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# Report of my stay in Thailand

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**T**his is a brief report of my stay in Bangkok. I realized my Master's thesis at the Assumption University. I arrived on site Monday, February 14 and have completed my work Friday, July 15. Then I spent a few weeks in Thailand. I will try to give an idea of life there, as well as provide some advice for those who want to go to Bangkok.

## Preparations

### Visa



To have also applied for a visa for the USA, I can assure that the demand for a student visa in Thailand is very simple, fast and cheap. I contacted the consulate of Thailand in Geneva to get information, no problem. I have only to go there with my passport, a copy of my flight, two pictures of me, 160 CHF (80 CHF per entry) and a paper from the Assumption University attesting that I will study there. And that's all, less than a week later, I received my visa at home.

### Vaccines

There are some vaccines to do to be able to live in Bangkok: In all cases the vaccine for hepatitis A and possibly that of B, take treatment against typhoid fever (eg Vivotif, three pills and then is immunized for one year) and have with you, as safety, drugs against malaria (eg Malarone). And also be up to date with vaccines for diphtheria, tetanus and polio.

### Travel

I opted for a European airline, Air Berlin (photo source: [www.airberlin.com](http://www.airberlin.com)). Today, prices are very low. The flight to get there cost me 590 CHF with a stopover in Dusseldorf (Dusseldorf for about one hour and approximately ten to Bangkok). I took a plane that left Zurich on Sunday afternoon to arrive Monday morning. Time difference with Switzerland is +6 hours (+5 hours in summer).



After my stay in Thailand, before returning to Switzerland, I used this opportunity (to be on the

other side of the world) to go to Australia. The flight there (with Qantas Airways) cost me about 660 CHF.

## Life in Bangkok

The weather is beautiful, although a little too hot for my taste. But most places have air conditioning (the laboratory, many restaurants, ...). People are extremely friendly as we are not in a tourist area where many try to make money on the backs of tourists (I have not seen a single tourist where I lived). The tourist area is about 3-4 hours walk or 20-30 minutes by taxi.

To travel by taxi is cheap, but I prefer to walk and take the train. It takes 45 minutes to reach the station (15 minutes by taxi for about 1-2 CHF). By train, it is possible to reach all the important areas of Bangkok.

## Apartment



I opted for an apartment that can be considered high end in Bangkok (Inspire Place Rama 9, 5 minutes walk from the university lab). This assured adequate security for my business (guard at the entrance round the clock, badge to enter in the elevators and the corridor with apartments).

In addition, this building offers a swimming pool and a gym. The room had air conditioning fairly recent which is not negligible for the electricity bill (the charges are not included). The apartment cost me about 275 CHF per month (plus charges, about 2 CHF for water and 50 CHF for electricity).

By taking an apartment, be careful how much electricity costs. The state requires 3 baht per unit and must be paid by example in the 7-Eleven convenience store (or make a bank transfer). But some owners request directly the charges. This can easily go up to 6 baht per unit! This is not the case for the apartment I had taken.



## Food

I have always been a true fan of Asian food. In Switzerland and to my great regret, Asian restaurants are quite expensive. But eating here costs almost nothing. For dinner, I ate with a colleague for about 2 CHF and a little more at night. I do not think I spent more than 10 CHF per day for food (food in the refrigerator, small snacks between meals and drinking water for the apartment are included). The following image shows the kind of dish I took to dinner.



For example, one evening I ate a fish grilled and stuffed with Thai lemongrass (bought on the street), 10 spring rolls (bought on the street) and 9 sushi (from the mall) for just over 3 CHF all included.



There is a crucial point to be observed. Tap water should never be drunk. This would be dangerous. But bottled water is cheap. Some restaurants serve

free rainwater. There is no reason to panic, it is pretty good. In addition, there is no risk to accept ice cubes in the glass.



But for those who want to try to eat very special is quite possible. Crickets, cockroaches, scorpions and tarantulas. Everything can be grilled. I have personally tried and do not regret it (the next picture is an ant & onion salad, really delicious).



## **Shops**

The "7-Eleven" convenience store are installed at all street corners. There is almost everything for daily life (open 24/24, 7/7). For larger purchases, there are many shopping centers called "Big C" in Bangkok.

## **Mobile phone**

It is useful to have a mobile phone to be reachable by colleagues, the university and the owner of the apartment. Prepaid SIM cards are cheap and the refills too. I chose the "True Move" supplier. Unfortunately, I lost my phone after two months, so I had to buy a new Thai SIM card. For the second one, it took the "DTAC" network. Both work well and are cheap, about 0.30 CHF for a sms to Switzerland and about 0.50 CHF per minute to phone on a Swiss fix line.

There are also many phone available that support two SIM cards. Some models are really cheap (I bought

a "Gnet" mobile phone for 35 CHF, image source: [www.radartelecom.com](http://www.radartelecom.com)). This allowed me to be permanently connected with my Swisscom network and that of my Thai SIM card.



## **Internet**

For internet access in my apartment, I had to pay to the owner. This is a login connection to be bought per month for the Wireless LAN. The 512k connection is about 12 CHF and that of 1M approximately 18 CHF. This may seem cheap for Switzerland, but is rather a lot in Thailand. If you have a phone line, you can request an internet connection directly to the supplier and this will be really cheap.

