

MARKET GUIDE THAILAND



NEW ZEALAND
TRADE & ENTERPRISE
Te Taurapa Tūhono

**KNOW
HOW**

About Thailand

Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia not to have been colonised. This has seen the monarchy, the military and Buddhist religion shape its society and politics. Thailand is the second-largest economy in Southeast Asia, with a population of 68 million.

Since 2001, Thailand has gone through political unrest. This has been dominated by the conflict between supporters and detractors of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin's sister, Yingluck, became Prime Minister following the 2011 election, but she was ousted by a military coup in 2014.

According to the World Bank, Thailand has made remarkable progress in social and economic development. It has moved from a low-income country to an upper-income country in the past four decades. Thailand has been one of the financial development success stories in Asia. This was particularly the case in the 1980s with strong economic growth with an average growth rate of 7 percent and poverty reduction. However, average growth slowed to 3.5 percent over the 10 years between 2005 and 2015.

In the past, Thailand's economy has been largely dominated by the agriculture sector. Rice has been the major agriculture product for export. Thailand has moved from low to middle-income growth during its financial development. This has been achieved by focusing on light industry with low wages, and targeting its heavy industries to continue economic expansion.

Thailand's food industry is the biggest contributor to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Thailand is one of the world's largest producers and exporters of food. Thai food exports in 2015 totalled around NZ\$43.3 billion. Rice, sugar, chicken, tuna and shrimp are the top food exports. Thailand is also ranked 13th among the world's largest halal producers. The Thai Government has recognised the importance of the food sector, and has provided investment

incentives to food manufacturers in the areas of research and development and food innovation.

The automotive sector is a good example of the manufacturing industry being a key major driver of the Thai economy. Thailand has a strong infrastructure and a wide network of small and large, local and foreign companies all along the car production supply chain. With the investment incentives provided by the Thai Board of Investment (BOI), Thailand has been an attractive location for multinational automakers and manufacturers. This includes organisations like Toyota and other automotive companies as well as Procter and Gamble, Daikin and Panasonic. In 2015, Thailand produced approximately two million passenger and commercial vehicles. That year, around 1.2 million cars were exported and 700,000 cars were sold domestically.

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Quick facts

Thailand is:

- an emerging economy and considered a newly industrialised economy
- the second-largest economy in Southeast Asia, with a population of 68 million
- made up of key industries including services, industry and agriculture
- a constitutional monarchy – it is the only Southeast Asian nation that has never been colonised
- looking to the future with a goal to be an innovative, knowledge-based economy
- made up of approximately 1,430 islands and home to 35,000 temples.

GDP:

NZ\$483 billion (2017)

GDP per capita (PPP):

NZ\$9,323 (2017)

Currency:

Baht (THB)

Official languages:

Thai

World Bank Ease of Doing Business ranking (2017):

46 of 190 (NZ ranked 1 of 190)

Corruption Perceptions Index ranking (2017):

96 of 180 (NZ ranked 1 of 180)

Free trade agreements:

AANZFTA (ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand),
NZ-Thailand CEP

Value of NZ exports:

NZ\$2,583 million

New Zealand's 10th-largest market in 2016

Land area:

510,890 sq km

Population:

69 million (2017)

Density:

133 people/km²

Trade Agreements

New Zealand has two trade agreements with Thailand – the ASEAN–Australia–New Zealand (AANZFTA), and the NZ-Thailand Closer Economic Partnership (CEP). Read more about these agreements on the [*Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website*](#).

If you are a goods exporter, use the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's [*tariff finder*](#) to find out the applicable tariff rates for Thailand, as well as HS codes, document and shipping requirements.

Opportunities for New Zealand businesses

There are a range of opportunities for New Zealand businesses in Thailand

The Thai Government has set up the “Thailand 4.0 road map”. The aim is to move Thailand out of the middle-income trap where a country’s growth slows after having reached the middle-income levels. Thailand 4.0 will focus on moving Thailand to become a high-income country with an abundance of cheap, unskilled labour to an innovative ‘value-based economy’. The Government wants to develop Thailand as a knowledge-based economy with an emphasis on research and development, science and technology, creative thinking, and innovation.

Food and beverage

In 2015, the food and beverage market in Thailand was valued at NZ\$60 billion. The demand is driven by urbanisation, which has changed the lifestyle of Thai consumers and created opportunities for new product development that fits with their lifestyles.

