GETTING AROUND THAILAND

Thailand has an extensive network of road, rail, and air travel services that makes it easy to get around. For short trips, taxis or car with driver are not too expensive. For those on a tight budget, there are plenty of air conditioned buses available. Trains also operate to several destinations. Thailand domestic flights are frequent, relatively inexpensive and offered by a choice of airlines. For Expats that plan to do much traveling around Thailand by car, it might be worth their while to obtain a Global Positioning System (GPS) device equipped with a Thailand map.

Travel by Air

There are several domestic air carriers in Thailand connecting the major cities with frequent flights daily to the major tourist areas of Chiang Mai and Phuket. Two airlines operate out of Don Muang, the former international airport. The rest operate out of Suvarnabhumi - Bangkok’s international airport.

Pattaya also has an airport. U-Tapao airport [http://www.utapao.com/index_en.html] is a short distance south of Pattaya. Bangkok Airways offers domestic service from U-Tapao to Samui and Phuket. U-Tapao has recently been upgraded to handle international flights (currently there is no scheduled international service).


CAUTION: If you are booking a flight connection that involves either Nok Air or One-2-Go, allow yourself plenty of time to travel between the two airports. Travel time by taxi can be from an hour to an hour and a half depending on traffic - taxi fare is about 400 Baht.

Travel by Bus

Air conditioned buses operate throughout Thailand providing access to most cities and towns. Bus travel is inexpensive, but can be uncomfortable for a long journey. There are also non-air conditioned buses available, but they are not recommended for long journeys as they stop often and small towns along their route.

The main Pattaya bus station is located on North Pattaya Road not too far from the Sukhumvit Road intersection. Bangkok has three main bus stations. Roong Reung Bus Company (038 429 877) offers transportation to all three Bangkok bus stations. These stations are:

Ekamai – this is the bus station located in Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok known as the Eastern Terminal. Most Expats traveling to Bangkok by bus go to this terminal as it is conveniently located near the BTS Skytrain (overhead railway) Ekamai station. This will take you to the points of interest, shopping centers, etc. in Bangkok. The air conditioned bus service, Pattaya
to Ekamai is the most frequent service in Thailand, running every 30 minutes between 4.30 am and 11 pm. The fare is 113 baht. The journey takes about 2 hours.

**TIP:** If you ask the driver, he will drop you off at the On Nut BTS Station entrance, which is two stops before the Ekamai BTS station. This can be very convenient and save time if you plan to use the BTS Sky train after arriving at the Ekamai Bus Terminal. Depending on traffic it may take another 20 to 30 minutes for the bus to get to Ekamai.

Mo Chit – this is the large bus station located in the northern part of Bangkok and is known as the Northern Terminal. From this bus station you can travel, for example, to Chang Mai plus places in Isaan such as Korat and Khon Kaen. The air conditioned bus service, Pattaya to Mochit runs every 45 minutes between 4.30 am and 9 pm. The fare is 121 baht. The journey takes about 2.5 hours. Although the BTS has a Mo Chit Station, it is not conveniently located to Mo Chit bus station.

**TIP:** The extremely large Jatujak Weekend Market is located two or three kilometers away from Mo Chit and it is quite practical to visit the market and return to Pattaya the same day.

Saitai – this is the bus station which, although located in the western part of Bangkok, is known as the Southern Terminal. From this bus station you can travel to places such as Hua Hin and on to Southern Thailand cities such as Surat Thani for Koh Samui, and Had Yai. The air conditioned bus service, Pattaya to Saitai runs every 60 minutes between 6 am and 6 pm. The fare is 113 baht. The journey takes about 2.5 hours

**CAUTION:** You may be approached by the operators of Blue / White / Orange buses. The fare to and from Bangkok is cheaper but these buses make a large number of stops which greatly increases the journey time. They are not recommended.

The Nakornchai Air Bus Service [www.nca.co.th] also operates from a bus station on Sukhumvit Road just opposite Central Pattaya Road. This company provides luxurious VIP buses to locations such as Chang Mai, Rayong, Buriram, and Ubon.

**Travel by Train**

Trains connect several cities in Thailand. The State Railway of Thailand (SRT) operates four lines from Bangkok’s Hua Lamphong railway station. Hua Lhampong railway station is located in southwestern Bangkok. See the time tables for the following lines: Northeastern Line [http://www.railway.co.th/English/Time_PDF.asp] (Bangkok to Nong Khai at the Laotian Border); Northern Line [http://www.railway.co.th/English/Time_PDF.asp] (Bangkok to Chiang Mai); Eastern Line[http://www.railway.co.th/English/Time_PDF.asp] (Bangkok to Aranyaprathe at the Cambodian Border); and Southern Line [http://www.railway.co.th/English/Time_PDF.asp] (Bangkok to Butterworth, Malaysia). See the fares here [http://www.railway.co.th/English/FareRate.asp].

