Go Global with Fisher

Thammasat University - Bangkok, Thailand: From a Student’s Perspective

Office of Global Business
250 W. Woodruff Ave., Second Floor Mason Hall
Columbus, OH 43210
+1 (614) 292-0845
fisher.osu.edu/international
Accommodations

University Housing
- Thammasat University does not offer any formal university housing but will assist in you in finding alternatives.
- Although Thammasat will not arrange dorm housing for you, there are dorms available at Rangsit. The negatives to these dorms are that they are about a 40 minute bus ride from campus that you need to pay for but the cost of living is cheaper than an apartment. You also will have the opportunity to meet many more Thai students.

Apartment Search
- Thammasat will provide you with information about many apartment complexes in the area, but there are three core options where exchange students generally chose to live.
  - 3J- This is where Thai students that are not from Bangkok live. It is one of the cheapest options and close to campus but is not the highest of quality. It is also the closest to school- in total the walk and boat ride take about 10 minutes.
  - Amarin Mansion- This is the most expensive option, but also where most people stay. There are only single and shared double rooms here.
  - Rattinakosin Tower- This is the farthest away from school (30 min walk) and generally has the fewest exchange students (15 or so) but has the best internet.
- There are options when choosing apartments. Some have two bedrooms, others are single apartments. Don't have a potential roommate? Upon arrival many students are looking for one. Arrive a couple days early and express your interest, you are bound to find someone in a similar circumstance.
- Even if not looking for a roommate it is recommended to arrive a few days before school starts. As more exchange students arrive the cost to live in many of the buildings will rise. Students can expect to pay about $300/month including all utilities (ask about their offering of internet, it can vary.) This number can go down if you share a room and are efficient with utilities. All of the apartments are fully furnished, but bring towels.
- Facebook Marketplace can be a great way to find a sublease for the semester. Just as Fisher students are travelling abroad during the fall, so too are students from Thammasat.
- Beware of Craigslist. There are a number of scams out there and it has happened to Fisher students in the past. If you are unsure, ask for help from the Fisher International Programs Office staff.
- The commute to school includes either a boat ride or a walk across the bridge and can range from half an hour to 10 min. If you are running late though, you can always take a motorcycle for about $1.
**DOCUMENTS**

**Passports**
- Passports should be secured as soon as possible. They are required for not only travel overseas, but also for application to Thammasat among other things.
- Check expiration date. In the past students have failed to realize that their passports expire during their trip which can cause serious issues with reentry to the United States.
- It is a good idea to keep several copies of all relevant documents on you at all times: licenses, residency cards, passports, visas, enrollment verifications, whatever has been issued to you. This is not required but you may find yourself in a situation in which these things would be extremely helpful to have and save time.

**Student Visa**
- When applying for a visa in the US, students can either mail their passport or go to an embassy. It takes about three days to process. Thammasat will provide a letter stating your enrollment in their university and notify you that a student visa is required. Fill out the corresponding forms and wait - Thammasat makes it quite simple.
- For Ohio residents, the consulate you will use is in Washington, D.C. Luckily, you do not need to go there, you can just send all of the information necessary. (2012)
- Past students strongly suggest obtaining a multiple entry visa! They will be around $165 compared to $65 for the single entry, but the extra money will save a lot of hassle. Single entry visas are valid for three months and foreigners pay $30 to enter and exit the country. After the three months, an additional $65 is required. Trips to the embassy take up most of the day... get a multiple entry!
- It is recommended to get your visa as early on in the process as possible to avoid stresses right before travel and also allow you to travel to other countries ahead of time if you want.

**Student Identification Cards**
- Exchange students will receive an ID from the university. Theoretically, students are now considered “Thai, “but at the discretion of the Thai people. Thai citizens are allowed into museums, national parks and many other interesting sights free of charge or receive a 20% discount. Keep the card close and save lots of money.

**Health Insurance**
- Thailand has some of the best hospitals in Southeast Asia. Most of the doctors speak English very well and communication is never an issue. Thammasat is just across the river from a very large hospital. Hopefully there will be no need to take advantage of this facility but it may be beneficial to check it out prior to an emergency because the layout can be quite confusing. It also has a very interesting and creepy museum inside!
- Ohio State requires that outgoing students purchase the HTH Supplemental Insurance, this will cover the student’s time while studying. However, if a student decided to travel before or after specific program dates, the HTH supplemental insurance will not cover any illness or injury. It is recommended that students contact their health insurance providers before traveling. In the case that a student requires medical attention out of the HTH time
period, it is important to know how to deal with copayments, insurance, etc. Specific questions about health insurance can be directed to OIA. (Office of International Affairs).

