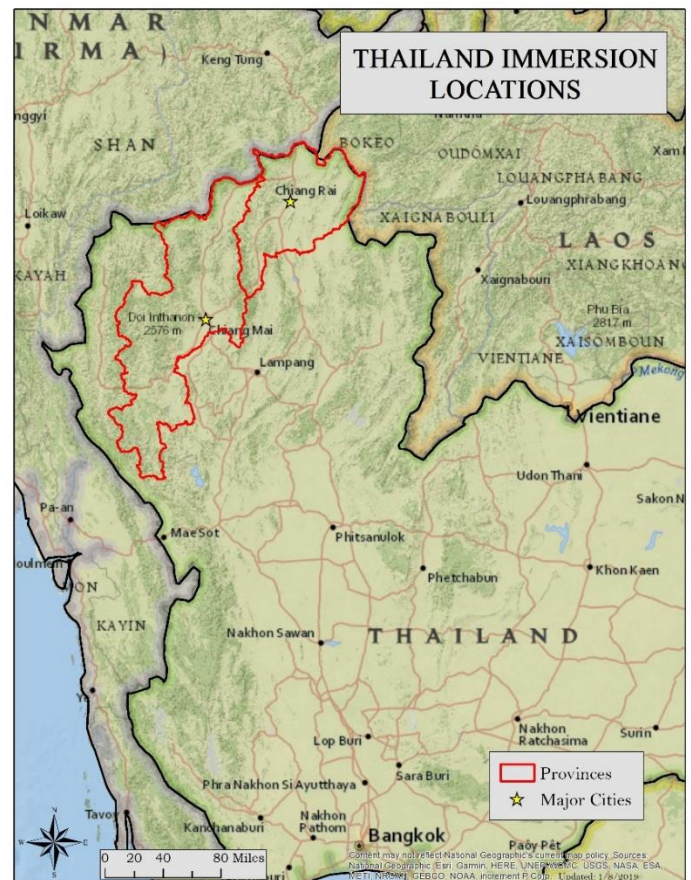
Your faculty leaders, Kao Nou Moua and David Soll, will assist students in exploring the culture, history, and everyday practices engaged by Hmong communities by interacting with host families, meeting with local professionals, exchanging experiences with Hmong students in Thailand, and so much more. These site visits will include both day trips and overnight homestays.

## *The Location*

This program includes travel to Chiang Mai and neighboring provinces in northern Thailand. The city of Chiang Mai, located 700 kilometers north of Bangkok, will be the group's base of operations for the entire trip. Chiang Mai is Thailand's fifth largest city with around 1,000,000 in the city proper. Typical of northern Thai geography, Chiang Mai lies on a large, flat plain surrounded by mountains. Chiang Mai was founded in 1296 and is one of the oldest continually inhabited settlements in Thailand. It was once the capital of Lanna, an independent Thai

kingdom, and has preserved its unique cultural heritage to a marked degree—including a regional dialect distinct from the Thai spoken in Bangkok. Within the city's original perimeter, still marked by a moat and fortified gates, are numerous ancient Buddhist temples and other monuments attesting to a distinguished past. Doi Suthep mountain, topped by one of Thailand's holiest temples, rises 1,676 meters to the west of the city, providing a dramatic backdrop to the city.

In Chiang Mai, local contacts will provide students with the history of Thai Hmong people. Students will meet with professionals in the fields of education and development whose work links Thai Hmong with larger international forces.



## *Program Calendar*

- June 3 – Convene in Chiang Mai
- June 4 – Orientation to Thailand, Chiang Mai
- June 5 – Meetings in Chiang Mai
- June 6 – Day trip to Doi Pui



- June 7-9 – Home stay at Mae Sa Mai
- June 10-11 – Meetings in Chiang Mai on related issues, work on projects
- June 11-13 – Home stay at Doi Inthanon
- June 14-15 – Meetings in Chiang Mai on related issues, work on projects
- June 16-21 – Home stay at Nan or Phayao
- June 22 – Work on projects in Chiang Mai
- June 23 – Final project presentations, discuss reflections and observations
- June 24 – Depart Thailand

## ACADEMICS

*There is additional information on academic topics such as registration, class attendance, credits and course load, grades, and transcripts in your Study Abroad Handbook.*

### Program Prerequisites

To participate in this immersion program, you must **be in good academic standing and have the minimum 2.3 GPA required.** We check grades at the end of the spring semester prior to departure. If you are on probation, we will need to check with the faculty leader to see if you will be allowed to participate. If you have been suspended, you will not be allowed to participate in the program.

Attendance at the March 16<sup>th</sup> study abroad orientation is required to participate in this program. The **prerequisite course is 1-credit of HIST 270 (GE-V and FC)**, which is offered on Thursdays from 5-7pm during the second half of spring semester. You will be doing some reading, research, and other academic preparation throughout fall semester.

