

## Thai Weddings

The Thai Buddhist wedding is a beautiful social ceremony that is deemed separate from the legal aspect of the marriage, which involves the marriage registration. The evening before the wedding marks the commencement of the Buddhist ceremony, which is the act of paying homage to the bride's ancestors.

The couple just wears their ordinary clothing during this ceremony, which is attended by nine invited monks. The monks will be sitting on straw mats with a bottle of water and a glass before them. As the couple sits closest to the first monk who holds a special fan in his hands, a sacred thread is twirled around the bride and groom's head and unrolled in the monk's hands. A bowl of water with a candle inside is placed nearest the first monk, which is the holy water to be used the following day. The monks will then proceed to pray and rest, after which they shall return to their temple to await the next day of the ceremony. Ceremony before the Wedding Day The nine monks present from last night will arrive again for the next part of the wedding ceremony. There will be nine trays containing small dishes to be placed before each monk. They will sprinkle holy water to bless all the guests present. The couple, who are now wearing traditional Thai wedding attire, will kneel together and once more a sacred string will be bound on their heads, after which they will proceed to wai (D+'I) as a sign of respect.

As prayers are being said, the couple will then proceed to give the monks money, handing them out into nine envelopes. After this the monks are fed before they go back to their temple. However, during retreat season monks aren't allowed to go outside their temples, therefore, no weddings are held during this time of the year. Door Ceremony One of the older elements of a Thai wedding ceremony included having a Door Ceremony where the groom opens all the gates on the way to his bride's house and offering gifts in the process. The gifts given are supposed to be more valuable the closer the groom gets to the bride's house. Today, the gates have been replaced by girls (usually the bride's sisters) holding a chain. The groom will then pass on from link to link, by confirming that he is able to care for his bride for the rest of their lives and presenting an envelope of money. Cheers would be heard every time the groom passes from link to link. Feet Washing Ceremony After the Door Ceremony comes the Feet Washing ceremony, but these old elements are no longer always present in a traditional Thai wedding. This part symbolizes the pledge of respect and allegiance of the wife to her husband. The wife bows at the feet of her husband, then proceeds to wash his feet and wai (D+'I).

The dowry is presented at this time, but usually this is just for ceremonial purposes and the amount is returned to the couple after they get married to help them get started on their new life. After the traditional Thai wedding has been performed, the community will view the newlyweds as husband and wife even without the legal aspect of marriage registration. However, it would be best to do the marriage registration for legal purposes, including visa applications. Shell Ceremony As the culminating part of a traditional Thai wedding, the shell ceremony starts with the couple kneeling on a small pedestal with clasped hands and garlands around their necks. After the village elder says a few words of blessings, the guests would proceed to pour holy water out of a shell onto their hands and says their own word of blessings for the couple. They will also give envelopes containing money to the couple, and the couple will give them wedding mementos in exchange.