



***Discover
the Rainbow
Side of
Bangkok***

Welcome to a 'RAINBOW BANGKOK'

This travel guide is an opportunity to us to reaffirm our philosophy when promoting Thailand. Our Kingdom has a long tradition of tolerance and openness towards all foreigners visiting us. We welcome anybody without discrimination of race, religion and of course gender. We are actually happy that Thailand capital Bangkok has long been marked as a favourite destination among **LGBTQ** communities.

Bangkok is indeed an exciting city, offering a range of activities, from cultural attractions to gastronomy experience, from unlimited shopping opportunities to the discovery of local communities. And of course, we invite you to explore the vibrancy of Bangkok nightlife. This guide will let you explore all the sides of Bangkok.

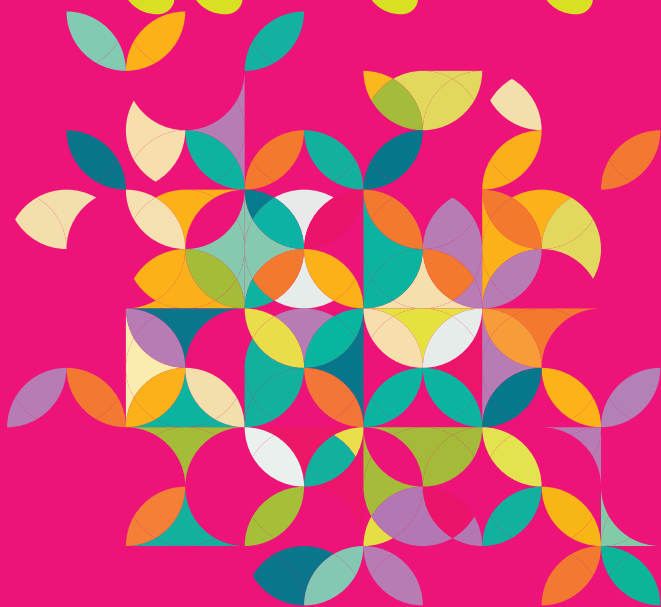


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Welcome to a
'RAINBOW
BANGKOK'



Discover **BANGKOK**

capital of tolerance and diversity

No doubt. Bangkok is one of the most exciting metropolises in Southeast Asia and certainly in the world. It is energetic, colourful, offers entertainment and activities for everyone; no matter your gender, your age, your ethnicity, your religion, you will discover your own Bangkok.

Bangkok has always been a tolerant, open-minded city which has been attracted communities from all around Asia and the world for more than 200 years.

Whatever your way of thinking, whatever your way of dressing, whatever your taste for food and of course, whatever your sexual orientation, Thai people will take it with a sort of *laissez-faire*, translated into the famous 'Mai Pen Rai' ('Never Mind') way of thinking. "As long as you do not do anything reprehensible and as long as you enjoy yourself, why not!", many Thais would tell.

This is why Bangkok has been so open to embrace differences and accept gender diversity. Such as the famed Thai transvestites. They are part of Thai society and if you go for example to a department store, some of the staff members advising you for your make-up or hair-do might actually be a lady boy.

The high degree of acceptance is due to the way of the Thai people's life philosophy. "You might be born a boy or a girl and feel the opposite. This is just a mistake in destiny and we should accept it," the locals say.



LGBT communities indeed are present everywhere and in all classes of society. This community is particularly active in the creative field, from design to movies, from art to cuisine, from fashion to hospitality. The LGBT communities are increasingly active in social issues. They are even now discussions at the political level to implement same sex unions...



Bangkok itself suggests to people not to be shy over their difference. This city has been shaped by diversity. Try to further find in other parts of Southeast Asia a city where entertainment, colours, fashion and gastronomy know so little limits.

With this guide in your pocket, we would like to give you an opportunity of discovering another Bangkok that might surprise and definitely delight you. This guide does not want to be extensive and replace existing guide books. Take it as a friend who would advise you how to best maximize your stay. Above all, have fun, enjoy Bangkok and open to its New Shades of Diversity!

BEHAVIOUR GUIDELINES TO ENJOY BANGKOK AT ITS BEST

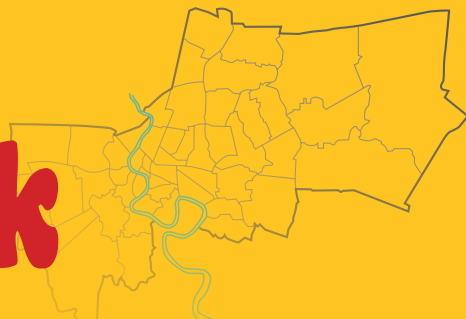
If Bangkok is an open city, there are however certain rules to respect which are often common sense, also linked to long established Thai traditions. Such as the way to dress if visiting temples, palaces and official institutions. Decent clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts or proper trousers would be appreciated. Shouting and bad behaviour are considered impolite by the locals. Smiling and talking lightly will win you people's hearts. Courtesy is highly praised in Thailand. And it makes life easier...

If you go out at night, do not forget to take a copy of your passport. Patrons will check your age for your own safety.

In case of any problem, the Tourist Police is here to help. Hotline is 1155.

EXPLORE

Bangkok



You do not need to be fluent in Thai to go around Bangkok

With Bangkok public transport, go over Bangkok's roofs with the Skytrain and get splashed by a boat on a canal.

Fearing to be lost in the big city? No worries, Bangkok's public transport is so easy to use.

The Skytrain (BTS) and MRT add lines year after year and most important tourist places are now accessible with these two independent transport companies at reasonable prices. Both the BTS and MRT run two lines to which the Airport Express Link can be added as it stops at a couple of stations in town. Offering a very comprehensive network, day cards or top-up cards are available for easy use.

While the bus system remains rather complicated if you do not master Thai –except to use the bus lines A1, A2 and A3 to Don Mueang Airport-, an exciting way to travel around Bangkok is to take a boat. The public Chao Phraya Express Boats take you from BTS Saphan Thaksin to Rajburana to the South and Nonthaburi to the north. Four lines of boats run every 10 to 15 minutes on average from 6.00 am to 8.00 pm.

And if you like to be splashed and have an adventurous spirit, jump –literally- into one of the boats navigating along Saen Saep Canal. Some 60,000 commuters use this public transport system every day which links Ratchadamnoen Avenue, near to the Golden Mountain temple to the Mall in Bang Kapi district. You will discover Bangkok from an unusual point

of view and you avoid traffic jams in town!

If you still like adventure, there are possibilities to use the Bangkok Sharing Bike System. Called 'Pun Pun' (actually pronounced 'Pan Pan'), the green bikes can be rented online or at the Pun Pun Bike Office inside Chulalongkorn University, across Chamchuri Square. Do not feel worried by the heavy traffic. Car drivers are careful when seeing bicycles.

And finally, there are plenty of taxis in town. If you travel as a group of two or three, they generally are cheaper than the Skytrain or MRT. Try to avoid them during rush hour. And install the ride-sharing apps to control the price of a trip.



Do not miss the MRT Blue line four newest stations linking Hua Lamphong Station to Bangkok royal district in Rattanakosin and Thonburi. They are true architectural jewels, reflecting Thai heritage.

First time visitors: the 10 not-to-be-missed places to go!

Staying less than 72 hours in Bangkok? This is what you should not miss for your Bangkok visit and for your collection of selfies.



Wat Pho. Next to the Grand Palace, this is the place of the reclining Buddha, the largest in Thailand. They are also some 800 images of Buddha inside and exquisite murals. The temple has been a centre of learning including the art of traditional massage. Massage initiation courses are proposed to travellers.

National Museum.

The largest of its kind in Southeast Asia, used to be a residence for the Royal Family before being turned into a museum in 1887. It has the most exquisite collection of Thai sculptures in the Kingdom.



Grand Palace. Impossible to miss this magnificent structure. Residence to the Chakri Dynasty, it is a city within a city with its various palaces in Thai and European styles, chedi and temples. All are lavishly decorated with a profusion of golden roofs, statues, ceramics and frescoes. They are museums inside as well as the famous Wat Phra Kaeo, sanctuary of the Emerald Buddha. Half a day is necessary to explore the Grand Palace. If you feel it is over-crowded to your taste, at least admire the view from the Royal Field (Sanam Luang).





Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn) is for Bangkok what the Eiffel Tower is for Paris thanks to its famous silhouette on the Chao Phraya River. Its Prang (Khmer style tower) is said to be 81.85 m after renovation. Expect to enjoy great views over the river from the top of the Prang.