Products from New Zealand could meet with key trends, such as convenience packaged food, health product and ‘premiumisation’. To support the urban lifestyle, Thai consumers are looking for

more ready-to-eat and eat-on-the-go products, with convenience and taste being key attributes.

Thai consumers are generally well educated, especially those in urban areas, and they are also looking for more sophisticated products with health benefits. Key products that are growing in this sector vary by age group – brain development for children, muscle building for male adults, beauty and anti-ageing for female adults, and mental health and joint strengthening benefits for the elderly.

Premiumisation and imported food products are in growing demand as a new generation of Thai consumers welcome more Western food in their diet. They also associate these food products with high quality.

This premiumisation trend can also be observed in the food service sector where many restaurants, including big chain restaurants, have launched dishes using imported ingredients. Product stories on origin, education about product applications and product sampling are key things that will help drive consumption and awareness among Thai consumers.

Health care

In 2015, 26 million tourists visited Thailand, and about 2.5 million foreign patients visited Thailand for medical treatment.

Thailand has an advanced private medical sector. There are more than 300 private hospitals in Thailand. The leading private hospitals have invested in technology, facility development and training to meet the international standards. One such standard is the Joint Commission International or JCI, which is globally recognised by insurance companies as an international standard.

Bangkok Dusit Medical Services (BDMS) is the largest private hospital group in Thailand and the Southeast Asian region. The group has more than 45 hospitals located in Thailand.

Opportunities for New Zealand businesses include:

- medical equipment and technology in specialist areas that improves patient safety, operation effectiveness and leading medical technology
- health products for wellness
- preventative medicine.

Key success factors for doing business in the health care sector include:

- being flexible
- local customisation, particularly around language
- building relationship and trust
- identifying the right partner and local distributor.

Construction

The Thai Government has allocated almost \$100 billion for its ongoing infrastructure development plan (2014 to 2021). Thailand's construction industry is expected to increase in value to US\$19.9 billion in 2019, which would make it the second-largest market in Southeast Asia.

Construction activity is driven by the tourism and hospitality sectors and the Government's upgrade of Thailand's key infrastructure such as airports, ports and motorways.

Manufacturing

There are substantial opportunities in the Thai manufacturing sector. This includes solutions and machinery for automation, energy efficiency, quality and safety, and economic control.

The high potential industries are:

- **Automotive:** Thailand is the biggest producer in Southeast Asia, and among the top five in Asia and the top 15 automotive producers in the world. A total of 1.88 million vehicles were produced in 2014 and about 60 percent of these were exported.
- **Electronic and electrical appliances:** electronic production is large but focused on lower value-added assembly for export. Thailand is the largest electrical appliance manufacturer in Southeast Asia.
- **Food processing:** Thailand is the largest food exporter in Southeast Asia with about 1,500 medium-to-large-sized food processing companies.

Renewable energy

The Thai Government has implemented the Alternative Energy and Development Plan (AEDP). This is a 10-year initiative (2012 to 2021) to better diversify and build a more sustainable energy sector. The end goal is to achieve 25 percent reliance on total national energy generation from alternative or renewable sources by 2021.

The breakdown of the sources is as follows: solar, wind, hydropower, bioenergy (biomass, biogas, municipal solid waste), biofuels (ethanol, biodiesel) and new energy sources (tidal, geothermal).

However, the key focus of the plan is on solar and bioenergy. This is due to the suitability and ease of production of these energy sources in Thailand.

Wood processing

Thailand is a major exporter of rubber wood, shipping over 65 percent of its rubber wood production abroad. The market outlook for rubber wood exports is bright thanks to an increasing supply, as well as demand, especially from China, where the furniture industry is growing. The Thai Furniture Industries Association (TFA) is encouraging Thai furniture manufacturers to produce higher quality products that focus on high-end consumers and the export market.

Digital content

Thailand is experiencing a rapid growth of internet, digital, social media and mobile activity. With more than 46 million internet users in January 2017 and double-digit growth in internet penetration and social media users, the digital sector is booming and attracting much overseas interests. The total e-commerce market in Thailand in 2017 was worth approximately US\$741 million, an increase of 12.4 percent compared to the previous year. The driving factors come from increased internet and mobile phone use as well as improved logistics and e-payment systems. The animation and gaming sectors experienced major growth, driven by the import of animations and games from other countries. These industries still have high imports for consumption.

Opportunities for New Zealand businesses include:

- English training: the Thai workforce needs to communicate in foreign languages
- Animation and game software
- Consultation work with the Government to support the digital content industry.

