

# Surat Thani: Useful Places

by Elizabeth A. Clayborne



When I first arrived in Surat Thani a year ago, I was so excited to start my new life in Thailand. I was also deeply exhausted. Moving across the world and traveling for 3 days straight will do that to you. But time waits for none of us, and in the days that followed my arrival, I went to various stores and bought the supplies that I would need for everyday use in my new home. At the time, I enjoyed the novelty of my shopping experiences. But looking back, I made very few wise purchases. Most of what I bought that first week didn't stand the test of time, and ended up in the trash a few months later. Exhaustion + fun new shopping experiences - knowledge about the culture = money wasted. After spending the last year in Surat Thani, I think a lot about how much time, energy, and money I would have saved if I knew then what I know now.

In this article, I'm gonna share what I've learned about the most important shops in Surat Thani. Where to go for household items versus where to go for stationary. Where to go for prepackaged groceries and bulk food items (I'll talk about fresh produce in another post. Thai open air markets deserve their own article 💕). I'll also include locations that you can use with your navigation apps in case you wanna go straight from reading this article to spending some \$\$\$\$. Take what you like, and leave the rest.

## 1. Tesco Lotus

✨ Grocery Store-Mr. DIY-Phone Store-Movie Theater-Boots Pharmacy ✨

<https://goo.gl/maps/CR8r3FohY7tksHLD6>



Tesco Lotus is about 15 minutes by motorbike from the city center. There are other grocery stores much closer to where you'll probably be staying, but this particular location is bigger than other Lotus Markets, plus it's in a complex of useful stores that will allow you to complete a lot of errands in one stop. It has a pharmacy, grocery store, Mr. DIY (a store that has all kinds of items), a phone store for refilling minutes, and a movie theater.

## ✨ Boots Pharmacy ✨



When you enter Tesco Lotus through the main entrance, if you look immediately to your left you'll see a Boots pharmacy. They have vitamins there, as well as the kind of bar deodorant that Westerners are used to (and that work for us). Most places don't have that kind of deodorant, so it's worth noting that this is one of the few places you can find it in person.

**[Note: Lots of body products here have a whitening or "brightening" element. Even things like deodorant or sunscreen. If you're not interested in that, just be careful to read labels to make sure your products don't have that effect.]**



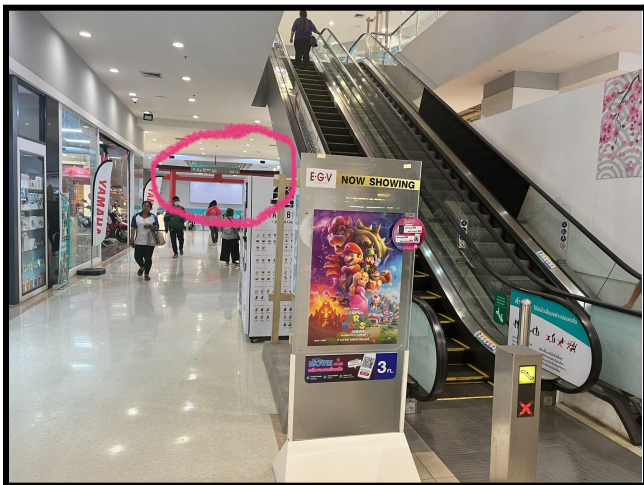
## ✨ Lotus Grocery Store (also has Household Items) ✨



(Notice the red arch at the top of the escalator. I'll mention it later in this article.)

To get to the grocery store portion of Tesco Lotus from the main entrance, you'll continue straight and go up the escalator. Once you get to the top, if you turn immediately to your right you'll see the grocery store a little way off in the distance. This is a great place for most prepackaged foods and a few produce items that are hard to find in open air markets.

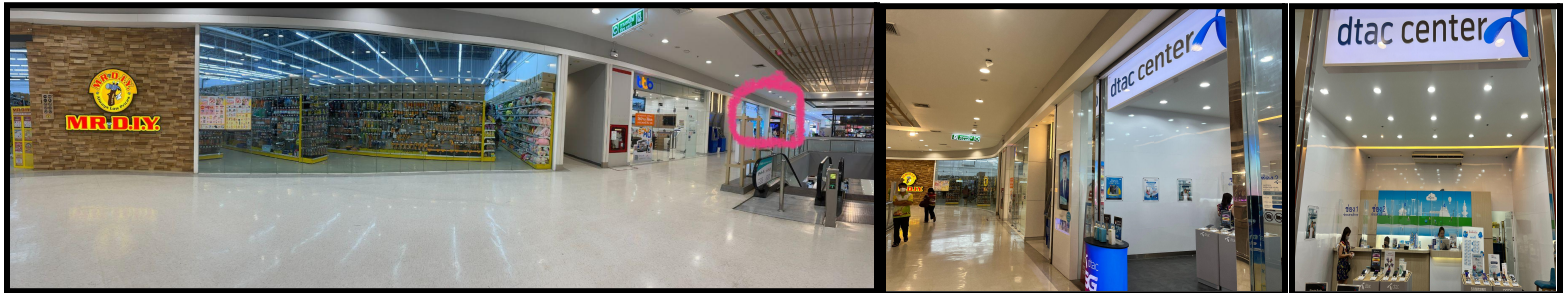
## ✨ Mr. DIY ✨



To get to Mr. DIY, you'll go up the first escalator. Once you get to the top you'll keep going straight. You'll come to a second set of escalators on your left. If you turn to go up this escalator, you can see the red arch again, this time from the back. It's circled in pink in the picture above. Go up that escalator and right in front of you will be Mr. DIY. This

