

Thailand and Myanmar: The Challenges of Development

1. How to prepare for the trip:

- a. **Packing:** Packing your bags requires strategic planning. Because we will be moving almost daily from one location to another throughout the trip, we recommend that you travel lightly. It will be warm, though not unbearably hot, in both Thailand and Myanmar during our stay. So pack mostly light summer wear. As it might get cool at night in Northern Thailand, bring along a long sleeve shirt or light sweater/sweatshirt. Please dress respectably – no torn jeans or anything too revealing, please. When we visit wats (temples) you should wear long pants (or skirts/dresses for the women if you choose). Do not forget to bring one semi formal wear for contingency (dress/skirt for women, decent looking pants and shirt for men). Women are also advised to bring at least one loose fitting, mid-calf length skirt (for ease of sitting on the floor for a traditional Thai meal in Chiang Mai).

You will be required to remove shoes to enter temples and some other religious sites, so some people like to wear shoes that are easy to slip on and off. Flip-flops or other slippers without a heel strap, however, are not advised. A pair of shoes like Tevas are recommended because they have a strap on the heel – necessary to enter certain temple grounds (e.g. Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok). Further, you will want some sort of shoe that can get wet (e.g. when we are bathing the elephants in Northern Thailand).

Although we will be staying in nice hotels, none of them have alarm clocks in the rooms. We will arrange wake up calls, but if you want to have some more flexibility, you might want to bring along a small battery operated alarm clock.

Finally, when we are on the road (i.e. not in our hotel rooms), the toilet facilities are not always up to the standards that we have here. Often times, the only option will be a squat toilet with a bucket of water to flush. You are well advised (by members of last year's trip) to bring along some toilet paper – one roll should be plenty.

- b. **First Aid and Personal Hygiene:** Items to consider bringing along include insect repellents, sanitizing gel (e.g. Neosporin), bandaids, suntan lotion, personal hygiene items, anti-histamines for any allergic reactions, and painkillers. Also bring your preferred anti-diarrhea medication (e.g. Immodium), something to soothe your stomach (e.g. Peptol Bismol), and something for re-hydration, i.e. to replace loss of mineral salts in your body in the event of severe diarrhea. Prof. Rinehart and I will also have a well-stocked first aid kit.

You may also want to bring along a small bottle of hand sanitizer. You won't always have access to clean water with which to wash your hands before eating or after getting them all sticky after eating some scrumptious juicy fruit!

- c. **Electricity:** Electric currents in both Thailand and Myanmar flow at 220 volts and 50 cycles. Most electrical appliances made for use in the USA requires 110 volts and 60 cycles of current. If you plan to use an electric shaver, CD-walkman, cell phone, video camera, alarm clock, etc. that require periodic charges, remember to purchase a voltage converter that can step down the current from 220 volts to 110 volts for the trip.
- d. **Money:** ATM's are prevalent in Bangkok and, in our view, are the preferred way to acquire local currency (you get the bank exchange rate and are charged a reasonable fee). In Myanmar you will not be able to use ATMs or credit cards at all, so you will need some cash. Crisp 100 and 50 dollar bills are preferred by the money changers. You will need money for most lunches and dinners (all of our breakfasts are covered in our hotel packages), beverages, occasional taxis, souvenirs, etc.

2. Do's and Don'ts:

Do's:

- Be considerate
- Be responsible
- Be aware and respectful of different traditions
- Be a good representative of Lafayette
- Show up on time when asked to do so
- Bargain when buying things (except food)
- Have a good time!

Don't's:

- Eat any uncooked vegetables or fruit that cannot be peeled!!!
- Drink water out of the tap
- Be loud and obnoxious
- Be aggressive or lose your cool
- Get frustrated when things don't go as planned
- Wear revealing clothes
- Touch anyone on the head or reach over anyone's head
- Point with toes
- Don't touch a monk – for women