Upon successful completion of the course over summer, you will earn another 1 credit of **HIST 270.**

**For students in catalog years through 2015-16,** HIST 270 over summer fulfills GE-V and 1-credit of Foreign Culture upon successful program

completion (*students earning a B.A., B.F.A. or B.M degree in the College of Arts & Sciences cannot use study abroad to fulfill their foreign language/foreign culture requirement. See the university catalog for details*).

**For students in catalog years 2016-17 and later,** completion of all course assignments for HIST 270 over summer fulfills the Responsibility Outcome 2 (R2): Global Perspectives requirement.

### Credits and Grades

Class attendance and participation in the spring class meetings and program lectures and excursions while in Thailand is required of all students and will be considered for your final course grade.

Since this is a short-term program, the academic structure has been adjusted so that you can get a valuable immersion experience in the host country in about three weeks. Credits earned abroad on this program are considered UW-Eau Claire resident credits, **and the grade will be figured into your GPA.** You cannot take any credits pass/fail.

The Faculty Leaders will issue grades based on the UW-Eau Claire A-F grading scale. Grades are typically not available until late summer after you have submitted your final assignment.

## MONEY MATTERS

*Information about how payments are made, when they are due, withdrawal/refund deadlines, financial aid, scholarships, and budgeting is in your Study Abroad Handbook.*

### Undergraduate Costs Paid to UW-Eau Claire

Tuition / Fees (WI res, 1 credit)	\$ 367
Program Fee (room and some meals)	\$ 1,600
Application Fee	\$ 30
<b>Total Estimated Program Costs:</b>	<b>\$ 1,987</b>
<u>Estimated FLIIE Program Subsidy</u>	<u>-\$ 1,500</u>

**Total Estimated Payment to UWEC \$ 487**

*Minnesota residents may apply for reciprocity, while non-residents will pay non-resident tuition.*

### **Additional Cost Estimates**

Passport/photos	\$ 135
Additional Meals	\$ 300
Personal Expenses	\$ 500
<u>Round-Trip Airfare</u>	<u>\$ 2,000</u>
<b>Total Additional Costs</b>	<b>\$ 2,935</b>

**Total Estimated Costs \$ 3,422**

### **Program Fee: What does it cover?**

- Airport pick-up in Thailand for those arriving at designated time
- Housing in hostels and host families
- Some program meals
- In-country transportation for program
- All activities, entrance fees, and site visits in the program itinerary
- International travel insurance with CISI

**Not included:** the cost of a passport, some meals, or personal expenses and independent travel.

### **FLIIE Funding**

This program is supported by Blugold Commitment FLIIE Funding for undergraduate UWEC students. While students are encouraged to participate in multiple high-impact immersion programs, each student is eligible to receive BCDT funding for only one FLIIE experience. Graduate and non-UWEC students are not eligible to receive this funding. Blugold Commitment funding is not able to cover the costs of tuition, but will include \$1500/student towards the program fee in 2019.

### **Souvenirs & Personal Travel**

The amount of personal funds to cover souvenirs and personal travel will vary based on your shopping habits, off-program entertainment, personal spending habits, etc. We do not expect you will spend a lot on personal travel as you have limited opportunities to travel during the program due to a

full calendar. There is time to travel after the program ends, but students will be responsible for their own expenses.

### **Program Refunds from UW-Eau Claire**

The \$30 application fee is non-refundable. The \$150 deposit is non-refundable except in the case of a documented medical or family emergency.

**The withdrawal deadline for the program is March 1. No refunds are available after March 1, and if you withdraw after March 1, you will still be required to pay all program costs and any funds already committed on your behalf, up to the full program cost.** All withdrawals must be in writing.

Undergraduate students who withdraw will lose their FLIIE funding. As such, they will be expected to pay ALL non-refundable program costs paid to UW-Eau Claire. A student who withdraws after the refund deadline would be responsible for paying the \$1,600 estimated cost, which is the true cost of the program without the FLIIE subsidy. FLIIE program support is based on student enrollment and can only benefit students participating in program.

### **Currency Exchange**

The currency of Thailand is the Baht. The exchange rate as of February 2019 is about 31 Baht per U.S. dollar. You can find current exchange rates at <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>.

### **Credit Cards**

In addition to the information on credit cards in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should be aware that **credit cards are not as widely accepted in Thailand as they are in the United States.** Only major stores, tourist hotels, and travel agencies usually take them. Be prepared to have another form of payment ready to use in case you cannot use your card.

### **ATMs: Credit/Debit Card Use**

Debit cards are usually the best option for withdrawing money while abroad. Be sure you know the 4-digit pin for your card and ask your bank what the withdrawal fees are. You may also want to know your daily limit. Your bank may charge transaction fees for each foreign transaction, so you should try to limit the frequency of your ATM withdrawals. Your bank may have global partners that allow you to withdraw for fewer fees, so take note if any banks are partners with your bank.

