

Thailand

Country name	Thailand
State title	Kingdom of Thailand
Name of citizen	Thai
Official language	Thai (tha) ¹
Country name in official language	ประเทศไทย Prathet Thai ²
State title in official language	ราชอาณาจักรไทย Ratcha Anachak Thai
Script	Thai
Romanization System	BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Thai 2002 Agreement ³
ISO-3166 country code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	TH/THA
Capital: official language	กรุงเทพฯ Krung Thep ⁴
Capital: English conventional	Bangkok
Population	68.4 million ⁵

Introduction

Thailand is in Southeast Asia. It is bordered to the north by Burma⁶, to the east by Laos, to the southeast by Cambodia, to the south by the Gulf of Thailand⁷ and Malaysia, and to the west by the Andaman Sea. The people of Thailand refer to their country colloquially as Mueang Thai. Surrounding nations knew it as Siam and it was by this exonym that the country was first known in Europe. In 1939 the prime minister, Phibun, issued a proclamation stating that “In the English language the name of the country shall be ‘Thailand’. The name of the people and of the nationality shall be ‘Thai’.”⁸ Thus, the name Thailand slowly came to be used in British English.

Geographical names policy and sources

Geographical names in Thailand are written in Thai script and it is PCGN policy to recommend use of Roman-script names as found on Royal Thai Survey Department (RTSD) sources produced since 2000⁹ on

¹ ISO 639-3 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² Or Mueang Thai colloquially. The country name is shown here in Thai script and romanized Thai.

³ In 2002, BGN and PCGN adopted the Thai government approved romanization system: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/501622/ROMANIZATION_SYSTEM_FOR_THAI.pdf

⁴ The romanized full name is: Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Ayuthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit.

⁵ July 2017 estimate of the CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>

⁶ Current UK government policy is to use the name Burma as the country name, as this is deemed to be the form in common usage in British English. Republic of the Union of Myanmar should be used as the formal state title reflecting the name used by the state itself.

⁷ An inlet in the west of the South China Sea.

⁸ As quoted in the Geographical Journal 94 (1939) 429-30.

⁹ Roman-script RTSD maps, produced after 2000, are romanized using the updated Royal Institute of Thailand system.

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UK government products. Names for use on UK government products may also be taken from the NGA GEOnet Names Server (GNS)¹⁰ which reflects the updated romanization system (at the time of publication).

The RTSD is responsible for surveying and producing Thai-script and Roman-script topographic maps of Thailand and uses the Royal Institute of Thailand romanization system. The original 1967 Royal Institute of Thailand romanization system was revised by the Thai government in 2000 and adopted by BGN/PCGN in 2002¹¹. No diacritical marks are used in this romanization system. Geographical names romanized using the original 1967 system may contain different vowels and word spacing to those romanized using the revised 2000 system.

Application of the updated Royal Institute of Thailand romanization system to Thai-script sources can be challenging without knowledge of the language, particularly given the lack of word division in Thai, so this should be avoided where possible. If required, please contact PCGN.

The Hydrographic Department of the Royal Thai Navy is the official source for nautical charts and also reflects the updated 2000 romanization system.

Languages

The national and official language of Thailand is Thai, written in Thai script. Consonants in the Thai alphabet each have an implicit vowel sound (a short 'a' or 'o'). The alphabet consists of 44 consonants plus vowel marks that are used to modify these consonants¹². It is written from left to right, with no spaces between words. Thai is the sole language used in government, in schools and the media. English is a common second language used in Bangkok, other major cities and tourist areas. Approximately 72 minority languages are spoken, of which Burmese is the largest minority language, spoken by 1.3% of the population¹³.

The main language of the north-eastern region of Thailand is Isan, also known as Northeastern Thai (ISO 639-3: tts), which is closely related to the Lao language. However, here too Thai is the official language and is spoken by most people and used in education. Although Isan has usually been written with the modern Thai alphabet, there are moves to promote its Thai Lao written form (Thai Noi script¹⁴) and multilingual signs with Thai, Isan and English have been installed in Khon Kaen province as part of a cultural maintenance and revitalisation project.¹⁵



Road sign with Thai, Isan and English names

Source: <http://isaanrecord.com/2016/09/21/signs-for-the-times-in-isaan/>

¹⁰ <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>

¹¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/501622/ROMANIZATION_SYSTEM_FOR_THAI.pdf

¹² <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/thai.htm>

¹³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/national/Khon-Kaen-Uni-has-Tai-Noi-signage-at-main-gate-30226965.html>

¹⁵ <http://isaanrecord.com/2016/09/21/signs-for-the-times-in-isaan/>



Additionally, due to the steady increase of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand, the Tourism Department and the Transport Ministry have added Chinese names on many of the signs in areas of the country that are popular with Chinese travellers.¹⁶

Road sign with Thai, Chinese and English names
Source: <http://www.chiangmaicitylife.com/news/chinese-language-road-signs-to-be-introduced-in-2016/>

Isan and Chinese names for features in Thailand are unofficial and consequently should not be included on UK government products of Thailand.

