THAILAND STUDENTS LIFE

ACADEMICS
Academic year in Thailand begins in mid-May and ends in March, and generally requires 7-8 hours per day, five days per week. There are roughly 40-50 students per class, and students remain in the same room for all subjects while the teachers alternate classrooms. Many high schools have over 5,000 students. Usually, Thai schools offer tutoring sessions after school, which usually end around 5-6pm. It is also very common for students to have tutoring sessions during the weekends. Homework is given every day for each subject.

Classes are taught in lecture-style environments, and students are encouraged to ask questions after class. **They may not feel comfortable sharing opinions openly to other students during class.** Teachers are highly respected in Thailand, and receive respect simply because of their position.

Schools in Thailand have specific rules, as every student is required to wear a specific uniform and dress properly or risk detention. Their nails have to be clean, and shoes are removed before entering classrooms. Romantic relationships are not allowed in school.

**Summer holiday for schools generally run from mid-March to early May,** and a lot of families travel during this period. October marks the end of the Rains Retreat, and there are many festivals throughout the country. Schools are also on holiday in October for three weeks.

ENGLISH CLASSES
**British English classes are generally taught daily by a Thai teacher.** However, wealthier families will enroll their children in international schools, which would likely include a native English speaker. English tapes are also used for listening and pronunciation purposes. Private language institutes can be found throughout the country. Since 2005, schools are being encouraged to establish bilingual departments where the core subjects are taught in English.
FAMILY LIFE
Thais respect their elders, including family members, elder classmates, teachers, and members of the military. It is common for grandparents to live with their children and their families. **Family dinners are very important because they should always eat together.** Children are always told to ask for permission whenever leaving their homes, and teenagers generally have curfews. Most children do not move away from home at 18 years old, as closeness with family is encouraged.

Thai ideals include discretion in behavior toward the opposite sex, modest dress, and a neat and clean appearance. **Their communication style is quiet, subtle and indirect, and may cause some strain in the beginning when they first arrive in the U.S.**

LIVING SITUATION
Most Thai youth have a computer in their rooms, but parents are aware as to what their children do on the computer. Thai children are also given household responsibilities, so there should not be problems understanding their responsibilities. However, **it would be best to show them how to do each household chore as it may be different to how they do it at home.**

CONFRONTATION / MODESTY
Thais believe strongly in the concept of “saving face,” meaning **avoiding situations that may embarrass them or hurt their reputation.** An example would be that they wouldn’t bring up negative topics in conversation unless initiated by another person. Laughing at minor incidents, such as tripping, is an attempt to lessen the embarrassment on behalf of the person undergoing the mishap. **The Thai smile is the best possible face for almost any situation.** Losing one’s temper would mean “loss of face” for everyone present. **Talking loudly is perceived as rude.**

Thai people prefer to compromise to avoid confrontation.

GREETINGS
Thailand is considered the Land of Smiles, and they are very friendly people. Traditionally, Thai people greet each other with palms together in a prayer-like gesture, called a *Wai*, and a slight bow. This similar gesture is also used to say “sorry” or “thank you.” However, most urban Thais are comfortable with a handshake. **When handing things to other people, they use either both hands or right hand only.**

**Thais are quite shy when meeting new people until they feel comfortable with someone. Public displays of affection are not common.**
**UNIQUE THAI FOODS**
In Thailand, **food forms a central part of any social occasion.** Most Thai meals consist of **vegetable and rice**, and usually do not include steak or cheese. Milk is seen as a children’s drink, and they wouldn’t eat cereal for breakfast. A typical Thai breakfast would be heartier, including porridge or food leftover from the night before. Bacon and eggs are not common in Thailand. **Food is eaten communally** with many dishes laid out on the table to share. It is considered **bad luck to eat alone**. It is traditional to eat with a large spoon and a fork, but the fork is not to be put inside the mouth. The fork is only to be used to scoop food onto the spoon. After the meal, it is also considered bad luck to dispense of leftovers. Sandwiches are not considered meals.

**TABOOS**
The monarchy is held in considerable respect in Thailand, and people should be respectful by not insulting anyone in the royal family.

**RELIGION**
Roughly 95% of Thai people are Buddhist, which is seen as a way of life as opposed to a religion. Most people practice Buddhist worship in their homes, which include an altar of a Buddha image. **Students from Thailand do not expect a house of worship while living in the U.S.** Every man in Thailand is expected to be a monk when they turn 20 because they believe that it is one important way to bring honor to the family. This is also seen as helping parents go to heaven after they pass away.

**MAJOR HOLIDAYS IN THAILAND**
Students may feel **homesick** during national holidays, which are usually spent with family. You might want to ask them to share their festivals with you.
Thai New Year (lunisolar calendar - Songkran): April 13-15
Loy Krathong Festival (November): celebrating end of the rainy season, and release of bad feelings

**ABOUT THAILAND**
Population of Thailand is estimated at 62 million and is currently growing due to a vigorous nation-wide family planning campaign. Around one sixth of Thailand’s exports are agricultural. The country ranks first in the world for rice and natural rubber, second in tapioca, and fifth in coconut.
One third of all Thais live in urban areas. About 75% of citizens are ethnic Thais. Each group speaks its own Thai dialect and practices many customs unique to its region. Roughly 11% of its population has Chinese ancestry. Thais are known to be very tolerant of other cultures. Thais tend to approach work with a sense of playfulness. The famous Thai smile comes partly from their belief that anything worth doing should have an element of fun.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES
http://www.thaistudents.com/
http://www.thailandsworld.com/