



**THAILAND
HOLIDAYS AND EVENTS**



Thailand has Government and religious holidays throughout the year. Being a Buddhist country, major religious holidays are also Government holidays. Many religious holidays are based on the lunar calendar. Consequently, the date will fluctuate from year to year.

On Government holidays, government offices and main bank branches are closed; if the date is on the weekend, they will close on the following Monday (a substitution day). The Government has also been known to declare additional days at times for some holidays. July 1 of each year is a Bank Holiday where only the banks are closed; if it falls on the weekend, there is no substitution day.

Entertainment and shopping venues will usually be open on most holidays. However, on some of the major holidays, the Government may declare a ban on the sale of alcohol. When this happens, some entertainment businesses may be closed and those that are open will not be serving alcohol; e.g., Makha Bucha Day and the, King’s Birthday.

Also, Thai law prohibits the sale of alcohol on Election Day; this ban starts the evening before Election Day (Saturday) and continues till midnight of Election Day (Sunday). Although technically illegal, some bars and restaurants may start serving alcohol on Sunday after the polls have closed. The ban also applies to private parties, but we have not heard of any reports of enforcement of that provision against foreigners.

April is the summer holidays for most schools and may begin as early as mid-March and end as late as early May. There will be a lot of families traveling during this period. Schools are also on holiday for about 3 weeks in October.

Some areas of Thailand will have recurring annual events and celebrations. As with holidays, some events are based on the lunar calendar. These will generally be about the same time each year, but can fluctuate into a preceding or succeeding month. Also, many local events take place during the same month each year, but the local officials will select the dates for that year’s events as little as a month or two before the event.



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THAILAND

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS - 2012



<u>DATE</u>	<u>DAY</u>	<u>EVENT</u>
January 1	Sunday	New Year's Day
January 2	Monday	Substitution for New Year's Eve (Saturday, December 31) and New Year's Day
March 7	Wednesday	Makha Bucha Day - Religious Festival celebrated by Buddhists
April 6	Friday	Chakri Day - Commemorates the founding of the Chakri Dynasty (King Rama I in 1782)
April 13	Friday	Songkran Festival in most of Thailand ¹
April 16	Monday	Substitution day for Songkran Festival (Public Holiday) ²
May 1	Tuesday	National Labor Day
May 5	Saturday	Coronation Day - Commemorates the coronation of King Bhumibol Adulyadej as King Rama IX
May 7	Monday	Substitution day for Coronation Day
June 4	Monday	Wisakha Bucha Day – Commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and passing of the Buddha
August 2	Thursday	Asarnha Bucha Day -Buddhist Festival to commemorate the Buddha's first sermon
August 12	Sunday	Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday (also celebrated as Mother's Day)
August 13	Monday	Substitution day for HM the Queen's Birthday
October 23	Tuesday	Chulalongkorn Day – Commemorates the 1910 passing of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V)
December 5	Wednesday	HM the King's Birthday (also celebrated as Father's Day)
December 10	Monday	Constitution Day – Commemorates the first permanent constitution (1932)
December 31	Monday	New Year's Eve

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¹ Pattaya and Banglamung will each designate a later date for official observance of Songkran – for more information – see the Songkran topic for more information.

² Songkran continues on Saturday and Sunday – when there are two public holidays falling on the weekend, there is usually only one substitution day for Government Offices and Banks to be closed.

SOME MAJOR EVENTS IN THAILAND - 2012

23rd January 2012 - Monday - Chinese New Year Day

The beginning of the Chinese lunar year is celebrated in every city throughout Thailand. Some businesses close for the day, but it is not a national holiday. It is sometimes called the Lunar New Year. The festival traditionally begins on the first day of the first lunar month in the Chinese calendar. In Pattaya, there will be several celebrations put on by the City and businesses featuring dragon dancers and other forms of entertainment.



10th May 2012 - Thursday - Royal Plowing Ceremony

Some Government Offices may be closed on Monday. Ancient royal rite held to mark the traditional beginning of the rice growing season. It is held at Sanam Luang in Bangkok. This event is usually televised.



25th November 2012 - Monkey Party in Lopburi

Lopburi is home to countless monkeys that have adapted to life in an urban environment. The annual festival takes place on the last weekend in November. Last year the locals provided around 2,000 kilograms of food because they believe donating the food will bring them good fortune.



28th November 2012 - Monday - Loy Krathong

Loy Krathong is a very popular and romantic Thailand traditional festival. It is held on the night of the 12th full moon (usually in November). The festival is held to pay homage to the goddess of rivers and waterways. Loy translates to "float", while Krathong is the Thai word for a sort of small raft made out of banana leaves. Loy Krathong is celebrated by floating Krathongs decorated with flowers, candles and incense on just about any waterway in the kingdom. It has a romantic origin. In 13th century Sukhothai, according to legend, Nang Nopamas, a royal consort of King Ramkhamhaeng (the founder of Sukhothai), made the first Krathong as an offering to Mae Nam (water goddess). She set it afloat on one of the palace canals so that it would drift past her lover the king. The king was delighted with the creation. This was the origins of the saying that if two lovers set a Krathong adrift and it stays afloat until out of sight, their love will last forever. It is an evening when Thais float candlelit offerings on any and all waterways around the kingdom. Many hotels, restaurants, and other venues will be holding Loy Krathong events. Many Krathongs are available for sale at all the beaches in Pattaya.