Business culture and etiquette

Business culture

Building relationships and trust are very important when it comes to doing business with Thai people. They prefer to build personal relationships before discussing business. Most often, business decisions are made at many different levels. This means that presenting business proposals may need to be carried out repeatedly and discussed with different people. It also means many meetings may take place before reaching the decision.

Thai people generally value enjoyment in doing business. Entertainment is an important part of developing business relationships. For example, having meetings at lunch or attending a networking function can be part of developing trust and good business relationships.

Appointments should be made well in advance. Details of the meeting should be confirmed the day before the arranged day. Arriving on time is also showing respect.

Scheduled appointments are important, and you should always be on time. Allow time for traffic delays, especially in bad weather.

Business dress code in Thailand is conservative. At a formal event, men should wear dark-coloured suits, white shirts and a tie. Women should wear plain conservative dresses or suits. On casual occasions, men should wear pants and shirts, and women should wear skirts and blouses. Jeans are usually worn by both men and women.

Greetings and introductions

This normally “wai” (raise their hands as if praying) when they greet each other. They also welcome the opportunity to shake hands with others, including foreigners, friends and strangers.

Business card etiquette

Never be without business cards as it is common to exchange them when meeting for the first time. When you receive a business card, take time to read and observe the name and title of the person you are meeting. Try to comment on some aspect – the title or the location of the office, for example.

It is common to lay the cards of several people in a row on the table (mapping the order in which those people are sitting) and to refer to the cards if you don't remember the names or titles. Never throw a business card across the table.

Thais respect authority, title and age. When receiving or giving gifts, business cards or other articles, Thais tend to use both hands as a sign of politeness.

Thais say their given name first and their family names last. Many names are very long and often if you ask whether there is a nickname, there will be a short form of the name (which you can note on the card). When addressing someone, use their first name or a name they have indicated, and begin their name with the honorific "Khun", which is not gender specific. It is quite common to refer to someone by their title (e.g. Vice President, Director, or President) rather than using their name. Thais are reasonably forgiving about people getting their names wrong or forgetting them.

Grant Thornton: Doing Business in Thailand is a great starting point for information on doing business in Thailand.

Seating etiquette

The most honoured position is at the middle of the table, with the second most important person seated next. This means that the host will sit at the middle of the table on one side, and the honoured guest in the middle on the other side, opposite the host. The honoured guest sits on the side of the table farthest from the door.

Importance of relationships

The personal ties you form with your Thai business partners may often be far more important than the legal force of any contract or agreement. Therefore, don't neglect personal aspects of your relationship with your Thai business partners.

Although many Thais understand written English reasonably well, listening and speaking ability varies.

Don't assume everything you say in English is completely understood. Sometimes, Thais may pretend to understand, although they actually don't. Try to avoid jumping right into business matters. Be patient and use a slow approach. Also, do not expect an immediate 'yes' or 'no' response.

Paying for meals

Splitting bills is generally not common among Thai business people. You should therefore be prepared to be either host or guest.

A face-to-face meeting is more effective than contact by telephone or email when you seriously want to discuss some business with Thais.

When receiving a gift, Thais do not usually open it in front of the giver. It is considered more courteous to open it later.

Respect

The head is the most respected part of the body. You should never touch anyone's head or ruffle their hair. The foot is the lowest and least respected part of the body. You should not use your foot to open or close a door or move something on the floor. Never lift your feet onto a chair or table.

As a rule, except for close friends, Thais do not touch or embrace and do not kiss in greeting or farewell. In addition, you must never touch a monk.

Travel and visiting Thailand

Accommodation

The hotels listed below are located close to NZTE's office at the New Zealand Embassy.

Hotel	Address	Telephone	Website/Email
Conrad Hotel	87 Wireless Road, Phatumwan, Bangkok 10330	+66 2 690 9999 +66 2 690 9000	http://conradhotels3.hilton.com/en/hotels/thailand/conrad-bangkok-BKKCIC/index.html
Indigo Hotel	81 Wireless Road, Lumpini, Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330	+66 2 207 4999 +66 2 207 4998	http://www.hotelindigo.com/bangkok pantaree.obnuan@ihg.com
Grande Centrepoint Ploenchit	100 Wireless Road, Lumpini, Patumwan, Bangkok 10330	+66 2 659 5000	http://www.centrepoint.com/ chanyika.t@gcphotels.com
Novotel Ploenchit	566 Ploenchit Road, Lumpini, Patumwan, 10330 Bangkok	+66 2 305 6000 +66 2 305 6001	http://www.novotel.com/gb/hotel-7176- novotel-bangkok-ploenchit-sukhumvit/ index.shtml H7176@accor.com
AETAS Bangkok	49 Soi Ruamrudee, Phloenchit Road, Lumpini Pathumwan, Bangkok 10330	+66 2 618 9000 +66 2 618 9091	http://www.aetashotels.com/ punthiwa_p@aetashotels.com

