

# SSG ORIENTATION PACKAGE

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## Location of SSG:

The SSG is located in the city of Phrae Thailand. Phrae is 125 miles SE (201 km) of Thailand's second largest city, Chiang Mai and 350 miles N (563 km) of Thailand's capital, Bangkok. The address of the USILACS SSG facility is **1/36-37 Mueang Hid Road, T. Nai Wiang, A. Mueng, Phrae 54000 Thailand.**

You can see where Phrae is located via Google Maps by following this link:

<https://goo.gl/maps/h1ajwnDnS9n>

## What is the SSG facility like?

Our 10,850 sq. ft. (1,008 sq. M) is a multi-story building in Phrae, Thailand. On the first floor, there is a lobby, Classroom # 1, two bathrooms, an indoor recreation/snack area. On the second floor, Classroom # 2, two bathrooms, an indoor recreation/snack area. On the third floor, Classroom # 3, two bathrooms, an indoor recreation/snack area. Each classroom has a capacity of up to 14 students. The facility high-speed internet, and all classrooms are air-conditioned with large screen monitors and white boards.

To see where the SSG facility is located, check it out on Google Maps!

<https://www.google.co.th/maps/place/18%C2%B008'10.2%22N+100%C2%B008'36.2%22E/@18.1361783,100.1428398,19z/data=!4m6!3m5!1s0x30d8c26a13de7d65:0xd6eda7ee0c09cac6!7e2!8m2!3d18.136177!4d100.1433871?hl=en>

## Visas:

All US Citizens are permitted to stay in Thailand for 30 days on a "visa on arrival" which is issued to you at the airport when you arrive in Thailand. Although the visa is only valid for 30 days, you have the option to extend it an additional 30 days at the Royal Thai Immigration office for 1,900 baht or \$50-60 depending on the exchange rate. This means that you do not need to apply for a visa prior to coming to Thailand.

Just a standard tourist visa is all that is required to attend the SSG. SSG is an acronym for "Student-Led Study Group". You are not paying for any education or attending school at the facility in Thailand. You are USILACS online students, enrolled online at USILACS Miami, Florida USA. You are using a facility which has been lovingly provided, by a local Thai company, free-of-charge, to USILACS students who wish to visit Thailand, interact with local Thai children, learn and experience some wonderful Thai culture, and lastly to interact with fellow USILACS students.

## Transportation to Phrae from Bangkok or Chiang Mai:

There are many methods of transportation available. Below is a list of methods to get to Phrae, along with some advice you may find helpful.

*\*Before continuing, please note that USILACS does not provide private transport or airport pick-up. However, rest assured that translated directions to the accommodations we recommend in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Phrae will be provided; these directions should be given to the taxi drivers in order to eliminate confusion that can result from the driver not speaking fluent English.\**

## Flying – Bangkok to Phrae:

If you arrive in Bangkok, one option you have is to fly to Phrae. There are two airports in Bangkok; Don Mueang (DMK) and Suvarnabhumi (BKK). Don Mueang is the ONLY airport that has flights to Phrae. Suvarnabhumi is solely an International Airport; there are no domestic flights.

This means that if you arrive at Suvarnabhumi Airport and would then like to fly to Phrae, you will have to travel to the Don Mueang Airport. Fortunately, there is a free Shuttle Service for connecting passengers; to avail of this service, you must show your connecting flight tickets as proof. Below is the schedule belonging to the free Shuttle Bus from Suvarnabhumi to Don Mueang:



เที่ยวบินจาก Trip No. 航点	เวลาออก Departure Time 出发时间	เที่ยวบินถึง Trip No. 航点	เวลาออก Departure Time 出发时间	เที่ยวบินจาก Trip No. 航点	เวลาออก Departure Time 出发时间
1	5:00	20	10:36	39	17:24
2	5:30	21	10:48	40	17:36
3	6:00	22	11:00	41	17:48
4	6:30	23	11:30	42	18:00
5	7:00	24	12:00	43	18:12
6	7:30	25	12:30	44	18:24
7	8:00	26	13:00	45	18:36
8	8:12	27	13:30	46	18:48
9	8:24	28	14:00	47	19:00
10	8:36	29	14:30	48	19:30
11	8:48	30	15:00	49	20:00
12	9:00	31	15:30	50	20:30
13	9:12	32	16:00	51	21:00
14	9:24	33	16:12	52	21:30
15	9:36	34	16:24	53	22:00
16	9:48	35	16:36	54	22:30
17	10:00	36	16:48	55	23:00
18	10:12	37	17:00	56	23:30
19	10:24	38	17:12	57	24:00

The Shuttle Bus departs from Suvarnabhumi Airport, Gate 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.