ATMs are plentiful in Thailand so you should not have a problem accessing one. 24-hour ATMs are plentiful in Chiang Mai as well as other large towns. The most commonly accepted U.S. cards are Visa and MasterCard. You can also draw cash as soon as you land at the airport.

### **Financial Aid**

To receive summer financial aid, **you must be enrolled for at least 6 credits** during the 11-week interim/summer period. Thailand students earn 1 credit on the seminar.

**At 1 credit, you are considered "less than half-time."** Consequently, room and board expenses cannot be considered in your financial aid budget. Less than half-time students are also not eligible for a Direct Ford Loan, but they may be considered for a Perkins Loan.

If financial aid eligibility is an important factor in your study abroad budget, **you may wish to enroll for an additional 5 or more credits on campus or online during the 2019 summer session.**

With at least six credits, you have "half-time or more" status for aid. Room and board can then be considered in your budget, and you may be eligible for a Direct Ford Loan. Consult the Financial Aid Office if you have questions about summer financial aid for study abroad.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

*Additional information on these issues, as well as information on CISI insurance, is included in the Health Issues and Safety Abroad sections of your Study Abroad Handbook.*

### **Immunizations**

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that travelers to Thailand discuss several vaccinations with a doctor at least 4-6 weeks before travel. Per the CDC, all routine vaccinations should be up to date before travel to any location. The CDC recommends that most travelers to Thailand receive the following vaccines due to risk associated with contaminated water and food:

- Hepatitis A
- Typhoid

For a full list of immunizations suggested for Thailand, please visit the CDC page: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/thailand>

There are very few required vaccinations for travelers anywhere in the world. Requirements can only be placed by the government of the country, and because such requirements often discourage tourists, governments are reluctant to establish them. CDC recommendations should be taken very seriously. However, since many of the recommendations depend on the type of travel you anticipate doing or the length of time you are staying, you need to meet with a doctor to determine what's best for your individual situation.

UW-Eau Claire's Student Health Services offers immunizations (IG, tetanus, Hepatitis B, etc.) and health education on international travel for a small fee. For more information, call: (715) 836-5360.

Often, your health insurance will cover the cost of immunizations. **If your immunizations are not covered by your health insurance and you receive financial aid, you may want to meet with the Office of Financial Aid to inquire if these can be added to your total financial aid budget.**

### **Yellow Fever**

There is no risk of yellow fever in Thailand. However, the government of Thailand requires proof of yellow fever vaccination if you are arriving from a country with risk of yellow fever. This does not include the United States. If you are traveling from a country other than the United States or have a layover in sub-Saharan Africa or a yellow fever country, you will be required to show the yellow fever vaccine. For a list of yellow fever countries, please see the CDC website: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2016/infectious-diseases-related-to-travel/yellow-fever>

### **Malaria**

According to the CDC, the risk of malaria is present primarily in certain provinces in Thailand. These do NOT include Bangkok or Chiang Mai, where only rare to a few cases have been reported.

Most malaria in northern Thailand is resistant to anti-malarial medicines. This makes treatment of malaria more difficult, and for this reason the Malaria Center in Chiang Mai recommends against taking anti-malarial medicine, since it is contributing to the emergence of drug-resistant malaria strains. They recommend instead being careful to prevent mosquito bites by using a mosquito net and/or DEET repellent. If you plan to travel to other provinces before or after the program, check [here](#) to see if malaria issues have been reported in these locations.

You should discuss your malaria prevention strategy with your doctor, especially if you plan to travel independently to areas where malaria is present. Malaria is transmitted through infected mosquitos so prevention is key. The decision about how to handle

malaria is one you must make yourself. If you decide to take anti-malaria medication, follow your physician's instructions carefully. Many anti-malaria medications can have serious side effects. Remember, malaria is rarely acquired if you've taken the proper precautions. The best way to avoid malaria is to avoid mosquito bites! So cover up!

To minimize mosquito bites:

- Cover up with light, breathable clothing. Wear garments with a high neckline (or a bandana around the neck), long sleeves, long pants, socks, and outdoor shoes—not flip-flops or sandals. Though you might be a bit warm, avoiding mosquito bites will be your reward!
- Use a DEET-containing insect repellent (such as “Deep Woods” Off) on exposed skin AND permethrin, an insecticide, on clothing.
- Avoid shiny jewelry and perfumed cosmetics, as they attract mosquitos.
- If travelling on your own, choose accommodations with tidy grounds and air conditioning or with windows having well-fitting screens. Use mosquito netting elsewhere. Check that the mosquito netting over your bed has no holes or rips. Tuck netting under your mattress.
- Avoid local preventives. Many are unproven, such as mosquito coils or Avon Skin-So-Soft. While these are popular folklore insect repellents in the United States, they perform poorly in scientific studies.

### **If you become ill:**

Early treatment is essential if you do contract malaria. Consider any flu-like illness with fever in a malarial area to be malaria until proven otherwise.

