



Thai-Chinese International School

# *Moving & Living in Bangkok*

*An infokit for the new teachers of TCIS*

## **Sawasdee!**

### **Teach in TCIS, Live in Thailand, Discover Asia**

This website is for the new teachers of the Thai-Chinese International School for school year 2004-2005. If you have already signed a contract to teach or are simply seriously considering it, this website features a ton of information to answer most of your questions and concerns.

**Why teach in TCIS?** The answers vary, but the number one answer we can offer you is our students. Yes, teaching in TCIS can be and has been a rewarding and fun experience for teachers because of our students, majority of whom are Thai and Taiwanese. For most part they are well behaved, highly motivated, and respectful to their teachers.

The work environment in TCIS is also more relaxed by Western standards. There is a warm atmosphere of friendship and respect among the non-teaching staff and teachers who are of diverse nationalities and culture (Thailand, US, UK, Canada, Taiwan, Philippines, Burma, and Sri Lanka). You shouldn't have any problems fitting in whatever your interests are with musicians, sports fans, bookworms, golfers, divers, singles, couples, backpackers, etc. The Thai staff are very helpful and extremely patient when it comes to teaching *farangs* (foreigners) about Thai language and culture, or more often than not, helping them ease the transition of living in Thailand. The Taiwanese staff and students will likewise expose you to Chinese culture.

Each day we live by the words, "Eastern Windows, Western Skies" with the motto: "Learning from the Past, Living in the Present, Looking to the Future."

**Why Live in Thailand?** It is a country rich in history, culture, and tradition. Just think of all things that have made Thailand world-famous: the temples, Thai silk, Thai food, Thai kickboxing, Thai massage, elephants, etc. Imagine living in a cosmopolitan place like Bangkok and experiencing these things and more everyday. If Bangkok gets too expensive, hectic, and crowded the nearest tropical paradise island is only three hours away. To many travelers, it is the gateway to the rest of Asia and the world because of its robust tourism program. TCIS observes many holidays allowing teachers to travel to Phuket and Chiang Mai, or the neighboring Asian countries of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines, China, Nepal, India; or as far as Europe and Australia.



## Getting Ready

The following important information is for new overseas hire teachers for school year 2003-2004. Download the checklist and related documents in the Download section then send photocopies of documents with asterisk(\*) to TCIS care of Jinda by May 15. Bring the originals with you when you come to Thailand.

Download **checklist & paperwork**

### Passport

Please make sure to have a passport that is valid for at least one year. Send us a copy of your passport (the page with your full name and passport number). We need it to prepare a letter for you to apply for a non-immigrant B. visa. If your spouse or children come to live with you in Thailand please give us a copy of their passport, too.

### Non-Immigrant B. Visa

You have to apply for a non-immigrant B. visa before coming to Thailand. Non-Thai teachers employed at TCIS - and their accompanying dependents - must hold a valid Non-Immigrant Visa. Normally, a visa can be obtained from the Thai Embassy or the Consulate in your country that is valid for 90 days. The school will prepare a letter stating that we will hire you as a teacher in our school. We will mail this letter to you sometime in May or June so that you can apply for a non-immigrant visa. If you apply too early it will expire before you get to Thailand in August.

### Online References for Visa and Passport Information

- **US Passport Services & Information**
- **Royal Thai Embassy in Washington**
- **Canadian Passport Office**
- **Royal Thai Embassy in Ottawa**
- **Embassies of Thailand Worldwide**

The Non-Immigrant Single Entry Visa, the first stamp in the passport, allows the teacher to stay in the Kingdom of Thailand for 90 days from the date of entry. New teachers should not arrive too early before the start of the school year as this may also cause your visa to expire early on.

Within these 90 days, TCIS, through the Government Liaison Office, will help the teacher to accomplish the following:

1. Register as a teacher with the Ministry of Education
2. Apply with the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare for a work permit to teach
3. Request the Foreign Ministry for a letter of certification for visa extension

The School also processes (one-file) family visas - i.e. effectivity/ expiry of individual documents of family members fall on the same dates. All application fees must be borne by the teacher. The service charge for processing family visa is 500 baht per person.

