

Potential Road Hazards

Driving your motorbike around in Thailand is very rarely a dull experience and there are plenty of things going on to keep you on your toes. Personally, I love driving around and find it pretty fun and liberating. However, there are plenty of possible hazards to look out for when driving around Thailand. In fact, there are so many that I can't even cover them all in this piece of writing. Here are the risks I believe you should be most vigilant about when tearing up the roads.

The high number of stray dogs running around the streets is a pretty big problem. The vast majority tend to keep themselves to themselves. The main problem with these ones is that they have a tendency to sleep in the middle of the road at night time. No problem with your headlight on, you just have to swerve around them. Unfortunately you will sometimes come across some pretty aggressive dogs roaming around. When you drive past them I would recommend not looking them in the eye. As silly as this might sound, looking at them seems to send them a bit crazy and there's a good chance they will bolt at you. Some dogs are acting as guard dogs for their owner's house and will approach you pretty aggressively anyway. The best thing to do is to just keep your cool and drive straight past them. If you panic and start swerving there's a good chance you will lose your balance and end up on the floor. If it gets really close to the bike and looks like it is going to try and bite you, a swift kick aimed near the head should deter the dog.



People love skipping red lights in Thailand. If the light turns red at a main junction, you could be waiting around 160 seconds before it turns green again. This causes a mad rush to blow through the light before it gets to red. If you are waiting at the lights and it turns green, be extremely careful of drivers from other directions smashing it through the junction so that they don't have to wait until their light is green again. I've seen people blow through the light 4 or 5 seconds after it has already turned red. If you are in the way of a truck blasting through the junction at 80km/h then you could be in serious trouble. Always take a second or two to take a look at your surroundings and ensure no-one is going to make you pay for their lack of patience at traffic lights.



Driving a motorbike around has some excellent perks. It's great been able to drive straight through the gaps to get past all of the traffic and end up at the front of the next traffic lights. You save a lot of time driving a motorbike due to the nippiness of them. There are a couple of main things to look out for though. If you are overtaking cars on the left hand side things can get a little tight. There's always a chance that someone in a parked car is going to open their car door without looking and you could smash straight into it, not having time to react. Though this doesn't happen too often, I myself have definitely had some very close calls. On these occasions I managed to swerve suddenly and avoid the opened door. There's little you can do to predict this happening so just be aware and alert at all times!

Tuk tuks! This next one is an almost daily occurrence. As tuk tuk drivers are always scouting around looking for their next customer it is probably fair to say that they aren't always to attentive towards what's actually happening on the road. The erratic nature of tuk tuks is quite often pretty dangerous and when driving behind or next to a tuk tuk it is a good idea to expect the unexpected. The classic

maneuver for a tuk tuk is to all of a sudden pull into the left in order to pick up or drop off a customer on the pavement. Always be prepared to have to brake very quickly!



In Thailand, especially Surat Thani it seems, there are loads of boy racers speeding it around town. Teenagers are driving these loud, lit up modified bikes with no helmets on and often with 2 or 3 people on the same bike. The main danger is obviously to themselves. The news in Thailand is always telling of high speed crashes involving these young racers. When you are driving around town it is definitely worth looking out for and being alert to these erratic drivers. Sometimes there are friends racing against each other and sometimes they just cram 3 onto a bike and bomb it around town. Look out for these guys and try not to be in their path when they speed past you!

The roads themselves in Thailand aren't all that great. The more you drive around and get used to the area, the easier it is to remember which parts of the road are messed up and hazardous. Some roads

are laden with potholes which can be deadly when driving a motorbike. Hit a pothole at a bad angle and you could find yourself flying off the bike at high speed. Some roads are also full of gravel which can make driving very dodgy. Gravelly roads can make the surface feel very uneven and slippery under the wheels, so it's best to take these roads nice and slowly. Another thing to look out for on the roads is random speed bumps which can take you quite unaware!!

Hopefully all of this hasn't deterred you from wanting to drive a motorbike around. It's really good fun and very convenient, definitely one of my favorite things about living in Thailand. The exploration options which having a bike gives you is also a huge advantage. Just be careful and be alert to all of the dangers highlighted here!



William Marlow