Common symptoms of malaria include fever and chills, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headaches, and dizziness. See a physician promptly! Delay in seeking medical care and delay in diagnosis



increases the chances of complications. Malaria can occur as early as six days after being bitten by an infected mosquito to several months after exposure. Inform your physician of recent travel if you have flu-like symptoms after returning home.

### **Zika Virus**

The Zika Virus is a risk in Thailand and is spread mostly by the bite of an infected mosquito. There is no current vaccine or medicine for Zika, and therefore ALL travelers should follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during *and* after their travel. The most common symptoms of Zika are fever, rash, headache, joint pain, red eyes, and muscle pains. These symptoms can last for several days to a week. However, many infected people won't have symptoms at all, or have only mild symptoms.

In particular, the CDC recommends that pregnant women should not travel to Thailand because Zika infection during pregnancy could cause serious birth defects. Partners of pregnant women and couples planning pregnancy should know possible risks to pregnancy and take preventive steps.

### **Water**

Tap water is generally considered unsafe in Thailand. The tap water in Chiang Mai meets World Health Organization standards for safe drinking. **However, it is not recommended that you drink the water; everyone still drinks bottled water as people do not trust the plumbing.** You should drink bottled or boiled water at all times. **Brush your teeth with bottled or boiled water,** also.

Carbonated bottled water, soft drinks, hot tea, and coffee are usually safe. Be sure to wipe off the top of a bottle or can before drinking out of it, or ask for a straw. By making sure that you are drinking uncontaminated water, you can reduce your exposure to many diseases such as infectious hepatitis, cholera, diarrhea and dysentery. **Where water is contaminated, ice is also contaminated**—you may wish to order drinks without ice. In general, stay

away from any bottled water where the plastic of the bottle is not strong or clear, as this may mean the bottle was reused.

Unclean food and water can cause traveler's diarrhea, which can often lead to dehydration. Dehydration can also lead to constipation. Make sure to stay hydrated during the program especially if you are losing liquids through illness or increased perspiration.

### **Common Health Problems**

The most common health problems for U.S. Americans in Asia are intestinal upsets. They usually occur because of the change in diet, the different meal schedule, and organisms unfamiliar to your system.

A very common ailment is traveler's diarrhea. It can largely be avoided by being careful about where and what you eat, and avoiding dairy products if they are not pasteurized. If you do come down with it, the following suggestions will help speed recovery and guide your decision to seek formal care:

1. It will usually run its course in three to five days. The worst symptoms usually occur the first day. Bed rest may help relieve cramps.
2. The main risk of the illness is dehydration. Be sure to maintain fluid intake. An excellent source of fluid replacement is ORS or Oralyte, a prepackaged liquid sold in many countries. If unavailable, the following recipe will provide similar value: one liter carbonated water, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/2 teaspoon baking soda (not baking powder), 4 tablespoons sugar.
3. An over-the-counter medicine like Pepto-Bismol may help relieve nausea and vomiting.
4. See your physician before departing for Thailand regarding the possibility of bringing along anti-diarrheal medication such as Levamycin or Cipro.

**If nausea and vomiting persist for more than 24 hours, if you develop a fever over 101°F, or if you develop severe abdominal pain, a physician should be contacted immediately.**

### ***Other Keys to Staying Healthy***

- In addition to malaria, insects (mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas) can cause a number of diseases, so you should take general precautions such as covering exposed skin, using insect repellent, and sleeping with a mosquito net over your bed, if necessary.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap.
- Keep away from animals such as stray dogs, as they may carry rabies or fleas.
- If you are buying food from street vendors, stick to breads or fruits that you peel yourself. (The knives used might be dirty.) Fruits that cannot be peeled, fruit juices diluted with water, raw vegetables, and salads that have not been washed with disinfected water should be avoided.
- In addition to bringing anti-diarrheal medication, some students experience the opposite effect. It is a good idea to also bring along fiber snacks or constipation medication.

### ***Medical Facilities on Campus***

Adequate medical care is available in Thailand. In Chiang Mai, there will be access to basic medical facilities that can provide modern medicines, vitamins, and ordinary health care products—although they might not have the same brands that are available in the United States. The city of Chiang Mai has several large, modern hospitals with dental facilities and also many clinics. You will receive more information about nearby medical and health facilities at orientation upon arrival.

### ***HIV/AIDS***

AIDS has reached epidemic proportions in Thailand, which posts one of the highest infection rates in Asia. **HIV infection rates among prostitutes in Chiang**

**Mai have been estimated at over 80%.** The risk of heterosexual transmission (from men as well as from women who are not prostitutes) in Thailand is also quite high. IV drug use provides another vector for transmission. Please be warned and be prepared to take all precautions necessary to avoid exposure to the HIV virus. Abstinence, both in terms of sex and drugs, is definitely the most secure prevention.