Visas and immigration

Tourist visa

New Zealand passport holders can visit Thailand as a tourist for up to 30 days without needing a visa. New Zealand passport holders visiting for longer than this must get a visa before travelling.

Business visa

A business visa is required for applicants who wish to enter Thailand for business or work. These visas are valid for three months from the date of issue. The visa cannot be used to enter Thailand after the expiry date. The holders of this type of visa are allowed to stay in Thailand for a maximum period of 90 days.

APEC Business Travel Card (ABTC)

The ABTC allows business travellers to travel within the member countries without having to apply for visas or entry permits. ABTC card holders are also allowed a number of entries into the member countries. They also have access to faster immigration processing via fast-track entry and exit facilities through special APEC lanes at major airports in participating member countries. Thailand is a member of ABTC.

Transport

Airports

The two major airports are Suvarnabhumi (BKK) (the newer terminal) and Don Muang (DMK) (mainly used by low-cost airlines). If you are transferring from an international flight to a domestic one, check if it is at the same airport.

Domestic flights for Thai Airways and Bangkok Airways arrive and depart from Suvarnabhumi Airport. Some low-cost airlines, such as Nok Air, Thai Smiles and Air Asia, may use Don Muang Airport. Check carefully if transferring from an international to a domestic flight.

Getting to and from the airport by rail

Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport is located about 25 kilometres from central Bangkok. [*The Bangkok Airport Train*](#) service operates between the city and the Suvarnabhumi Airport. There is both an express service with two stops only as well as a local service. The Bangkok city stops are Makkasan Station (close to a connection to the MRT underground – Phetburi station) and the first station – Phaya Thai, which connects to the BTS skytrain with the same name. As traffic can be very heavy during peak hours, the Airport Link is a good option. It takes just

15 minutes. However, in the city stations there are some stairs, so it may not be convenient when travelling with large or multiple bags. The train station in the airport is located on the lowest level.

Taxis

Taxis are a popular form of transportation in Thailand. There are many taxis in most busy city areas. Their availability is indicated by a red light displayed in the front window. Taxi drivers have varying levels of English ability so it is best to carry your destination address written in Thai, and also to have a phone number for your destination as a back-up.

Taxis do not accept credit cards. It is common practice to 'round up' when paying. Taxi drivers may not have sufficient cash on board to be able to give change for large denominations such as THB500 or THB1,000. Late at night and in certain nightlife areas, taxis may refuse to use the meter. Instead, walk to another area or negotiate.

Rail

Train services in Thailand are OK for backpacker and sightseeing experiences but not common for business travel. Reservations can only be made in person at a station.

Ports

An estimated 85 percent of Thailand's trade goes through Klong Toey Port on the Chao Phraya River. There are also deep seaports at Map Ta Phut and Laem Chabang on the Eastern Seaboard, and at Songkhla and Phuket in the south. These are playing increasing roles in international and coastal trade.

Underground and Skytrain

Around Bangkok the BTS Skytrain and the MRT underground offer quick alternatives to traffic congestion. The services are air conditioned and well managed.

Station names, ticket counters, and transfer signs are all clearly marked in English as well as Thai. The various lines are colour-coded and all trains make announcements in English and Thai. The underground ticket machines accept banknotes, however the BTS Skytrain stations often do not; so, coins are easier – although there is a banknote exchange counter at every gate.

The tickets for the BTS Skytrain and the MRT underground cannot be used across both modes of transport. Ticket prices are generally between THB15 and THB52, depending on the distance travelled. In both cases, select your destination at the ticket dispenser and pay the fare to receive

a ticket or 'token'. This is read at the ticket gate upon entry and then kept by the gate upon exit. Drinks and food are not to be taken onto the platform. Bag searches are common but brief.

Service hours

All public transportation, except for taxis, stops around midnight. If you have to meet with contacts late in the evening, it is better to choose locations at or near your hotel.

