

# Tourism Culture and Its Development in Thailand--A Land of Smile

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**Abstract:** The unique Thai greeting has made this country famous for its tourism industry known as the Land of smiles. This paper will analyze the development of tourism in Thailand through the combination of culture and tourism, so that people can be more familiar with the tourism culture of Thailand.

**Keywords:** Tourism; Tourism Culture; A Tourist Attraction; Tourism Economy; Development

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## 1. Introduction

From the "four Asian Tigers" in the 1990s to the well-known "New Malaysia and Thailand", it is all related to Thailand's advantaged geographical location and superior tourism resources. The rapid development of tourism in Thailand has influenced its economy, culture and society.

## 2. History Of Thailand's Tourism Industry

Thailand's tourism industry started earlier in Asia, beginning in the 1950s and 1960s. The history of Thai tourism dates back to 1924, when the Royal Siam Railway established a public relations department to promote tourism. In 1959, the Thai Tourism Organization was established in the country, as well as Thai International Airways, which marked the gradual formation of the basic framework of Thai tourism. However, in the late 1970s, Thailand's economy fell into a downturn, and tourism became the main source of foreign currency acquisition <sup>[1]</sup>. With the development of the Asia-Pacific economy, the country's tourism also ushered in a period of recovery. From the 1990s, the country's tourism organization was upgraded to the National Tourism Administration of Thailand. By 2000, Thailand welcomed more than 10,000 foreign tourists and the total foreign currency income exceeded 7 billion US dollars, making remarkable achievements. Since then, Thailand's tourism industry has been at the forefront of Southeast Asia. In the past three years, due to some force majeure factors, the "tourism-oriented" country's economy plunged into a downturn again. By May 2022, the Thai government has taken various measures to attract more tourists and reopen the tourism industry; However, on October 1, the Thai government officially announced the cancellation of epidemic control measures and made full preparations for welcoming more overseas tourists <sup>[2]</sup>. Thailand's economy has since recovered. The National Tourism Authority of Thailand estimates that more than 25 million overseas tourists are expected by 2023.

## 3. Rich Tourism Resources

Thailand has many tourist attractions, rich in culture and history. There are various religious beliefs in Thailand, but Buddhism still occupies the mainstream of religious belief in Thai society. It can be seen from the many famous temples in Bangkok, including the Grand Palace - Chao Phraya River as the main line, throughout downtown Bangkok and its surrounding areas, becoming a tourist attraction. One of the most famous is the Grand Palais. Located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River in Bangkok, the Grand Palace is the royal palace of the Siamese royal family in Thailand. It has distinct characteristics of Siamese architecture art as well as architecture, sculpture and decoration art, which is highly praised by tourists from all over the world. Besides, Chiang Mai and Pattaya are also very popular tourist cities in Thailand.

## **4. Resources And Features Of Tourist Attractions**

Located in the middle of Indochina Peninsula, Thailand has a tropical rainforest climate, so it is rich in resources and rich in tropical fruits, mainly coconut, durian, etc., with high quality and low price. Animal and plant resources are also very rich, oak, elephants and so on. In addition, Thailand takes Buddhism as the main religious belief, and its overall tourism resources are mostly temples, almost all over the country. There are 72 provinces in Thailand, each of which has temples. These temples have their own characteristics, were built in different periods, and have a long national history.

There are also some taboos when visiting Thai temples. Both men and women who meet monks must perform namaste and give way to the monks to show respect. There is a Buddhist saying that the shadow is the monk himself. Therefore, pedestrians should watch their step so as not to step on the shadow of the monks<sup>[6]</sup>; Men should not go topless in temples, and women should not wear shorts or miniskirts. Secondly, Thai people believe that the head is the most sacred part. Touching other people's head and climbing the statue of Buddha are not allowed. These are all disrespectful behaviors.

## **5. Tourism Economy**

With the government's strong support and promotion, Thailand's tourism industry has become a great success, with the number of tourists from all over the world increasing. According to the country's official statistics, the total number of foreign tourists reached 13.8 million in 2006, with Central and East Asia accounting for 55.2%, Europe and the United States accounting for 25.3% and 6.7% respectively. In 2012, the number of Chinese tourists to Thailand exceeded one million, accounting for 14% of the total number of foreign tourists to Thailand, creating a staggering tourism income<sup>[3]</sup>, which far exceeded the level of 2011.