Territorial and toponymic issues

Thailand and Cambodia dispute ownership of land near the 11th century border temple, Prasat Preăh Vihéar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site¹⁷. It is in the Dangrek mountains that form a natural border between Thailand and Cambodia. A 1962 International Court of Justice judgement awarded the temple to Cambodia, but the governments of the two countries have yet to agree precisely where the boundary runs around the temple area. The *de jure* boundary should be shown on UK government products and the temple may be labelled using the Cambodian name **Prasat Preăh Vihéar** or with the English generic term **Preăh Vihéar Temple**¹⁸ if required.



Aerial view of Preăh Vihéar Temple. Source: Wikipedia



The boundary alignment is also disputed in an area close to the Cambodian border town of Poipet¹⁹. The Cambodian name with the conventional name in brackets **Paôy Pêt (Poipet)** should be shown.

Border crossing from Thailand to Cambodia at Poipet. Source: <http://www.enjoyvietnamtravel.com>

¹⁶ <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/news/2015/06/30/thai-bid-to-avoid-accidents-with-chinese-road-signs/>

¹⁷ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1224>

¹⁸ The Khmer form is Prasat Preăh Vihéar. Prasat means “temple” in Khmer.

¹⁹ A town popular with Thai gamblers.

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Other boundary disputes exist between Cambodia and Thailand, particularly along the Dangrek Mountains. The *de jure* boundary should be shown in each of these cases with the correct local names used on either side of the *de jure* boundary.²⁰

Administrative structure

Thailand is divided into 76 provinces (Thai: Changwat/จังหวัด) at first-order administrative level (ADM1) plus the capital city Bangkok (Krung Thep), a municipality (Thai: Mahanakhon/มหานคร). Each province is further broken down into districts (Thai: Amphoe/อำเภอ), or sub-districts in Bangkok (Thai: Khwaeng/แขวง).

The provinces are often gathered into four, five or six groups for geographical, political, statistical or touristic purposes. These regions do not have any administrative functions and should not be shown as administrative divisions on HMG products. For ease of reference this Factfile lists the provinces in the four most commonly used regional groupings (e.g. on television when discussing regional events): Central, Northern, Northeastern and Southern.

CENTRAL

Province ²¹ name and location (ADM1)	Name in Thai script	Seat and location (PPLA)	Number of Amphoe ²² (ADM2)	ISO 3166-2 code
Ang Thong (14°35'N 100°27'E)	อ่างทอง	Ang Thong (14°35'N 100°27'E)	7	TH-15
Krung Thep (Bangkok)²³ (13°45'N 100°29'E)	กรุงเทพ	Krung Thep (Bangkok) (13°45'N 100°29'E)	50	TH-10
Chachoengsao (13°41'N 101°04'E)	ฉะเชิงเทรา	Chachoengsao (13°41'N 101°4'E)	11	TH-24
Chai Nat (15°11'N 100°07'E)	ชัยนาท	Chai Nat (15°11'N 100°7'E)	8	TH-18
Chanthaburi (12°36'N 102°06'E)	จันทบุรี	Chanthaburi (12°36'N 102°06'E)	10	TH-22

²⁰ Please seek boundary advice from the GeoNames and Boundaries section at the U.K. Defence Geographic Centre.

²¹ Except for Krung Thep (Bangkok), which is a municipality.

²² Or Khwaeng (sub-districts) in Bangkok.

²³ The full ceremonial name is displayed in front of the Bangkok City Hall: Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Ayuthaya Mahadilok Phop Nopparat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Piman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit.



