



CultureNotes: Thailand

Thailand is known as the "Land of Smiles" for its friendly, peaceful, soft-spoken people. The Thai are generally non-confrontational and value harmony in relationships.



Thai etiquette is based largely in Buddhism, as more than 90 percent of Thais are Buddhist. Your student will likely



not be used to public arguments or open displays of anger. According to Kwantessential, "Openly criticizing a person is [seen as] a form of violence [in Thailand], as it hurts the person and is viewed as a conscious attempt to offend the person." This is a very important cultural difference to be aware of.

Because of this non-confrontational nature, many Thais find it difficult to openly disagree. It is important to watch for non-verbal cues to determine if your student might actually be upset.

In Thailand, rice is the main dish of every meal, including breakfast. The Thai words for "food" and "rice" are the same. Your student will not be used to how much bread and potatoes Americans tend to eat.

The general eating utensils in Thailand are a fork and spoon, and sticky rice is sometimes eaten with the fingers. Beverages are rarely served with meals, and it is considered proper etiquette to leave some food on one's plate at the end of a meal. In Thailand, finishing everything indicates one is still hungry.



- * Capital: Bangkok
- * Population: 67 million
- * Area: About 198,114 sq.mi.
- * Nationality: Thai
- * Language: Thai
- * Climate: Tropical monsoon
- * Fun Fact: The Thai greeting "sawatdee" originated during WWII. Before that, the usual greeting was to ask people whether they had eaten yet.