Chao Praya River. Take a public or a private boat to go along the Chao Praya River. Through wooden houses on stilts, temples, churches, opulent European palaces and of course the Grand Palace mirror themselves in the waters of the river.

Wat Benjamabophit/Marble Temple.

Built entirely in Italian marble- including the floor tiles-, the temple perfectly blends European and Thai styles. Stroll in the gardens to visit the charming monks' quarters.

Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall.

It took 11 years to build this majestic structure completed in 1915 to serve as the Main Throne Hall. The Hall, built by a dozen artists and engineers from Italy, takes its inspiration from the Vatican's St Peter's Basilica. The building can be admired from a distance.

Yaowarat/Chinatown. Nostalgic of a 1960's style China Explore Yaowarat Road with its big neon lights, old-style shops and of course plenty of Chinese food!

Ratchaprasong/Siam.

You probably do not need a recommendation for that area because this is the centre of the shopping district. There are a dozen shopping malls with 1000s of shops from luxury to popular, fancy hotels, an art centre and a museum.

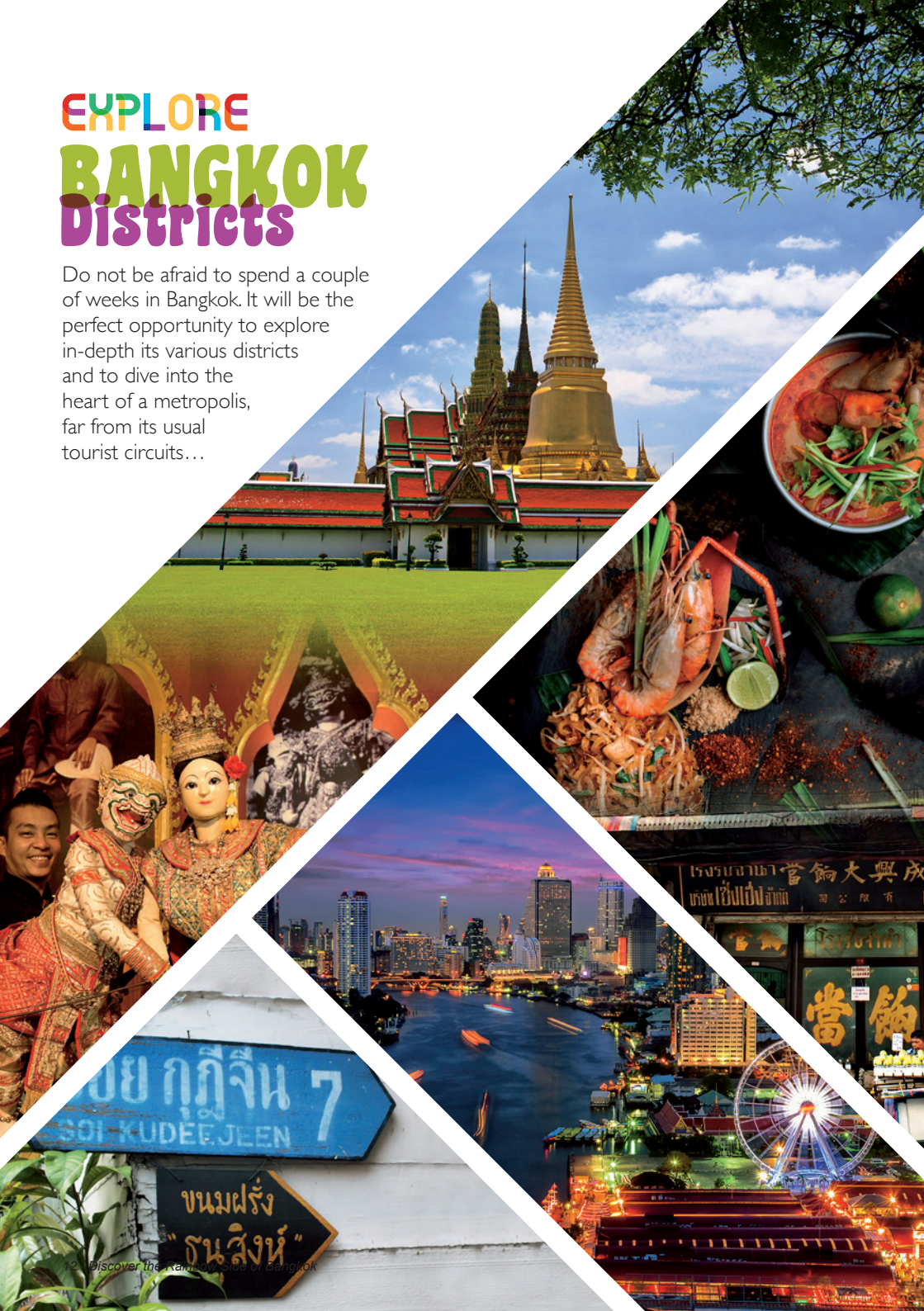
Jim Thompson House.

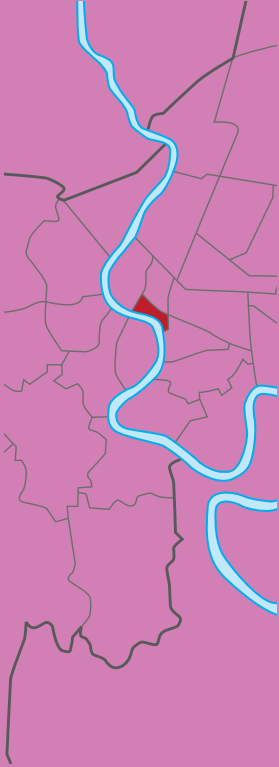
In a small laneway from MBK Shopping Mall is the Jim Thompson House, three 200-year old Thai Teak houses connected to each other. The place was home of American-born Jim Thompson, considered the father of the Thai silk revival but also an intelligence officer. The place is now an exquisite museum and also has a restaurant.



EXPLORE BANGKOK Districts

Do not be afraid to spend a couple of weeks in Bangkok. It will be the perfect opportunity to explore in-depth its various districts and to dive into the heart of a metropolis, far from its usual tourist circuits...





EXPLORE

YAOWARAT

Walk over a dragon, pray at the world's largest golden Buddha, buy a wig and sip a cocktail tasting like a medicine!

Go to China without flying and getting through the hassle of visa formalities! Yaowarat has been the settlement of a Chinese community in Sampheng area as soon as the Siam monarchy moved the capital from Thon Buri to Bangkok. All over the 19th century, immigrants from war-torn areas of China settled there, attracted by the prospective of doing trade and earning a better life. Over 50% of ethnic Thai Chinese originally came from Guangdong Province. Today, the Chinese of Thailand represents the largest overseas Chinese community in the world with a population of approximately 10 million people.

The settlement in Sampheng district along the main artery was named Yaowarat (meaning the 'Young King') – a reference to King Rama V the Great who built the road and was enthroned at the age of 15.



Shop in 1970s China...

Yaowarat Road and its adjacent streets are a colourful world, a maze of traditional shops selling gold and jewels, which actually gives its nickname of 'Golden Road', Chinese pastries, dry pork, medicinal herbs, religious items, electric appliances and tons of more or less tasteful plastic accessories. Not to forget hundreds of food shops selling sugar-coated duck, BBQ pork, rice soups, dumplings, sausages, herbal drinks and pastries.

It is also like a time machine to explore with its communities living like in the 1960s or early 1970s. Tang To Kang, the capital's oldest gold shop, and Chao Krom Pho, the city's oldest Chinese medicine store, still look like the way they did more than a century ago. And if you desperately need to find a wig and jewel accessories for a last-minute party, Sampeng Square on Ratchawongse Road is the right place to go.

Do you know that when you walk along Yaowarat Road, you actually follow the body of a dragon? The dragon's head starts at the Royal Jubilee Arch at Odeon Circle and ends up when crossing Chakraphet Road after the bridge over the Ong Sang Canal.



Shiny Shrine

They are a dozen Chinese shrines and temples in Chinatown; some belong to foundations while some others are home to ethnicities according to language (Cantonese, Hakka, Hainanese, Hokkien and Teochew, the latest being the most spoken language by Sino-Thais).

If you love gold, Wat Traimit Witthayaram on the edge of Chinatown, near Odeon Circle, will please you. Its golden roof, the biggest golden Buddha statue (3.90 meters) waits for your visit! The temple has a museum about Yaowarat Thai-Chinese. Chinatown's most elegant shrine is a small black stone and gold temple along Chao Krung Road which belongs to the Cantonese Linguistic Association.