Pattaya is on the Eastern Line. Pattaya Railway Station (telephone: 038 429285) is located on Soi Pornprapanimit, just off Sukhumvit Road near Central Pattaya Road. There is one service per day to Bangkok’s Hua Lamphong railway station leaving at 2.21 pm and arriving at 6.25 pm. The service runs
Monday to Fridays only. The service runs from Bangkok to Pattaya leaving at 6.55 am and arriving at 10.34 am. Again, the service runs Monday to Fridays only. However, train travel is slower than bus travel. If you prefer to get from Pattaya to Hua Lamphong Station faster or the 2:21pm train does not fit your travel plans, then take the bus to Ekamai bus terminal, then take the BTS Skytrain to Asoke station (interchange with subway) and changing to the MRT subway service to Hua Lamphong station.

**TIP:** Train tickets to any destination can be purchased in advance from the Pattaya Railway Station – this is advisable as seats are not always available on the day of travel. Also travel agency ticket fees can be avoided. The SRT offers a Rail Pass [http://www.railway.co.th/English/Railpass.asp](http://www.railway.co.th/English/Railpass.asp) to non-Thais that allows unlimited travel for a period of 20 days.

The Amazing Thailand [http://www.amazing-thailand.com/SRT.html](http://www.amazing-thailand.com/SRT.html) has some good information about rail travel in Thailand. The Ticketing section provides information about the types of trains and classes of service offered by SRT.

**Getting Around in Bangkok and other areas**

In the Getting Around Pattaya section we note that the most common form of public transportation around the City is by Baht Bus (Sawng Thaew). Although you may find Sawng Thaew in other localities, they may not operate the same as in Pattaya (fixed fares and normal routes). In Bangkok, you have local buses, micro buses, meter taxis, elevated rail and a subway, motorcycle taxis, and the 3 wheel Tuk Tuk.

Taxis generally start the meter at 35 Baht - see our previous caution about the "meter broken" routine. The Skytrain [http://www.bts.co.th/en/index.asp](http://www.bts.co.th/en/index.asp) is operated by the BTS and the subway is operated by the MRT [http://www.bangkokmetro.co.th/index.aspx?Lang=En](http://www.bangkokmetro.co.th/index.aspx?Lang=En). This website has a good map [http://images.google.co.th/imgres?imgurl=http://www.urbanrail.net/as/bang/bangkok-skytrain1.JPG&imgrefurl=http://www.urbanrail.net/as/bang/bangkok.htm&usg=--aqMcwiSdB7cOTaBERdjV_b6oo8=&h=290&w=442&sz=40&hl=en&start=12&tbclid=Fie5mzeHL6-2IM&tbm=isch&tbnh=83&tbnw=127&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dbangkok%2Bskytrain%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26safe%3Doff%26sa%3DG](http://images.google.co.th/imgres?imgurl=http://www.urbanrail.net/as/bang/bangkok-skytrain1.JPG&imgrefurl=http://www.urbanrail.net/as/bang/bangkok.htm&usg=--aqMcwiSdB7cOTaBERdjV_b6oo8=&h=290&w=442&sz=40&hl=en&start=12&tbclid=Fie5mzeHL6-2IM&tbm=isch&tbnh=83&tbnw=127&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dbangkok%2Bskytrain%26gbv%3D2%26hl%3Den%26safe%3Doff%26sa%3DG) of both systems as well as the line to Suvarnabhumi Airport (currently scheduled to open in December 2009). Tuk Tuks are better for short distances. The fare is negotiated with the driver. One way to negotiate Bangkok during the peak travel times is to hire a motorcycle taxi, which will weave in and out of traffic. As with the Tuk Tuks, the fare is negotiated.

**TIP:** If you are traveling in a small group (3 or 4 people), using a taxi will in most cases be less expensive than everyone using the skytrain or subway - however, for other than short distances during peak hours, travel time can be longer because of Bangkok’s notorious traffic jams.

Outside of Bangkok the availability of public transportation will vary. In the smaller towns, instead of Tuk Tuks, you will most likely find the Samlor (3 wheel bicycle) available. Also, in very small towns and larger villages, you may find a
motorcycle with a trailer welded to it like a sidecar that has one or two small bench seats to sit on.

**Transportation using a hired car and driver**

Hiring a car and driver is another way of traveling around Thailand. Most larger hotels will have cars available. In Pattaya, many travel agencies or small travel booths will have information available on hiring cars or minivans. You may also see a sign posted in a barber/beauty shop, bar, restaurant, etc. of someone offering a car and driver. For day trips, they will usually charge on a half day or day basis. For overnight trips, you will most likely be expected to pay for food and lodging for the driver. In smaller cities and towns, someone will know someone who has a car and is willing to hire it and themselves out to transport your around. If you have a car or plan to rent one, read the information in the **Vehicles** section including the availability of GPS devices and some tips about driving in Thailand.

**CAUTION:** Be sure the fare and all that is included is fully understood. Also, if hiring a car from the small booths or signs posted in shops or someone in a small town, they may have only the government compulsory insurance, which provides very little liability coverage in case you are injured in an accident. Cars with “full” or “first class” insurance provide more liability coverage, but will have limits.

**TIP:** If you hire a car and driver for more than local and surrounding area travel, it is not uncommon for the driver to get lost. Often, the best solution is to find a local motorcycle taxi, or motorized samlor driver to escort you to your destination. Pay on arrival.