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Chon Buri (13°21'N 100°59'E)	ชลบุรี	Chon Buri (13°21'N 100°59'E)	11	TH-20
Kanchanaburi (14°0'N 99°32'E)	กาญจนบุรี	Kanchanaburi (14°1'N 99°31'E)	13	TH-71
Lop Buri (14°48'N 100°39'E)	ลพบุรี	Lop Buri (14°48'N 100°37'E)	11	TH-16
Nakhon Nayok (14°12'N 101°12'E)	นครนายก	Nakhon Nayok (14°12'N 101°12'E)	4	TH-26
Nakhon Pathom (13°55'N 100°7'E)	นครปฐม	Nakhon Pathom (13°49'N 100°03'E)	7	TH-73
Nonthaburi (13°51'N 100°30'E)	นนทบุรี	Nonthaburi (13°51'N 100°30'E)	6	TH-12
Pathum Thani (14°1'N 100°31'E)	ปทุมธานี	Pathum Thani (14°3'N 100°29'E)	7	TH-13
Phetchaburi (13°6'N 99°56'E)	เพชรบุรี	Phetchaburi (13°06'N 99°56'E)	8	TH-76
Prachin Buri (14°2'N 101°22'E)	ปราจีนบุรี	Prachin Buri (14°03'N 101°22'E)	7	TH-25
Prachuap Khiri Khan (11°48'N 99°47'E)	ประจวบคีรีขันธ์	Prachuap Khiri Khan (11°49'N 99°48'E)	8	TH-77
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya (14°20'N 100°33'E)	พระนครศรีอยุธยา	Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya ²⁴ (14°20'N 100°33'E)	16	TH-14
Ratchaburi (13°31'N 99°48'E)	ราชบุรี	Ratchaburi (13°32'N 99°48'E)	10	TH-70
Rayong (12°40'N 101°16'E)	ระยอง	Rayong (12°40'N 101°16'E)	8	TH-21
Sa Kaeo (13°47'N 102°8'E)	สระแก้ว	Sa Kaeo (13°49'N 102°03'E)	9	TH-27
Samut Prakan (13°35'N 100°35'E)	สมุทรปราการ	Samut Prakan (13°35'N 100°35'E)	6	TH-11
Samut Sakhon (13°32'N 100°16'E)	สมุทรสาคร	Samut Sakhon (13°32'N 100°16'E)	3	TH-74
Samut Songkhram (113°24'N 100°0'E)	สมุทรสงคราม	Samut Songkhram (113°24'N 100°00'E)	3	TH-75
Sara Buri (14°53'N 100°24'E)	สระบุรี	Sara Buri (14°31'N 100°54'E)	13	TH-19
Sing Buri (14°31'N 100°54'E)	สิงห์บุรี	Sing Buri (14°53'N 100°24'E)	6	TH-17
Suphan Buri (14°28'N 100°7'E)	สุพรรณบุรี	Suphan Buri (14°28'N 100°07'E)	10	TH-72
Trat (12°14'N 102°30'E)	ตราด	Trat (12°14'N 102°30'E)	7	TH-23

²⁴ The historic city of Ayutthaya, was the capital of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, or Siam, around the middle of the 14th century. The ruins of the old city are preserved in the Ayutthaya historical park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Modern Ayutthaya is a few kilometres to the east.

NORTHERN

Province name and location (ADM1)	Name in Thai script	Seat and location	Number of Amphoe	ISO 3166-2 code
Chiang Mai (18°50'N 98°58'E)	เชียงใหม่	Chiang Mai ²⁵ (18°47'N 98°59'E)	25	TH-50
Chiang Rai (19°54'N 99°49'E)	เชียงราย	Chiang Rai (19°54'N 99°49'E)	18	TH-57
Kamphaeng Phet (16°33'N 99°30'E)	กำแพงเพชร	Kamphaeng Phet (16°28'N 99°31'E)	11	TH-62
Lampang (18°41'N 99°43'E)	ลำปาง	Lampang (18°18'N 99°30'E)	13	TH-52
Lamphun (18°34'N 99°0'E)	ลำพูน	Lamphun (18°35'N 99°0'E)	8	TH-51
Mae Hong Son (19°17'N 97°57'E)	แม่ฮ่องสอน	Mae Hong Son (19°18'N 97°58'E)	7	TH-58
Nakhon Sawan (15°41'N 100°6'E)	นครสวรรค์	Nakhon Sawan (15°42'N 100°08'E)	15	TH-60
Nan (18°46'N 100°46'E)	น่าน	Nan (18°47'N 100°47'E)	15	TH-55
Phayao (19°11'N 99°52'E)	พะเยา	Phayao (19°9'N 99°54'E)	9	TH-56
Phetchabun (16°26'N 101°09'E)	เพชรบูรณ์	Phetchabun (16°25'N 101°09'E)	11	TH-67
Phichit (16°26'N 100°20'E)	พิจิตร	Phichit (16°26'N 100°20'E)	12	TH-66
Phitsanulok (16°49'N 100°15'E)	พิษณุโลก	Phitsanulok (16°48'N 100°15'E)	9	TH-65
Phrae (18°8'N 100°8'E)	แพร่	Phrae (18°8'N 100°8'E)	8	TH-54
Sukhothai (17°0'N 99°49'E)	สุโขทัย	Sukhothai ²⁶ (17°0'N 99°49'E)	9	TH-64
Tak (16°53'N 99°07'E)	ตาก	Tak (16°52'N 99°07'E)	9	TH-63
Uthai Thani (15°22'N 100°02'E)	อุทัยธานี	Uthai Thani (15°22'N 100°02'E)	8	TH-61
Uttaradit (17°37'N 100°5'E)	อุตรดิตถ์	Uttaradit (17°37'N 100°05'E)	9	TH-53