- Thammasat will present exchange students with two insurance cards. International students can use these in the case of an illness or injury. Keep in mind, hospitals take cash upfront when seeking care, the insurance company will reimburse the patient shortly thereafter. Medical care is inexpensive compared to the states, a trip to the doctor/hospital costs similar to our copayments.

**FOOD AND DRINK**

**Grocery Stores**
- Tesco’s is one of the largest chain grocery stores. These stores are all over the city. Most students go to the Tesco’s in the basement of Pata Mall. Grocery prices can be high, students will soon find that it is a bit cheaper to eat out every night. Breakfast snacks are good to purchase at Tesco, but all in all most students do not purchase groceries. Some people go to the grocery to buy breakfast, but many do not really go at all.
- Need a snack? 7-11’s are everywhere and are convenient for quick purchases.
- If you are looking for produce or other fresh foods you will not have a problem finding them. Take a walk down the street, there are vendors on almost every corner and are generally in the same place from day to day. You will quickly discover your favorite vendor, the most delicious foods, and even the sellers to avoid.

**On Campus**
- The campus cafeteria is excellent. The food is very inexpensive at about $1.00 a meal (this is pretty typical all around Thailand). Most of the food booths have one option and do not speak English. No problem, just walk around and see what looks tasty.
- If you are on campus check out the restaurants along the waterfront in the ally. Most of them have English menus but some do not and it will be a bit of a struggle to order.

**Dining**
- It appears as if Thais have never ending appetites! Because of this there is always something edible around.
- Tipping is not required. However, at very nice restaurants it is nice to tip a bit. Thais eat with a spoon and fork—there is no knife. The fork is used to push the food onto the spoon.

**Recommended Restaurants**
- Right along the river near the bridge, you will notice a giant BBQ restaurant. Go there! It is an all you can eat restaurant for 100 baht. It is set up as a buffet, but all of the meat and veggies are not cooked! At your table there will be a hot stove. Make sure that you bring your friends to maximize the experience. Avoid sickness and cook the meat thoroughly!
MONEY

Using an ATM

- ATMs are everywhere. There is a $5 charge on every withdrawal from that bank as well as whatever your home bank will charge you.
- Students have found that their US banks charge a percentage of the amount that is withdrawn internationally. Some charge a flat fee when using an ATM and this usually proves to be a better option. Talk to your bank about the different options they offer for international travel.
- Capital One offers credit cards that do not charge international fees. This can save a significant amount over the duration of travel. Look into all options to see what will work best for your circumstance.
- While cash is the only form of payment taken at many places, be smart about the amount that you carry at any given time. Carrying an excessive amount of money makes you more vulnerable in certain situations. The stores that have high price tags will most likely take credit cards.

Establishing a bank account in your host country

- Some people find the $5 charge to be a little pricey and choose to open a Thai bank account. This is quite easy. Look into any conversion charges when opening up the account to avoid any surprises. If they are high, it might be worth it to keep paying the withdrawal fees.
- Thammasat University does not offer much assistance in this regard. However, there are several banks outside of Thammasat near the ferry station. Bank of Bangkok is the cheapest in opening an account, (around $15) other accounts can cost more.

Credit and Bank Cards

- Again, make sure you check bank fees. If students choose to use their card for minor purchases the fees can accrue quickly. It is a better idea to carry some cash around with you for this reason.
- Credit and Bank cards were accepted in ATMs, but Thailand has an economy driven by cash. Very rarely will you be able to use cards when paying for hotels, meals or shopping items. Only in rare cases when purchasing from an upscale establishment will they accept a card. For this reason, it is best to carry baht.
- When traveling to neighboring countries, it is common to use American dollars. This will give better exchange rates compared to exchanging baht. Make sure that the dollars are crisp. Creased, old or ripped bills will not be accepted. Small bills are more efficient.
- Students are encouraged to write down the customer service numbers on all credit cards and keep the numbers with them in case cards are stolen and cancellation is necessary.
Travelers Checks
• Though travelers’ checks may have once been the safest way to manage money while traveling, they may not be the best option. Traveler’s checks are only good once converted to Euros. Therefore, if a student plans to use traveler’s checks, it is recommended that this be only part of the whole money management scheme.