The Goddess of Mercy (Guan Yin) is visible inside the Thien Fah Foundation Hospital, a charity association which continues to provide free medical



assistance to needy people. It is always busy as locals come to pray to the Goddess. The temple is little known but has beautiful carving and is spectacular when lit at night.

Wat Mangkon Kamalawat or Wat Leng Nei Yi is the most revered in Sampheng. It is located along Charoen Krung Road and contains a series of golden statues of Chinese-style Buddhas and Buddhist guardians.



Visarut Mac Jitsiri, Doctor in Acupuncture



Yaowarat is the heart of the traditional Thai-Chinese community with its own culture. I was myself immersed into Chinatown life, as I worked for four long years in acupuncture at the Thien Fah Foundation, one of the oldest social care institutions in Yaowarat. I associated Yaowarat with the local people, praying at shrines and enjoyed all the special food during the Chinese New Year. These days, I spend most of my time around Ratchaprasong, as I find all I need, from breakfast to gym, from movies to shopping. My favourites in Bangkok? Kopi Yai Tha Kee for its old fashioned atmosphere; Winebridge, a very Thai hang-out pub but good for drinks. and also the Cassette Music Bar in Ekamai.



Teens of Thailand

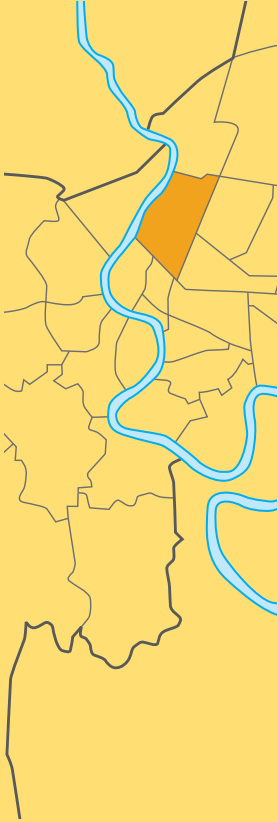
Sip an herbal cocktail made in Yaowarat

Time for a break? Having dim sum at the 1930-style Shanghai Mansion Bangkok Hotel?. The dim sum has the reputation of being among the best in Bangkok while advertisements and antique furniture evoke the glamour of Shanghai. The hotel used to be the first Chinese Opera House in Bangkok before being turned into Thailand's first stock exchange. Or try Nai Mong Hoi Thot (539 Soi Prapachai) famed for its oyster and mussel omelettes.

In the evening, escape the crowds strolling under the neon lights of Yaowarat Road to enjoy a range of new bars and eateries in Soi Nana (Yaowarat-not to be confused with the one on Sukhumvit). Young entrepreneurs, mostly handsome local kids opened cocktail bars and restaurants. Try the tailor-made *Teens of Thailand's* cocktails for the forever-teens in their heart, *Tep Bar*, which proposes strange herbal cocktails while youngsters play traditional Thai music; *23 Bar and Gallery* organises young artists' exhibitions, while *Ba Hao* proposes contemporary Chinese food, snacks and cocktails. Hang out with your loved one at *Asia Today (A.T.)*, in Maitri Chit Road, next to Soi Nana. The talented mixologists create their drinks with unknown Thai herbs including a daiquiri flavoured with Khao Yai National Park honey. As all these bars are in the same area, just pop up from one place to another!



Tep Bar



EXPLORE DUSIT

Have a Vienna-style 'Kaffee und Kuchen', bike like King Rama V the Great under the tree's shade of Bangkok 'Champs-Elysées' and admire the largest collection of Italian buildings of Asia...

Once upon the time, Bangkok dreamed of being European. It all started at the end of the 19th century, during the reign of King Rama V the Great. The presence of colonial powers in Southeast Asia was increasingly felt by Siam which started to negotiate diplomatic and commercial treaties with a dozen countries around the world to preserve the integrity of the Kingdom. And to show that Siam was a modern nation, King Rama V the Great embarked twice in 1897 and 1907 on a trip to Europe, visiting all the European monarchies. And came back with the idea to transform Bangkok into a modern metropolis equivalent to Paris, London or Berlin. From 1880 to 1920, both Kings Rama V the Great and Rama VI commissioned two dozens of architects, engineers, sculptors or painters to work in Bangkok. They mostly came from Italy but also from Great Britain, Germany and Austria.



The result is that Bangkok has an incredible collection of European-style palaces, schools, public institutions, gardens and even bridges. This is a unique heritage in Southeast Asia with both the Dusit and Phra Nakhon districts preserving Bangkok best examples of this architecture. Here are some of the not-to-be-missed buildings in Dusit, which will make you thinking that you are in Europe...



Parusakawan Palace.

At the corner of Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue and Sri Ayutthaya Road, a fabulous palace, built by Italian Mario Tamagno, is today the Police Museum. Outside it is all Art Nouveau while the inside is all Rococo style. Do not miss the stunning Ballroom with its mirrors and stucco. Inside the Museum of Police, get a selfie of yourself in a prison cell. Just for the fun of it!



Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall and Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall.

Unfortunately, both buildings are now closed to the public and can only be seen from afar. The first is a remarkable Italian style structure while the second is a curious blend of Indo-saracenic (Mughal) and Art Nouveau architecture. Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall can be admired from the compound of the Royal Elephants Museum (Chan Tong, ex. Royal Elephants Stable) which faces the Hall.



Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue.

Yes, the avenue was inspired by Paris' Champs Elysées and the shady contra-alleys with trees were designed for the Royal Family to ride on their bicycle. The avenue had to look European and is lined with imposing palaces; such as the classical Royal Thai Army headquarters (two buildings), Ministry of Education, and the second Parusakawan Palace. All to be admired from the outside, as they are not open to the public.

Government House.

On the corner of Phitsanulok and Nakhon Ratchasima roads stands a replica of a Venetian Gothic Palace with its loggias and gothic arcades, work of the Italians Annibale Rigotti and Mario Tamagno. The structure can be seen from the outside only, except if you are in Bangkok on Children's Day (second Saturday in January), the only time the palace opens for the public...



Varadis Palace.

A typical Jugendstil (German Art Nouveau) Palace which still belongs to the family of Prince Damrong, a son of King Rama IV. Inside, you get the impression of being 100 years back in time. The Palace is open to the public but appointment needs to be made prior to a visit (Tel : 02-282-9110, 081-459-8840).



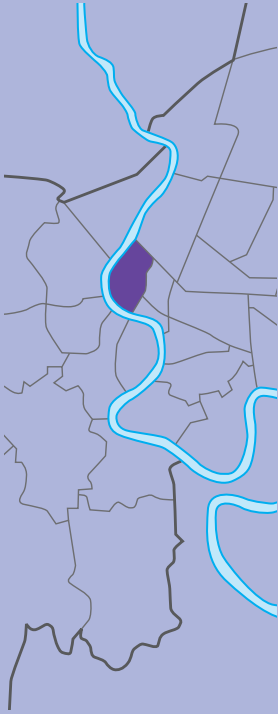
Wat Benjamabophit School.

After Rome, Venice, here is Florence... In the gardens of the Marble Temple (see page 8-9) stand many European-style buildings inspired by ancient Rome. Best is the school built in the Tuscany Renaissance style with its pink facade and green shutters.



Make a break at the **Phaya Thai Palace** (Ratchathewi Road).

As the Palace is part of a hospital, you can enter the compound. The pavilion in front of the Palace used to be the Private Lounge for King Rama VI when waiting for his car, and it has been now transformed into a coffee shop, called Norasingha Café. It is all decorated with frescoes and wood panels in Art Nouveau and Renaissance style. Sofas, armchairs and mirrors give the place a sort of Viennese atmosphere. Enjoy a cappuccino with some cake.



EXPLORE

PHRA NAKHON

Dream over H.M. Queen Sirikit exquisite wardrobe, learn all about King Rama V the Great and Thainess. And worship the statue of a pig!

Phra Nakhon District stands where Bangkok was born on Rattanakosin Island. The area is full of monuments, museums, parks and temples worth visiting.

Start with Sanam Luang, the Royal Ground where the Grand Palace stands. Best is to start early if you want to visit the centre of Thai monarchy with its various palaces, pavilions, museums and the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. The Palace opens its doors at 8:30 a.m.; a perfect timing to avoid crowds inside the compound.





H.M. Queen Sirikit's sequins and silk dresses

At the entrance of the Grand Palace on the right side of the main entry gate, the Queen Sirikit Textile Museum (opening time 09.00 a.m.) is one of the world's most beautiful fashion museums. It contains the private wardrobe of H.M. Queen Sirikit with amazing pieces of clothing created by the best fashion designers of the world.

