

Living and Teaching in Thailand

Twelve years ago my husband and I made one of the biggest but best decisions of our lives. We decided to apply for teaching jobs in Thailand and after successfully interviewing we moved to Bangkok in August 2010. After an initial two years and a desire to, 'see more of the world' we moved to Hong Kong. However, the draw and our love of Thailand brought us back in August 2016 and that is where we find ourselves still today. My name is Emma Gricmanis, I love living and teaching internationally and I am sure those considering this step will too!

Thailand is commonly known as, 'The Land of Smiles', it is a Buddhist country in South East Asia and is host to some of the happiest, kindest and loveliest people you will meet. Situated near the Andaman Sea and bordered on land by Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Malaysia, Thailand boasts a variety of landscapes and settings. With beautiful beaches and islands in the south, rural villages and mountains in the north and an abundance of cultural locations across the country, there really is a lot to see and do.

Living and teaching in Thailand can be very rewarding and also sometimes a little frustrating. The weather and continual sunshine really is a plus but the heat can be intense and unrelenting. The food is delicious and a variety of restaurants cater for a vast array of multicultural culinary expectations. Street food is cheap, tasty and easy to find, whilst brunches and afternoon teas are available in most hotels. Both provide unique experiences on a wide spectrum and are equally satisfying and enjoyable.

Thailand's culture is fascinating and interesting. There are a number of museums and exhibitions that detail Thailand's history. Learning about the past and present Thailand, helps me to appreciate the country's way of life. Visiting temples and memorials, whilst also experiencing festivals and celebrations has opened my eyes to a rich culture that has shaped Thailand and its people. Being a lover of architecture and buildings, being exposed to such stunning palaces, temples and traditional houses continues to be a treat from the structures of Europe and the UK. This coupled with the beauty of Thailand's national parks, waterfalls, beaches and the vibrancy of Bangkok its capital, means that everyone is catered for and there is always something new to discover.

Teaching in Thailand is very easy and the children are respectful and keen to learn. International schools vary from smaller settings with close knit family communities to larger schools, some with UK affiliations. Most of the schools in Bangkok have excellent reputations and the packages are very similar, with minor differences such as levels in housing allowance, flights and medical insurance. It is common in all the major international schools to provide these extras in addition to salaries and usually to a high standard. Thailand's medical care is some of the best I have ever experienced and many people will come to Thailand for the affordable but outstanding medical facilities.

I would without a doubt recommend anyone moving to Thailand to take up a teaching post. The day to day interactions with students are rewarding, parents are respectful and appreciative of teachers and the schools here are up to date with educational practices and provision. It is important to research schools carefully before accepting a job and ensure that the educational standard is a place you wish to work. It is useful to look out for schools accredited by UK or International bodies, such as CIS, COBIS or NEAS&C, to name just a few.

Schools with these accreditations are most likely to offer the better packages, although you can live very easily on small amounts in Thailand. Many condos or apartments range from 18,000 to 50,000 Baht (about 520 USD to 1450 USD) and vary in size and quality. Many of the older buildings are bigger and more reasonable, whereas the more modern buildings can be smaller and pricier. Housing is probably the largest outlay you will have, as utilities are fairly well priced and food is extremely affordable.

The advantages of living and teaching in Thailand are the people, the opportunities to travel and explore, the food and the culture. There are very few disadvantages to living and working in Thailand but one can be the pace of life and getting things done. Thai time can be frustrating, for example the air con technician that doesn't arrive until several hours after the agreed time, taking an hour lunch shortly after or the food ordered in a restaurant that arrives at different times during the meal or all at once including starters, mains and maybe dessert! But even with these minor quirks, the ever present, 'Mai Pen Rai' really does resonate. In Thailand there truly is a mantra of, 'Don't Worry, Be Happy!' Those who venture to this fantastic country and make it their home will indeed, like I am, be happy with their decision.

Emma Gricmanis

Head of Early Years in Bangkok