### ***Tattoos and Body Piercings***

Past visitors to Thailand have indicated that tattoos and body piercings are available and cheaper than in the United States. However, providers may not have the same health practices that are required in the United States. As a result, getting a tattoo and/or piercing with an unsterilized or improperly sterilized needle can expose you to a number of diseases such as **HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis B, C, and D.**

### ***Smoking***

Smoking is unusual in Thai culture and in public it is illegal. If you are caught smoking in public, you may be fined 2,000 Thai Baht.

### ***Air Quality***

The air quality can vary from season to season. Talk to your doctor to discuss what precautions you should take if you have sensitive lungs due to asthma or allergies. The U.S. Department of State has suggested wearing a disposable mask on days when the air pollution is at its worst.

### ***Dog Bites***

Dog bites are common in Thailand. If a dog bites you, let your Faculty Leader know **IMMEDIATELY**. A rabies vaccination must be administered within a few days of the bite, so it is imperative that you check with a doctor.

### ***Three Thai Laws to Know***

**1) Thai laws relating to drug usage or sale are far stricter than those in the United States, and they are enforced!** Remember, it is **ILLEGAL** to possess, sell, or distribute drugs in Thailand. The penalties for carrying or using illegal drugs (including marijuana)

in Thailand are extremely harsh—even for small amounts. To be sentenced as a "dealer" you need not actually be selling the drug, since it is determined only by the amount of the drug you possess—an amount which is very small. **Penalties include death, life imprisonment, or long prison terms.** There is NOTHING that UWEC or the U.S. government can do if you are found in violation of Thai laws. If any student is caught with illegal drugs while in the program, they will immediately be expelled without recourse.

**2) Prostitution is illegal in Thailand.** This law is not as strictly enforced by Thai authorities as the drug laws are, but it is the law, nevertheless. **Any student known to have visited a prostitute will be canceled from the program and sent home immediately.** Also, HIV infection rates among prostitutes in Chiang Mai have been estimated at over 80%. Not only is soliciting a prostitute illegal, it can also be deadly.

**3) Criticizing the royal family is against the law.** (See *Culture Notes, Royalty and Politics* in this guide.) *Lese majeste* laws make it a crime to insult or criticize the king, queen, and heir apparent to the throne, and Thailand has some of the strictest laws in the world. Those convicted can face anywhere from 3-15 years in prison. The Royal Family is deeply respected by the Thai people and are seen as symbols of Thai identity.

### ***Sexual Harassment & Assault***

**Harassment:** Sexual harassment is present in Thailand. Female travelers have reported staring, lewd and suggestive comments, catcalls, and groping. Often these incidents occur in crowded areas such as market places, bus and train stations, and public streets. Women travelers in Thailand are advised to respect local dress and customs as a way to minimize harassment.

**Assault:** Crimes against women including rape are also present in Thailand. Suggestions include:

- Avoid public transport after dark without the company of known and trusted companions.
- Restrict evening entertainment to well-known venues.
- Avoid isolated areas any time of day.
- Keep your hotel room number confidential.
- Lock your hotel room and use deadlocks or door chains while in your room.
- Hire only reliable cars and drivers. Avoid traveling alone in cabs at night.
- Keep conversations with unknown men short—getting involved in conversations with unknown men can be interpreted as a sign of sexual interest.

### ***More Info on Health & Safety in Thailand***

Detailed information on crime, road safety, drug penalties, and terrorist activity in Thailand is included in the [State Department Consular Information Sheet](#). **It is highly recommended that you read that information in detail before traveling to Thailand.** Safety in and around Thailand will be discussed during orientation. One important point to remember about safety in Thailand is that **they drive on the opposite side of the road, so LOOK RIGHT!!** before crossing the street.

Just like any U.S. city, you will need to take safety precautions while walking and traveling. Using your common sense at all times will aid you well. Avoid unlighted areas at night when you are walking around the city, and do not walk or take public transportation alone at night—especially women. Don't take any unnecessary risks! If you have to return home alone late for whatever reason, **take a tuk-tuk (3-wheeled taxi) or a see-law (a pick-up taxi).** While you won't want to rely on tuk-tuks as your sole source of transportation every day, they are your best option at night and are not overly expensive.

The greatest risk you face in Thailand is that of transportation-related injury, particularly as a result of driving or riding motorcycles. **Therefore, the**

**program has adopted a Peace Corps regulation: students are not allowed to drive or ride on a motorcycle while participating on the program.** Not only is motorcycle travel dangerous, many of the shared helmets available to passengers of motorcycle taxis are infected with head lice. **Riding on a motorcycle without wearing a helmet is illegal.**

Thailand is known for its markets, but this is also a place where theft is most common. It is very important to watch for tourist traps. Many merchandisers will try to solicit you and ask extremely high prices for their product, so be aware of this and don't be afraid to say no if someone is trying to solicit you.

**\*\*NOTE:** Both men and women should be aware of their safety at all times. In the past, men have been just as susceptible as women to potential risks. As U.S. Americans, you may stick out as "foreigners." The best advice is to be aware of your surroundings, listen to your instincts, and use your common sense.