## Work Permit



The school assists Full Time Teachers and Permanent Substitutes with the procurement of an appropriate work permit after the teacher has secured a non-immigrant visa. Costs of renewal of subsequent visas and work permits will be paid by the school.

A teacher's application for a Work Permit to teach is submitted by the School to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

Once the Work Permit is granted, it is valid for one year from the date of issue -- as long as the Non-Immigrant Visa is effective, and as long as the school contract is in effect. To apply for the extension of a Work Permit, the passport must be presented. For this and other reasons (re-entry permits) it is not unusual for teachers to leave their passports in the hands of the school office staff responsible for renewing permits.

### Application Form for Teaching Permit

Please fill out the Form for Teaching Permit and send it back to us. The information on the form is needed for your application for the Thai Teaching Permit and Work Permit. We will prepare all paper work to be ready for you to sign when you come to Thailand so that we can submit an application for your Teaching Permit as soon as possible upon your arrival to Thailand.

After submitting application it usually takes about 1 - 1.5 months to get Thai teaching permit. After we receive your Thai teaching permit we will apply for your work permit which also takes about a month.  
download application for teaching permit

### Special Reminders

All communication/contact with the Immigration Division, Ministry of Education, and Labor Department shall be arranged through the school's Government Liaison Department. All communication/ contact with any embassy/ consulate shall be made personally by teachers.

#### • Directory of Embassies in Thailand

Re-entry permits should be obtained before leaving Thailand on holidays. The cost of re-entry permits are borne by the teacher (1000 baht for single entry and 3,500 baht for multiple entry). It is best not to pay for multiple entry until you receive your work permit because of the change in visa status.

## Degree, Transcript, Teaching Certificate or Teacher License

Please send copies of the above-mentioned to us and bring the original with you when you come to Thailand.

Verification of Teaching Experience or letter from your previous employers (school) if any

Please send us copies of the letter from your previous school(s) (on the school's stationary) stating your position and verifying the years you worked for them. (from when to when). Please bring the original with you when you come to Thailand. (Letter from your current school can be given to us when you come to Thailand.)

## Marriage License and Children's Birth Certificate



If your spouse comes to live with you in Thailand but he/she does not work for our school we need your marriage license. If your children come with you we need their birth certificate. Please bring the original with you when you come to Thailand. Marriage license and birth certificate are needed for visa extension of your spouse and children.

**Note:** For passport holder of Taiwan R.O.C. a House Registration is needed if your child come to live with you in Thailand. All documents need to be translated into English and get a stamp by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taiwan. If it's not convenient for you to get a stamp by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs you may have the stamp by Local Authority, but you will have to get another stamp by the Taipei Economic and Trade Office in Bangkok. In this case you will have to pay 600 Baht

## Medical Examination

Pre-employment medical examination is required. The expense for the annual medical exam cannot be reimbursed. The school will send the air ticket to teachers AFTER receiving the medical examination. You need to fill out the enclose Medical Exam Form. Getting whatever the doctor's standard form is also fine, as long as it meets the requirements below. The chest x-ray is to check for tuberculosis. In many places there are other types of tests -- any test will do as long as it shows that you do not have TB.

1. Vital Signs and Physical Examination
2. Chest X-ray
3. Complete Blood Count (CBC)
4. Hepatitis B: HBsAg
5. Liver Function
  - SGOT
  - SGPT
6. Urine Examination
7. Blood Chemistry
  - Diabetes - FBS
  - Kidney Function - Creatinine
  - Lipid Profile - Cholesterol
  - HDL
8. HIV test
9. Drug Test: Tetrahydrocannabinol, Methamphetamine

## Shipping & Shipping Clearance



New teachers (overseas hire) should NOT send things by air or by sea freight before the school confirms the completion of the work permit. It will be finished about one month after the completion of the teaching permit, around the end of October or November. Work permit has to be shown to customs for tax exemption. If you try to ship things in your name before you have a work permit, the box could be held up at customs for quite some time. It is quite expensive and slow to ship; much cheaper to buy what you need here.