## **Local population**

As already said before, people are really friendly there. It is a country where respect is important. At university there is no problem to be understood, everyone speaks English. But this is not the case outside. Obviously, in the tourist area, most people know their way with English. But around the the University is not the case at all. Also, it is obligatory to learn basic phrases in Thai (hello, thank you, I want rice with chicken, water, turn left, ...).

## **Visits**

I have not really visited Bangkok as a tourist because I stayed a few weeks after my work. But I have visited places useful for my stay. To begin, I recommend going to Chatuchak Weekend Market, one of the largest weekend market in the world. You can buy all at local prices (more than 150,000 stands with 200,000 visitors every day). Then the MBK Center is a huge shopping mall in Bangkok. 8 levels and 330 meters long, it has no less than 2500 shops and stalls on a sales area of 89,000 m<sup>2</sup>, making it one of the biggest malls in Asia (I went to buy clothes for example).





For a more tourist side, I would advise to go to the Marble Temple (Wat Benchama Bophit) which is a major of the newer Buddhist temples in Bangkok. I also enjoyed visiting the temple Wat Pho (the oldest and largest temples in Bangkok).



## Few days in Cambodia

After three months, the first entry in my visa has expired. I could go to the immigration office to use the second entry, but I found more attractive to use this opportunity to visit another country. So I went a few days in Cambodia, where I stayed in Siam Reap.



I visited a floating fishing village and of course the temples of Angkor.



## Working in Bangkok

### Assumption University



Assumption University is a university with three campuses in Bangkok. I was in the Hua Mak campus (from district Bangkok, Lat: 13°45'10" Long: 100°37'41"). Assumption University is noted for attracting large numbers of foreign students. It is also the first international university in Thailand. The university has a beautiful garden at its center. The perfect place to work while relaxing...

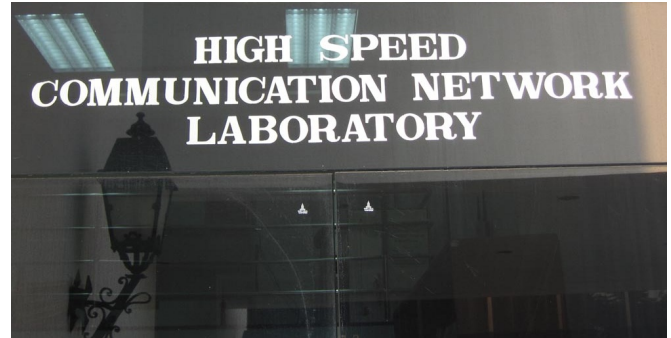


### Work hours

The normal work day begins at 8am and end at 5pm. But it is obvious that with a job as the Master thesis, I worked much more, including weekends.

### The lab

The laboratory is located south of campus. It has an excellent air conditioning system and even in the summer of Thailand, temperatures remained cool. I received a magnetic card, which gave me access to the laboratory when I wanted. Asians play a lot video games and therefore, outside of working hours (mostly on Sundays), the laboratory looked more like a game room...



### Colleagues

Like local people, my colleagues were very friendly. They really helped me with advice for life in Bangkok as well as for my work.

## Costs

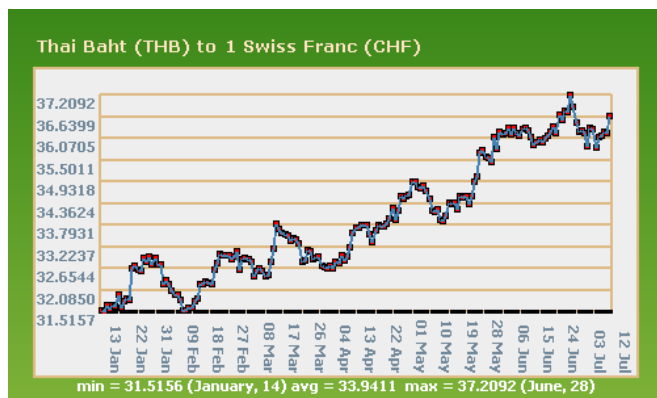
This part could be useful for someone who wants to go to Bangkok. I bought several articles not necessary for life there (external hard drive, memory card for my camera, ...). But they are naturally not in the list.

Some things are cheap in Thailand, such as transportation (taxi, train, ...), food, clothes and "cheap" electronic equipment. But other things are at the same price as at home as the brand clothes and the brand electronics.

Costs for 5 mounts

Types	CHF
Flight to Bangkok	590
Apartment	1375
Charges (water and electricity)	260
Internet access at apartment	90
Mobile phone (Thai SIM card)	55
Food	~ 1500
Other	~ 1970
Flight out Bangkok	660
Sub-total	6500
Financial help from "International Office" of HEIG-VD (CH)	
Travel	−1000
Stay 5 months in Bangkok	−3000
Total I had to pay	2500

These numbers are estimates. The ratio between the Thai baht and the Swiss franc has changed during my stay in Thailand, as shown in the next image (source: <http://exchange-rates.org/history/THB/CHF/G>).



## Conclusion

I recommend everyone to go for an exchange in another country. Even just to discover another culture. Thailand is a wonderful country, as its culture and people who live there. I do not regret my choice, even if I missed Switzerland during my stay.