

Quick Facts about Thailand

Land Size

- Slightly more than twice the size of Wyoming

Climate

- Tropical; rainy, warm, cloudy southwest monsoon (mid-May to September); dry, cool northeast monsoon (November to mid-March); southern isthmus always hot and humid

Natural Resources

- Tin, rubber, natural gas, tungsten, tantalum, timber, lead, fish, gypsum, lignite, fluorite, arable land

Land Use

- Arable land: 32.41%; permanent crops: 8.81%; other: 58.78%

Environmental Issues

- Land subsidence in Bangkok area resulting from the depletion of the water table
- Droughts (particularly in the Northeast)
- Air pollution from vehicle emissions
- Water pollution from organic and factory wastes
- Deforestation
- Soil erosion
- Wildlife populations threatened by illegal hunting

Weather in May and June:

- May: start of the monsoon season; slight cooling from 100+ degree days in April
- Average temperature in Chiang Mai (85 - 91 degrees F)
- Average temperature in Chiang Rai (82 - 90 degrees F)
- Conversion Formula: $T_{(F)} = T_{(C)} \times 9/5 + 32$
 - To find out what 34 C is in Fahrenheit $T = 34 \times 9/5 + 32 = 93.2$
- Rain perhaps every other day in May, lessening as we get into June

Population: 68 million

- **Refugees:** 132,000 from Burma (2014)
- **Stateless persons:** 614,000 (UNCHR Dec 2015) – many more; grossly underreported
 - About half of Thailand's northern hill tribe people do not have citizenship and make up the bulk of Thailand's stateless population
 - Most lack documentation showing they or one of their parents were born in Thailand
 - Children born to refugees from Burma (Myanmar) are not eligible for Burmese or Thai citizenship and are stateless
 - Many of the refugees from Burma (Myanmar) are Karen, an ethnic minority group persecuted by the Myanmar government
 - Another group from Burma (Myanmar) are the Rohingya refugees who are considered illegal migrants by Thai authorities. If caught, they are detained in

- inhumane conditions or expelled; stateless persons are denied access to voting, property, education, employment, healthcare, and driving
- o There is also a group called Chao Lay, maritime nomadic peoples, who travel from island to island in the Andaman Sea west of Thailand who are also stateless

Life expectancy: 74 years (71 men; 77.5 women)

Literacy rate: 96% (age 15+ who can read and write)

Government System: Constitutional Monarchy

Chief of state

- o King PHUMIPHON (also spelled Bhumibol) Adulyadet
 - He is known as King Rama IX (since 9 June 1946).
 - He was born on December 6, 1927.
 - He is the longest serving head of state and the longest reigning monarch in Thai history.
 - He was born in Massachusetts (while his father was enrolled at Harvard in the public health program).
 - His father died in 1929 when he was 2. His mother moved family to Switzerland to continue their education. When his uncle abdicated the throne in 1935, Bhumibol's brother Ananda (age 9) became the new King Ram VIII
- The family stayed in Switzerland and King Phumiphon studied at the University of Lausanne. When WWII ended, the family returned to Thailand.
- After his brother was shot and killed on 9 June 1946, Bhumibol succeeded his brother to the throne.
- King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit have four children (3 girls and 1 boy)

Government Officials

- Thailand's government is characterized as a Constitutional Monarchy
- Currently, there is an Interim Prime Minister Gen. PRAYUT Chan-ocha (since 25 August 2014)
 - o Note: The former Prime Minister YINGLAK Chinnawat was removed from office on 7 May 2014 after the Constitutional Court ruled she illegally transferred a government official; The Thai army declared martial law on 20 May 2014 and led a coup on 22 May 2014
- The prime minister is elected from among members of the House of Representatives; following national elections for the House of Representatives, the leader of the party positioned to organize a majority coalition usually becomes prime minister by appointment by the king; the prime minister is limited to two four-year terms

Current Issues Receiving Global Attention

- Trafficking in persons
 - o Thailand is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking

- o Victims, who are most often from neighboring countries (especially Burma) but also China, Vietnam, Russia, Uzbekistan, India, and Fiji, migrate to Thailand in search of economic opportunities but are forced, coerced, or defrauded into labor in fishing, low-end garment production, factories, domestic work, street begging, or the sex trade
- o Men from Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand are forced to work on fishing boats have reportedly been kept at sea for years
- o Migrants, members of ethnic minorities, and stateless persons are most vulnerable to forced labor and debt bondage; sex trafficking of Thai and migrant children and sex tourism remain significant problems
- o Thailand is a transit country for victims from North Korea, China, Vietnam, Pakistan, and Burma destined for exploitation in third countries, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Russia, South Korea, the US, and Western European countries
- o Thailand is on the Tier 2 Watch List for trafficking in persons
 - Thailand does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so; anti-trafficking efforts remain insufficient compared with the size of Thailand's human trafficking problem, which is compounded by widespread corruption among law enforcement personnel/
 - Few efforts were made in 2013 to address frequent reports of forced labor and debt bondage among migrants in Thailand's fishing and other commercial sectors; authorities systematically failed to investigate, prosecute, and convict owners, captains, or complicit officials for involvement in forced labor
 - Government labor inspections did not result in the identification of any suspected cases of labor trafficking (2014)
- Illicit Drugs
 - o Thailand is a minor producer of opium, heroin, and marijuana
 - o The country serves as a transit point for illicit heroin to the international drug market from Burma and Laos
 - o Eradication efforts have reduced the area of cannabis cultivation and shifted some production to neighboring countries; Opium poppy cultivation has been reduced by eradication efforts; Thailand plays a minor role in methamphetamine production for regional consumption but Thai people are major consumers of methamphetamine since the 1990s despite a series of government crackdowns
 - o Thailand is also a drug money-laundering center

Sources:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhumibol_Adulyadej
<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e489646.html>