Most airlines allow two pieces of checked-in luggage and one carry-on. The checked-in luggage will be charged extra if it exceeds 70 lbs. Most airlines will not accept any luggage weighing over 90 or 100 lbs. We suggest that you weigh your luggage before going to the airport. Since most airports in the US have weighing scales outside the departure area you should also weigh your luggage there before checking-in just to be sure.

*For 3 years now we have been using a Rubbermaid chest with wheels for our luggage everytime we travel from the US to Thailand. They only cost \$10-15 at Wal-Mart, are highly durable, and can be recycled as storage bins and coolers once we are in Thailand. It will also be useful if you decide to move or change apartments in Thailand. The Rubbermaid chest have a lot of room for bulky and irregular-shaped materials like towels, backpacks, sleeping bags, stuffed toys, kitchen tools, books, etc.*

*We also suggest that you put a label with the TCIS address and phone number on all your luggage. The Customs people at the airport will be more understanding if they know you are a teacher and the contents of your luggage are school materials. In case you lose your luggage or it is held for some reason, it will also be easier for the authorities to contact the TCIS office staff about it.*

*-- Brian and Tonette*

## What to Bring

We recommend that you bring a reasonable amount of cool, comfortable, and presentable clothes and footwear to wear to work.

The clothing -- including underwear -- sold in Thailand is generally smaller than clothing available in America. For women, American size 8 is about the largest dress size you will find out, but 6 is the norm. For men, the largest pant size is usually a 38. Women may purchase shoes up to size 8 or 8.5, but again, that is the largest and is less often available. There is no need for winter clothing as the temperature is always warm. You may wish to bring a sweater or light coat for trips up north or for air-conditioned buses.

It is easy and quite cheap to have clothing made here. A wide-variety of material such as silk is available in shops, stalls and malls throughout the city. Finding a seamstress or tailor is not difficult. They can generally duplicate an item that you have or work from a picture.

The towels sold in Thailand are not absorbent so bring a couple with you. Bring a flat sheet, too. It is not advisable to bring fitted bedsheets until you have picked your apartment as the dimensions of Thai beds are different, although they are similar to double, queen, and king sizes.

Bring your golf set, too, if you are an avid golfer like some of our teachers who play golf every Friday in Thana City.

Everything else is easy to find and buy or order in Bangkok. This includes US brands of groceries, cosmetics, toiletries, contact lens solution, etc. There are many substitutes imported from other countries. If you are taking a specific brand of medication or contraceptives that may not be available in Thailand, you might want to bring at least a year's supply. Excedrin is not sold in Thailand, but Advil is. The same applies for feminine products like tampons, and diet products, although Equal is widely available here.

Film, diskettes, CDs, memory sticks and the like are sold everywhere, usually at a much cheaper price.

Correspond with one of our teachers if you need to be more specific on what is available in Thailand or not, especially when it comes to teaching materials. It is always good to be armed with books, videos, CDs, and other teaching tools that you are already familiar with because you will be spending more of your time looking for apartments and getting oriented with Thailand and TCIS than planning your lessons for the first week of classes.

## What to Wear

To be a teacher in Thailand is to be in a place of honor. School is considered a second home, and teachers are like second parents to their students. Teachers are to live an exemplary life before their students, their parents and the community.

The rule of thumb is you must be dressed so you can enter a Buddhist temple. Women teachers wear dresses, skirts, and pants that are standard for teachers in US schools. Women should be considerate to the Asian staff, parents, and students who may be offended by clothes that reveal cleavage or too much skin such as low-necklines, spaghetti straps, short skirts, mini tops that expose navels, etc.



Male teachers wear shoes, pants, and shirts with collars. Some men who find shoes too hot wear sandals with socks instead. Ties are not required but wearing one is judged as "professional" by many in the community. Coats are only worn during graduation and prom ceremonies.

Jeans are not allowed except on "no uniform day" during the last Friday of the month. PE teachers, sports coaches, advisers during school activity days may wear T-shirts and shorts of a modest length to teach.

It is hot in here, and although the offices and classrooms are air-conditioned some women teachers opt to wear short sleeves and cool clothes.

