



# **TEFL JOBS IN THAILAND**

**A Guide to Teaching  
English in Thailand**



**CHIANG MAI**

**BANGKOK**

**PHUKET**

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A Guide to Teaching  
English in Thailand

For people who regard quality of life as more important than how much you earn, Thailand is perhaps Asia's top TEFL destination.

There are plenty of jobs, the wages are pretty good, the cost of living is low and teaching in Thailand allows TEFLers to explore the country. Add that to the fact that Thai people are genuinely outgoing and welcoming and it's easy to see why Thailand is such a top TEFL destination.

## TEFL Jobs in Thailand: A Little Background

Thailand is famous in the West for two main things: tourism and political unrest. Luckily for TEFL teachers, Thailand's second claim to fame doesn't seem to have any negative effect on the first. Despite a recent history of military coups and civil protest, a growing number of people choose to visit the country each year. This growth in tourism, and the comparative wealth it affords those who manage to jump onboard the gravy train has lead to an ever-increasing demand for trained TEFL teachers.

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## Opportunities for TEFL Teachers

The English Language market in Thailand is well established and well organised: newcomers to the country are guaranteed to find lots of opportunities in local newspapers

and job sites. A well respected TEFL qualification will make finding a TEFL job a little easier and will set you up for the challenges ahead.





## TEFL Jobs Hotspots in Thailand

There are opportunities to teach English in pretty much every town and city in Thailand. We've chosen the three cities below because of the sheer number of jobs and because they each offer a slightly different insight into modern life in Thailand.



### Bangkok

Bangkok is home to a huge and well organized TEFL industry. There are thousands of language schools across the city, as well as TEFL jobs in universities, state schools and private business colleges. The Bangkok Post and [www.ajarn.com](http://www.ajarn.com) are always full of TEFL jobs and the demand for people with a respected TEFL certificate seems to be growing all the time. Despite the seemingly constant demonstrations and problems the city faces, Bangkok remains one of the world's truly great cities.

### Chiang Mai

Not only is Chiang Mai awash with language schools and TEFL jobs, it's also one of the most attractive and laid back cities in the country. In fact when you speak to Thais in Bangkok or Southern Thailand, a major topic of conversation will be whether you've been to Chiang Mai, and if not when will you be going. People from all over Northern Thailand (and Laos) come to Chiang Mai to learn English (primarily to get involved in Thailand's huge tourist industry). The demand for teachers in Chiang Mai is sky high and the city is a lot less politically volatile than the capital, Bangkok. It's also a good base to explore the hill country of northern Thailand.

### Phuket

Think of Phuket and one thing should spring to mind: tourism. Many people who visit Thailand will fly straight into Phuket airport, head off to a beach somewhere and then fly back out of Phuket. And while they're in the country, they



won't expect to have to learn any of the local lingo. Which is why Phuket is such a great place for TEFL teachers. Not only are there lots of Thais who want to get involved in the tourism industry, but teaching English in Phuket during the week allows you to spend the weekends chilling out on the palm-fringed beaches of Phuket Island, Koh Phi Phi and Koh Lanta.

## Show Me the Money! Wages and Cost of Living in Thailand Wages

Obviously that depends on your level of training and experience, but with a degree, a respected TEFL qualification and all the relevant paperwork you can expect to earn a starting salary of around 30,000 Baht a month, but that could be as high as 60,000 depending on your experience and the location of the school.



### Cost of Living

Living in Thailand is pretty cheap. A decent apartment in Bangkok would maybe set you back 7,000 Baht a month, in other cities and rural areas it will probably be about half that amount. All the fun stuff is pretty cheap in Thailand too. A tasty two course meal at a local night market and a freezing cold Singha beer or two won't set you back more than around 150-200 Baht. Trains, buses, internal flights and ferries are pretty cheap too. And once you've eased yourself into the Thai way of life and learnt how to haggle a little, life will get even more affordable.

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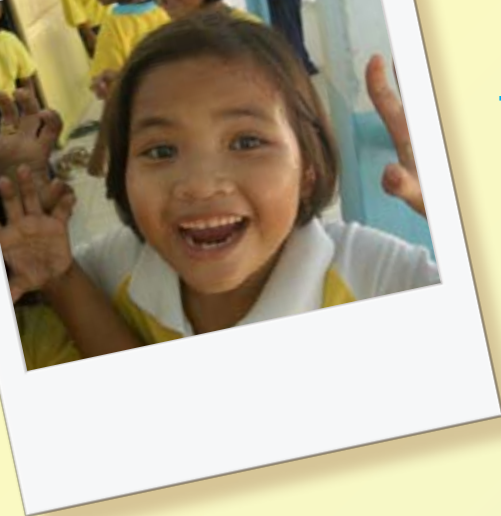
### Accommodation

Most teachers in Thailand live in small studio apartments. The main difference you'll find is that some Thai apartments don't have kitchens, as street food is so cheap and readily available. Wherever you live in Thailand, one thing will remain constant: don't expect the usual Western style toilet, in all parts of Asia the squat toilet is the norm. Don't worry you'll get used to it pretty quickly.

