



# Chulalongkorn Exchange:

*A student's experience on Thayer's (best) exchange program*



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# 01 So, who wrote this?

สวัสดีค่ะ! *Hey!*

My name is Evan Bass and I am a '24 who went on the Chula Exchange program in 2023. Pursuing my engineering degree in Bangkok was one of the most incredible experiences I had while at Dartmouth. I hope this guide shows how unique studying at Chula is and provides you with a student perspective on the exchange.

At Dartmouth, I am seeking to complete the BE (bachelors of engineering) at Thayer in four years. I write this to illustrate: *anyone can study abroad while becoming an engineer*. I cannot encourage you enough to apply to this program. Studying at a globally renowned university in the context of a Southeast Asian culture not only uncovers an approach to engineering impossible to find at Dartmouth, but also illuminates the nuances of designing in a non-Western environment.

*A Quick Note: All the photos included in this guide, I took myself—you'll see things throughout which you'll be sure to see while at Chula!*







# Academic Stuff





## 02 So, what's Chula like?



### Background

Chulalongkorn University is the royal university of Thailand, originally established King Rama VI in 1917. It is the nation's oldest institution of higher learning, one of the most prestigious, and certainly the most recognizable.

As a student, you'll quickly discover the campus is historic and has multiple museums across campus dedicated to royal figures and famous alumni (including the Humanities Library, pictured on the first page, built for a princess whilst she was in attendance).

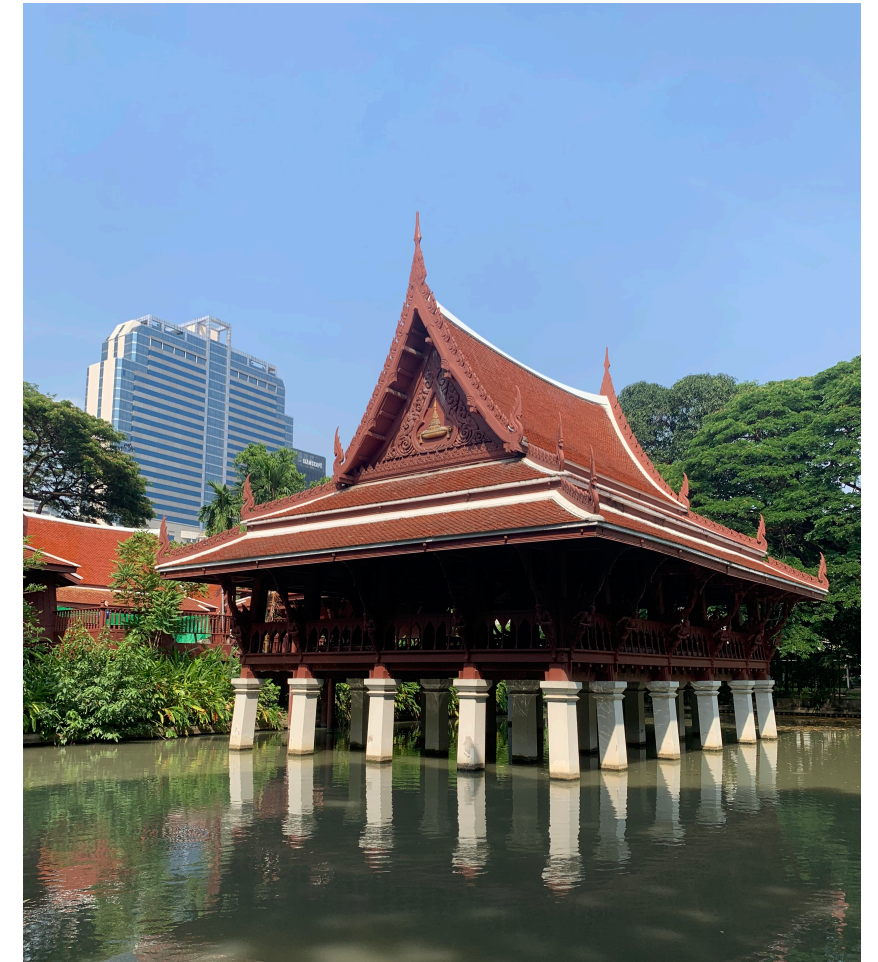
The school itself is quite comprehensive, and each faculty has its own exchange program drawing students from around the globe!