Nearby, visit the Thawon Whattu Building. It is easy to recognize with its distinctive orange colour. A free exhibition tells all about King Rama V the Great, the monarch who modernizes Siam with the ambition to make the Kingdom en-pair with other nations around the world.

Opposite to the Grand Palace, at the other end of the Royal Field, the National Gallery is hosted in an Italian-style building, which used to be the Royal Mint. There are 100-year old royal portraits as well as paintings and sculptures showing the history of Thai art. Regular exhibitions on contemporary arts are also organised.



Queen Sirikit Museum of Textile

Largest Europe-style building and a royal garden

On the left side of the Grand Palace's compound, stands a yellow European Style structure. The building used to be the Royal Barracks and was built by Austria-born Italian architect Joachim Grassi. The long façade along Kalayana Maitri Road with its windows and pediments turn to gold and orange in the sunset. The building is actually the largest Europe-style structure in Bangkok. Take a selfie and post it. None of your friends would guess that you are in Thailand!



Next is **Saranrom Palace** with its pink/coral colour. Originally built by a German and later altered by Italian architects, the Palace belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is closed to the public but its garden is open. It was one of the first European style gardens created by British Royal advisor and botanist Henry Alabaster. There is an iron-cast music kiosk, a fountain decorated with statues, parterres of roses and an orangery but also giant lizards and Thai-style houses. Pay a look to the graceful memorial in shape of a chedi to Queen Sunanda Kumariratana and Princess Kannabhorn Benjaratana, who drowned in the Chao Phraya River across from Bang Pa-In Palace near Ayutthaya.



Dressed pig statue

Across the Park, pass the Asadang Canal and discover a pig wrapped in shiny clothes and covered by garlands. The memorial actually is a royal present from three members of the Siamese Royal Family to honour the 50th birthday of Queen Sri Phatcharinthra. You might think that a pig might not have been the best idea for celebration. Wrong! The Queen was born in the Year of the Pig as were the three people and the designer of the sculpture, Prince Narisara Nuvativongse.



Become a champion of “Thainess” at Museum Siam

The word “Thainess” has been in public speeches in Thailand for 80 years now, but currently enjoy a revival. Do you want to know what is hiding behind “Thainess”? Learn all about it in probably the least possible “Thainess” building- the Museum of Siam. The structure used to be hundred years ago the Ministry of Commerce designed by the Italian most prolific architect in Bangkok, Mario Tamagno.

In the neo-classical building with its wooden stairs, arches and stucco, an interactive presentation explores “Thainess”, its history and all the icons which are shaping Thailand, from the tuk-tuk to papaya salad, from famed Thai brands to advertising from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Songs, TV commercials, daily life objects and of course the central figures of the Thai monarchy are together combined to give a first insert into “Thainess”. There are also rooms exploring the symbol of monarchy, Buddhism, education, beliefs, objects of daily life and of course, food.

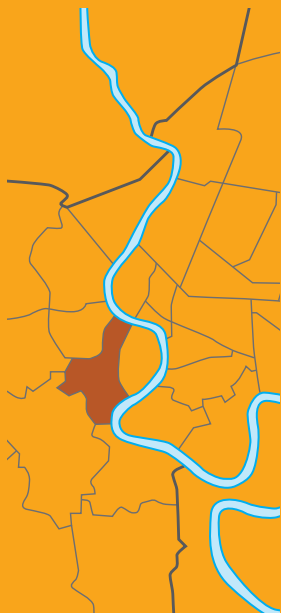
Bangkok’s version of Sydney Harbour Bridge

Linking Phra Nakhon to Thon Buri is the Memorial Bridge (Saphan Phut), a structure made of steel and conceived by British designers of the Dorman Long Company, which also built the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge. Constructed between 1929 and 1932, Saphan Phut commemorates the 150th anniversary of the Chakri Dynasty.



On the Bangkok side, the memorial to King Rama I the Great was designed by Italian-born Corrado Feroci, the father of Thai modern art. It blends the Siamese style and art deco, particularly the mosaic behind the King, made of golden pieces of ceramics.

A model and historical pictures related to the construction of the bridge can be seen in the King Prajadhipok Museum at the corner of Lan Luang and Ratchadamnoen Roads. It is hosted in an exquisite Italianate building, which used to be a Swiss-run department store.



EXPLORE

THON BURI

'Kudi Jeen magic'
in the steps of Bangkok's most
fascinating community

Think cosmopolitan life and probably New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong or Singapore come to mind. Add also Bangkok and experience it in the Kudi Jeen district on the Thon Buri side! The peaceful place, nestled between the Memorial Bridge and Wat Arun is a small area formed by a couple of narrow streets. Easy to find thanks to its church standing near to the river. The Santa Cruz Church was the centre of the Portuguese and Mestizo community relocated from Ayutthaya, following the old capital's destruction by the Burmese army back in 1767.





"The area attracted Portuguese, Siamese, Chinese or Muslim merchants from the South and Burma. Kudi Jeen means in fact "Chinese Church" due to the blend of cultures here", explains Mrs. Navinee Pongthai, a Eurasian lady who created Baan Kudichin, a museum telling all about this community.



Stroll around the minuscule streets surrounding the church in the direction of the canal separating the community to Wat Arun and Wichai Prasit Fort. Many of the small houses bear distinctive signs of their Portuguese heritage; such as pictures of the Virgin Mary or Jesus on the Cross as well as azulejo tiles (Portuguese blue ceramic). Most amazing are probably people's distinctive

faces, a true blend of Portuguese and Thai features.

Eat Portuguese-style sponge cakes and try some of the culinary Portuguese-Thai specialties of locals in the museum's café (*Baan Kudichin Museum - open Tuesday to Sunday until 6 p.m.- 271 Tedsaban 1 Road, Wat Kalayanamit*).

EXPLORE

CHAROEN KRUNG

New hipster life in the heart of Bangkok former European district

Have you ever wondered why the area between Asiatique and the Rivercity Mall are lined up with many European buildings? The Chao Phraya River used to be the centre of trade for Bangkok, contributing to the city prosperity. One hundred and fifty years ago, Trading concessions were given to European countries in Siam, and they naturally located along the Chao Phraya River and Charoen Krung Road. The large street was also called "New Road", as it was the first paved road in Bangkok.

For over 80 years, Charoen Krung remained the centre of Bangkok's European life with its hotels, department stores, exclusive clubs, banks, embassies (Portugal and France still have their there), schools, churches and even hospitals. A lot of these structures are still visible today, although some have been redeveloped to welcome new activities. In recent years, trendy coffee shops, art galleries and design spaces have opened around the former Grand Central Post Office, now home to the Thailand Creative and Design Center. TCDC is turning the area into one of Bangkok's hipster destinations to explore by foot or bike.



Former Customs House

11 HISTORICAL PLACES not to be missed along Charoen Krung

A two- to three-hour tour along Charoen Krung...



1 ASIATIQUE the Riverfront.

It used to be the old port of Bangkok and was turned into an entertainment area with a mix of old and new warehouses. It hosts a range of restaurants, crafts and design shops as well as entertainment venues; such as Calypso Cabaret – Bangkok's top transvestite show-, Joe Louis Puppet Theatre, Muay Thai Live show and the giant Ferris wheel. It is only open in the evening and accessible by free shuttle boat from the Saphan Thaksin Pier.

2 European Cemetery.

Just before arriving at ASIATIQUE, there is the first cemetery of

Bangkok, containing mostly names of famed and less-known personalities. Danish, Germans, British, French, Belgians, Americans and Chinese stand side by side under frangipani trees. An unusual walk inside Bangkok's history.

3 Assumption Cathedral.

Bangkok's grandest church was founded in 1809 with the current structure constructed in 1909. While its exterior style is distinctively gothic, its interior is in a pure medieval Romanesque style and adorned with frescoes on its ceiling. The cathedral is the centre of Bangkok's Catholic community.

4 East Asiatic Company.

The Venetian-style structure used to be the headquarter of the East Asiatic Company, which owned Bangkok old port, various emporiums and the Oriental Hotel. Abandoned for a couple of years, the place is now getting a new lease of life as it has been chosen for hosting Bangkok first Art Biennale 2018. Spaces are open for art exhibitions.



5 Oriental Hotel.

Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene, Norman Mailer, Princess Diana, Elizabeth Taylor or Michael Jackson and now you! Stars and VIPs love the Oriental Hotel, the most legendary property in the Thai capital. Built by Danish captain and entrepreneur Hans Niels Andersen in 1887, it became the ultimate in European-style luxury. The original building still stands there surrounded by modern structures. It hosts the Author's Lounge, old-fashioned but so chic for an afternoon tea.



