

Thailand (Bangkok) Bathroom (Bathrooms)

July 30, 2021

INTAGE Thailand Daisuke Aoba



1. Introduction: An old story about toilets in Thailand

It was about 25 years ago when I was traveling Thailand alone as a backpacker. I still have a vivid memory of the toilet I used when I stayed with a host family in Bangkok for about a week. I had just finished my business when I noticed that the exit strategy of the toilet was completely unarmed: a large polyethylene bucket that looked like it could hold 100 liters was filled with water. I squatted down on the toilet and watched as the bucket gently floated in the water. I simulated the optimal procedure in my mind over and over again, trying to decide whether I should let my left hand wait for the water in my butt or whether I should scoop the water with my left hand and then let it go to my butt. What I need is a feeling and momentum. The numbness in my legs is reaching its limit. I hold my breath and say, "Ay! It was the first time for me to use the bathroom. The shower was in the same room as the toilet in the house, so I decided to take a shower after using the toilet until I got used to using the toilet. Because there was no toilet paper in the house, it was more convenient to wipe off the water from my body by taking a shower.

2. Thai bathrooms are unit bath style

In the past and still today, Thai bathrooms usually have a toilet and a shower room in one room. So to speak, it is a unit bath type. Bathrooms and toilets are called "hong naam" in Thai language, where "hong" means room and "naam" means water. Because it is a room of water, toilet and shower are also in the same way. These are installed in the bathroom including a washbasin.



[Bangkok. Detached house for high income group with monthly household income over 75,000THB. Shower, toilet and sink are all in one room.

Source: Consumer Life Panorama TH_6

3. Toilet in Thailand

Let's take a look at toilets first. Toilets can be divided into two types: the squatting type like the Japanese style, and the sitting type. In Bangkok, you can still find squatting type toilets in some local restaurants, but the number of these toilets is decreasing, and it is safe to say that the toilet seat type is becoming the mainstream for households in the middle class and above income bracket. In rural areas, however, it is not uncommon to see a squatting type toilet.



[Udon Thani. Detached house in the lower income bracket with monthly household income below 14,999THB. A squatting type toilet. When flushing, it is necessary to pour water over the toilet with a hand bucket, etc.]

Source: Consumer Life Panorama TH_49

Now, after you sit down and do your business, you push the button on the top panel of the tank to let the water flow. Some have a single button, while others have two separate buttons, one large and one small, to change the amount of water flowing.

After flushing, you can wash your buttocks with a hose with a nozzle that extends from a water pipe near the toilet bowl. What used to be a tub has now been replaced by a hose. It is very convenient because water comes out by holding the lever of the nozzle at hand, but you have to hold the lever carefully because you don't know how vigorously the water comes out or not when you use it for the first time. Once, the water was so strong that I made a fountain come out from the gap of the toilet seat on the back side.



[Bangkok. Condominium for middle to high income group with monthly household income of 50,000-75,000THB. Washing the buttocks with a hose with nozzle on the left hand side of the toilet] Source: Consumer Life Panorama TH_23

Other than the hose type, there are products with names such as TOKYO SUKKIRI. By opening the shower nozzle fixed to the toilet seat with the water volume control knob on the right hand side of the seat, the buttocks can be washed with the shower nozzle under the back of the seat. In some cases, a shower toilet seat and a hose with nozzle are attached. The key point is that no electricity is used at all. This is because, as I said at the beginning, a bathroom is a room of water, and the floor is usually wet, and water from the shower may splash around the toilet bowl, and the area around the toilet bowl is also wet after finishing business. For this reason, it is dangerous to place an electric outlet on the wall below the back of the toilet bowl, and a shower toilet seat that operates only by water pressure is easy and reasonable to install. In Thailand, it is not so cold that we want to wash our buttocks with warm water, so we can use tap water at the same temperature.

The water pressure in Thailand is generally low and the water flow is not sufficient. After washing your buttocks, it is considered etiquette to dispose of the toilet paper used to wipe the water droplets in the trash can next to the toilet, rather than flushing it down the toilet bowl.

4. Shower in Thailand



[Bangkok. Detached house for high income group with monthly household income over 75,000THB. The shower room is separated by glass. A hot water heater is also installed] Source: Consumer Life Panorama TH_7]

Next, let's take a look at showers. There may be individual differences, but in Thailand, where it's always summer, you'll probably take a shower at least twice a day to wash off the sweat or take a bath as a measure against the heat. Tap water is not so cold, but rather tepid, so even if you take a bath in it, you may feel a little chilly, but it's not too cold that you can't take a bath, and it's rather pleasant.

When showering with hot water, it is common to turn on the switch of the electric water heater, which is installed diagonally above the shower nozzle, to get hot water. The temperature of the hot water is adjusted by a dial on the side of the water heater. Even if you set the temperature to the maximum, you will feel that the temperature is 40 degrees Celsius or less. Turn off the power when not in use. The electricity bill in Thailand is relatively high compared to other countries, so it is natural to save electricity. Because it is a unit bath, the water when you take a shower wets the floor of the room, so it is sometimes separated by a curtain or renovated with a glass door, but it is only in a few luxury condominiums that the toilet and shower are independent.

The floor is tiled, and although it dries relatively quickly due to the high temperature, the shower makes the floor wet and slippery, and there are many concerns about injuries from falls when going to the toilet, especially in homes with elderly people.



[Bangkok. Detached house of high income group with monthly household income of 100,000THB. This is a typical bathroom of a Hong Naam (water room)] Source: Consumer Life Panorama TH_26

Looking back more than 25 years ago, we do not see any major changes in the layout of showers, toilets, and sinks in the house that are necessary for daily life, but we can certainly see a shift from squatting toilets to sitting toilets, or from hand tubs to hoses with nozzles. On the other hand, there has been little change in the fact that the floor of the bathroom tends to get wet easily due to its structure. In Thailand, where the aging society with fewer children is expected to advance the fastest among ASEAN countries, product proposals that consider the safety of the elderly in the bathroom, such as quick-drying, non-slip flooring that can be installed in a short period of time, may be acceptable, given the relatively large floor area of the bathroom and the difficulty of replacing it with a floorboard. It may be acceptable, assuming that the floor area of the bathroom is relatively large and it is difficult to substitute with snowboards.