### International School of Engineering (ISE)

Chula is structured as many state universities across the US; it has multiple faculties which each have its own rules and international exchange programs. Each has its own rules, so although all must wear a uniform, the ISE is very relaxed about it!

On Thayer's exchange, you'll attend ISE, which hosts about 20-25 exchange students from around the world. During my time, Dartmouth provided the only Americans, with most other exchange students coming from France, Germany with some from other European/Asian countries.



### Campus

Firstly, Bangkok as a whole is very safe, but Chula's campus is situated within an upscale, metropolitan district which is populated by university students and staff. It is easily navigable, with an electric bus fleet to help you brave the heat and is situated between Siam, known for housing Southeast Asia's best malls, and downtown Bangkok.

The campus itself feels like a tropical paradise, filled with green spaces and parks. Overall it is 250 acres.



## 03 So, what are classes like?

*Chula ISE offers a wide range of transferable classes, many of which are specialized, and not offered at Thayer.*

**The ISE is divided into five focuses:**

- *Nano Engineering*
- *Aero Engineering*
- *Information & Communication Engineering (ICE)*
- *Automotive Design & Manufacturing Engineering (ADME)*
- *Robotics & AI Engineering*

**Across these categories, you can expect to find most fundamental engineering classes offered and are able to take any ISE classes offered, regardless of major, as an exchange student. Specialized classes which qualify for Thayer credit not offered at Dartmouth transfer as engineering electives.**

*Classes are similar to the European style. They meet once a week for 3 hours and you can expect only a little homework. Your grade depends primarily on a midterm and final.*





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# Once in a Lifetime Stuff





## 04 So, what's Bangkok like?

### The Jewel of Southeast Asia

*If you don't know much about daily life in Bangkok that's okay! This is for you.*

As a city, Bangkok is sprawling and absolutely filled with a colorful, tasty, and bustling society. Overall, the city is quite safe with low rates of crime, especially in the areas surrounding Chula. It is massive and perhaps the most metropolitan hub in all of Southeast Asia. Trust me, you won't get bored.

#### Navigating the Chaos:

It would be a lie to say the streets of Bangkok are not overwhelming to a newcomer. You should expect busy roads ruled by motorcycles, cars, and tuk-tuks all speaking a language of their own. Don't worry!—you'll learn the rules of the road quickly. Unlike most Western cities, the sidewalks function as a marketplace and are filled with curbside restaurants and every salesperson imaginable.

With that said, Bangkok is easily navigable. It has great above and below ground public transportation, as well as busses, and perhaps too many forms of taxis (motorcycle taxis, Uber equivalents, tuk-tuks).