6 O.P. Place.

The majestic European-style building across the Oriental Hotel used to be Bangkok's first department store owned by a German company Falck and Beidek . It is today O.P Place, a luxury shopping centre specializing in antiques and art.



7 Haroon Mosque.

Is Bangkok's oldest, as it was built in 1828. Only a portal and some sculptures remain from the original building. The mosque can be visited and is surrounded by some old teak wood villas with delicate carvings.

8 Customs House.

Totally derelict, the Customs House is an 1888 masterpiece in the Palladian style of Austria-born Italian architect Joachim Grassi. Hong Kong film director Wong Kar-wai used the crumbling structure for his famous movie "In the Mood for Love". The romantic feeling of the ruins will not stay for too long now as a project to convert the place into a deluxe hotel was recently confirmed.

9 Grand Postal Building.

The massive structure replaced a former post office and is one of the few examples left in Bangkok of the People's Party architecture during the tenure of Prime Minister Field Marshall Pibul Songkram. The nationalist-style monumental building is now home to the Thailand Creative and Design Centre (TCDC) with a café, library, design shop and exhibition spaces. There is a great view from the open terrace with its garden.



10 Kalawar Church.

The Church is located inside the Holy Rosario School. It was built in 1898 by Italian architects Mario Tamagno and Annibale Rigotti in the neo-gothic style. The interior is decorated with a painted ceiling, frescoes and stucco. One of the most charming churches of Bangkok.

11 SCB Bank.

Next to Kalawar is Siam's first bank. The Siam Commercial Bank building was constructed by Italian Annibale Rigotti in 1910 in the neo-Renaissance style. The inside still shows the old bank design while a small museum on the second floor, formerly the bank manager's lodging.

Back to 1950s life at the Bangkokian Museum

It is a free trip into time. Go to the Bangkokian Museum, just in the street opposite of the Grand Postal Building (73 Charoen Krung Road) and pass an old wooden house nestled into a lush garden. This is the Bangkokian Museum born from the passion of Mrs Varaporn Surawadee, who lived there since her childhood. The lady – who passed away in 2017- used to collect and keep all the objects of her daily life. While the house shows the typical interior of a 1940s/1950s Thai-Chinese family, the former kitchen has an incredible collection of any type of objects, from matchboxes to ashtrays, from tourist brochures to postcards and plastic gadgets. It is weird, kitsch, touching. . .

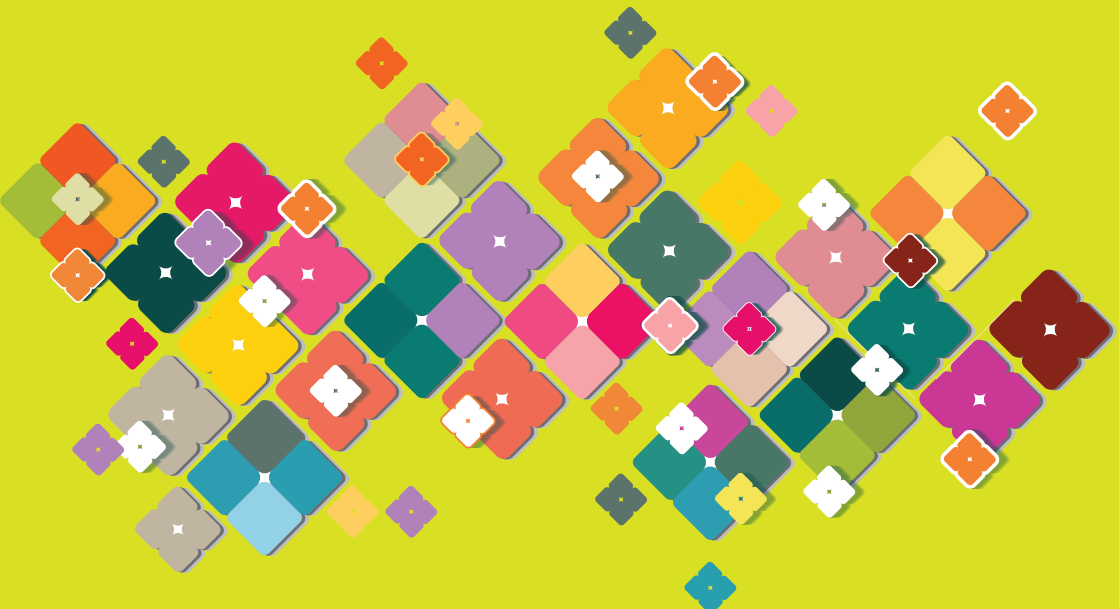
(open from Wednesday to Sunday until 4 pm)







BANGKOK the Dreamed Themes



CLIMB BANGKOK PEAKS and EMBRACE TOWN!



You heard or saw the movie *Hangover 2* with the famous final scene at the Sky Bar of the Lebua State Tower in the heart of Bangkok. The place really exists and is these days often packed due to its world exposure in the movie. But good news is that there are so many alternative choices, from the cheapest to the most expensive with most hotels now offering a roof bar.

Totally free of charge is the suspended garden and terrace of *the Thailand Creative and Design Centre (TCDC)* in Bangkok's former Central Post Office with a view of Charoen Krung and the Silom area; at the *EmQuartier* shopping mall, the *Helix Tower* is an open suspended garden with views on Sukhumvit and Queen Sirikit Park.

Almost free of charge are some temples with the possibility of climbing on top of their chedi. Among them, the greatest view over the Chao Phraya River is from the Prang (tower) of *Wat Arun* (100 Baht to get inside). Nearby, the *Golden Mount* or *Wat Saket* has one of the highest viewpoints in the old town under the shadow of its gilded stupa at 80 metres in height (entrance is now 60 Baht). Alternatively to the Golden Mount, *Loha Prasat* or *Wat Ratchanadda* (Metal Temple) offers views at 36 metres in height over Ratchadamnoen Avenue and Chinatown (20 Baht can be given as a donation).



Sarabhai road from above



View from Banyan Tree Hotel

Rising heights and prices

And then, there are all the rooftop bars, which are open to the ones consuming. **And as skybars are on trend, the choice is getting bigger and bigger.**

On Sathon, Vertigo and the Moon Bar at the **Banyan Tree Hotel** give a 360-degree view over the Silom/Lumphini and Chao Phraya areas. From the nearby **SO Sofitel**, the view over Lumpini Park reminds one of New York's Central Park. On the Chao Phraya River, have a fantastic view over all of Bangkok at the **Millennium Hilton Hotel** with a view stretching from ASIATIQUE The Riverfront to the Rama VIII Bridge, near the Bank of Thailand. In the Ratchaprasong area, the **Centara Grand** with the lavish CRU Champagne Bar or even **CentralWorld Tower** offer great views of Bangkok's heart of shopping. And amateurs of Phrom Phong and Thong Lo districts should go to the 35th floor of the **Compass Skyview Hotel** on Sukhumvit Soi 24 to Vanilla Sky, Phrom Phong's highest point of view. In all of these places, expect to pay between 280 Baht and 400 Baht for a drink. But feeling high has its price!

Looking for something more unusual? In the heart of Yaowarat, try the newly opened roof bar of the **Oneday Wallflowers shop** in Soi Nana. The bar is like a little jungle with hundreds of plants all over you far from the concrete jungle of Chinatown! And for the ultimate blending height and luxury, try the Flûte A Perrier-Jouët Bar, an exclusive champagne bar, the highest in the world. It is located in the **State Tower**, the one pictured in 'Hangover 2'. At **ICONSIAM, the Tasana Nakorn Terrace** gives unmatched sweeping views over the Chao Phraya River.

Finally, there is the unmatched **King Power Maha Nakhon Skywalk**. Thailand's highest observation deck stands at 314 meters high, offering 360 degree panoramic views from an indoor and outdoor viewing area, integrating a terrace with a bar as well as an impressive glass tray which gives the impression to float over the roofs of Bangkok. For the ones not that adventurous, the view at sunset is fabulous and very romantic. Or try **Spectrum at Hyatt Regency**, a rooftop bar designed by a Japanese architecture team with the impression to dive into Sukhumvit buildings.



Millennium Hilton Hotel

A LOVE FOR PERFECT BODIES



Thai women and men love to look good. The trend to have perfect bodies has been enjoying a come-back for over a decade now with tons of fitness clubs all over the city. But it is a long tradition to have a perfect body. Just think of the sculptural bodies of Muay Thai boxers and try to shape yours in the same way. A 6-pack body made in Bangkok! But if you feel this might turn into a challenge, they are plenty of spas around the city to regenerate.



