

Thailand Airports Guide

By Eric Brown

It may sound strange, but I *love* airports! I actually enjoy long layovers. I like exploring every little nook of each airport where I step foot. I've purposely taken trips with 3+ stops just to see new airports. *The Terminal* is one of my favorite movies.

Teaching for Super English, you will almost surely spend some time in some of Thailand's airports, whether on your way here or while traveling throughout the country. This article can serve as your guide to the airports where you'll likely stop on your travels. I've scoped out seating areas, wifi hotspots, shuttle and taxi services, and other amenities that can make your layovers more enjoyable, or at least less brutally exhausting. Below you'll find info on the two commercial airports in Bangkok and one in Surat Thani. For more info on booking your flights, read the "[Traveling to Surat Thani](#)" article on the Super English site, but be aware that Air Asia has moved and now flies out of Don Mueang Airport.

Bangkok Suvarnabhumi Airport (BKK)



This is the main international airport in Bangkok. Little known fact – it was also the [most Instagram-ed location in the world in 2012](#). If you're flying from anywhere outside of southeast Asia, you will arrive at this airport. Like Thailand as a whole, the airport is very welcoming. It's a very clean and modern airport, and considered among the nicest in the world. When you arrive, you've got a long walk to customs, but even this process is made pretty pleasant by the friendly, smiling Thais greeting you as you enter their country.

For arrivals, you probably won't spend long here, but you will likely need to transfer to Don Mueang Airport on your way to Surat Thani. There are a couple ways to get there. The free route is to take the complimentary shuttle bus between the two airports. There has been confusion for some teachers in finding the bus, but an airport employee directed me to Exit Gate 2, and the bus was parked right in front of the door, with signs showing the departure times (hourly). The bus was uncomfortable, the driver treated the gas pedal like a drum pedal, and we were thoroughly jet-lagged. So it was not a pleasant experience. But it was free, and you may

as well get used to bus rides like this as soon as you get to Thailand. The shuttle will drop you off right at the main terminal for Don Mueang, where you can let your nausea subside before your next flight.



If you choose to forgo the authentic Thai adventure of the free shuttle, you can pay for a taxi instead. After going through customs you'll be approached by people offering taxi services. These are supposedly pretty fancy (A/C!) but cost about double the price. Or you can follow signs for the public taxis, which will take you to the line of cabs parked in front of the airport. Go to the taxi desk – NOT directly to a driver – and tell them where you want to go. Repeat – tell the *desk*, not the driver, where you are going. Most drivers don't speak much English, if any at all. The taxi ride should cost you around 300-500 baht, depending on traffic and tolls, and your driver will likely treat the Bangkok roads at least as aggressively as the shuttle bus driver. If you still decide to take the taxi, let Peter know first, because he can give you great advice to make sure you don't get fleeced or end up in the wrong place. I definitely recommend saving the money and taking the shuttle. In retrospect, it wasn't *that* bad.

If you're departing or transferring here and have some time to kill, here are a few tips to improve your wait. You can get free fast internet at kiosks around the airport for 15 minutes at a time, or free wifi access with a password from an information desk. There is plenty of good food here if you are willing to walk around to different concourses. Thailand's airports are a good place to snag some good western food, since there's not a lot of it to be had in Surat. I know there's a Starbucks and a Burger King here, but if you explore you might find even better options. I haven't personally used the free lounge areas at Suvarnabhumi, but I've heard they are very nice and about as comfortable as you'll find at any airport. If you've got a really long layover here, consider storing your bags and taking the Airport Rail Link into town, or read up on the ["Sleeping in Airports" website](#), for tips on killing time or getting some shut-eye in the terminal.

Bangkok Don Mueang Airport (DMK)



Don Mueang is Bangkok's old airport. Before the new one opened last decade, this was the hub for all of Thailand's international travel. So although it's not as big or nice as Suvarnabhumi, it is still a major airport with all the amenities you would expect. Plus a few unexpected ones, like the world's only [golf course located between major runways](#)...

If you're arriving here and plan to stay in Bangkok or head to northern Thailand, you can take the skywalk on the 2nd floor over to the train station, where you can either hop a quick train downtown or head out for Chiang Mai or somewhere else up north. If you need to get to Suvarnabhumi Airport, you can take the shuttle I mentioned earlier, as it runs both ways. If you are in the arrivals area on the first floor, as you face the exit doors, walk all the way to the far left (south) end of the lobby. There you'll see the signs (inside and outside) for the free airport express shuttle, which will drop you directly at the departures lobby at BKK Airport.



If you are departing or transferring flights here, there are a few ways to keep yourself occupied. While Don Mueang isn't located in a thriving hotspot of Bangkok, you can leave the airport easily and explore the nearby area, full of markets, cheap Thai restaurants, and a pretty big temple. You can store your bags for a small fee at the "left luggage desk" inside, then walk out

the skywalk toward the train station. It will spit you out onto a street with about a thousand motorbike taxis. Turn right and escape the airport for a bit. Alternatively, you can rest inside in perhaps the coldest place in the entire country. Once through security, the lounge areas have the a/c set to just slightly above freezing. It's uncomfortable, but enjoy it while it lasts. For wifi, you can log in using your ticket number if you are flying on NokAir. I don't think AirAsia or the other carriers offer this service, but it's probably worth looking into. There are a decent number of shops and foods stalls in here, but again, take advantage of what you can't find in Surat. Indulge in Subway and KRISPY KREME!! And if boredom completely takes over, there's a golf course just outside.

Surat Thani Airport (URT)



This airport is not actually in Surat Thani town. It serves as the airport for the whole province and is about 40 minutes outside of town. When we arrived here for the first time, we were picked up by one of the Thai staff from Super English and taken directly to the Big House. Since then we've been on our own getting to and from the airport. Phantip travel company is the best option I've yet found. They run a shuttle bus to or from the airport for 100 baht each way, but on what seems to be a pretty sporadic schedule (*maybe* somewhat aligned with flight times...?). Just look for the Phantip desk as soon as you leave baggage claim. You can't miss it. From the airport, they'll drop you right in the middle of Surat at Talad Kaset, where you can easily hail a tuk-tuk to get home.

As far as I can tell, the only destinations you can fly to from Surat Thani are Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur. There's not too much reason to show up really early for a flight out of Surat, unless the shuttle schedule doesn't line up well with your departure time. If this is the case, as it was for us, and you arrive well before your flight, don't worry, there's *plenty* to do here. You can take a full two minutes to walk from end to end of the terminal. You can watch the couple hundred or so people in the airport. You can browse the three or four vendors seemingly selling nothing but durian products. And you can sit and wait. Seriously, there's not much here. My best advice

would be to bring an engaging book. If you want wifi, it's included with any purchase over 50 baht at the one coffee shop after security. You'll probably be in this airport a few times, and I'd put money on that password never changing. That 50 baht one time investment will probably give you internet access for every future flight. There's not much else to say about the Surat Thani International Airport. At least the chairs are comfortable.

Hopefully this guide helps prevent boredom, disorientation, and overall bad airport experiences. If you need more advice for pleasant travels, ask away. If you have questions about visas, customs, or the ins-and-outs of international travel, ask Peter or your airline.