²⁵ Chiang Mai is the largest and most culturally significant city in northern Thailand. The city sits astride the Ping river, a major tributary of the Chao Phraya river.

²⁶ Sukhothai was the capital of the Sukhothai Kingdom for approximately 140 years in the 13th and 14th centuries. The ruins of the old city are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Modern Sukhothai is a few kilometres to the east.

NORTHEASTERN (ISAN²⁷)

Province name and location (ADM1)	Name in Thai script	Seat and location	Number of Amphoe	ISO 3166-2 code
Amnat Charoen (15°54'N, 104°37'E)	อำนาจเจริญ	Amnat Charoen (15°51'N, 104°38'E)	7	TH-37
Bueng Kan (18° 09'N, 103° 45'E)	บึงกาฬ	Bueng Kan (18° 21'N, 103° 39'E)	8	TH-38
Buri Ram (14°59'N, 103°E)	บุรีรัมย์	Buri Ram (14°59'N, 103°6'E)	23	TH-31
Chaiyaphum (15°48'N, 102°1'E)	ชัยภูมิ	Chaiyaphum (15°48'N, 102°01'E)	16	TH-36
Kalasin (16°25'N, 103°30'E)	กาฬสินธุ์	Kalasin (16°26'N, 103°30'E)	18	TH-46
Khon Kaen (16°26'N, 102°50'E)	ขอนแก่น	Khon Kaen (16°26'N, 102°50'E)	26	TH-40
Loei (17°29'N, 101°43'E)	เลย	Loei (17°29'N, 101°43'E)	14	TH-42
Maha Sarakham (16°00'N, 103°10'E)	มหาสารคาม	Maha Sarakham (16°11'N, 103°18'E)	13	TH-44
Mukdahan (16° 35'N, 104° 30'E)	มุกดาหาร	Mukdahan (16° 32'N, 104° 43'E)	7	TH-49
Nakhon Phanom (17° 29'N, 104° 29'E)	นครพนม	Nakhon Phanom (17° 24'N, 104° 46' E)	12	TH-48
Nakhon Ratchasima (15° 00'N, 102° 10'E)	นครราชสีมา	Nakhon Ratchasima (14° 58'N, 102° 04'E)	32	TH-30
Nong Bua Lamphu (17° 15'N, 102° 15'E)	หนองบัวลำภู	Nong Bua Lamphu (17° 12'N, 102° 26'E)	6	TH-39
Nong Khai (17° 45'N, 102° 45'E)	หนองคาย	Nong Khai (17° 52'N, 102° 44'E)	9	TH-43
Roi Et (15° 45'N, 103° 45'E)	ร้อยเอ็ด	Roi Et (16° 03'N, 103° 39'E)	20	TH-45
Sakon Nakhon (17° 20'N, 103° 50'E)	สกลนคร	Sakon Nakhon (17° 09'N, 104° 08'E)	18	TH-47
Si Sa Ket (14° 50'N, 104° 20'E)	ศรีสะเกษ	Si Sa Ket (15° 07'N, 104° 20'E)	22	TH-33
Surin (14° 50'N, 103° 45'E)	สุรินทร์	Surin (14° 53'N, 103° 30'E)	17	TH-32
Ubon Ratchathani (15° 10'N, 105° 10'E)	อุบลราชธานี	Ubon Ratchathani (15° 14'N, 104° 50' E)	25	TH-34
Udon Thani (17° 20'N, 102° 50'E)	อุดรธานี	Udon Thani (17° 25'N, 102° 47'E)	20	TH-41
Yasothon (15° 51'N, 104° 17'E)	ยโสธร	Yasothon (15° 48'N, 104° 09'E)	9	TH-35

²⁷ *Isan* is the English spelling of the Isan/Thai name for the northeastern region of Thailand.

