

THAILAND FOR LITTLE EXPLORERS



Experience the magic of Thailand with your little ones! Sheena explores the vibrant tapestry of culture and values that awaits our little explorers when we teach them to embrace Thailand's ancient temples, exquisite food, pristine beaches and more.

Sawasdee ka! As an expat parent living in the vibrant land of Thailand, you have a golden opportunity to immerse your children in the rich tapestry of Thai culture. Beyond the pristine beaches and tantalizing street food, Thailand holds a treasure trove of traditions, values, and experiences that can shape your children's perspectives and enrich their lives. Join us on this extraordinary journey as we explore fun and engaging ways to teach your little ones about Thai culture, instill important values, and foster a deep love for nature.

Exploring temples, spirituality, and cultural landmarks

Thailand's landscape is adorned with majestic temples, or "wats", offering a serene space for contemplation and exploration. Take your children on a temple-hopping adventure to iconic temples such as Wat Phra Kaew in Bangkok or Wat Phra That Doi Suthep in Chiang Mai. Teach them about the significance of these sacred places and encourage their participation in traditional rituals, such as lighting incense sticks or making a respectful offering. Engaging with Buddhism and spirituality will foster a sense of mindfulness and respect for different belief systems.

No exploration of Thai culture would be complete without visiting its world-famous landmarks. Take your children to the Grand Palace in Bangkok, where they can marvel at the

opulent architecture and intricate details. Another historical gem is the ancient city of Ayutthaya, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where they can wander among the fascinating ruins of temples and palaces. These landmark visits will provide a window into Thailand's rich history and cultural heritage.

Celebrating festivals with gusto

Thailand is a country that loves to celebrate, and its festivals are truly a sight to behold. Immerse your children in the joyous celebrations of Songkran, the Thai New Year, by joining water fights and engaging in traditional ceremonies that symbolize cleansing and renewal. Experience the Lantern Festival in Chiang Mai, where families release beautiful lanterns into the sky, carrying away their worries and hopes. Encourage your children to participate in these festivities, learn about their cultural significance, and embrace the spirit of unity and celebration.

Culinary adventures and traditional Thai arts

Thai cuisine is a feast for the senses, and introducing your children to its delectable flavors will broaden their culinary horizons. Take them on a culinary adventure, sampling iconic dishes such as pad Thai, tom yum soup, and mango sticky rice. Visit local markets like Chatuchak in Bangkok or the Walking Street Market in Chiang Mai, where aromatic street

food stalls beckon with their tempting offerings. Engage your children in fun cooking sessions at home, allowing them to assist in preparing simple Thai dishes to explore the diverse textures and smells of Thai herbs and fruits. By embracing Thai cuisine, they will develop an appreciation for diverse flavors and cultural culinary traditions.

In addition, why not unlock your children's creativity and introduce them to the world of Thai arts and crafts? From intricate wood carvings to vibrant Thai silk, there's something for every budding artist. Engage them in activities like traditional Thai art classes, batik painting, tie dye, or even trying their hand at traditional Thai dance movements. These hands-on experiences will not only nurture their artistic skills but also provide a deeper understanding and appreciation of Thai cultural heritage.

Thai language, values, and "sanuk"

Learning a few basic Thai phrases can open doors to authentic cultural experiences and interactions. Encourage your children to embrace the Thai language by teaching them common greetings, expressions, and simple words. Make it fun by engaging in playful tongue twisters, like "Yak Yai Lai Yak Lek" (which means "a big giant chases a small giant"). Embracing the language will make your children feel more connected



to the local community and deepen their appreciation of Thai culture.

Thai culture places great emphasis on respect, gratitude, and good manners. Teach your children these values by modeling them in your everyday interactions. Encourage them to greet others with a polite “sawas-dee ka” (hello) and practice the Thai gesture of respect, the wai, by pressing their palms together and slightly bowing. Teach them to show gratitude by saying “khob khun ka” (thank you) and by demonstrating appreciation for the efforts of others. Teach them about the concept of “sanuk” (finding joy in everyday activities) and “mai bpen rai” (the relaxed and easygoing attitude). Emphasize the importance of showing kindness and compassion to others, whether it’s through acts of giving or volunteering in your local community. In Thailand, a little can go a long way due to the large socio-economic gap. By practicing these values, your children will develop a deep respect for Thai culture and a sincere appreciation for those around them.

Nature’s playground and beach bliss

Thailand’s natural beauty offers a playground for your children to connect with nature and develop a love for the earth. Take them to national parks such as Khao Yai, Doi Inthanon, or Erawan, where they can marvel at cascading waterfalls, go on wildlife-spotting adventures, and trek through lush jungles. Encourage them to embrace their inner explorers and engage in activities like hiking, camping, or birdwatching. These experiences will foster a sense of environmental consciousness and appreciation for the wonders of nature.

Thailand’s stunning coastline and turquoise waters offer ample opportunities for beach adventures. Take your children to destinations like Phuket, Krabi, or Koh Samui, or the lesser known Koh Samet, Koh Larn or Koh Lipe, where they can build sandcastles, frolic in the waves, and explore vibrant underwater worlds through snorkeling or diving. Use these coastal adventures as an opportunity to teach them about the importance of

marine conservation. Activities like beach clean-ups or visits to marine sanctuaries can highlight the importance of protecting the environment and all living things .

Conclusion

Living in Thailand provides a unique opportunity to nurture your young children’s understanding of Thai culture, instill important values, and foster a love of nature. By immersing them in the temples, festivals, language, arts, values, and nature of Thailand, you are opening their hearts and minds to a world of diversity, understanding, and environmental consciousness. As you embark on this extraordinary journey together, you’ll not only strengthen their connection to their new home but also instill in them the wisdom, open-mindedness, and compassion that will guide them throughout their lives.

Photos courtesy of the author.



About the Author

Sheena Low is an aspiring children’s book author, mother to two-year-old August, and runs Super Fly Honey, a pole activewear brand. In December 2020, anticipating the need for a nanny following her surprise pregnancy, she moved from Amsterdam to Bangkok. When August was born, it turned out she wanted to swap her more-than-full-time working hours for life as a full-time mom. She’s still baffled how that seismic shift of identity occurred.