



*The official religion in Thailand is Theravada Buddhism, practiced by more than 95% of the population and by many who reside in Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. Small tokens of this religion are seen in the most inconspicuous of places around the country.*

*Buddhism is a key component to the identities of many Thais. Many will give daily offerings to things like spirit houses. Others will sporadically feed the many *soi* (street) dogs to make merit. By making and gaining merit, many Thais believe they will live longer and happier lives. Some people will also wear Buddhist amulets in order to protect themselves.*

*There are some 300,000 monks living in the Land of Smiles. From Phuket to Bangkok, visitors are almost guaranteed to see a few of them in Thailand. Their yellow and orange robes are very recognizable in a sea of modern-day clothing. Many Thais will start their day off by giving offerings to monks who are collecting donations in the streets.*

*Every man in Thailand is required to become a monk for a period of time before the age of 20. Though the expected time length is about three months, some will stay as little as a day or two. The majority of monks remain for at least a few weeks. Young men do this in order to receive good karma and merit.*

### ***Buddhist Temples***

*There are some 30,000 Buddhist temples in Thailand. Some of the most well-known temples, or *wats*, in the Land of Smiles include Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok as well as Wat Phra That Doi Suthep in Chiang Mai. Many Thais will spend Buddhist holidays around these stunning, architectural wonders. In addition to being a place of worship and celebration, these temples often house monks, schools, and act as gathering places for locals. Many temples feature markets just outside*

*of their grounds, and Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha) even has a massage school on its grounds.*

*Understanding such a rich culture is a rewarding process that everyone should undergo. Travel to Thailand, and let trip advisors craft the best itinerary for your trip, so that you will fully understand the rich complexity of Thai Buddhism, its tradition, and its importance in the shaping of the whole country.*