

Things You Should Know/Prepare Before Visiting Bangkok

Hi everyone! MagicFest Bangkok 2019 is coming up soon, and we're all very excited about it. It's been over 6 years since last time we have an event of this size in Thailand. Let's hope everyone could enjoy it! Just a short introduction of myself. I am Shanin, the owner of a small TCG shop in Bangkok and also a level 2 judge. I really love Magic, and I want to do as much as I can to help make this MF Bangkok as successful as it could be.



The graphic is a promotional banner for MagicFest Bangkok 2019. On the left, there is a square image of a city at night with illuminated roads and buildings. To the right of the image are four icons: a red flame, a blue calendar, a blue location pin, and a blue key. The text on the right side of the banner reads: "MagicFest Bangkok" in orange, "Limited Grand Prix" in blue, "11-13 October 2019" in black, "Central Plaza Ladprao" in black, and "Hotel Coming Soon!" in black. At the bottom left, the hashtag "#MTGBANGKOK" is written in black. At the bottom right, the words "COMING SOON!" are written in large blue letters.

Today I'd like to write something that will be useful for you who are travelling to Bangkok. We know very well that Bangkok is one of destinations many tourists love to visit at least once. Yes, there are so many nice things to do while you're here, but I believe you can find those things in any travelling websites so I'm going to do something different. I'd like to list out things you should know or prepare before coming here instead. Forgive me if you find this list a bit unorganized since I've never done this before. Also, my English isn't that great either so if some of my word choices are strange or misleading, please just ignore it LOL

It's very hot here!

Even though we're taught in our elementary school that Thailand has 3 seasons: hot, cold, and rainy season. In reality, our 3 seasons are hot, darn hot, friggin' hot. Luckily around October it's just around darn hot period. It should be around 30 – 35 degrees Celsius around that time (that's 86 – 95 for Fahrenheit.) If you're here only for the tournament, it should be totally fine because we tend to have very cool A/C on all the time in department stores, and yes, this MF is held in one of the biggest malls in Bangkok. So if you're planning to walk around or stay outside a lot, make sure you get well hydrated because you're going to be real sweaty.



It still might be rainy.

The rainy season should've been over by that time already, but in some years it goes a bit longer than usual. When it rains here in Bangkok, it's like an all out attack with "Inspired Charge" cast before damage step, unlike raining in Seattle or Manchester at all. Please prepare your umbrella if you're going outside because you can get totally soaked very easily if you're caught in the rain here.



Beware of our taxis.

To be fair, taxi in Thailand is very cheap. It starts at 35 Baht (1.10 USD) and goes up 2 Baht each interval. However, they always tend to cheat on foreigners to get more money, or sometimes even us locals that don't know the way around. The cheating can come in various methods:

1. Not turning on the meter, they'll just tell you some number that's way overpriced. Last week we just heard the news that a taxi charged his tourist 1,500 Baht for riding to the airport where it should've only been around 500 Baht. ALWAYS ask the driver to turn on the meter. If he acts like he couldn't speak English, call one of your local friends if available to ask him to turn on the meter (or just leave.)
2. Taking you through the long route, making you waste more time and money. Try looking on google map all the time to check if they're doing it or not if possible.
3. They rigged their meter, and the number will keep going up faster than normal. Nothing much you can do here except for reporting to the Taxi Call Center service. To be honest, I really doubt they'd do anything to that taxi driver.





All in all, I really believe it's safer to use an app to call a taxi instead, which brings me to the next point....

Uber is no longer here, but we still have Grab.

We used to have Uber here few years ago, but now they're merged with Grab already. If possible, just use Grab. It's a lot more reliable than using our local taxis here. Just avoid calling Grab from the airport. There're taxi mafias overlooking there, and they tend to act stupid when they see Grab cars. Even local authority won't mess with them if it's not necessary so it's best just to avoid trouble there. Apart from that, I'd recommend calling Grab all the time. They're just a bit more expensive but a whole lot more reliable.



We also have TukTuk and Motorbike Taxis.

TukTuk is the traditional tricycle taxi we have since decades ago. It's not really that less expensive than a normal taxi, but if you haven't been on one, you might wanna try it out. It's just one kind of unique experience. You still have to beware of getting overcharged though, so check the fair price from Grab app first so get some idea how the price's suppose to be.



On the other hand, we also have motorbike taxis where we locally call "Win" here. Please don't ask why we call that because I have no idea too LOL. If you feel a bit superstitious, you might want to grab a "Win" to make yourself feel lucky for that day's tournament. I'd only recommend only use motorbikes for short distance route though because it can get very pricey if going for long distance. Nonetheless, they are very good for avoiding traffic jams because the driver will always zigzag around other cars while you're jammed in the middle of the traffic. You can easily find "Win" here. Just look around for those with orange jacket like in the picture below. They have their own parking pool, and you should be able to find them like in every 1 km or around every major tourist places (and almost every train station). If you're going to somewhere less than 2 kilometers, it should never go over 50 Baht. Of course, just like taxi, sometimes they want to charge more to foreigner so you may need to negotiate a little. If the price is way too high to the point that it's obviously scamming, just try walking away, and they may try to recatch you to bargain the price down further.