Other
• Past students have recommended having backup solutions to problems you might face in advance. For example losing your credit card. Come up with a backup plan to what you would do if this were to happen because it takes a while to get a new credit card to be sent overseas. (i.e.: have a second credit card stored in a different place, pay for the entire group dinner when going out and then have everyone pay back in cash, etc.) (2013)
• Past students have recommended making a rough budget for your expenses abroad to avoid missing out in activities at the end of the semester. For example, one student limited her expenses to $2000 a month while abroad. (2013)

For more information about using credit cards and ATMs abroad and the related fees, visit http://www.flyerguide.com/wiki/index.php/Credit/Debit/ATM_Cards_and_Foreign_Exchange

PHONE AND INTERNET
Using a phone from home
• If planning to use a phone from home, do homework with respect to cost. In the past students have realized that using devices such as smartphones with international capabilities can be much more expensive than planned.
• An international SIM card will be necessary, and can be purchased at a phone outlet upon arriving.
• Some iPhones can be unlocked for use abroad, in which case an international SIM card may be inserted. Check with your mobile carrier before attempting this.
• Some phone providers have international calling to emergency numbers only, or they charge you an insane fee when used. Some students have suggested bringing your phone from home if you have this option; it gives a sense of security when first arriving at the airport.

Buying an international phone
• Whether choosing to use a phone from home or purchasing one in Thailand, a cell phone is recommended for
coordinating plans, handling business, and safety reasons.

- The phone plans in Thailand are very affordable. 1-2-Call is one of the most popular carriers. Their plan is prepaid and minutes can be bought in 7-11’s. Past student have spent about $5/month on their phone.
- Often times, phone stores in the malls (try Pata mall) have inexpensive options. Students have recommended purchasing an older version for around $20. It is not necessary to have a newer, expensive version.
- These phones can make international calls, but it is pricey. Other options have proven to be more efficient for calling family and friends back home.

International Communication

- When calling home, Skype video use is free with wifi access! This is a great option for keeping in touch with friends and family from home as well as those met while traveling.
  - Help parents and friends set up and learn how to use Skype before traveling.
  - Purchasing Skype credit allows students to call a landline or a cell phone back home at lower costs. When internet is available this can reduce the hassle involved with international calling cards. Users can also pay $6-$10 for a month of unlimited calls to any landline or cell phone in the U.S. from their computers.
- G-chat is also a favorite channel of communication for students. It has a G-Video option as well. It can be more convenient than Skype because it is more user-friendly. Which mode of communication you choose ultimately depends on your preferences. It is recommended to explore both programs before departure so you can inform family members which you will be using.
- If you want friends to be able to call you, leave voicemails, or leave text messages like a regular cell phone, you can sign up for Google voice. You will need to use a VPN (virtual private network) but students have said that it is well worth it. With Google voice, you receive a US telephone number that works like a landline. If you have to make business calls while abroad, this can be a great tool! For more information go to: http://www.google.com/googlevoice/about.html.

Internet

- Internet reliability can vary depending on your place of stay. It is important for you to investigate this when considering housing options.
- Thammasat has reliable and fast internet on campus and has computer labs accessible to business students.

Safety Tips

- Be aware of all surroundings and keep your items close to you at all times. If staying in hostels it is advised to bring a lock to protect your valuables. Avoid bringing anything of extreme sentimental value.
- Keep emergency numbers specific to your host country with you at all times.
- When traveling by bus and choosing to use the underside for luggage, make sure to utilize locks. Avoid bringing anything of increased value, as these can be target areas for theft.

Transportation and Travel

Public Transportation

- Bangkok is full of transportation and traffic!
Generally the cheaper it is, the slower it moves. During the day this is usually not a big deal. However, when evening traffic hits its peak it can really start to matter if you have somewhere to get to quickly.

- The bus is a nice way to travel when alone and looking to save money. Beware though, sometimes they change their original route and also can be rather slow.

- Taxi is another option, a taxi ride starts at about $1 and increases throughout the ride. Make sure to always take a metered taxi or foreigners may be taken advantage of. Sometimes traffic is so packed that it is hard to find a taxi that will take you where you want to go.

- TukTuks are smaller than a car and are often able to weave in and out of traffic, getting you to your destination faster than a taxi. Make sure that you agree to a price before you are taken on a ride.

- Bangkok is full of motorcycle stands. These stands are found on random street corners, you cannot miss them. Some prices cannot be haggled with, but it is always worth a try. Make sure that you wear a helmet! The drivers usually have an extra one; take theirs if they do not have one.

Mapping

- Mapping is pretty tough in Bangkok. The best thing to do is to explore with a map from your local convenient store (or the university bookstore). Many of the street names change from block to block. After a couple weeks, you will have a pretty good idea of how things work.

- Thai people are not always willing to help when it comes to helping foreigners navigate around. Be patient, and allow for plenty of time in travelling plans.

International Travel

- Students in the past have traveled a great deal more than originally expected. Keep this in mind when budgeting and packing. Many students over pack. Appliances such as straighteners, hair dryers, electric shavers, etc can be bought in country; as well as toiletries, bedding, and many other bulky items. This will save room in your bag as well as solve any wattage conversion problems you will encounter.