Thailand's main economic source besides agriculture is tourism. Tourism is a huge source of wealth for Thailand, accounting for 12-15% of GDP. According to statistics, in 2012, agriculture accounted for 12% of Thailand's gross domestic product (GDP), manufacturing accounted for 38%, and the service sector accounted for 50%, among which the service sector was mainly tourism. According to the statistics of Thai tourist arrivals and income from 2015 to 2019, the number of Thai tourists and tourism income increased year by year before 2019, but from 2020, affected by the epidemic, the tourism income of Thailand decreased by 82.6% year on year. The number of tourists fell 83.2 percent year-on-year. It was also a huge blow to Thailand's economy. But in late 2021, early 2022, the Thai government announced that it would open its doors and continue to accept tourists from all over the world in an effort to revive the economy. In 2022, Thailand's GDP growth rate will be 3.3%. In early 2023, the Center for Economic Management of Thailand adjusted the growth rate to 3.7%, which is expected to be higher.

## **6. The Impact of Tourism on Thailand**

### **6.1 The development of tourism drives the development of other industries.**

The development of tourism not only increases job opportunities but also increases national income. It has promoted the development of hotel service industry, transportation industry, commodity service industry and catering industry<sup>[4]</sup>. Southern Thailand and its northern islands, in particular, have seen large numbers of residents engaged in tourism, which has boosted economic development, raised incomes and improved quality of life.

### **6.2 Enhancing Thailand's visibility in the world.**

With the development of tourism, a large number of overseas tourists come to Thailand. Its rich resource advantages and cultural accomplishment make people have a deep memory of this Buddhist country. Mention beaches, sunshine, coconut trees and elephants, and Thailand quickly comes to mind. The development of tourism has made Thailand more and more well-known and fascinating.

### **6.3 Greatly develop tourism resources.**

The development of tourism makes use of Thailand's resources. In addition to the animal and plant resources mentioned above, Thailand also develops islands in different regions to create tourism resources with Southeast Asian characteristics, such as Koh Samui Island with coconut forest, Hua Hin and Phuket and other tourist resorts<sup>[4]</sup>.

## 7. Development Advantages and Prospects

### 7.1 Policy advantages

The initiative of "One Belt and One Road" has great influence on the development of Thai tourism. The opening of the Kunming-Bangkok high-speed railway and the sustainable development of China-Thailand friendly relations all play an important role in promoting the tourism of Thailand. In January 2023, China announced the relaxation of restrictions on outbound tourism. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Health of Thailand Anutin said, "We are very happy about the relaxation of travel restrictions in China. Since China relaxed travel restrictions on January 8, the number of Chinese tourists entering our country has been increasing, which is very gratifying. Thailand and China are members of the same family. Chinese tourists are an important pillar of Thailand's economic recovery. We will do our utmost to provide safe and comfortable travel experience for Chinese tourists. With the development of The Times, the film and television industry in Thailand has risen rapidly, and the Thai circle has also quickly joined the contemporary entertainment circle where Japanese and Korean entertainment are prevalent, becoming an emerging trend, which has also become an important driving force for the future development of Thailand's tourism industry. Finally, the implementation of "Thailand 4.0 strategy" and the development of science and technology will further develop tourism and transform traditional tourism into intelligent tourism.

### 7.2 Location advantage

Thailand is located in the middle of Indochina Peninsula, adjacent to Myanmar and Laos in the north and Cambodia in the southeast. Its territory extends along the Kra Isthmus to the Malay Peninsula, and lies between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean in the south. The Gulf of Thailand in the southeast and the Andaman Sea in the southwest make Thailand very convenient for land and water transportation. The launch of the Bangkok-Kunming high-speed railway in 2023 will play a crucial role in promoting the economic development and friendly exchanges between China and Thailand.

### 7.3 Technological advantages

In recent years, due to China's technical support to Thailand, Thailand's tourism resources have been better developed and utilized. 5G technology, cloud technology, artificial intelligence and AI will play a role in the tourism industry. According to the director of the "China Tourism Administration" of Thailand, Thailand's tourism industry is in a critical period of recovery at present, and the introduction of digital technology will be very important to improve the market competitiveness of Thailand's tourism products. China's digital technology helps Thailand develop smart tourism and promote the upgrade of tourism digitalization<sup>[5]</sup>.

## 8. Conclusion

All in all, the future of Thailand's tourism industry is expected to recover its former style, and Southeast Asia's tourism is still leading by Thailand. With the continuous promotion of "One Belt and One Road" and the progress of Thailand's film and television industry in recent years, the tourism industry has more opportunities to drive the continuous development of the entire Thai economy and various industries and realize the sustainable development of tourism.

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