## Electrical

The voltage in Thailand is 220 volts compared to 110 volts used in the United States. Most appliances are readily available in Thailand including hairdryers, stereos, microwaves, toasters and even crock-pots. Some furnished apartments may come with TV, dishwashers, and even microwaves, and toasters. In addition, transformers are also readily available in a variety of sizes at reasonable cost.

Do not bring a surge protector from the United States unless you know it is rated to handle 220 volts. Surge protectors are readily available in Thailand.

## Electronics

Read this before packing your videos and DVDs. Thailand uses the PAL system for tape coding while the United States uses NTSC. Multi system VCRs can be purchased in Thailand for around US\$100. This means that you can play tapes from the United States, however, some homemade videotapes from the United States (NTSC) may not play back on some of the Multi-system VCRs.

VHS-C and 8mm blank tapes for camcorders are available in Thailand. Even if the label says PAL, you can use these blank tapes in an NTSC camcorder. However, if you are planning on bringing a camcorder from the United States you will not be able to make copies of tapes using the Multi-system VCRs in Thailand. If you plan on buying a camcorder in Thailand (PAL- for at least 50% more than USA prices), you will not be able to play your homemade tapes on VCRs in the United States. Basically, homemade and camcorder tapes

need to be converted from PAL to NTSC or from NTSC to PAL. This can be expensive as stores in the United States charge about \$30 per tape to transfer. If you bring a digital video camera and buy a desktop computer here for US\$600, you can avoid the whole format issue and use software to make CDs of any format you like.

Non-Educational DVDs are widely available and very reasonably priced. If you wanted to bring educational DVDs remember that DVDs in the US play on Zone 1 players. DVD players in Thailand are technically supposed to be Zone 3, but most models play DVDs from all zones. It is possible to convert a one-zone DVD player to play all zones. Many licensed and unlicensed DVDs sold in Thailand nowadays are "all-zones."

Digital and film cameras are 30-50% more expensive here, but there has been some recent reduction in prices. (Fuji and Kodak films are widely available and processing is the normal price if not a bit cheaper than in the US.) The prices are because of import duties, so bring your own camera and don't claim it on the customs form you will be given on the airplane!

Stereos and Walkmans get the same taxation, so bring your own and double check the adapter before you plug it into the wall! You can get any voltage adapter you need here at a low price. Before you hoist that home theater receiver into a crate though, be aware that good audio equipment is also available here for that same 30-50% more than USA prices, in other words cheaper than the cost of shipping the heavy things!

## Pets



Bringing pets in and out of the country is not practical. There is increased security in airports and airlines so check with your airlines regarding shipping pets. Quarantines may also be required. It is better to purchase them in Thailand but check also with the apartments regarding rules in keeping pets.

At the Nouvelle Condominium in Thana City many tenants are permitted to keep pets like cats and dogs by their respective landlords. However, the Nouvelle management also restricts ownership of pets to certain sizes and discourages owners from letting their animals roam freely.

You may also reconsider keeping pets if you plan to do a lot of traveling as there are many holidays and occasions for going away for days.

Should you decide to bring or keep a pet with you there are alternatives, such as the Nobel housing subdivision where units have small yards. There are, of course, pet care clinics and kennel boarding services that will babysit pets as Thais love pets. You don't have to go to a dog show to see how Thais pamper their pooches. There is one dog in Nouvelle who gets pushed around in a baby pram.