October 2012 - Buffalo Racing, Chonburi

Chonburi is the provincial capital of Chonburi Province, which includes Pattaya. The Chonburi Buffalo Races is a very popular annual event. The water buffaloes are decorated with colorful clothes, ornaments and flower garlands before competing in the event. The Chonburi Buffalo Race has its origin in the buffalo trade that took place in the past. Chonburi was the trade center of eastern Thailand. The water buffaloes accompanied the merchants and pulled along the cargo carts. After the end of the trading days, merchants indulged in fun and merriment by arranging the buffalo contests before returning home. The Chonburi Buffalo race has since then followed tradition and so people throng Chonburi to view this colorful event. The jockey rides bareback astride the water buffalo's rump, slaps him with a switch and bumps along on his steed down a 130-meter (427-foot) strip. The day's events, which also include a buffalo beauty pageant, a Miss Farmer beauty contest and a comic buffalo costume contest, exemplify a favored Thai attitude to life — "sanuk," meaning fun. Pattaya City Expat Club members have been invited to attend the race the past few years as a guest of the Provincial Government.



October 2012 - Rup Bua Festival, Samut Prakan

Bang Phli is a district in Samut Prakan which has an abundance of lotuses. The morning of the 14th full-moon night of October is the day before the end of the Buddhist Lent. Buddhists come here to pick the flowers for offerings to monks according to tradition. The people of Bang Phli regard this as great merit so they volunteer to keep the flowers for distribution to visitors who row to the district to receive them every year. This tradition has become the "Rap Bua" (lotus receiving) festival.

October 2012 - Phra Samut Chedi Temple Fair, Samut Prakan

Every year during October, Samut Prakan City has its annual Temple fair and parade. The parade goes out from City Hall to the market. It will return to the City Hall again and then go on the boat to the other side of the river.



November 2012 - Surin Elephant Round Up

Surin has been the location for annual Elephant round up since 1955. It is usually held in November. It is one of the most exciting spectacles of the year in Thailand. Surin is known as the province of elephants. The people here are well known for their skills in rounding up wild elephants, training and taming them. Each year, more than one hundred elephants take part in the festival, displaying their grace, strength and intelligence in games of soccer, log carrying and tug-of-war. The highlight of the festival is a dramatic mock battle. If you plan to go, book your tour or hotel early as most lodging will have been reserved well in advance.



THAI NEW YEAR SONGKRAN



Thailand has three New Year Celebrations each year. The first is the beginning of the new year according to the Western calendar (1 January) - the one that is celebrated throughout the world. The second is Chinese New Year (Lunar date), which usually occurs in February and is celebrated in much of Asia and Asian communities around the globe. The third is the Thai New Year known as Songkran (Lunar date). It is usually celebrated in April over a 3 day period - this holiday is often referred to as the water festival.

Most Thais try to return to their hometowns and villages during the Songkran period. Consequently, many businesses close during the period or operate with reduced staff. The day before and after the Songkran period, public transport (buses and trains) will be extremely crowded.

Traditional Songkran involves paying respect to ones elders and ceremoniously pouring water over their hands. Other ceremonies include the pouring of water over the hands of monks. However, it has also evolved into a water throwing festival where anyone out in the open is fair game to get wet - from buckets of water, water hoses, water guns, etc. Pattaya especially seems to have gone overboard with the water throwing.

For the past several years, the Club has set aside a regular Sunday meeting to carry out a traditional Songkran ceremony. Many communities designate one of the three days as their official day of celebration. Pattaya and Banglamung usually designate a date after the regular period to observe Songkran – often on the following weekend with one on Saturday and the other on Sunday. These dates are usually announced during February or March.



Although Pattaya and Banglamung officials declare their one official day, the City's residents and visitors start the celebration on the first day it is observed in Thailand and continue through the following

official dates; thus, the celebration in Pattaya and Banglamung is usually over a week long period instead of just 3 days.



Some Expats love it, while others hate it. The ones that hate it do so because for a week long period, if you dare venture out during the day, you will get wet. Although the water throwing is supposed to stop at sundown, there are always a few diehards that continue past that time. It is also not so much the water as it is the talcum powder that is also thrown on all and sundry. Those that do not enjoy the holiday often choose this time of year to visit their home country or elsewhere outside of Thailand or other communities in Thailand where the celebration is milder and limited.

If you visit during Songkran and venture out - take a few precautions. Wear clothes that you do not mind getting drenched and covered in pasty goo. Place your wallet and mobile telephone in plastic bags that can be sealed. If you have any important papers, documents, or other items that you do not want to get wet, also place them in plastic bags or other waterproof container. Then grin and bear it!

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