### ***Emergency Contacts***

If you are in an emergency situation in Thailand, you will need to know how to reach the local police, fire, or ambulance services. The local equivalent to the 911 emergency line **in Thailand is 191 for police and ambulance and 199 for fire.** We suggest you save these numbers in your cell phone in case you need to use them quickly.

The U.S. State Department also provides a list of 911 numbers abroad. In some countries there are different numbers for fire, police, and ambulance. Plan ahead and research numbers before you go.

## **REQUIRED DOCUMENTS**

### ***Passport***

General passport information is found in your *Study Abroad Handbook*, but you will need a valid passport with an expiration date more than six months after the end of the program. If you don't have a passport,

apply for one right away because it might take up to 6 weeks to get a new passport.

### ***Visa***

A visa is official permission to visit a country and is granted by the government of that country. **You do not need to obtain a visa for Thailand if you are in the country for under 30 days. If you plan to travel after or stay in Thailand for more than 30 days, you must obtain a visa from the government.** Please contact your program coordinator for instructions on a visa.

## **PACKING TIPS**

*In addition to the general packing information in your Study Abroad Handbook, you should know the following about Thailand.*

### ***Clothing & Weather***

Thailand has a tropical climate with three distinct seasons: hot (March-May), rainy (June-October), and cool (November-February), with cooler temperatures in the mountains year-round.

During the rainy season, it's often hot and humid. In Chiang Mai, high temperatures are in the upper 80s or lower 90s, and lows are in the mid-70s. The mountains will be slightly cooler. As the name of the season suggests, it also rains regularly. This means it is possible that it will rain almost every day, though very rarely does it rain all day. Instead, there will be periods of downpour (often in the late afternoon or early evening). When it is not raining, skies are often overcast. This actually helps keep the temperature down, but it does mean things are humid.

Attire for the program will be casual most of the time, though for some visits a more formal business casual will be expected. Choose a color scheme and bring mix-and-match clothing. Dark colors show dirt less quickly when you travel. What you plan on wearing—and packing—should be informed by cultural expectations in Thailand. In Thai culture,



what you wear is an expression of your respect for others.

Students should generally be prepared to dress more conservatively. Thais place a great deal of emphasis on looking clean and neat. Men wear slacks or jeans, t-shirts, polos, or long or short-sleeved dress shirts. Long shorts are acceptable in social and recreational settings, but not in many public places. Women generally wear skirts, although slacks and jeans are also common. T-shirts, polo shirts and blouses are also common. Spaghetti strap tank tops are not acceptable in the community.

### **Appliances**

The standard electric current in Thailand is 220 volts. If you plan to bring a hair dryer, razor, etc., with you from the United States, **you will need to buy a voltage converter and plug adapter and bring it with you.** The other option, of course, is to buy the necessary appliances after you arrive.

### **Other Items to Bring**

- *Pepto-Bismol, Imodium, Tylenol, Cold meds, cough drops, constipation meds*
- *Prescription meds (always put in carry-on bags, NOT in checked luggage that could get lost)*
- *Personal toiletry articles (not all products, especially feminine, will be easily available)*
- *Hand sanitizer or disposable wipes / tissues*
- *Shoes: One dressier pair, plus one pair of comfortable and broken-in walking shoes, and a pair of cheap shower sandals (to be used in the bathrooms, which tend to stay cold and wet)*
- *DEET 30 mosquito repellent*
- *Travel umbrella*

## **GETTING TO THAILAND**

### **Fox Travel**

All students on faculty-led immersion programs sponsored through UWEC are required to purchase their international flights through Fox World Travel. Please contact a Fox World Travel agent (open

7:00am-5:30pm on weekdays) through one of the options below:

- Call toll-free 866-230-8787 (option 4)
- Email [uwgroups@foxworldtravel.com](mailto:uwgroups@foxworldtravel.com)

Have ready:

- Name exactly as it appears on your passport
- Group code: **09UW3450**
- Passport number and expiration date
- Credit card number to charge

If you are traveling on the regular dates (June 2 and June 24), just give Fox Travel the Group Code and they will book your flight for you.

It is your responsibility to make travel arrangements to arrive at Chiang Mai airport on June 3 and, **flying from the United States means that you will need to leave on June 2 to arrive on June 3.** You will be informed of the arrival window during your breakout session at Orientation who will tell you what time to meet your Program Leaders at the airport. Once you arrive at the airport **do not leave the airport until the pick-up service arrives to meet you.** It is recommended that you consider traveling with another program participant—a travel companion can make arrival in a new country much less intimidating!

### **Settling In - Housing and Meals**

Students will be staying in a variety of housing, including hotels, hostels, and homestays. Students can expect to stay two or three to a room. There is the possibility that Wi-Fi will be available at some locations, but do not count on it. Some meals while in Thailand are included in the program cost, while others will be on your own. You will receive more details about meals at orientation.