SOUTHERN

Province name and location (ADM1)	Name in Thai script	Seat and location	Number of Amphoe	ISO 3166-2 code
Chumphon (10° 24'N, 099° 04'E)	ชุมพร	Chumphon (10° 30'N, 099° 11'E)	8	TH-86
Krabi (08° 12'N, 099° 01'E)	กระบี่	Krabi (08° 04'N, 098° 55'E)	8	TH-81
Nakhon Si Thammarat (08° 23'N, 099° 49'E)	นครศรีธรรมราช	Nakhon Si Thammarat (08° 26'N, 099° 58'E)	23	TH-80
Narathiwat (06° 12'N, 101° 43'E)	นราธิวาส	Narathiwat (06° 26'N, 101° 49'E)	13	TH-96
Pattani (06° 45'N, 101° 22'E)	ปัตตานี	Pattani (06° 52'N, 101° 15'E)	12	TH-94
Phangnga (08° 38'N, 098° 25'E)	พังงา	Phangnga (08° 27'N, 098° 32' E)	8	TH-82
Phatthalung (07° 30'N, 100° 05'E)	พัทลุง	Phatthalung (07° 37'N, 100° 05'E)	11	TH-93
Phuket²⁸ (08° 00'N, 098° 15' E)	ภูเก็ต	Phuket (07° 50' N, 098° 23' E)	3	TH-83
Ranong (10° 06'N, 098° 45'E)	ระนอง	Ranong (09° 58'N, 098° 38'E)	5	TH-85
Satun (06° 50'N, 100° 00'E)	สตูล	Satun (06° 37'N, 100° 04'E)	7	TH-91
Songkhla (06° 50'N, 100° 40'E)	สงขลา	Songkhla (07° 12'N, 100° 36'E)	16	TH-90
Surat Thani (09° 00'N, 099° 02'E)	สุราษฎร์ธานี	Surat Thani (09° 08'N, 099° 20'E)	19	TH-84
Trang (07° 30'N, 099° 36'E)	ตรัง	Trang (07° 33'N, 099° 37' E)	10	TH-92
Yala (06° 20'N, 101° 15'E)	ยะลา	Yala (06° 32'N, 101° 17'E)	8	TH-95

²⁸ The province of Phuket includes Phuket island, the largest island in Thailand and a popular tourist destination.

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Additional useful names

PCGN Recommended Name	Local Names	Location (coordinates)	Feature Type
Chao Phraya ²⁹	Mae Nam Chao Phraya (Thai)	40° 01' 04" N 048° 27' 12" E	River
Mekong ³⁰	Mae Nam Khong (Thai) Mènam Khong (Lao) Lancang Jiang (Chinese) Mekong River (Myanmar) Mékôngk (Khmer) Sông Tiền Giang (Vietnamese)	41° 03' 26" N 029° 02' 36" E	River
Phatthaya (Pattaya) ³¹	Phatthaya	12° 56' 07" N 100° 53' 05" E	Special governed city
Ping	Mae Nam Ping (Thai)	19° 12' 40" N 098° 58' 15" E	River
Isthmus ³² of Kra ³³	Khokhok Kra (Thai) Isthmus of Kra (Myanmar)	10° 20' 00" N 099° 00' 00" E	Isthmus
Andaman Sea	-	31° 00' 00" N 047° 25' 00" E	Sea
Gulf of Thailand	Ao Thai (Thai)	39°42'38" N 044° 17' 35" E	Gulf

Useful references

BBC country profile: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-15581957>

BBC language guide: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/other/thai/guide/>

BGN/PCGN Romanization System for Thai, 2002 Agreement:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/501622/ROMANIZATION_SYSTEM_FOR_THAI.pdf

FCO country profile: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/living-in-thailand>

Government of Thailand: <http://www.thaigov.go.th/en/index.php>

UNESCO: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/th>

ISO Online Browsing Platform: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#search>

Omniglot: <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/thai.htm>

Unicode Standard: www.unicode.org

US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server: <http://earth-info.nga.mil/gns/html/index.html>

US Board on Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Thailand:

http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/Policies/Thailand_Country_Policy_webversion_Jul2015.pdf

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²⁹ The major river in Thailand, which flows through Bangkok and into the Gulf of Thailand.

³⁰ The Mekong flows south from China and Myanmar (Burma), along the Thailand/Laos border and then through Cambodia and Vietnam. The local language names may also be added to larger scale products.

³¹ Pattaya is a popular resort city about 100 km south-east of Bangkok. It is a self-governing municipal area.

³² A narrow strip of land connecting two large land areas otherwise separated by bodies of water.

³³ The Isthmus of Kra lies between the Andaman Sea in the west, and the Gulf of Thailand in the east, connecting southern Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand with the Malay Peninsula.