English language

Many of us Thais still cannot speak English well. To be fair, it has been a lot better in recent years. To make matter a bit worse, Thai people sometimes tend to be shy and never speak even though they can. You'll just need a bit of luck to find someone who can talk with you in English, but believe me, it's a lot better now.



Greetings with “Wai” and Asian Handshakes

It’s our tradition to here to “Wai” when we want to formally greet one another. It’s a slight bow, with the palms pressed together in a prayer-like fashion. You can see in the picture below. Oh, I almost forgot, we also do "Wai" when we're saying "Thank you" to others as well. This is a whole lot more common than greeting, actually. Since it's quite uncommon for strangers to "Wai" (for greeting) at each other, I'd suggest you try "Wai" at locals here when you want to express thanks. I'm sure we'll be impressed on how well you studied before coming here.



Handshaking is not common here at all and only done when greetings with western foreigners. I’m pretty sure it’s as Asian thing that we don’t really touch others that much so when it comes to handshakes, we tend to shake quite softly. It’s no where close to western style that you grab another person’s hand tightly, so when you’re facing us Asians grabbing your hand softly, that’s just our way. It’s not that we didn’t want to or anything :)



Massage here is cheap but great!

In Thailand, you can find massage places almost everywhere. Doesn't matter you're in the center of the city or around the city rim, you'll always be able to find a massage place within 2 km radius for sure. I strongly recommend you to at least try one. If you somehow couldn't find one close by, just ask the locals around you. Google Maps may help, but since so many of massage places in Bangkok are still ran by the older generations, many of them didn't put their business on the map yet.

Normal traditional body or foot massage would only cost around 200 – 350 Baht per hour (7 – 12 USD), depending on the location. That's what I always do, simple and easy (and cheap.) Most of Thai masseurs are female, but please do not worry. Most of them are well ready for big guy customers like us, Magic players. If you want them to massage stronger, just say “Rang rang noi krub” (stronger please). And if you want it softer, it's “Bao bao noi krub”.



But avoid massage place with cute girls on the sign!!

I'm not sure what I should explain further. I guess you all know :P



It's not that easy to find, but I heard so many stories from foreign tourist getting unexpected service unintentionally. Just saying.



Giving tips

I'd say we're somewhere around in the middle between American and Japanese culture. Japanese will never take any tips, and on the other hand, it's almost a must for American. There's no real obligation here for us to give tips unless we feel they really deserve it. I often heard that tips are given based on percentage of the value of product/service we're offered. If that's a misunderstanding, please let me know, but that's not the case here. We normally give only around 20-50 Baht for basic service like waiter/waitress, bell boys, or even valet guys. For more skilled intensive service like masseurs, we tend to give around 50 – 100 Baht. Of course, there may be some other exceptional cases, but I can say this is like 95% of the cases. I know that this can sound a bit complex, but to put it in a simple way, just give whenever you feel like they deserve it.



Convenient stores are everywhere.

You can probably find 7-11 like in every 500 meters. Some are even closer than that. Apart from medicine, I think they have everything you need in daily life already. You can even buy a cheap smart phone in 7-11 nowadays. It's just that convenient. Foods in convenient stores here are quite diverse too. From my experience, I can say for sure we have the best food in convenient stores among this region. Of course, I'd still recommend you try some other local foods over this, but if you really have no other choice, then you won't be so disappointed.



And yes, sometimes you can even find two 7-11s side by side. It looks funny, but a short story behind it is that one is franchisee and another one is owned by the franchisor.



Street foods are the best.

I know I'm saving the best for the last. You may be able to find a lot of nice restaurants in many malls and hotels, but believe me, the best local foods are always street foods. It's actually almost everywhere around Bangkok, but the most famous place in Bangkok is definitely at "Yaowarat", which also has its simple English name "China Town". Give it a try! Oh, the food stalls will start coming out around 6 PM so don't go there too early.



Thailand have so many signature dishes so I won't pin down on which of them are the best, but what I'd recommend you to try at least once is actually what we called "Aharn-tam-sung", which means Made-to-order Foods. This is where the restaurant will have all the basic materials for basic foods we normally eat like rice, noodles (there're like 6-7 types of noodle we normally

consume here), many types of meat, many types of vegetables, etc. You just order whichever you want, and if they have the ingredients, then they'll do it for you. Simple as that! You can stick with something basic like "Fried Rice with Pork and Basil", or you can be very creative like "Fried Rice with Pork and Chicken, Topped with Omelets and Sausages, and No Vegetables Please." Yes, you can be very creative and picky with this type of restaurant. Just keep in mind that the more customizations you ordered, you may run into some bad luck that the waiter or the cook forgot some parts of those orders too LOL.



Here are some of the foods you can easily find at "Ahorn-tam-sung" restaurants.





Actually, there are so much more I can go on about Thai food, but it'd definitely be too long here, so I'm going to continue on this later next time.

Ask me anything!!

If there is anything you'd like to know more about Thailand, feel free to contact me at any time! I'd love to help all of you. I may even put it on this blog further so that everyone could know it as well. Here are some channels you can get in touch with me:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bugong>

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Hope you all enjoy this article. Thanks very much for reading and see you soon in Thailand :)