## **COMMUNICATION**

*Information on accessing your UW-Eau Claire email address, which you need to check while abroad, is in your Study Abroad Handbook.*

### *Time Difference*

Thailand is 12 hours ahead of Eau Claire. For example, when it is 2:00 PM on a Thursday in Eau Claire, it is 2:00 AM on Friday in Thailand.

### *Telephone and Computer Information*

From the U.S. to Thailand: To call someone in Thailand, you must first dial 011, which is the international dialing code. Next, you dial 66 (the country code), then the rest of the local number.

Feel free to bring your laptops if you want. There will be opportunities to access the Internet and email, but be aware that Wi-Fi access can be inconsistent and rarely free. If you choose not to bring a laptop, there are web cafes at which you can rent computer time, which includes access to the Internet.

## **CULTURE NOTES**

### *Toilet Expectations*

In Thailand you will find primarily eastern-style toilets (more commonly known as squat toilets). You may find some places, like large shopping malls, that have western-style toilets. **It is also not common for toilet paper to be provided in public restrooms**, so you will want to carry travel sized packets of tissues or toilet paper.

### *Kreng Jai*

"Kreng Jai" is a deeply embedded, almost instinctive cultural behavior that is similar to the English concept of CONSIDERATION. The concept extends beyond being considerate in social interactions. Kreng Jai often involves a subtle deference to a person of authority. Thai cultural behaviors avoid immediate personal conflict with another in order to keep either party from losing face. This may mean that you find yourself doing something you really don't want to do to please another person or to keep them from "losing face."

Some examples of this type of behavior include:

- Compliance to others' wishes or requests
- Reluctance to disturb or interrupt others
- Restraint with one's show of displeasure or anger (so not to cause discomfort to others)
- Avoidance of asserting one's own opinions or needs (i.e., deferring to others instead)
- Reluctance to ask questions when one has not understood someone
- Avoidance of causing others to lose face or to be embarrassed
- Reluctance to give instructive communications to superiors (by rank) or to peers who are older or have worked longer
- Avoidance of making corrections of another's mistakes, particularly if s/he is more senior
- When giving opinions, choosing what is an obviously disadvantaged position, as a measure of self-restraint
- Avoidance of the demand for one's right

This concept translates into some **specific classroom behavior** unfamiliar to U.S. students. As examples:

- Thai **students stand up** when their teacher enters the room, this is a sign of respect. Students are expected to pay full respect to their professors inside and outside the classroom. Professors are seen as a second parent to Thai students and regarded with high respect.
- When you greet an Ajaan (teacher), either in or outside of class **you greet them with a "wai"**: you put your palms together, finger tips at about chin or mouth level (praying position). There is a social hierarchy in the wai and when you greet someone above you on that hierarchy, you nod your head to show respect.
- Thai are fond of saying "mai pen rai" which means, "it's okay, no problem." It represents their easygoing demeanor and positive attitude. They are quick to forgive little mistakes, like dropping something or bumping into someone.

## *Hierarchy*

Thailand is a hierarchical society. The idea that "all people are created equal" is a Western idea—not a Thai one. This is pervasive and is quite difficult for many Westerners to accept. Women are not seen as equal to men, poor people are not equal to rich people, younger people are not equal to older people, ethnic minorities are not equal to the ethnic majority, etc. This results in what Westerners consider discrimination, but it also provides status and respect to older people, etc. Although this worldview is being challenged by some in Thai society, it is something you should be aware of as you prepare to travel to Thailand.

Thai people will ask you directly about your age, social status, education, and religion. It is not considered rude or imposing; they are simply trying to learn how to address you. Thai language has several levels of formality according to your social status and age. When Thai ask these questions, they are only trying to understand your social standing, so do not be offended.

## *Gender Relations*

You will most likely observe different gender dynamics in Thailand and what seems like discrimination to a Western person. At the same time, Thailand is undergoing a tremendous amount of change, so gender dynamics are in a great deal of flux. Asking about these things with your Thai friends can bring heated (and fun) discussions as they try to figure things out as well.

Depending on the context, relationships between young men and women (even those in college) are more formal than in the United States. Public displays of affection, even holding hands, are frowned upon—but are becoming more common among young people. It is common, however, to see people of the same sex holding hands as a sign of friendship.

Western women are stereotyped as being "easy," so be wary of Thai men who approach you. For men, be

aware that there are many preconceptions about why Western men come to Thailand.

Shaking hands with a friend or someone younger than you is becoming more common in Thai culture; however, shaking hands with an elder is never acceptable.

## *Respect for the Body*

The head is the highest and most sacred part of the body. Therefore, you should not touch another person's head or shoulders, even if the person is a child. For similar reasons, you should not reach over people's heads to get things.

The feet are considered "lower" and less clean than the rest of the body. Never point at a person or object with your feet, step over someone, put your feet up on coffee tables or other furniture, or carry your shoes at a high level. (Never tie your shoes to the outside of your backpack). When in a temple, sit so that the soles of your feet point away from the altar.

