

Surat Thani: Things to Buy When You Get Here

by Elizabeth A. Clayborne



Picture this:

My first day in Thailand, a storm rolled in out of season. Nothing in my life had prepared me for Thai rain. It was wild and loud and inescapable. Fat droplets came down fast and furious, soaking everything in a matter of seconds. To me, it seemed to come out of nowhere. One minute, the sun would be bright and butter yellow. Suddenly, a black raincloud would appear, growing almost perceptibly across the horizon. A few minutes later, the heavens would open. You could almost hear the city screech to a halt. Sometimes, traffic would pause as everyone pulled over for their safety. Pedestrians would run to the nearest overhang to crouch and wait out nature's fury. All you could hear was the roar of the rain. It was wild and beautiful and peaceful. If you were on the way to work or a meeting—no you weren't. It's times like those that made it clear to me why life moves at a more leisurely pace in Thailand. For as long as the rainy season lasts, we're all on nature's timetable, not the bottom line's. Usually, as suddenly as the downpour began, it would end. Within minutes the sun would be back out and steam would arise from the newly drenched green things in the area. Not long after that, everything would be bone dry again, as if an ocean of water hadn't just fallen out of the sky.

I loved every second of it. But my shoes and my clothes did not. The Thai weather is nothing to play with. In this article, I'll provide a list of things I think you should buy when you get to Thailand. Most of these will be weather related, but since I'm writing this for teachers coming to Thidamaepra, I'll include a few things I think will help you at work as well. Take what you like, and leave the rest.

1. A Raincoat 💖

✨ Where to Purchase: Mr. DIY ✨



There are two main types of raincoats that you see people wearing in Surat Thani. One has buttons down the front, and it's the cheaper version. The other is pullover style. It doesn't have buttons all down the front, just a couple at the top. This one is slightly more expensive but still pretty cheap. I'd get the more expensive one. The plastic is better quality and it won't flap around as much when you're on the bike. Those buttons all down the front of the cheaper one take too long to do up when you're caught in a downpour. And the pullover style has strong elastic at the wrists so water doesn't go up your sleeves. 10/10 recommend.

2. Crocs (Real or Fake) 💖

✨ Where to Purchase: Central Mall -OR- Any cheap shoe stand (there's one by the bus station) ✨



I think crocs (either real or knock off) are the best rainy season shoe/shoe to wear while riding the bikes. These shoes can get soaked and will dry quickly, without molding. They cover your foot from anything hitting it from the outside, which happens on the bikes sometimes. The platform style specifically will keep you out of puddles when the rain is at its heaviest (the platforms aren't quite as high as in this picture). Even when it's not raining, you get a lot of dust on your clothes when you ride the motorbikes.

So if you wear nice shoes while you ride the bikes, they won't stay nice very long. And you can always bring your nicer shoes with you in your bike boot to change into once you get to where you're going. 10/10 recommend.

3. Rain Shoe Covers 💖

✨ Where to Purchase: Lazada (online) ✨



For those times you do want to wear your nicer shoes on the bike or when it's raining, these rain shoe covers will keep both dust and rain off of them. Wet/dirty shoes are the worst. 9/10 recommend.

4. Sun Hat 💖

✨ Where to Purchase: Lots of places, but I'll link my favorite clothing store. It's walking distance to school ✨

<https://goo.gl/maps/maXChUsny9NABGEY8>



If a sunhat is in your fashion wheelhouse, I'd recommend it. Sunscreen can only do so much, and our faces deserve shade. 9/10 recommend.

5. Sunscreen 💖

✨ Where to Purchase: Tesco Lotus, pharmacies like Boots, beauty stores ✨
Whether or not you're willing to rock a sunhat, sunscreen is a must. And I'd stock up. It's a little pricey for the good stuff, but you definitely want SPF 50+. Just make sure it's not "whitening" if you're not interested in those effects. 10/10 recommend.



6. Umbrella 💖

💖Where to Purchase: Mr. DIY (or anywhere) 💖

This one is pretty self-explanatory, so I won't include a picture. It can be a cheap-ish one cause it's not too windy in Surat Thani that I've seen. But they're good for rain and sun shade. 7/10 recommend.

7. A Box for Your Motorbike 💖

💖Where to Purchase: X Motorbike Rentals 💖



When/if you rent a motorbike, I would ask X (one of the owners of the rental shop) if you can purchase a storage box to install on the back of it. He will probably have one, and he'll probably install it then and there. These are incredibly helpful for everyday life. Grocery shopping, regular shopping, stowing your backpack/bag when it rains, the list goes on. And when you travel, if you want to go by bike it's almost a necessity. 10/10 recommend.

8. Reusable Shopping Bags 💖

💖Where to Purchase: Very specifically-> The BIGGEST yellow bags from Mr. DIY 💖

I can't tell you how many uses I have found for these huge yellow bags. They're sturdy, water resistant, and can fit almost ANYTHING. They're foldable so you can easily fit a couple of them in the boot of your bike. I've lent them out several times, because several times a random situation arose where someone needed a bag and I had one. They're great for using as both a laundry basket (because they're structured enough that they can mostly stand up on their own when unfolded) and as a way to carry laundry either to a laundromat or the closeline. Most importantly, if you buy something kind of bulky but only have your bike, you can put it in that bag and hang that bag off of this little hook on your bike. I've carried a dog bed and a large rice cooker easily and safely on my bike in that bag. 10/10 recommend.



9. A Light Zip-Up Windbreaker

Again, this is pretty self-explanatory so I won't include a picture. Any light jacket will do. It seems weird because Thailand is so hot, but that's exactly what the jacket is for– the sun. You are *exposed* on those bikes, cause there's no shade for as long as you ride. The Thai sun burns. Plus lots of dust gets kicked up by traffic, and it's dirty tbh. I've wiped my face with a wet wipe after a couple of rides on the bike and had the wipe be brown with soot 🦴 (so it's also good to wear your mask while you're on the bike). Jackets help keep the dust off your body as well as the sun. 10/10 recommend.

10. Tackle Box 💖

✨ Where to Purchase: Mr. DIY ✨



My teacher box is banged up, but I love this thing. You can leave it on top of your desk to store/organize your office supplies, or you can bring it to class like I do. It has lots of compartments to store things. If you look in the pictures, I have two of my three game items in this box - The Bell (which you can also find at Mr. DIY) and The Sticky Ball (which is only on Lazada). You can also see my red crayon things and “sign pens” in there, which I talk about in my article on places to shop in Surat. This box makes transporting my teacher supplies and games from class easier and less hectic. 9/10 recommend.



I hope you found this article helpful. Happy Shopping!