Tuk-tuks

Tuk-tuks are three-wheeled open-air vehicles which can easily travel through slow traffic. As they are unprotected and therefore relatively unsafe for business travel, it's best to leave these to tourists. It is not a good look turning up to a business meeting in one of these.

There are many scams which involve tuk-tuk drivers being paid commissions by gem stores and other tourist shops based on delivering tourists to their doors. A common line is to tell the passenger that the place they want to go to is not open, and then proceed to introduce a wonderful deal/sale or alternative destination. Keep any bags or wallets close to you and well inside the vehicle to avoid the risk of drive-by motorcycles helping themselves.

Car hire

Rental cars are available for visitors who wish to drive in Thailand. An indicative rental charge for an online booked Camry 2L Automatic with collision damage waiver insurance is THB1,500.

Here are links to some well-known car rental businesses:

[*Avis Thailand*](#)

[*Budget Thailand*](#)

Driving in and around Bangkok

To rent a car, foreign travellers should:

- have more than one year's driving experience
- have an international or a Thai driver's licence
- be over 21 years of age
- have a valid passport.

Cars are driven on the same side of the road as in New Zealand. Although most road signs are written in both Thai and English, driving is not easy for visitors. This is because of the huge volume of traffic and the erratic driving behaviour of motorcyclists. Another issue of concern for foreigners is that, in the event of an accident, they can sometimes end up being the target of the complaint regardless of what has happened. It is therefore recommended to consider hiring a driver rather than self-driving.

Buses

Local city buses can be air-conditioned or non-air-conditioned. They are not widely used by foreign visitors and information about the routes and destinations is often not presented in English. Intercity buses and mini-vans are commonly used for regional transportation. Try to ensure that any vehicle you choose has seatbelts and be watchful for driver fatigue or road rage.

Electricity

In Thailand, electrical outlets are for 220 volts and frequently not earthed. Take care around signage and outdoor areas, particularly in wet weather, where fallen wires could create conditions for short circuits.

Always check the power supply before using any equipment. Two plugs are common – a straight two-pin plug and a round two-pin plug.

IT, internet and communications

There are internet cafes available in the city. The trend has now moved towards Wi-Fi for personal connection.

Telephone

Country code

The country code for Thailand is '66'.

Local calls

Bangkok telephone numbers (landlines) use the prefix '02', followed by a seven-digit number. If dialling from abroad, leave off the zero (e.g. +66 2 230 1234).

International calls

Direct dial international calls can be made by dialling '001' followed by the country code and telephone number.

Mobile phones

Rental services are available at the airport. Local SIM cards are widely available and inexpensive. Photographic identification (passport) is needed. Prepaid cards can be topped up at 7-Eleven and other convenience stores. Mobile coverage is generally good; however, 3G services are not available everywhere.

Currency, credit cards and ATMs

Currency

The monetary unit of Thailand is the Thai Baht (THB), and the sub-unit is the 'satang'. There are 100 satang to the Baht, but they are becoming less commonly used. There are four denominations of Baht coins (1, 2, 5, 10) and banknotes come in denominations of 20, 50, 100, 500 and 1,000. Satang coins come in 25 and 50.

Banks

Banking hours are 9am to 3.30pm Monday to Friday.

Many smaller branches in department stores, supermarkets and retail areas are open seven days a week and often until 7pm.

International money exchange

You can exchange foreign currency (including New Zealand dollars) or traveller's cheques for Thai Baht at a bank, a foreign exchange booth or a hotel counter. Usually the bank rates are similar but a hotel rate will be more expensive.

Credit cards

Credit cards such as Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Diners Card and JCB can be used at major hotels, department stores and larger restaurants. Smaller stores, including convenience stores and public transportation (train, taxis), generally don't accept credit cards, so it is worthwhile carrying some cash. Debit cards are accepted at point of sale with signature. The PIN system widely used in New Zealand is not used in Thailand.

Automatic teller machines

You can get money from ATMs showing the Plus or Cirrus signs, using your credit card or debit card with your own PIN. All ATMs offer instructions in English. It is not difficult to find an ATM and they are available 24 hours a day.

Lost/stolen credit/debit cards

Report lost and stolen cards immediately to your bank:

Visa Thailand: 001 800 441 3485 or +1 303 967 1090

MasterCard International: Call your credit card issuer

Diners Club Thailand: +66 2 238 3660

Tipping

It is common to tip about 10 percent for restaurant meals and to tip for services received such as bag carrying or car parking assistance in the amount of THB20 to THB40. Taxi fares are usually rounded up to the nearest THB5 or THB10. All tipping should be in cash; it is not usually added onto a credit card payment.