place has everyyyything. But if you want household items, I don't recommend buying them from this store. What this store brings to the table is choices (one of which are super cute plushies). What it does not bring is quality. So if you want pens and stickers and things for classes, and random little things for your house like duct tape I say go for it here. If you want glassware or hooks to hang on your walls or *anything* that will take heavy use, I would suggest the Lotus grocery store downstairs or Daiso (which is in Central Mall. I'll talk more about Daiso later in this article. It's the best).

### ✨ Dtac Phone Store ✨



If you want to go to Dtac for phone services (to get a Thai phone sim card, top up your data, or pay for Spotify), you exit the second escalator and turn to the right. I circled Dtac in pink so you can see where it is in relation to Mr. DIY.

### ✨ SCB Bank ✨



If you want to go to SCB (Siam Commercial Bank), which is the bank that Thidamaepra typically recommends for teachers (that I also use), then you would exit the second escalator and turn to the left. It's right across the store from Mr. DIY.

### ✨ Movie Theater ✨

To go to the movie theater, you'll exit the second escalator and turn to the left. I circled Mr. DIY in pink so you can see where it is in relation to the theater.





## 2. Central

*The best mall in Surat Thani - has everything*

<https://goo.gl/maps/PGNpXS52KqiyfkzC?>



I love Central. It has everything, and the quality of things here is very good. It's not in the city center, but it's very close to Tesco Lotus. A lot of times when I go to one I go to the other. If there's a particular Western item you want, you can probably find it here.

## *Tops Market -groceries*



There's a grocery store on the first floor (on your left as you enter) called Tops Market. It has an excellent bakery and carries lots of western food items. It's probably my favorite grocery store in Surat just for the vibes.

## ✨ Uniqlo - clothes ✨



Also on the first floor, right across from the main entrance (past the escalators in the center of the mall) is Uniqlo. If you want to buy work clothes at a brick-and-mortar store, this is probably your best bet. In smaller, Thai clothing stores, (like the ones in the other 2 smaller malls in the city) they often don't carry sizes that would fit Western bodies and proportions. But Uniqlo should work for most folks. Bear in mind, clothes can be a little pricey relative to other items in Thailand. An average, good quality item of clothing at Uniqlo is 1,000 - 2,000 baht (which is like, half of the average rent).

## ✨ B2S - Stationary ✨



On the second floor of Central Mall is B2S. Since we're teachers, I figure ya'll might want to know about this store. At Thidamaepra we mark a *lot* of stuff. We also make our own class materials. Certain types of marking tools can make that work easier. There are two marking tools that I swear by, and both can be found here. One is this crayon thing I absolutely love using to mark books. We have to mark books and stuff in red, so I buy the red ones specifically. "Sign pens" (in case you don't know, it's like a cross between a pen and a marker that won't bleed through paper) are great for hand drawing worksheets and tests. You can see both in the picture above. You can find them on the second central aisle of the store, on the very bottom row, a bit towards the register. The sign pens and crayon things are almost right next to each other.



## ✨ Daiso - Household Items ✨



Daiso is the best store ever for most household items that I can think of, and many more that would never occur to me until I go to Daiso, and then I'm like, "Yup, I need that." Everything in the store is superrrr cheap and also weirdly good quality. I don't understand it, but I'm also not questioning it. I would start here and buy what you can find here *first*, before buying household items from anywhere else.

## 3. Dry Cleaner 💖

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We have to look professional and neat while also fielding hugs from sticky children daily. These conflicting expectations lead to lots of laundry. A lot of places in Thailand have washing machines but no dryer, so hanging laundry is very common. Which is lovely, eco-friendly– and takes time. Another thing I noticed is that some laundry machines here took a toll on my clothes and left them looking crinkled and weirdly grey-ish. All in all, laundry for work was becoming a huge time suck and I was still looking crumpled. So I decided to start bringing my work clothes to the dry cleaner. It's 20 baht per item, they usually have them done by the next day, and the best part– it's within walking distance to Thidamaepra. The owner is a sweet lady named Day who does not speak English at all. Momo, her daughter, speaks it pretty well. Mochi is the fluffy cutie getting

pets, and he makes every one of my visits there fun. He's super friendly. If you end up going, tell them all hi from me 😊

## 4. Makro 💖

*(Bulk Items/ Grocery Store)*

<https://goo.gl/maps/syAky1qeTQvYmvfc?>



Makro is great for bulk items (I like getting oil from here cause I cook a lot). They have pre-packaged food in smaller quantities as well, so it's a pretty good one stop shop if you just want groceries. Makro also has pretty good quality dishware and tupperware for cheap. I personally wouldn't purchase any kitchen appliances, knives, or pots/pans from here though. All the kitchen items I bought from there gave out on me after a couple of uses 😭



I hope you found this article helpful. Happy shopping!



