



Thai Police

**Description**

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If you come to Thailand to get drunk and rowdy in public, (and many people do), ingest drugs, cavort with teen hookers, insult the Royal Family (a super huge no-no!), disrespect Buddhism (like peeing on the outside wall of a wat in a drunken stupor), then I'm sure you'll feel Thai cops are out to get you. And you would be right...hopefully!

But in rural Thailand when your searching for Old Siam ways, you'll find the Thai police to be a rather courteous group and often helpful. Besides, it's doubtful you'll have any contact with the police during your stay.

There's no 4th Amendment in Thailand. The U.S. Constitution is irrelevant. Thai police don't

need reasonable suspicion to stop you. You aren't given an attorney courtesy of the Thai people; and you won't be read any Miranda rights. Justice will be swift. And in the case of drugs, lese majestre, child molestation or gun violence, your punishment will be far greater than anything in the Western World.

My wife has a nephew who's a policeman in Lamphun. He often stops by our country house around dinner time to visit his daughter and mother. He'll sit next to me in full uniform as I'm eating and we'll chat. He in broken English and me in my broken Thai. He seems a nice guy, but what he does all day I don't know. Probably the same as policemen the world over.

My experience with Thai police is that generally they're the same as their American counterparts. If your nose is clean, they usually have little interest in you. There's always the rare story about the rogue Thai cop, but that can happen right here in the U.S. Yes, Thais complain ceaselessly about police and political corruption, and they're probably right. But such shenanigans shouldn't affect you as a visitor to their country.

### **Military Checkpoints**

My wife and I often travel up north around the Myanmar/Laos border. The Golden Triangle. I've traveled on many rural roads throughout this area, and often very late at night. It's not uncommon to come across military checkpoints on these dark, lonely roads. These are the old smuggler routes of the Golden Triangle.

These military checkpoints can be found all across Thailand. A portable barricade will block traffic. They're usually manned with 5-7 soldiers. A couple soldiers always have the ubiquitous small machine gun slung across their chest while the others just carry sidearms. The soldiers always seem bored, but quickly take their positions when a vehicle approaches.

A soldier will briefly inquire of our driver who we are and where we're going. The soldiers take one look at me (a farang) and waive us through. They're not interested in us. Their looking for illegal Burmese laborers, Yaba (methamphetamine), teak logs, or any other kind of smuggling that's active in the area.

I've passed through these checkpoints all across rural Thailand, and other than a brief questioning (and often no questioning) we've been waived right through.

### **Bribery: A Cultural Thang???**

If you ask Thai people about the police, most will say that many are corrupt. If you ask Thai people about their criminal justice system, all will say that "money talks".

My company's Thai pillows/mats are made near Yasoton and are delivered by truck to Chiang Mai. That's about a 14 hour drive. On the way, our driver is always stopped by a certain provincial police department and made to pay a fine right there on the road. It happens everytime. I always reimburse the driver for the "fine". It's the cost of doing business.

Once a Thai friend was driving my wife and I to Yasoton to inspect a new lot of pillows. We came up to a police (not Thai military) checkpoint in broad daylight on a busy highway. The officer approached the passenger side of the car (where I was sitting) and requested my friend's drivers license. My friend

took a 100 baht note (about \$3 US) from the car's console, folded it up and handed it *right under my nose* to the officer. He told the officer that this (referring to the money) was his driver's license. The officer took it and waived us through the checkpoint.

I would not in anyway recommend that you offer a bribe to the police. As a White person, you don't know the circumstances or culture of bribery. If you attempt a bribe, your situation may suddenly spiral out of control. The cop may well assume that a White person offering a bribe is a set-up or sting operation. He may well haul you out the car and like the U.S., you'll be in far more trouble for the bribe than the ticket. Or, he'll rightfully assume your wallet has far more money in it than just what was offered, and the price of paying him off just skyrocketed.

Never offer a bribe. Period. You simply don't know enough to do it safely and you're taking a huge risk.

### **Traffic Tickets**

If only the U.S. did traffic tickets like the Thais! I've been in cars numerous times that have been stopped for speeding. Yes, we were indeed speeding. Guilty. The police will flag you down and guide you to an area just off the roadway where they will "process" the ticket.

You must pay the ticket right then and there. The cops have a tent set up for fine payment. No court. No judge. No Due Process. But then again, you're guilty right?

The good news is that the fine for speeding was 250 baht (about \$7 U.S.) Better yet, the cops will only ticket you once that day (or at least that's what happened to us.). We got the speeding ticket in the morning near Chiang Mai. We were later stopped in Issan for speeding again. My friend just showed the cop the ticket from the morning and the cop let us go. I don't know if this is always the case, but my friend knew of this "rule" and that's why he was speeding a second time. Go figure.

### **Conclusion**

If you're having repeated contact with the Thai police, you're probably doing something wrong. You're sticking out. You're coming to their attention. You're grating against their police sensibilities. Stop it.

In your journey to see the Old Thailand and to explore the old style culture, the Thai police are far more your ally than nemesis. Respect them and their culture and they will reciprocate more often than not. Be safe.

### **Category**

1. The Siamese Puzzle Box

### **Tags**

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