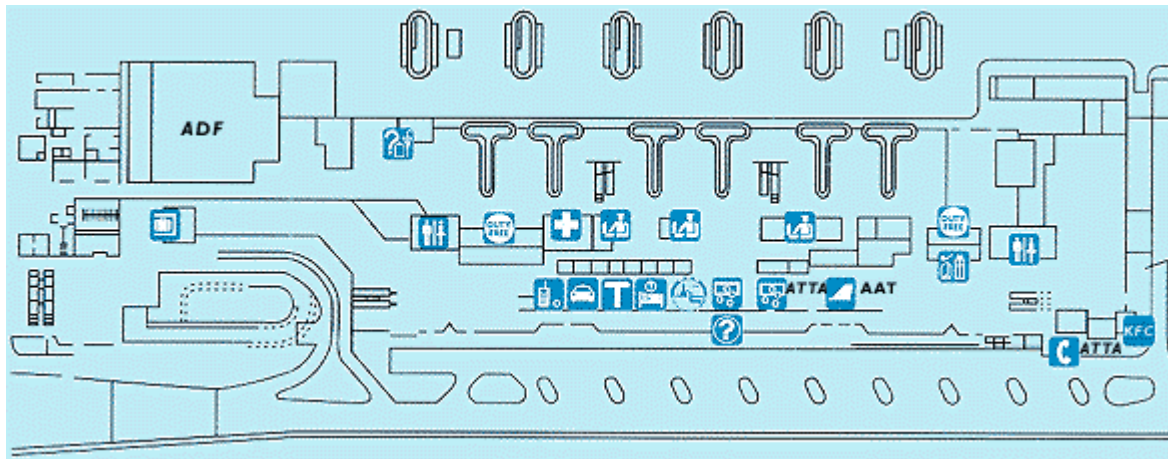
## Flight & Arrival

The date when you will be coming over will be about August 1. We will send your airline tickets as soon as we receive copies of your medical exam, transcripts, credentials, and verification of employment.

If possible we'll arrange for everyone to be on the same flight from the US or Canada to Bangkok, so you'll have a chance to talk and bond with other new teachers before you get here.

## Bangkok Int'l Airport

Once you arrive at the Don Muang International Airport of Bangkok you'll pass through passport and baggage checks. Follow the crowd and after clearing Customs you will enter the Arrival Hall. The welcome party for TCIS will be waiting for you at the meeting point (number 12 in the airport facilities map whether you are arriving in Terminal 1 or 2). Your transportation will either be an air-conditioned bus or van, depending on the number of people arriving. Below is the arrival area in Terminal 2.



## ***Housing in Thana City***

We will arrange for places for you to stay either at a hotel (about \$15/night, a your own expense), or hopefully, in with the teachers in their apartments for free.



You will have a number of days to find an apartment, and we will help connect you with people who are looking to rent. Most overseas hires from North America and Taiwan stay in Thana City on their first months or year in Thailand. There are three condominium complexes within Thana City, and monthly rent is as low as 5,000 baht for unfurnished townhouses in Thana Place; to 10,000-20,000 baht for furnished one or two-bedroom apartments in **Nouvelle Condominium**. Prestige Condominium is in the 25,000 and above range.

TCIS and Thana City are somewhat distanced from the action of the city (30 km), especially if traffic is bad (1-2 hours or longer on Fridays and holidays). Thana City is great for newcomers though, and it can be seen as the best of both worlds: access to Bangkok from a quiet, serene, green, (somewhat deserted), amenities-rich housing complex. It all depends on what you want, and what you're comfortable with. Thana City has some wonderful aspects, and its supreme convenience to school is very hard to beat. You can generally move into Thana City within a few days of arriving.

## ***Nouvelle Condominium***

Majority of teachers from overseas live in Nouvelle Condominium (NC). There are six duplex condo towers, marked buildings A to F, all within walking distance. Each duplex has its own swimming pool (one half of Olympic size), lobby with 24-hour security and security cameras, covered parking, mini-gymn, and ping-pong room. There are mini-restaurants, mini-grocery stores, bars, laundry service, and beauty parlors in both Buildings A and C. Traditional Thai massage service and a day-care center are also available at Building A.

## ***Outside Thana City***

Many teachers who have been around longer (American and various Asian nationalities) do not live in Thana City. Some live far away because that's where they lived before coming to TCIS, some live in Bangkok, some live in other housing complexes out here near school. If you want to live downtown, or at least closer to it, you definitely have options, so long as you're willing to rough it in a hotel while you're looking for a place.

## ***Living in Bangkok near the Skytrain Route***

(contributed by Mechum)

It's hard to beat living near the Skytrain for one. It is a traffic-free route to many very cool places in the city. The part of the Skytrain that is nearest school (SE side) is the On Nut end of the Sukhumvit line, which would be stops Phrom Phong, Thong Lo, Ekkamai, Phra Kanong, and On Nut. These are Sukhumvit Sois 26 up to 71 or so, in the districts of Bangkok known as Khlong Toey and Wattana.