If you have yet to book a connecting flight to Phrae, you will be unable to take the Shuttle Bus to the Don Mueang Airport. However, you can easily take a taxi! A taxi from the Suvarnabhumi Airport to Don Mueang Airport costs **approximately** \$10 USD or 320 Baht (Prices are subject to change based on route, driver, and day of the week)

Nok Air is the ONLY airline that services Phrae. Nok has two direct flights from Bangkok to Phrae every day. Both flights depart from Don Mueang Airport (DMK). The first flight departs Bangkok at 9:30 am and arrives in Phrae at 10:45 am. The second flight departs Bangkok at 2:25 pm and arrives in Phrae at 3:40 pm.

A one-way flight cost \$30 to \$70 USD per person, and a round-trip flight cost \$80 to \$120 USD per person. *Please keep in mind that you can't book Nok Air flights from any of the large travel agencies or through other airlines, e.g. Travelocity, Booking, Expedia, Agoda, etc. You can only book flights from their website:*

<https://www.nokair.com/>

When you have completed the SSG Course and chose to fly back to Bangkok, there

is also a free Shuttle Bus Service for connecting passengers that will take you from the Don Mueang Airport (a Domestic Airport) to the Suvarnabhumi Airport (an International Airport). To avail of this service, you must show your connecting flight tickets as proof. Below is the schedule belonging to the free Shuttle Bus from Don Mueang to Suvarnabhumi:

ตารางเวลาการเดินทางบริการ  
 ระหว่าง ท่าอากาศยานดอนเมือง-ท่าอากาศยานสุวรรณภูมิ  
**Airport Shuttle Bus Timetable**  
**Don Mueang Airport - Suvarnabhumi Airport**  
 廊曼国际机场-素万那普国际机场的巴士时刻表

เที่ยวบิน Trip No. 班次	เวลาออก Departure Time 出发时间	เที่ยวบิน Trip No. 班次	เวลาออก Departure Time 出发时间	เที่ยวบิน Trip No. 班次	เวลาออก Departure Time 出发时间
1	5:00	20	10:36	39	17:24
2	5:30	21	10:48	40	17:36
3	6:00	22	11:00	41	17:48
4	6:30	23	11:30	42	18:00
5	7:00	24	12:00	43	18:12
6	7:30	25	12:30	44	18:24
7	8:00	26	13:00	45	18:36
8	8:12	27	13:30	46	18:48
9	8:24	28	14:00	47	19:00
10	8:36	29	14:30	48	19:30
11	8:48	30	15:00	49	20:00
12	9:00	31	15:30	50	20:30
13	9:12	32	16:00	51	21:00
14	9:24	33	16:12	52	21:30
15	9:36	34	16:24	53	22:00
16	9:48	35	16:36	54	22:30
17	10:00	36	16:48	55	23:00
18	10:12	37	17:00	56	23:30
19	10:24	38	17:12	57	24:00

ข้อมูลเพิ่มเติม

The Shuttle Bus departs from Don Mueang Airport, Terminal 2 (International wing), Gate 6, Ground Floor.

### Bus - Chiang Mai to Phrae:

Green Bus is one of the largest bus companies in Thailand. There are a total of 8 busses that depart from the Chiang Mai Arcade Bus Station to Phrae per day. You can choose between VIP and first class; this can be compared to business class and economy class on airplanes.

Tickets cost between \$8 to \$12 USD per person. Busses depart as early as 6:00 am and as late as 6:00 pm. You can book and pay for your tickets online from their website; they accept VISA cards.

Here is a link to their website in English:

<http://www.greenbusthailand.com/website/en/> Here is a pin to the Chiang Mai Bus Station: <https://goo.gl/maps/Ki1SzbG6p932>

### Car Rental:

You can rent a car or SUV from Budget Rental Car at both the Chiang Mai and Bangkok airport for about \$27 to \$57 USD a day. The advantage of this option is that

you have personal transport for the entire SSG. Here is a link to their website:

<https://www.budget.com/en/home>

Driving time between Bangkok and Phrae is approximately 9 hours.

*\*Please keep in mind that if you are planning to rent a car in Thailand, you will need to apply for an International License prior to your trip\**

## Rooming (Phrae, Chiang Mai, Bangkok):

### Phrae:

USILACS has pre-booked double-occupancy twin rooms, including breakfast for all the students attending the SSG in Phrae at a the beautiful Phoomthai Garden Hotel <http://www.phoomthai garden.com/> . This wonderful traditional Lanna-style hotel is located less than a block from our facility. The hotel has been recently renovated to meet Western standards.