Muay Thai

Muay Thai is part of Thailand's identity as much as Tom Yam soup or tuk tuk. Boxing is surrounded by traditions with fighters performing ritual dances before fighting to fight evil spirits and pay respect to their teachers.

While Bangkok's iconic Muay Thai in Lumpini Park was closed a decade ago, there are still two stadiums to look at fights. Bangkok's last historical Muay Thai stadium is located at Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue 1. Called Rajadamnern Stadium, it is a structure built in 1945 and is able to accommodate 8,000 people in historical settings. Prices for tickets range between 1,000 and 2,000 Baht.



Alternatively, the new Lumpini Muay Thai, located north of Bangkok near Laksi Train Station (6 Ramintra Road, Anusawaree) organises fights three times a week with prices set at 1,600 Baht.

Strong believer in non-violence but still interested in the art of Muay Thai? An alternative is the Muay Thai Live show at ASIATIQUE The Riverfront. The multi-award winning performance tells the history of Thai boxing

with real boxers performing in a spectacular ballet style. Muay Thai Live organises regular live fight performances as well. Prices start from 1,200 Baht.

A chic Muay Thai souvenir

You could buy Muay Thai short pants in a night market like everyone else, but how about buying an 'Amazing Muay Thai Pop-up Card', the world's first perfect human-shaped pop-up paper model instead? The little paper figure brings only advantages: it will not take space in your suitcase, it is reasonably priced, environmentally-friendly, and it provides work to minorities, as some of the Pop-up Cards are created by refugees presently residing in Thailand because of persecution. Most of the Central Department Stores sell the cards, particularly at Central Embassy, at ZEN CentralWorld, but also at Siam Discovery and the shop of the Thai Creative and Design Centre (TCDC) (www.amazingmuaythai.com).



Turn into a Thai fighter!

If you want to become a Muay Thai fighter, many courses are open to foreigners including women. The most renowned school is **RSM Muay Thai Academy**, which offers an impeccable premises initiation and confirmed courses taught by accredited Muay Thai instructors, including some champions (www.rsm-academy.com).

Still not so much into Muay Thai but an adept of fitness? There are hundreds of fitness clubs around town. However, to meet and make friends, the best places are the free fitness open-air areas inside Lumpini Park. Socialise with muscled Bangkokians getting fit. Or run and perform aerobics courses around the Park at sunset.

Spas and massages

What would Bangkok be without a Thai massage? Foot massage, head and shoulder massage, traditional Thai and oil massage, the choice is infinite and the number of places around Bangkok is amazing. Even if the most remote district, there is a massage shop. And in contrary to an urban legend, most of the massage shops propose healing traditional massage. Prices can be as low as 150 Baht for an hour traditional foot or Thai massage in Bangkok's less touristy districts. Silom however has the biggest concentration of gay-friendly massage places.

Meanwhile, for a luxury, intimate spa with the feeling of being in an oasis away from the big town, **Divana Spa** is one of the best known places in Bangkok. Located on Sukhumvit Soi 25, near the Asok BTS Station, the spa is located

in a garden and offers a wide range of treatments. It can be booked online. **Baan Sabai** offers similar treatment in another lush garden environment, near K Village and a few minutes away from EmQuartier. At the junction of Silom and Charoen Krung Roads, **Infinity Spa** is a striking contemporary spa far from the many Thai-kitsch looking massage and spa places. Open spaces with a touch of green and blue, the spa offers a range of traditional massages, as well as facial rejuvenation and facial detox.

Last but not least, **Babylon Sauna** is an institution. The gay sauna is the largest in Asia and probably in the world, offering anything from massage sessions to swimming pool, gym to restaurant and even a hotel, which has been turned into a boutique luxury place over the last decade. It is easy to spend half a day there! (www.babylonbangkok.com)



Actor and model Paween Snooker



So Sofitel infinity pool

Finding the right swimming pool

In the heat, most 4- and 5-star hotels in Bangkok offer a refreshing retreat with a swimming pool. However, if you stay in a small boutique hotel or a shared apartment, you might not have a swimming pool available. So, how to find one? Bad news is that most hotels' swimming pools are exclusively reserved for hotel guests. However, a few do accept non-guests for a fee. This is the case of the **SO Sofitel** where non-guests can not only enjoy the fabulous view over Lumpini Park, but also eventually participate in the hotel's infamous SO pool party organised on the last Saturday of each month.

The Millennium Hilton Hotel on the Chao Phraya River with plunging views of the river and **the Pathumwan Princess Hotel** in the Ratchaprasong area also have a swimming pool open for non-guests.



The Peninsula Bangkok

Alternatively, there is the Babylon Spa and Sauna swimming pool, however only open for men. Cheap and open to all is the Olympic-size public swimming pool inside the **National Stadium Sports Complex**. Before enjoying the Wisutamol Swimming Pool, do not forget to bring a hat and sunscreen as the facility is in the open.

FLOWER POWER

They are everywhere: from potted plants in front of shops to garlands and crowns adorning statues to special exhibitions showing new breeds of orchids, flowers are a part of the Thai lifestyle, especially during religious rites; Floral garlands also help to celebrate auspicious events; such as, a wedding or simply are a way to greet a host in a sign of respect.

The Thai art of designing flowers has a long history, stretching back to Hinduism and which has been further turned into an art during the reign of King Rama V the Great with flowers shaped as 'Phuang Malay' in the form of garlands, strings, necklaces or wreaths.



Five places to visit for a maze of colours and scents

1. Flower Market

The most colourful place to go is the traditional flower market at Pak Khlong Talat in the vicinity of the Memorial bridge (Saphan Phut); hundreds of shops are to be seen with people cutting flowers, bracing petals of roses, jasmine and marigold, making strings of flowers to create Phuang Malai, making bouquets and flowers' arrangements. The market is a very photogenic place, especially as it remains relatively immune of tourists – so far! If you went clubbing all night long, rush around 3 a.m. to the market to see boats arriving carrying flowers.



2. The Museum of Floral Culture

Learning about Thainess in flowers is best at the Museum of Floral Culture. Located in a 100-year-old house in the Dusit district, the stately property tells all about the history of floral compositions as well as their spiritual meaning. Exhibitions also show the creations of artist Sakul Intrakul. Workshops are also organised to learn the art of Thai floral compositions (315 Samsen Road Soi 28, www.floralmuseum.com).

3. Oneday Wallflowers Shop

Probably the most charming flower shop in Bangkok. Located in an old Sino-Thai house in the hipster part of Yaowarat, the shop creates flower arrangements made of very fresh simple European-style flowers including wreaths. There is a coffee shop where guests can sit surrounded by plants and eat cakes decorated with flowers. A restaurant as well as a rooftop bar welcomes visitors. A perfect romantic place! (31-33 Soi Nana, Bangkok, Yaowarat. Near Hua Lamphong MRT)



4. Jim Thompson Museum garden

It is certainly not the largest garden of Bangkok, but the Jim Thompson green space is probably how Westerners would conceive a typical Thai garden. Just a few metres away from Siam, here is a dreamed landscape with its lush greenery made of palm trees and bamboo, hiding giant lotus flowers, hibiscus, heliconia and frangipani. A relaxing break is the veranda of the semi open air restaurant with its tranquil pond covered by purple lotus (6 Soi Kasemsan 2, Rama I Road, near National Stadium BTS Station, www.jimthompson.com).

Flowers as jewels

Like Thai Royalty or Beyonce, feel seduced by the creation of Thai designer Chaichan Jantarasuwan and his brand *“Revival”*. His jewels are inspired by Thai traditions that includes the strings of flowers of Phuang Malai with earrings reproducing roses and jasmine petals, and vivid colours inspired by tropical flowers. His creations can be seen at the Wonder Room space inside the Siam Centre.



Flowers as food

Restaurant Baan *Nam Prik Kao Suay* is one of the best known in Chanthaburi province, as the owners of the place have been working to create tasty food integrating flowers in their menu. The restaurant is now in Bangkok and offers pastel looking spring rolls filled with Thai herbs and flowers as well as salads with sprinkles and petals of local flowers. Unusual, colourful and overall delicious! (62, Sukhumvit Soi 33, near Phrom Phong BTS Station). And if you want to bite into a dessert looking like a flower; Audrey Café des Fleurs is the place with desserts looking like flower petals (EmQuartier, Helix Tower).



UNITING COLOURS IN BANGKOK



You do not need to be a drag queen to allow yourself into outrageous flashy colours. In daily life, Thailand's capital city is an incredible patchwork of colours assembled with more or less good taste, and Thai people have a fond love for bright dresses. Do not feel surprised to see some Bangkok fashionista and socialites dressed in glittering flashy shades.