- For the flight over to your destination and back, utilize StudentUniverse.com. Students have had great luck with affordable prices.

- With affordability comes the possibility of delays and cancellations with these airlines. They will rebook you it may just take time. Take situations in stride.

- If possible print out any boarding passes prior to arriving at the airport or you may have to pay an additional fee. Also, double and triple check your bag measurements. These airlines are very adamant on their luggage regulations and will impose hefty fees for any passengers that bags do not apply.

- Buy plane tickets and make travel arrangements as least a week in advance if you want a cheaper price.

- Past students recommend going to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.

- Airasia and Jetstar are popular sites for less expensive airfares in Asia.
Places to Visit

- Some local areas to check out are Chiang Mai and Issan area, Udon Thani, Chiang Rai, Krabi, Kanchanaburi (Erawan Waterfalls), Railay Beach, Koh Phangan (Full Moon Festival) and Prachuap.
- Past students recommend going to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.

University Tips

University Resources

- Thammasat computer lab has printing available for students. Go to the lab office to buy printing credit. It is about 2 baht per sheet and can be refilled whenever needed.
- Thammasat uses a system similar to Carmen; from there you will be able to print off all of your PowerPoint and other documents.
- Thammasat has uniforms that are required when attending all business classes. Because of the size availability, if you are bigger than an 8, purchase the uniforms in the U.S. If you are smaller than an 8 you can purchase the uniforms once at Thammasat at the bookstore or neighboring other stores (they are cheaper in Thailand.) Thammasat will send students guidelines and photos to help with this.
- Their website can be quite helpful: http://www.tu.ac.th/eng/
- It is advised that you get connected with the Office of International Affairs at Thammasat in order to get connected with more cultural activities, hands-on staff, and other Thai students/volunteers that really want to help.
- Faculty is generally really approachable.
- The student and faculty’s English is very good and there hasn’t been much challenge for communicating. (2012)
- Don’t get frustrated if you find that things are not punctual. Time here is very fluid. For example, if your meeting time is at 3pm, don’t be surprised if it doesn’t start until 3:15 or 3:30pm.
- Attendance is taken at every class. You can have up to 4 classes missed per class so plan ahead and be flexible with dates.

Miscellaneous Tips

Language

- There is a very large language barrier in some parts of Thailand and nearly any in others. Thailand is very developed for tourists, when near the university you should not have too much trouble with communicating or navigating. Take your time and use simple words, have people explain things again if you are not sure what they said.
- Many people speak English, just not very much or very well. When you are near the apartment buildings nearly everyone speaks English because it is a residential area.
- Thammasat offers a Thai class. However, students recommend learning it through others. Thais love to teach their language. If you are ever unsure of a word, try to pronounce it! You will get some laughs for sure, but can learn this way quickly enough, and people respect that you are making the effort.

Phrases/Words

- “Mai Ben Rai” is a phrase often used. More or less it means no worries or no big deal. This is very indicative for the culture of the country. Thailand is very relaxed and does not like confrontation. This phrase will quickly end any argument.
- Unlike some countries, Thais are not mad when people do not speak their language. Most try to learn basic English to facilitate tourism. Students are strongly encouraged to learn at least a couple of phrases in Thai. Knowing a little does go a long way. Thais will be enthusiastic to meet you if they know you are attempting to

Ohio State University
Fisher College of Business

8
learn their culture and language even if you can’t say much at all.

Tidbits

- It is advised that you be very open minded and patient when you are on exchange. Not everything is going to go your way while abroad and you will hit major road blocks that you’ve never encountered before, but its best to just keep an opened mind and don’t let things get you down. The times that don’t go exactly as planned are going to be the biggest learning experiences. (2013)

If there are further questions or concerns, different resources are available that students can utilize. The Office of Global Business will be a resource throughout the entire trip. Past students have also volunteered to be a contact if additional questions would arise.

**Contributors**

Ruth Kee  
Outbound exchange student to Thammasat  
Autumn 2010  
Kee.22@buckeyemail.osu.edu

Cannus Thieu  
Outbound exchange student to Thammasat  
Autumn 2011  
thieu.2@buckeyemail.osu.edu

Kyle Outcalt  
Outbound Exchange Student to Thammasat  
Autumn 2012  
Outcalt.4@osu.edu

**Additional Contacts for Further Questions**

Kozue Isozaki  
Assistant Director for International Exchange at Ohio State  
isozaki.1@osu.edu

Narisa Klieothong  
Exchange Coordinator at Thammasat University  
narisa.k@tbs.tu.ac.th