## *Royalty and Politics*

The Royal Family is held in the highest regard. Speaking or acting against the Royal Family can result in deportation or jail. Pictures of the Royal Family must be treated with respect, and they are usually hung very high. Do not step on a coin or paper money, as this is disrespectful to the King (his picture is on both). Be sensitive when speaking about politics. Keep criticisms to yourself.

## *Religion*

Buddhism is the state-sanctioned religion in Thailand and is held in very high regard. A woman may not touch a monk or give anything directly to him. It is illegal to climb, sit on, or deface any image of Buddha—or any national monument. Other religions, including animism, Islam, and Christianity, are practiced in Thailand. You should be respectful at ALL religious events or places.

### *Dining Experience*

While Thai people do not eat large quantities of meat, they do add meat to almost all dishes (mostly pork, chicken, and seafood). Even stir-fried vegetables usually contain small pieces of meat. Some restaurants may prepare dishes without meat upon request.

Being flexible in your diet is a sign of acceptance and appreciation to your Thai hosts. Eating is more than just filling your stomach. In Thailand, sharing food is a social event. Refusing to try new foods or join in with others may be interpreted as being anti-social. Joining in is a way of "being Thai." Thai food always comes in shared dishes. Be sure to take small amounts so there is enough to go around. Eating is an opportunity to socialize, so take your time!

You will be given a fork and spoon unless you order a noodle dish, then you will receive chopsticks. Knives are extremely rare because your food will already be cut up. And, in most restaurants and households, you are NOT expected to eat everything on your plate. In fact, doing so may insult the chef and interpreted that you were not fed enough or that you need more food. To avoid this, just leave a little food on your plate. Tips are usually included in the bill, but you can leave 10% tip for good service if you like. A nice tip is 20 Thai Baht (under \$1.00 USD). There are no extra fees for eating in or taking out.

If you have dietary restrictions for religious or medical reasons, Thai people may not fully understand, but will accept your explanation.

### *Animal Life*

The tropics are also full of animal life that will be new to you. Many houses have ants and spiders in them, mosquitoes can be bothersome, small lizards live inside most buildings on the walls, and cockroaches can be found even in the most luxurious homes. In rural areas, you may encounter such things as mice, rats, lizards, and snakes, but usually they stay out of your way!

### *Infrastructure*

Though Thailand is quickly modernizing, its infrastructure is not as developed as that of the United States. Controls on pollution and pesticides and environmental protections are also not as strong (or are not enforced). Stray dogs live on the streets and in and around market places. Not every street has sidewalks, and some streets have partially constructed ones. The wide range of choices you are used to regarding your food, reading material, recreation, and choices of medical care will not be available. Keep in mind, though, that it will be your experience of these kinds of conditions and others that will contribute to your understanding of the context in which the struggle for sustainable development is taking place.

### *Doing Without*

In addition to adjusting to the conditions mentioned above, there are things you will have to give up to live in Thailand—which may be hard at first. Eventually, though, you may realize that you don't actually "need" what you thought you did. Not everyone misses the same things and different people react differently to the sacrifices they must make. For some people, not having their own car may prove frustrating since possibilities for travel will be limited. For others, it might be the unavailability of certain foods or not being able to maintain a vegetarian diet.

### *Political Change*

The country has recently been involved in numerous political changes—some quite democratic, some less so. It is wise to disengage in political discussions regarding one party or another—or taking a side as most students are less familiar with the cultural, historical, and political knowledge to be adequately informed of the complicated nature of politics in another country. Of course, being generally informed of current political issues in Thailand is highly recommended so that you might be able to carry on a meaningful conversation with someone about political issues in Thailand.



# CONTACT NAMES & ADDRESSES

GENERAL UW-EAU CLAIRE & CISI CONTACT INFORMATION IS IN YOUR STUDY ABROAD HANDBOOK.

**Copy this page and leave it with your  
emergency contact and/or parents.**

## **UWEC ACADEMIC AFFAIRS**

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## **UW-Eau Claire After Hours Numbers**

(715) 839-4972 or (715) 577-9045

In an after-hours emergency, please call University Police at (715) 577-9045. Calls can be made to this number 24 hours a day. You may get an answering machine; however, an officer is alerted as soon as you have left your message. Be sure to give the officer the phone number you can be reached at, as well as what type of assistance you require.

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

The U.S. Department of State offers useful travel information on the "Travel and Living

Abroad" section of their web site-

<http://www.state.gov/travel/>

Check the "Travel Tips" section.

## **U.S. EMBASSY IN BANGKOK**

U.S. Embassy Bangkok

120/22 Wireless Road, Bangkok

Thailand 10330

Tel: +66-2-205-4000

Hours: Monday - Friday, 7:00am-4:00pm.

## **U.S. CONSULATE IN CHIANG MAI**

387 Wichayanond Road

Tel: +66-53-107-700