### Bangkok:

**Below is a hotel that USILACS recommends for those traveling thru Bangkok to attend the SSG.**

**Amari Don Muang Airport Hotel:** This is a very nice Western hotel with a breakfast buffet; rooms cost \$62 to \$120 USD per night.

**Advantages of this hotel:** This hotel has shuttle services available to the nearest BTS sky train station; Mochit. This way, if you arrive at the Suvarnabhumi airport, you can take the airport link to the Phaya Thai BTS Skytrain Station, connect to the Mochit BTS sky train station, then take the hotel's private shuttle from there to the hotel. If you will be flying out of the Don Mueang airport, this hotel is convenient because there is a walkway connecting the hotel directly to the Don Mueang Airport.

You can see the location and the type of rooms available by following this link: <http://www.booking.com/Share-BZnQfx>

### Chiang Mai:

**Below is a list of hotels that USILACS recommends for those traveling thru Chiang Mai to attend the SSG.**

**The Imperial Mae Ping Hotel:** This is a nice Western hotel with a breakfast buffet; rooms cost \$36 to \$120 USD per night.

**Advantages of this hotel:** It is centrally located in a very popular area of Chiang Mai. It is only a short walk or ride away from the Night Bazaar market and the Old City; they are both very popular tourist destinations. Other than that, this hotel is also close to the Chiang Mai Arcade bus station; 2 mile (4km).

You can see the location and the types of rooms available by following this link: <http://www.booking.com/Share-2JyLLw>

**Duangtawan Hotel:** This is a very nice Western hotel with a breakfast buffet; rooms cost between \$55 to \$160 USD per night.

**Advantages of this hotel:** This hotel is only 689 feet (210 Meters) from The Imperial Mae Ping Hotel mentioned above. Likewise, this hotel is only a short walk or ride away from the Night Bazaar market and the Old City; they are both very popular tourist destinations. It is also close to the Chiang Mai Arcade bus station.

You can see the location and the types of rooms available by following this link: <http://www.booking.com/Share-2S3jEe>

**The Y Smart Hotel:** This is a nice Western hotel with rooms costing \$20 to \$60 USD per night. The hotel is 200m (700ft) from the Chiang Mai Arcade bus station. There are not many tourist attractions around this hotel, but it is very convenient for getting to the bus station.

You can see the location and the types of rooms available by following this link: <http://www.booking.com/Share-4wO6OXs>

## Dress Code:

Here at USILACS, we strive to uphold the highest standards; ethically, morally, and physically. This principle applies to everything we do, including the dress code of our staff and students. This being said, in order to leave a good impression on the people we meet and so as to not be a stumbling block, the student dress code is as follows:

### Men

- Short or long sleeve dress shirt; any color
- Slacks, suit pants, or khakis; any color
- Dress shoes
- Vests or sweater vests (optional)

### Women

- Blouse or dress shirt (short or long sleeve); any color
- Knee length skirt or knee length dress
- Dress shoes

**NOTE:** Thai Culture: Please no sleeveless or deeply cut tops

Our student's dress code is dependent on the season and location where the SSG is being held. Since the upcoming SSG is going to be held in Thailand where the climate is hot and humid, suit jackets or suit coats are not required.

## Electronic Devices:

For those of you who are traveling to SE Asia for the first time, it is important to keep in mind that the standard voltage utilized in Thailand is 220V; not 120V. This being said, it is important to check the devices you are planning to bring with you to make sure they either have 1) a built-in adapter or 2) are dual voltage.

## Cellphones and Thai SIM cards

**Cellphones** – During your stay in Thailand, you will no doubt need a Thai SIM card in order to make calls in case of an emergency or to contact fellow SSG attendees. You will also need data in order to post pictures of your Thai adventures for your friends and family to see! However, not all cell phones are “unlocked” or are capable of being used overseas.

**We highly recommend you check with your cell phone provider prior to your trip.**

If, after checking with your cell phone provider you find out that your phone is 1) locked and can't be unlocked, or 2) it is unlocked, we recommend the following options:

- (1) LOCKED: If your phone is locked and can't be unlocked, we recommend purchasing a prepaid phone prior to your trip that can be used overseas.
- (2) UNLOCKED: If your phone is unlocked you simply need to purchase a Thai Prepaid SIM card as described below.
- (3) **BEFORE LEAVING THE AIRPORT:** Purchase a SIM with data plan from one of the airport vendors listed below.
- (4) Add both of USILACS phone numbers and add USILACS as a friend using the methods shown [Methods to Contact USILACS while in THAILAND](#) listed below.