Public holidays

[Office Holidays](#) has details on the various Thai public holidays.

Language and useful phrases

Here are some basic Thai phrases to get you started. Note that the last word of most Thai sentences is gender specific according to the speaker. For men – the ending is khrap; for women – Ka. Khrap is used in the phrases below:

English	Thai
I'm fine	Sa-bai-dee khrap
I need a taxi	Kor-taxi-khrap
Thank you	Kop-khun-khrap
I do not understand	Mai-khao-jai-khrap
I am unwell and need a doctor	Phom mai-sabai. Don haa mor

Safety and security

Visit the [Safe Travel](#) website for the latest travel advisory updates. New Zealanders in Thailand are strongly encouraged to register their details on Safe Travel.

Medical services and hospitals

Vaccinations are advisable but not a requirement. If you're planning on trekking or passing through the more remote areas, then check out the list of recommended vaccinations for visits to Thailand. Avoid drinking the tap water to ensure you don't get sick and make sure you stock up on bottled water.

Thailand has both public and private hospitals. Private hospitals in Bangkok are world class and recommended for foreigners due to their superior service and better level of English. They can also be costly though, so insurance cover is advisable.

Here are contact details for two of the main Thai hospitals:

Bumrungrad Hospital
(nearest to NZ Embassy)
www.bumrungrad.com

BNH
(Convent Road/Silom area)
www.bnhhospital.com

Emergencies

There are different emergency services phone numbers:

Police 191

Fire 199

Ambulance 1669

For foreigner travellers (tourist police) 1155

Airport information +66 2 132 1888

Tourist information

If you need travel information for your trip to Thailand, please contact an overseas branch office of the [*Tourism Authority of Thailand \(TAT\)*](#). In Thailand, you can stop by information desks at international airports or major tourist sites for maps, tour brochures, and general information about accommodation, shopping and restaurants, tourist attractions and local cultural activities.

Food

Thai cuisine provides unique aromas and tastes for visitors to enjoy. As well as being nutritious, Thai food is traditionally very low in calories, with rice and a wide variety of vegetables forming the base of the meal.

Seasonings include garlic, chilli, soy sauce, shrimp paste, lemongrass, galangal, coriander and a diverse range of other herbs.

Common Thai dishes

- Pad Thai: Stir-fried noodles with bean sprouts and peanuts wrapped in a light egg omelette
- Kra Pao Gai: Chicken stir-fried with basil, usually spicy
- Tom Yum Kung: Spicy clear soup with shrimp
- Gaeng Juud: Plain soup, usually with pork
- Gaeng Kiew Wan Gai: Green curry, usually with chicken, pork or meat.

Singha (pronounced Sing) and Chang are two widely available locally brewed beers. Bottled water is safe to drink. If eating at roadside stalls, take care to select places that are busy and have rapid turnover. Also, check that the cutlery is clean.

Entertainment

Much of Bangkok's nightlife is centred around drinking. There are numerous bars and clubs in the city.

Business entertainment is usually lunch or dinner. Typically alcohol is not involved. Most Thais do not frequent the well-known spots that foreigners hear about.

The best area for pubs and bars is probably RCA or Thonglor, although there are simply too many to mention. Many hotels have nightclubs or discotheques as part of their facilities on offer.

For locals at least, karaoke (singing) is very popular evening entertainment. Some places will combine bowling theatres and karaoke for an evening's entertainment.

Trade shows and industry exhibitions

Thailand has a range of trade shows and industry exhibitions. These websites have more information:

[EventsEye](#)

[10timesTradeFairDates](#)

Product registration

Importing food into Thailand requires product registration approval by the Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

FDA is an agency under the Ministry of Public Health. Its main roles are implementation and enforcement of food law, and to guarantee the quality and safety of food to the public.

Thai FDA consists of four product control units and two supporting units:

- Bureau of Cosmetics and Hazardous Substances
- Bureau of Import and Export Inspection
- Bureau of Drug
- Bureau of Food
- Narcotics Control Division
- Medical Devices Control Division.

The Bureau of Food under the Thai FDA is responsible for pre-marketing approval and post-marketing activities. This includes the licensing for manufacturing and importation of food commodities and registration of specially controlled food. The purpose is to screen for good-quality and safe food only to enter markets. FDA has classified foods into three main product categories according to the Food Act:

1) Specific Controlled Food – Registrations are required for foods in this category. Legal provisions are related to food standard quality, specifications, packaging and labelling requirements, as well as other aspects of good manufacturing practices. The Food Committee may make recommendations to the Minister of Public Health specifying specially controlled foods.