Every taste is acceptable, every colour is beautiful; the best example being Thai local business companies asking their employees to wear fluo pink, vivid green, or purple polo shirts as uniforms. Do not be shy and dare to mix colours to celebrate a rainbow kingdom!



Graphic designer Chanida Vorapitak in EMQuartier

Shades of a day

Thai dress in different colours according to the day, an ancient tradition related to astrology. You will probably notice that every day, a large number of people wear similar colours. Nothing is compulsory, but if you really want to follow the colour scheme of the week, here are the right shades for your clothes. But this is anything but compulsory of course.

Monday is yellow or cream; Tuesday is pink; Wednesday is green but turns to grey at night; Thursday is orange or brown; Friday is light blue; Saturday purple or black, and finally Sunday is red.



Kannika Jansuwat painting The Vivid Ideas

Shades of a temple

Looking for the most colourful temples in Bangkok? Most temples are carrying exquisite murals in strong colours while exterior walls as well as doors are adorned with tiny pieces of mirror glass shiny as stones and golden plaster. However, one of the most colourful temples in Bangkok is Wat Ratchabophit, also called the Benjarong Temple. The entire façade of the Wat is covered by multi-coloured glazed tiles, similar to

Thai-style Benjarong porcelain, in shades of yellow, pink, dark blue, white and red. The details on the façade are just amazing!

If you fall in love with Benjarong porcelain after visiting Wat Ratchabophit, then finely painted Benjarong can be found at Narai Phand, the state department store for handicrafts on the top floor of Siam Paragon Department Store.



Details of the façade of Wat Ratchabophit



The Thai Silk dress was designed by famed Burmese fashion designer Mogok Pauk Pauk.

Shades of silk

All shades can be found at silk shops but have an instinct for pieces, which are pre silk and not pure polyester. Just a simple tip: Authentic silk fabrics are generally neither soft nor light. Once you turn into an expert, the best places to find your exact shade are - once again - Jim Thompson and Old Siam. Jim Thompson revived the silk industry in Thailand 70 years ago. Today, its shops carry all types of silk you have ever dreamed of including brocades. The Jim Thompson Shop on Surawong Road 9 near Silom carries the largest choice of fabrics for the company. Alternatively, for a tighter budget, the Factory Outlet Store on Sukhumvit Soi 93 (Bang Chak BTS Station) also offers an outstanding choice. Old Siam is THE place where Thais would shop. The mall is located in Pahurat, at the end of Yaowarat Road and not far from the Flower Market.



The second floor is branded the 'Silk Zone' and is probably the largest concentration of silk shops – all selling authentic silk at fair prices. Be aware that shops tend to close early around 5 p.m. despite the fact that the mall officially closes at 7 p.m.



Shades of food

The craze for colours is also reflected in food. Sodas here are as fluo and bright as ever, with apple soda in so beautiful green shades and Thai traditional desserts (khanom) looking like little gemstones coated in strong pink, yellow, ruby red and pure blue colours. Even rice can have delicate shades of green, purple or orange thanks to the addition of herbs and flowers. A delight for the eyes and eventually for the mouth.

BANGKOK IS ARTY!



For a long time, Bangkok was considered a minor destination for art freaks. But it is all changing as private art galleries have spread up all across town, many being innovative and daring to challenge the art perception of Bangkok's conservative circles. Local tycoons have also opened their own art museums, and hotels are turning themselves into art museums. A major venue is the Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre (BACC) with its range of free of charge exhibitions, shows and art forums.

More art events take place around town all-year round with the flagship in the art world being now Bangkok Biennale - hosted every two years.

All galleries are open places to meet people. Just pop in and enjoy. And if you like an artist, take his/her name and contact him/her on Facebook. Generally, it works!



National Gallery



BACC

WHAT A WONDERFUL ART WORLD

Between two shopping sprees at MBK or Siam Discovery, why not look at an exhibition at the **Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre (BACC)**.

The structure, visibly inspired by New York's Guggenheim inside, is an excellent place to discover contemporary Thai art in all fields, from painting to photography, from design to dance and even students' creations. There are many debates as well about art and society, If you master the Thai language first. All the activities are free of charge.

National Gallery.

Across from Sanam Luang, just opposite the Royal Palace, the National Gallery shows 300 years of Thai art with a specific focus on modern and contemporary painting and sculpture. The classical building used to be the Royal Mint.



Artist Lisa Mam at Bangkok Art / Hotel-Fair



MOCA

Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA).

This is Thailand's largest private museum opened a decade ago by telecom tycoon Boonchai Bencharongkul, who displays most of his extensive private collection. Many of the pieces belong to the surrealism and hyperrealism art movements, many with a religious stream. With their splashing colours and strange figures, you could think to be part of a psychedelic party 50 years ago.



Anonymous



Alex Face, Charoen krung soi 32

Street Art.

It has been a decade since Bangkok warmed up to street art. Many walls and abandoned corners along Charoen Krung Road and Sampheng (Songwat Road and Chinatown) are now covered with colourful frescoes and paintings, many being installed during the urban art festival Bukruk from international artists who were invited back in 2013 by the French Embassy and the cultural centre Alliance Française to give a splash of life on the walls of town. Some 20 street artists came from Spain, Austria, Romania, Greece, France, the USA, Thailand or Korea among others with most of their paintings being still visible today.



Roa, 1444 Song Wat Road

Lhong 1919.

It is like a piece of South China in Thon Buri. Where a pier and a rice mill used to stand along the river, a wealthy Chinese trader built warehouses as well as a large courtyard house. The mansion is not open to the public, but the warehouses are now filled with ubiquitous coffee shops, restaurants, design and souvenir outlets. There are two art galleries and also Chinese-style paintings decorating the courtyard. Avoid the weekend, which brings hundreds of selfie-freak visitors. (248 Chiang Mai Road, Khlong San, open daily - Krung Thonburi BTS Station).



Fresco reproducing traditional Chinese painting at Lhong 1919

Jumping from art gallery to art gallery

There are close to a hundred art galleries these days in Bangkok with at least half a dozen joining the club with every year as art generates more art from local Thais. Among the best known galleries, **100 Tonson Gallery** is a reference in the art world by organising exhibitions of famous



Artist: Somchai Pongsa

Thai and international artists; **10ML Gallery Café** on Wipawadi Soi 16, is not only an art gallery, but also a café and place to learn about art through workshops; **Chin's Gallery** on Yannawa Road mixes fashion, design and art, exhibiting confirmed artists and rising Thai art stars; **Duke Contemporary Art Space** is located in Gaysorn Village and integrates an art hall, but also a high-end whiskey and cigar bar; **Kathmandu Photo Gallery** in a charming shop house is specialised in photography, a few metres away from Silom Road next to the Indian temple. **Subhashok The Arts Centre** looks like a museum and often presents provocative art pieces. The only problem: it is not easy to locate the place and local moto-taxis do not know it as well. **Yenakart Art Villa** halfway between Narathiwat Road and Rama IV Roads is an amazing house from the 1960s surrounded by a garden. The perfect place to discover artists, many of them being part of the LGBTQ community.

Ung Jongsuwat Angsuvarnsiri, Managing Director, Adler Subhashok Gallery



Bangkok is a lifestyle metropolis in a very chaotic urban environment. I love the fact that the city never sleeps. I also admire Bangkok for its ability to integrate. Foreigners here will not feel rejected and that includes LGBTQ people. There is this very important detail of feeling safe here. A common rule is that people will not bother you in your life, even if you will not know what they really think. And this is not bad! Regarding arts, Bangkok is coming of age, although there is still a lot to do to turn the city into a thriving art metropolis; such as giving more flexibility to import and export art. This would help bringing exhibitions of world niveau. They are meanwhile more art galleries including leading institutions such as BACC but also innovative private spaces such as Num Thong Gallery in Aree, N22 on Narathiwat Road or the Yelo House specialised in photography.

Sleeping with art

Ever dream to sleep in a piece of art or at least to be surrounded by art? Bangkok gives you this opportunity. Such as the **So Sofitel** on Sathorn; each floor being designed according to the four earth elements. And yes, the elegant uniforms which seem to mix Thai and 18th century style European clothes carry the signature of French designer Christian Lacroix.

The hype **W Hotel** has its own range of art pieces evoking Bangkok's way of life. Feel like a star under the 800 sparkling light bulbs in the corridor to the lifts, or in front of the bejewelled lobby mural made of 80,000 crystals and representing Thai mythical creatures of the Himmaphan Forest. And do not forget to take a selfie in the bedrooms laying down on the crocodile skin-padded bed surrounded by giant Muay Thai gloves covered by golden sequins.