**Now, we are both in full communication. You can contact us with any questions or if you need any assistance while traveling in Thailand.**

You can find detailed information along with a list of some of the available promotions below.

**Thai SIM Cards** - As was mentioned in the paragraph above, it is very important to have a way to communicate with others while you are overseas; not just to keep your loved ones up to date on your adventures, but for your safety as well.

Applying for a SIM card is easy! All you need is a **scanned copy of your passport**. However, there is no need to stress. The employee working at the kiosk will happily make a photocopy for you.

The price ranges from \$4 USD - \$18 USD depending on what plan you choose. In the case that you use all the minutes that come with the SIM you purchase, you can top up your SIM at any local 7-11 Convenience Store.

We have taken the liberty of providing you with the location of SIM Card kiosks at the Suvarnabhumi, Don Mueang Domestic, and Don Mueang International airport:

## Suvarnabhumi Airport:

Once you exit the arrival gate, there will be an AIS and DTAC Kiosk to your left. They are both Thailand's top Mobile Operators. Here, you can purchase prepaid SIM cards that not only provide you with calling minutes but unlimited 3G/4G High-Speed Internet.



## Don Mueang Airport – Domestic Terminal

Once you exit the arrival gate, there will be an AIS Kiosk (green) and a True Kiosk (red) to your right. AIS and True are some of Thailand's top Mobile Operators. Here, you can likewise purchase prepaid SIM Cards equipped with calling minutes and 3G/4G Unlimited High-Speed Internet.



## Don Mueang Airport – International Terminal

Once you exit the arrival gate, there will be a mini AIS Kiosk in front of you to the left (green). AIS is Thailand's No.1 Mobile Operator. Here, you can purchase prepaid SIM cards that not only provide you with calling minutes but unlimited 3G/4G High-Speed Internet.



## Methods to Contact USILACS while in THAILAND

There are many ways to contact us at our SSG Facility in Phrae, Thailand; through either our landline number or various Instant Messaging platforms. The local telephone numbers are as follows:

**Office Land Line:** +66 54 060 132

**24-Hour Office Mobile:** +66 90 330 5801

Below is a list of the Instant Messaging apps that USILACS has an account with. With one of the following apps, you will be able to contact us and vice versa whenever you have WiFi; this is an ideal alternative for people whose phone does not accept a Thai SIM Card:

**WhatsApp** – The student must save USILACS number (**+66 90 330 5801**) in order for USILACS to show up on their friend list.

**Viber** - The student must save USILACS number (**+66 90 330 5801**) in order for USILACS to show up on their friend list.

**WeChat** – The student can add USILACS as a friend using this ID:

**wxid\_jadgi91j3y6z22**

**Skype** – Username is: **USILACS**

**Note:** It is **mandatory** that each student adds USILACS on one of the following platforms prior to attending the SSG. This is to ensure that we have a way to contact and assist the student between when they arrive in Thailand and when they arrive at the SSG Facility in Phrae.

## **Additional Frequently Asked SSG Questions**

### **Are my travel expenses included in the tuition?**

No, traveling costs to and from the SSG are not included in your tuition; however, when you are taking part in SSG activities, transportation is included.

### **What if we need help speaking Thai when were there?**

Our staff can speak both English and Thai, and they stand ready to assist you whenever needed. We will also supply you with phone numbers of certain staff that can translate for you by phone when you are attempting to communicate with a non-English speaking Thai.

### **How do I get to the hotel and check-in?**

When you arrive Phrae, simply contact the Phoomthai Garden Hotel for free pick up from the airport or the bus station. Their phone number is: **054-627-359**. Tell the operator that you are with the USILACS group and you have reservations. When you arrive at the hotel allow them to photocopy your passport, check you in, and they will give you your room key. No need to pay, USILACS has already paid for your room. For students attending alone, you will be assigned a roommate by USILACS, and the hotel will assign you to the proper room.

### **Is it mandatory to attend all SSG activities and events?**

Yes and no. Attendance and participation in all SSG educational activities, including Thai school TESOL and class management courses are mandatory; however, students have the option to opt-in or opt-out of any of the recreation activities.