### Flight Reimbursement

The chances of your employers paying for your flights up front are pretty slim. But if you negotiate your contract well, there is a chance that the cost of your flights will be paid back as an end of contract bonus.





## Taxes

The amount of tax you pay really depends on how much you earn. But unless you're earning a fortune, the Thai taxman will take somewhere between 10% and 20%.

## Potential to Save Money

Although wages are relatively low, so is the cost of living. So if you earn a good salary, stay away from expensive imported goods, eat street food rather than dining out in restaurants and give the nightlife a rest from time to time, you should be able to save a little money.

## How Much TEFL Training is Recommended?

First things first, you will need a degree to teach in Thailand. Without one you won't be able to get the relevant work visas, so you'll have to work illegally. Not a good plan: working illegally increase the risk of getting ripped off, and Thailand is not a good place to be a criminal! As for TEFL certification, it is sometimes possible to get teaching jobs without a TEFL certificate,

but because of the sheer number of people who want to teach in Thailand, competition is fierce: so you'll be in a much better position if you're TEFL certified.

## Common Teaching Conditions

Conditions can vary depending on where you're teaching and who you work for. So if it's possible, negotiate your working conditions and timetable with your employers before accepting a contract. In general you should expect to work between 25 and 40 hours a week and you may have to work some weekends. A relaxed and positive attitude is a must, as Thais value a 'jai yen' (cool heart) and your students will respond better to a teacher with a sense of fun.



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## Anything to Be Wary of

Be careful to never touch one of your students on the head – a sacred part of the body to Thai people. Bangkok can be noisy, polluted and unbelievably fast paced, so be prepared for a sensory overload.

## Working and Visas

### Finding TEFL Jobs from Home

If you're a first time TEFL teacher and feel you need a little support, take a look at supported programs like our Teach in Thailand Internship where you'll be well looked after by our partners in Thailand. If you choose to go it alone, you'll need to search the web for opportunities, then send a copy of your resume, along with a photograph, a photocopy of the relevant page of your passport, a copy of your degree and any references. Most recruiters will then interview successful candidates by phone.



### Finding TEFL Jobs in Thailand

Thailand is a relatively easy place to find work, especially if you have an accredited TEFL certificate. Once you're in the country, it is often just a matter of photocopying your resume a few times and making appointments with language schools and recruitment agencies. Make sure you have a few passport photos handy too – you'll probably need them for your application form.

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If you plan to stay in Bangkok, take a little time to acclimatize to the place first: spend a week or so enjoying the city and seeing the sites to work out if Bangkok is the place for you. The last thing you want to do is sign up to a year long contract, then realize that you can't stand the thought of a year in such a crazy place! Check out the Bangkok Post, the Nation and [www.ajarn.com](http://www.ajarn.com) for the latest information. Or pop into the bars on the Khao San Road for a beer or two and you're bound to find a table full of TEFLers swapping stories: they'll usually be able to

point you in the right direction. The Hole in The Wall pub has always been a real TEFL hangout – they do decent food too.

## Job Interviews

Thai schools REALLY appreciate it if you dress smartly. In fact if you turn up dressed in shorts and a t-shirt and looking like you just got off the night bus from Krabi, you've got no hope whatsoever of landing the job. So iron that shirt, polish those shoes, and make sure you're absolutely spotless when you head for interviews.



## Getting Your Visa

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The visa system in Thailand is incredibly complicated. In order to teach there you need a teacher's license (from the Thai Ministry of Education), a work permit (from the Thai Labor Department) and a one-year visa (from the Thai Immigration Dept) – you get your visa on the strength of having your work permit. The good news is that employers help you get the correct visa and do a lot of the paperwork for you. There is a good guide here that covers a lot of the most common questions about Thai visas: <http://www.ajarn.com/help-and-guides/work-permit-visa-faq/> Whatever happens with the whole visa application process, DO NOT try to work in Thailand without the relevant visas - it will not end well!

## Requirements for a Working Visa:

- ★ A valid passport
- ★ A university degree with Thai translation
- ★ A work permit
- ★ A teacher's license
- ★ Medical certificates
- ★ TEFL certificate
- ★ Up to 24 passport photos!
- ★ Information about your employer (map, school principal's license, etc.)

## Useful Links

[www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com)  
[www.eslbase.com](http://www.eslbase.com)  
[www.tefl.com](http://www.tefl.com)  
[www.tefl.net](http://www.tefl.net)  
[www.ajarn.com](http://www.ajarn.com)

## Useful Books

### **Teaching English Abroad by Susan Griffith**

This is something of a Bible for TEFLers and will give you all the info you'll need to get started.



# Notes