2) Standardised Controlled Food – Standard foods do not require registration, but their quality and labelling have to meet the standard requirements as specified in the Notification of the Ministry of Public Health.

3) Other Food – Foods, raw or cooked, preserved or non-preserved, processed or non-processed, if not listed under category 1 or 2, will be considered as general foods. Although registrations are not required, general food products are controlled and monitored with regard to hygiene, safety, labelling and advertising. Foods in this category may be subdivided into:

- (a) foods that must have standard labels
- (b) other general foods.

Food labelling and advertising also require approval.

Normally, the following documents are required for food product registration in Thailand:

- Certification of Free Sale
- GMP Certification
- HACCP Certification.

Food importers of New Zealand products are required to meet the Thai FDA's GMP and Certificate of Free Sale requirements. Thai law requires importers of food products from New Zealand to present the Thai FDA with a Registration Certificate. New Zealand food exporters must provide their importer with the original copy of Registration Certificate for each manufacturing premise exporting to Thailand. Photocopies or scanned images of the certificate are not acceptable by the Thai FDA.

New Zealand exporters can get information on how to apply for the original copy of a Registration Certificate at foodsafety.govt.nz. It also has details on [overseas market access requirements](#).

The product registration process can take time. The Thai FDA has a procedure available for importers to follow, depending on the type of product that is being imported. Often, product registration depends on the novelty of the product and how much the Thai FDA is familiar with it. Registering products that are already available in the market typically take less time than those which are new to the Thai market.

Food product registration approval cannot be transferred between importers. If a Thai importer or distributor registers the product, the right to import and product liability will belong to the Thai company and it is not transferable. So, when changing an importer or distributor, product registration needs to be undertaken by a new importer.

Other tips include:

- The Thai FDA can provide an importer with a pre-consultation service to help importers prepare information and documents that will be required to register the product. In case of a product that may not fit into the categories mentioned above, having a pre-consulting discussion with the Thai FDA will prove to be very helpful.
- In most cases, the Thai FDA has a committee to review and approve product registration. However, sometimes decisions are made by an authorised person; so, meeting with the right decision-maker is also very important.

Thailand's [Food and Drug Administration](#) has more information in this regard.

Setting up operations and establishing a business

There are three kinds of business organisations in Thailand: sole proprietorships, partnerships and limited companies. The most popular form of business organisation for foreign investors is the private limited company.

Private limited companies require a minimum of three promoters. They must file a Memorandum of Association, arrange a statutory meeting, register the company, and obtain a company income tax identity card. They must also follow accounting procedures outlined in the Civil and Commercial Code, the Revenue Code and the Accounts Act.

A balance sheet must be prepared once a year and filed with the Department of Revenue and Commercial Registration. In addition, companies must withhold income tax from the salary of all regular employees.

Other forms of corporate presence are branches or representative offices of foreign companies. Both options will have a limited range of services, and the registered company cannot generate revenue in Thailand.

Please visit [the Department of Business Development, Ministry of Commerce](#) for more information.

Restrictions on foreign ownership

Forming a wholly-foreign-owned company in Thailand involves a significant amount of red tape. One requirement is a [foreign business licence \(FBL\)](#) – this can take years to be granted by the Thai Ministry of Commerce.

Under the Foreign Business Act, foreigners are limited with respect to operating some categories of businesses. Some may require a licence or a certificate, depending on the type of business.

The Thai Board of Investment (BOI) has provided some alternatives to registering a company in Thailand. This helps with securing the foreign business licence. The key areas of BOI's approval is in manufacturing activities of various sectors. There are also two key areas in service businesses: [International Headquarters and International Trading Centers](#).

The [Thai Board of Investment](#) has more information about this.

Customs and import regulations

Thailand's Customs and import procedures are relatively complex and it is recommended that you use a local importer.

It is important that New Zealand exporters understand the document requirements of Thai Customs to receive the full benefits of the Free Trade Agreements. Among other things, Thailand's Customs requires original documentation called a Certificate of Registration, which is issued in New Zealand to the exporter by the Ministry of Primary Industries.

Advance rulings on HS codes are available from Thai Customs. These are highly recommended for products where there is any possibility of 'interpretation' around the applicable HS code.