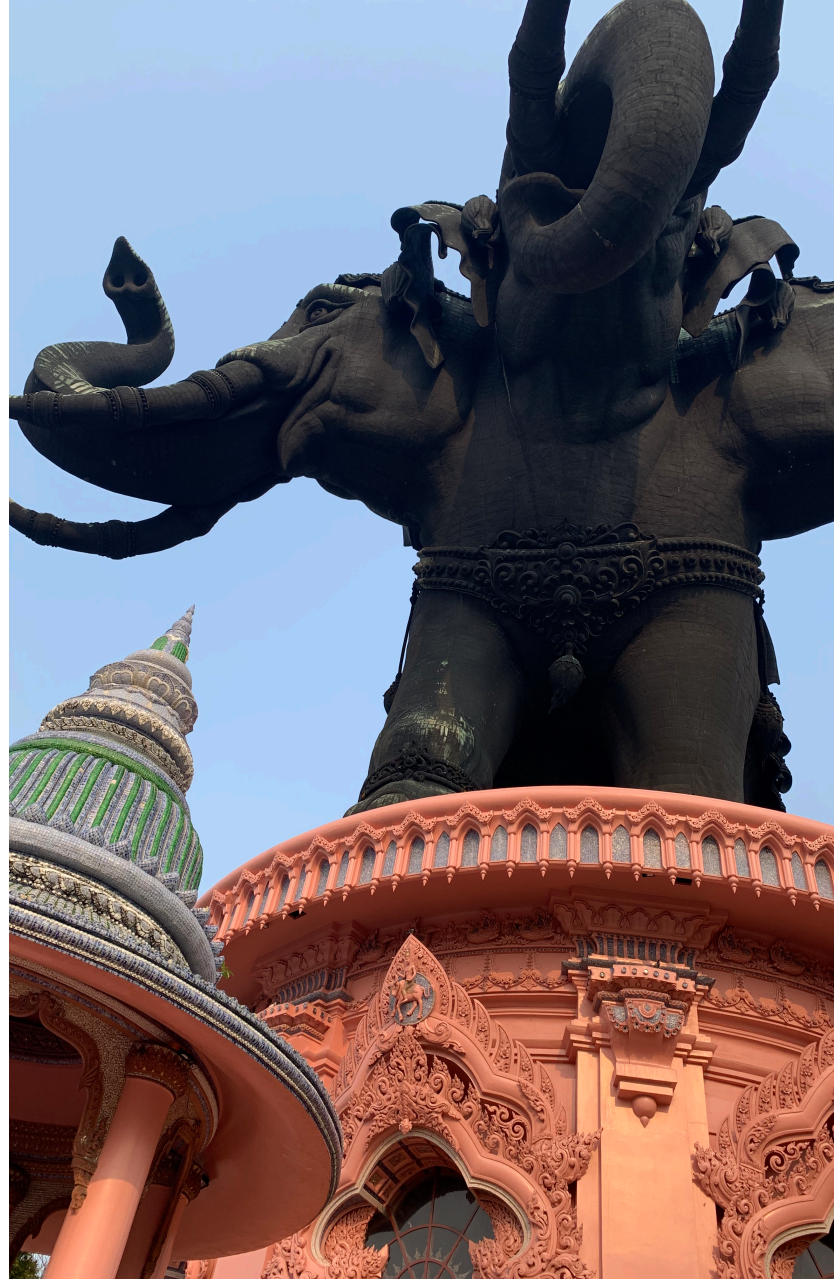




## 05 So, what events will take place?



Bangkok is home to the world's largest Chinatown and has a large Chinese-Thai population. **Chinese New Year** is a huge event, where the city and streets fill with color, food, and spectacles.



In Bangkok, there are always events taking place. There is a huge “pop-up” culture, meaning there are all kinds of unexpected things happening across the city and especially at Chula.