### **Is there homework expected while attending the SSG?**

It is strongly recommenced you study all reference materials, and watch all videos, and take extensive notes prior to that course being covered in the SSG. Failure to perform adequate homework ALWAYS results in lower grades.

### **What are the bedrooms like at the hotel?**

All bedrooms are fully air-conditioned and have high-speed WiFi available. The Phoomthai Garden Hotel enjoys a 3-star rating. We have reserved an entire floor at this hotel for all the SSG students. You and one fellow student will be sharing a room with two twin beds that is western style with all the amenities.

### **Is housekeeping and laundry provided?**

Yes, full housekeeping service is provided by the Hotel. Laundry service which includes washing, drying and ironing of your clothes is available at a very reasonable price, from the Phoomthai Hotel & Resort as well as other nearby shops. Costs for laundry services are the responsibility of the student.

### **What if I want to stay at another local hotel?**

If you choose to make independent housing or food arrangements, there are many local hotels within a short taxi ride. We will be happy to provide you a rooming list upon request. Price range from \$10 USD to \$100 USD per night. However, your

tuition is not based upon hotel occupancy, it is based upon education; the SSG is a service provided to students; therefore, no adjustment to tuition will be made if you choose to make your own housing arrangements.

### **What if I want my non-enrolled spouse, friends, or children to share my room and enjoy food service and SSG entertainment activities?**

Non-enrolled family members are not allowed to attend or participate in any SSG classes or Thai school activities; however, they are allowed to share your bedroom, enjoy all SSG food service, and attend all SSG entertainment activities for an additional charge of only \$400.00 per person.

### **Is there anywhere locally that I can rent a car or motorcycles?**

The Phoomthai Garden Hotel has several very nice pedal bikes available for their guests use free of charge. Most of our students utilize this form of transportation while attending the SSG; however, for those who want to venture further, there are local businesses where you can rent cars and motorcycles.

### **What meals are provided, and how do they consist of?**

A breakfast buffet is provided every morning by Phoomthai Garden Hotel. While at the SSG facility your lunch will consist of fresh fruit, fresh green salad, soup, and sandwiches, your dinner will feature fresh fruit, a fresh green salad, steamed vegetables, and one of a wide variety of savory (non-spicy "MyPet") Thai dishes with rice where applicable. Lunches and dinners will be provided to all students Monday thru Friday. The SSG facility is closed on Saturday and Sunday; however, many students use these days to explore Phrae and discover all those delightful little coffee shops and local restaurants. You can also purchase food and drinks from local stores, shops, and restaurants within a five-minute walk.

### **What about those with food allergies or on special diets?**

**IF YOU ARE ALLERGIC TO SHELLFISH OR PEANUTS BE WARNED!**  
**Thai cooking makes extensive use of these two ingredients.**  
**It is your responsibility to inquire before you consume.**

We have made a huge effort to offer a wide variety of fresh lunch and dinner items which offer the widest selection possible. If you have food allergies or are on a special diet, we suggest that if you cannot eat the food served at the SSG, possibly consider utilizing local grocery stores, or many cook to order restaurants in the area.

### **In case of an emergency, are there hospitals near the SSG?**

Yes, Phrae two private and one public hospital. The closest one less than 1 mile away. All the hospitals are western standards, and all speak English.

### **Is the SSG facility safe and secure?**

Our facility is located on a quiet business street, in one of the safest areas of Phrae. It is a very stable neighborhood where most students enjoy night time strolls or bike rides.

## **Will I be able to attend meetings or go out in the field with a local group?**

Midweek is Friday at 6:30 and Sunday is at 2:00. The local hall can only hold up to 30 guests. We will have sign-up sheets at the SSG, and a local bus will deliver the group to the hall and back for less than \$1.00 each way. Since the SSG facility is closed on Saturdays and Sundays, we reserve these days for recreation and the going out in the field. Due to the size of the local group, and the need to have each non-Thai SSG student accompanied by a Thai speaker, there is also a limitation of around 20. As with the meetings, we have a sign-up sheet at the SSG, and buses available for your transport.

## **I teach English online. What can I do for internet or how do I find a location to teach, especially when sharing a hotel room?**

Many of our friends teach online at night. The SSG facility closes at 6:00. In addition, we cannot allow any students use our facilities or Internet to teach "work" without being in violation of local laws and regulations. From a legal prospective USILACS is basically breaking Thai labor laws by facilitating employment in Thailand to a person without proper work permits. Phrae has excellent 4G internet service; therefore, we recommend that if you need to work online, purchase a high-speed internet sim for use in a phone, tablet, or in a laptop Internet stick.