Taxation

Personal income tax

Information about Thailand's [*personal tax rates*](#) is available at the Revenue Department website.

Corporate income tax

Information about [*corporate tax*](#) and [*taxes applicable for foreign companies*](#) is available at the [*Revenue Department website*](#).

Value Added Tax (VAT)

The Revenue Department of Thailand has proposed the Finance Ministry keep the value-added tax (VAT) rate at 7 percent for another year, until the end of September 2017.

Opening a bank account

Personal bank account

Although a work permit is officially required, it is possible to open an account with just your passport.

Opening a Thai bank account will cost you at least THB500.

Once the account is open and verified you will usually receive a debit card, which allows you to withdraw money at ATMs. The initial fee for an ATM card is THB300. If you haven't made any transactions for a while and the balance of your account is below a certain minimum, you will have to pay a monthly charge of about THB50.

Bank statements will not be mailed to you. You will have to request them at your bank. An overdraft facility is practically impossible to obtain in Thailand.

Corporate bank account

Opening a corporate bank account requires corporate registration with the Thai Ministry of Commerce and tax registration with the Thai Revenue Department.

Resources and contacts

Local government directory

There are several Thai local government groups that may be of assistance:

[Thailand Board of Investment](#)

[Bank of Thailand](#)

[The Federation of Thai Industry](#)

[The Stock Exchange of Thailand](#)

[Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

[Thai Ministry of Education](#)

Business associations

The following organisations may be helpful if you're looking to set up a business in Thailand:

[Joint Foreign Chamber of Commerce in Thailand](#)

[New Zealand Thai Chamber of Commerce](#)

[New Zealand Society Thailand](#)

[New Zealand Alumni Association](#)

Local news and online media

There are a number of media outlets in Thailand:

The Bangkok Post

www.bangkokpost.net

The Nation

www.nationmultimedia.com

Krung Thep Thurakit

(Bangkok Business News)

www.bangkokbiznews.com

Post Today (Thai)

www.posttoday.com

Business Day Newspaper

www.bday.net

In addition, [Thai Visa News](#) is a popular web forum.

Popular social media

Facebook

Currently, there are 18 million Facebook users in Thailand. The largest age group is currently 18 to 24, followed by the users in the age group of 25 to 34. There are 49 percent male users and 51 percent female users.

Line

Line is a mobile text and voice messaging communication service. Line app provides multimedia communication with text messaging, hold-to-talk voice messaging, broadcast (one-to-many) messaging, photo/video sharing, location sharing, and contact information exchange. There are 15 million Thai users. It's also an important new platform for social marketing and brands outreach, with the top Thai brand on Line having 4.6 million followers already.

Instagram

With significant growth in Thailand in the past year, Instagram now has around 600,000 users across the country.

NZTE/Embassy contact details

Both NZTE and the New Zealand Embassy have a presence in Thailand.

Organisation	Address	Telephone	Website / Email
New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (8AM - 4.30PM)	14th Floor, M-Thai Tower, All Seasons Place, 87 Wireless (Witthayu) Road, Lumpini, Patumwan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand	+66 2 251 7288	www.nzte.govt.nz exporthelp@nzte.govt.nz
New Zealand Embassy (8AM - 4.30PM)	14th Floor, M-Thai Tower, All Seasons Place, 87 Wireless (Witthayu) Road, Lumpini, Patumwan, Bangkok 10330, Thailand	+66 2 254 2530	info@newzealandembassybkk.com



New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) is the Government agency charged with a single purpose: growing companies internationally, bigger, better and faster, for the good of New Zealand.

We employ 600 people, have over 200 private sector partners and draw on a global network of thousands more. We have people based in 50 offices, working across 24 time zones and 40 languages to support New Zealand businesses in over 100 countries. Our global presence lets us deliver value to the businesses we support, through our unique know-how (knowledge and experience) and know-who (networks and connections).

Our know-how and know-who is expressed in our Māori name: Te Taurapa Tūhono. Te Taurapa is the stern post of a traditional Māori waka, which records valuable knowledge, and stabilises and guides

the craft forward. Tūhono represents connections to people and an ability to build relationships.

We provide customised services and support to ambitious businesses looking to go global. We help them build their capability, boost their global reach, connect to other businesses and invest in their growth. We also connect international investors with opportunities in New Zealand through a global network of investment advisors.

We call on our Government network and work closely with our NZ Inc partners and the business community, to grow our national brand and help businesses to open doors in global markets.

nzte.govt.nz

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