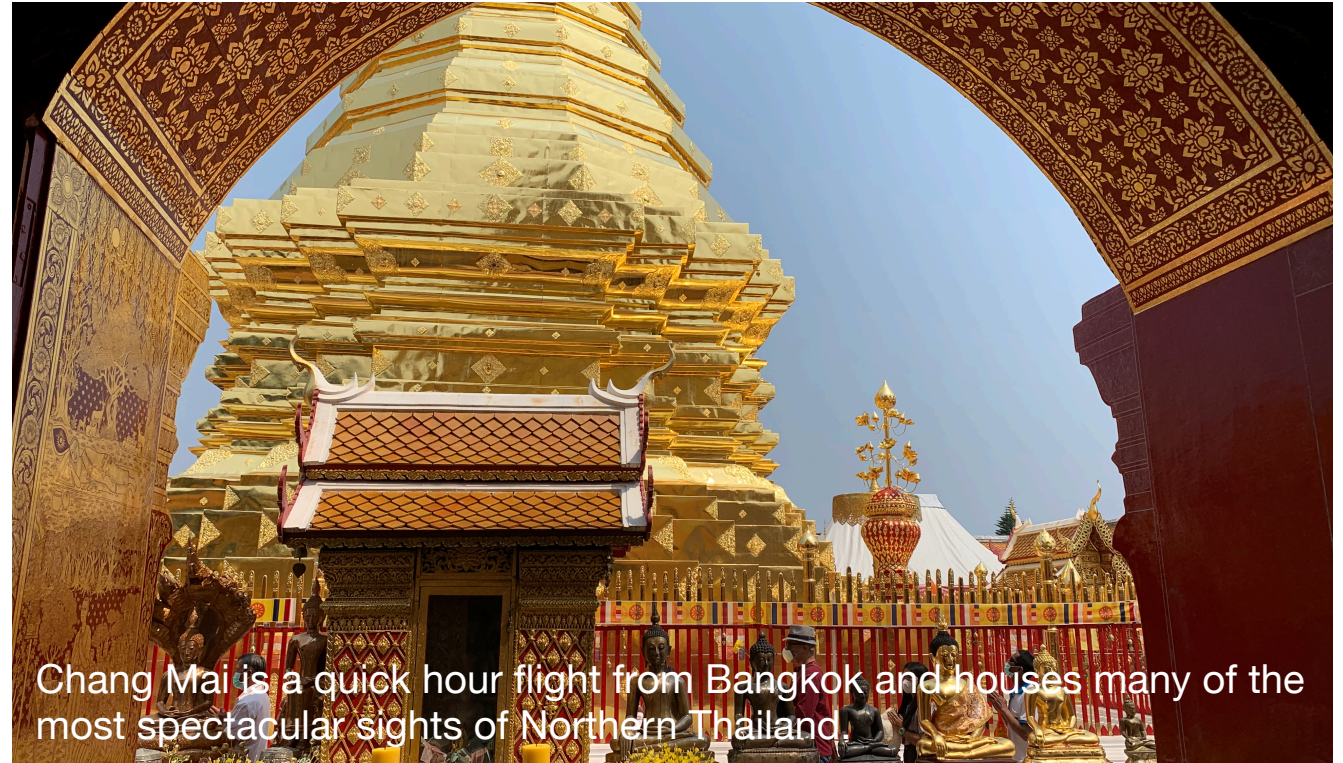
**Songkran** marks the start of the Thai New Year and is celebrated by a massive water fight. Bangkok is the rowdiest, Chang Mai has the most water.



## 06 So, where can I travel?

*Thailand is made up of a diverse mix of states, each with its own regional cultures, histories, foods, and unforgettable experiences. Here are a few I had!*

Ayutthaya is the ancient capital of Thailand and is located only one and a half hours north of Chula's campus by train.



Chang Mai is a quick hour flight from Bangkok and houses many of the most spectacular sights of Northern Thailand.