Other areas not on the Skytrain route but closer to town and TCIS would include Bang-Na and Srinakarin Roads. By the way, there is a proposed extension to the Skytrain that would run out to the New International Airport...which is in Thana City's backyard. Unfortunately It would be many years in the making...

## Money & Banking



You will be paid the settling in allowance upon your arrival, but it is highly recommended to come with about \$1,000 in cash that you can change at the airport. This extra cash will supplement your allowance and help pay for the deposit (equivalent to two months' rent) of your apartment. You can bring credit cards, and these are accepted almost everywhere but will be charged 2% for overseas expenses. Very few transactions accept checks; even utility bills are best paid in cash. Traveler's checks tend to be inconvenient, too. There are international ATM machines everywhere and they will disperse Baht from your foreign account at an optimal rate!

TCIS will bring new overseas teachers to the Bank of Ayudhya to open an account. Salaries are paid out in baht monthly (on the last working day of each month) during the calendar year and may be directly deposited in the teacher's bank account. The exchange rate is based on what is published by the Bangkok Post every 15th day of the month.

You may choose between regular ATM card or a Visa Electron debit card. Debit cards take a month to process but they are rather useful for shopping and can also be used to withdraw money from ATMs in other countries when teachers go on holidays. For this reason some teachers open two accounts and mail the second ATM card to families in their home country, and use this method to send money home.

The school cashier goes to the bank thrice weekly and it is customary for teachers to make deposits, withdrawals, and pay their rent through her. You may also exchange your money for other currencies, e.g. dollar, baht, etc.

## Sending Money

*Check the Western Union it has Money Transfer offices in many major department stores, including most all branches of Central, the big department store chain. You can also transfer money to all major banks.*

*Money can be wired through the bank for a fee (maybe \$30 but ask Kara because she does this and knows the fee). Several teachers have opened a second bank account and sent the ATM card back home to a family member to withdraw money in their own country then deposit it into the teacher's account at home. Sometimes the ATM cards have been found to be faulty and not work at home, but it's worth a try as the fee is much less than wiring money. It is also possible to send a money order. The bank charges about B150 for one.*

*-- Tara*

*First I would like to congratulate you on your new position! You definitely made a good choice coming here. If you are curious about "Sending money back home" for bills, loans, whatever, I think the best thing to do is to set up two accounts at the bank our school provides us. Have one account that the school deposits money into. And also have a second account, with the same bank, to put money for bills into. So you're basically transferring money from your main account into a second account. Send the ATM card from the second account to your home country and have a friend/ family member take money out from it, and deposit it into your home bank. I would start setting up an automatic withdrawal from your home account to the institutions you owe money to. Sending checks overseas is not only unsafe, but very time consuming. I pay my bills this way and its very easy. Or you can just have the bank here in Thailand "wire" money to your home account, but its \$25 U.S dollars a wire. That gets expensive. I hope that helps some of you out! Can't wait to meet all of you in a few months!*

*--Adam*

## Orientation

New teachers go through a pre-orientation on Aug. 1-6 so that briefings, legal procedures, meetings and housing searches can be scheduled. This website and equivalent infokit handout aims to answer the most common concerns and questions of new teachers from overseas.



Two or three working days before the opening of school in August are designated as Teacher Orientation days. Depending on the year, Orientation may take place either on- or off-campus. Consultants may sometimes be brought in to lead Orientation or our own teachers may be asked to lead workshops. Administrators plan Orientation days with suggestions from the Teachers.

The purposes of Orientation are to:

1. Enable teachers to prepare their classrooms
2. Lay the groundwork for staff teamwork and plan jointly at the department level
3. Review current procedures, policies and schedules for all teachers
4. Share overall goals for the school year

This school year all teachers are expected to attend the Orientation on Aug. 9-11. Classes and student orientation will begin on Aug. 13, the day after the Queen's birthday.

*Not directly related to the orientation is the "unofficial" staff bonding trip that some teachers organize for the new arrivals. In the past three years this involved a weekend trip to the white sandy beaches of Koh Samed, the favorite weekend getaway of many TCIS teachers. The official staff bonding trip follows a couple of weeks after school starts. This usually takes place in a resort hotel and teachers may bring their families.*