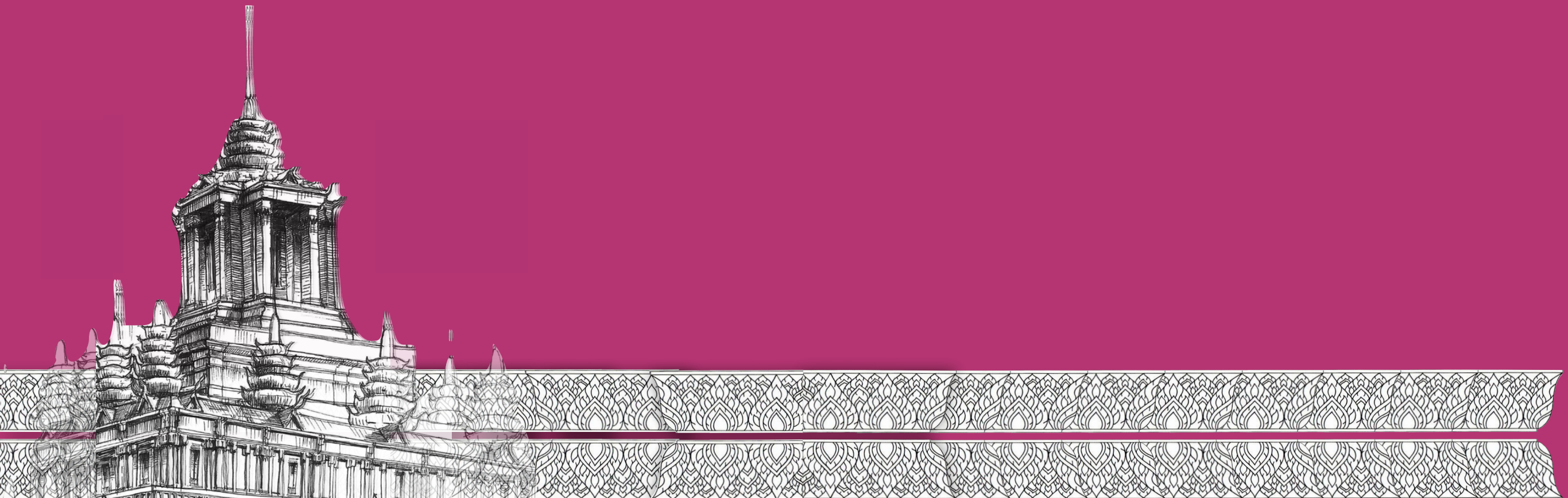


Thailand is famous for its islands. I mean common—look at them!



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# Practical Stuff





## 07 So, how does housing & visas work?

*Perhaps the most daunting part of the Chula program is imagining the path of securing housing and a visa. Don't stress too much! It is easier to figure out than you may think, but the timeline may be shorter than you wish! You're on Thai time now!*

### Let's talk about housing first:

It's important to note that students on the exchange program are responsible for securing their own housing. This may sound difficult at first, but in reality, Chula is surrounded by numerous options, many of which are quite affordable especially when compared with Dartmouth housing or that of other cities.

Exchange students are encouraged to apply to Chula's CU IHouse, although availability is not guaranteed. During my time, I stayed in CU IHouse, an international apartment style dorm which is a 24 story, modern high rise with a free bus to different parts of campus. CU IHouse is a great housing option, but not guaranteed as it is reserved for Chula's graduate programs.

What is important to note is Thailand on a whole operates on a much more lax, and chilled timeline than that of the US. It sounds stressful, but it is not uncommon to find housing a month to even two weeks before arriving at Chula. With that said, it would also be possible to arrive at Chula with the plan to stay at a nearby hotel until you secure housing. Remember, Thailand operates on a very different timeline! Don't get too stressed!

### The Visa Situation:

Fortunately, the visa situation is fairly straightforward, but of course is variant based on your country of origin and its relationship with Thailand. Chula's exchange liaison will secure the necessary documents to arrive in the country smoothly. Again, do not fret! You may only receive your visa documents a few weeks prior to arriving! But do not worry, the exchange coordination office is filled with fantastic people who do this each year successfully.

The visa you will likely receive will be a valid entry for about 3 months from your time of arrival in Thailand. Thus, you will need to go to the immigration center in Bangkok and get your visa extended about 3 months into your exchange. This may also sound daunting, however the exchange office will provide you with the appropriate guidance and documents. Be sure to reach out to them a few weeks in advance and make an appointment at the immigration office (also in advance)!

Lastly if you wish to leave the country, you will need to get a re-entry visa. This is quite easy to do. Arrive early to the airport (or port of entry). Here, you will need to present a printed passport photo (be sure to bring extras), a TM-8 form (found online or at the port), and the appropriate fee in baht (about or \$30).



## 08 So, what about finances?

### Bangkok on a Budget

One of the great parts of studying abroad in Bangkok and traveling in SE Asia is its affordability. An average meal at Chula's dining hall (all made to order) is between \$2-3 USD. While in Bangkok, I easily lived off of \$10-15 a day, including 3 full meals and some transportation. The relative affordability of food and goods was one of the largest sources of culture shock for me and the students on my trip. Additionally as a Chula student, you will also get discounts on tickets to national museums and temples (*just bring your ID*)!

Thailand uses the Thai Baht as its main form of currency. Although some places accept card, most still use cash only, especially in markets and local restaurants, so be sure to have some Baht on you. ATMs are also easily accessible throughout the country and USD and other major forms of currency can be exchanged at banks.