The intimate **Park Hyatt** - part of Central Embassy - is almost like a museum, as it integrates the private art collection of the hotel owner; Central Group CEO Tos Chirathivat. The collection includes two

dozen art pieces, and private art tours are even organised by hotel staff. You can eat or have a coffee next to some artworks of very famous Thai artists.

However, you do not need to spend a fortune to be surrounded by art pieces in your bedroom. Reasonably priced boutique hotels will confront you with art pieces of young Thai and Asian artists. The **Cacha Art Hotel** commissioned five artists to turn rooms into true pieces of art (156/5-9 Phetchaburi Road, Ratchathewi); Arte Hotel Bangkok has an even more radical art concept. Hotel owners think that anything is art from staff's uniforms to the music in the lobby, and from tailor-made textiles that cover every sheet, bed runner and cushion in your room (29 Sukhumvit Soi 19).

Hotels and art blend so well together that an art fair is now organised every year in a hotel. The Hotel Art Fair Bangkok transformed during a weekend an entire hotel into an art centre, each room being rented by an art gallery. And as you are in Thailand, there will always be plenty of food and drinks during the event (www.facebook.com/HotelArtFair/).



SO Sofitel Bangkok



Park Hyatt Bangkok

Jim Thompson: flamboyant man, exquisite taste!

Is Jim Thompson a tragic hero of our times? His entire life sounds like fiction. The American was all together a WWII hero, a spy, an art lover and a canny businessman. Last but not least, rumours abounded about his homosexuality although he was married. Arriving in Bangkok at the end of World War II, Jim Thompson developed a passion for Thai textiles and arts, reviving a moribund silk industry. It then launched during the 50s and 60s new patterns and shades under its own brand. The man was a patron of Bangkok's art community.



His end could not be ordinary. He disappeared during a vacation in the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia, and his death remains a mystery. Was he killed because he was a spy, or because of his tumultuous love life? The mystery remains more than 50 years after his end...

Settling along the San Saep Canal, just opposite a Muslim community of weavers, Thompson built an exquisite opulent mansion made of various historical teak houses, which used to be in Ayutthaya. The house blends Thai and Western architecture and design. Inside are precious antiques, chinaware, paintings and furniture from Siam and Indochina surrounded by a lush garden. The house is a museum and is complemented by a restaurant, shop and a space for temporary exhibitions.

The Jim Thompson Foundation will build nearby a larger art centre, which will be a new cultural icon when opening around 2021.

TCDC

It used to be Bangkok's Central Post Office, and it still today integrates a small post outlet. The Grand Postal Building along Charoen Krung is an impressive structure from the late 1930s with a touch of European art deco. In 2017, it was converted into the Thailand Creative and Design Centre (TCDC) with a

purpose to bring design to both Thais and visitors. While the Centre hosts less exhibitions these days compared to a few years ago when located at the Emporium Mall, it is still worth a visit just to enjoy a drink on its terrace (1160 Charoen Krung Road, Saphan Thaksin BTS Station).



Open House: Heaven for spiritual and terrestrial food

Let's face it. Thai people are not known to be avid readers except during their time as a student. This, however, did not seem to be a handicap to create one of the most amazing bookshops in Asia. On the top floor of the Central Embassy shopping mall, **Open House** is a beautiful space filled with tonnes of books from the ground to the ceiling and comprises also gallery designed objects. The owner, Shane Suvikapakornkul, is an art lover and art books collector. At Open House, you can find anything you dream including rare art books impossible to find anywhere else.

The store also has a very comprehensive section of LGBTQ publications, many being about the history and perception of homosexuality in Southeast Asia. The LGBTQ section is located along the windows on the street side and near to a restaurant outlet.

Because this is the uniqueness of Open House, the space actually combines books and food - a favourite for Thais. This explains why Open House is becoming so popular and why the bookshop's staff is all across the space to remind customers not to take the book to the table and leave greasy fingers on the pages.

Garlands, zebra, dolls: Kitsch is Bangkok's mantra

Bangkok, capital of kitsch? Certainly, the city has a true devotion for many useless plastic colourful objects, which your grandparents would have certainly cherished and that you probably rejected... until it became the latest trend.

Giant pig statues indicating restaurants, coloured plastic baskets, minuscule dolls, plastic plates in all shades, plastic statues of animals and dancers, and long garlands of plastic flowers; all of these objects are absolutely everywhere around Bangkok.

Some have meanwhile a spiritual meaning. Figurines representing animals or humans are generally located near spirit houses. Animals are symbols of gratitude to house spirits protecting people. Some of these spirit houses can be surrounded by hundreds of zebra, tigers and other animals; little figurines are however servants to the spirits. While they might look kitsch, they are considered as important objects for the Thais.





Ants, Thai labour, Batman: Museums you never dreamed of visiting...

Bangkok has hundreds of museums, many of them being dedicated to art and handicraft. But if you feel tired of looking at painting or sculptures, here is a couple of unusual museums, places that you have probably never dreamed to visit and which are often born through someone's (weird) passion. A true labour of love!

The Ant Museum at the Department of Forestry, Kasetsart University, will confront you to giant ants, the life organisation of these animals and turn you into a true specialist of ants and maybe help you to shine out during a

dinner with friends ... (Vinit Building, Faculty of Forestry, Kasetsart University, Lat Yao sub-district, Chatuchak district).

Feel the spirit of revolution at the *Thai Labour Museum* near the old Makkasan Railway Station. The Museum run by the trade union tells all about Thailand's social movements and workers' rights, from the abolition of slavery to the first wages given to Chinese coolies and to contemporary protests against unfair treatment. The most poignant is a memorial made of burned toys, dedicated to the 188 workers of a toy factory, who perished in a fire in 1993. (503/20 Makkasan sub-district, Ratchathewi district).

Did you know that Bangkok is a bit like Gotham City? In an insignificant corner of the Ramkhamhaeng area in northeastern Bangkok – the grey architecture of the area could actually be located in Gotham City- stands the incredible *Batcat Museum*. The place is crammed with some 50,000 toys and objects related to comic characters. All your childhood stands there, from Super Mario to Ironman, from the Simpsons to Doremon. Collection owner Somchai Nitimongcolchai has a devastating passion for Batman acquiring memorabilia of the famous superhero. Batman, his friends and enemies occupy two rooms of the Museum. Highlights are human-scale statues of Batman, the Joker, the Penguin, Riddler or Two-Face with the piece de resistance being a real size model of the famous Batmobile (Batcat & Toys Museum Thailand, 3702 Srinakarin Road, Bang Kapi district - next to the Mall Department Store).

SEVEN AMAZING TEMPLES IN BANGKOK

Church inspired temple: **Wat Benjamabophit**

The temple is one of the most visited in Bangkok by tourists with its exceptional structure, built exclusively in Italian marble of Carrara. But it is not the only Italian influence, the temple is indeed an admirable fusion of Thai and Western architecture. Commissioned in 1899 by King Rama V the Great, designed by Prince Narisara Nuvativongse, the temple was built by architect team Annibale Rigotti and Mario Tamagno. Few will notice that the layout of the temple reproduces a church cross. Nearby, the Benjamabophit School was built in Tuscan baroque.



Wat Ratchanatdaram (Loha Prasat), an iron temple

At the start of Ratchadamnoen Klang Road, the temple is inspired by Sri Lanka Buddhist temples and is Bangkok – and the world’s – only temple structure made of metal. Loha Prasat means actually iron castle or iron temple and is composed of five towers, of which the outer, middle and central towers contain large black iron spires. You will desperately look for the black spires on the temple, as it has been recently restored with the roof being now coated into a shiny bright gold colour. Nice (and free of charge) view from the top over Rattanakosin Island.

Italian frescoes at **Wat Ratchathiwat** wihan

Wat Ratchathiwat was first built around 1820 but the main hall was reconstructed between 1907 and 1911. While the exterior was designed in the Khmer style by Prince Narisara Nuvativongse, murals inside the main hall were executed by the Italian painter Carlo Rigoli depicting the Vessantara Jataka, referring to the Buddha's life. The style is typical of the academic painting of the late 19th century.



The Gold temple (near Ekkamai)

Wat Pha Si

Probably not Bangkok's most amazing temple except for one thing; the main hall (Ubosot) is completely covered in gold.



Where Hell turns visible at **Wat Saket**, **Wat Suthat** and **Wat Mahabut**

Theravada Buddhism, as practiced in Thailand, associates the concept of the “Three Worlds” (“traiphum”) highlighting the intimate link between hell, earth and paradise. This is why some temples in Bangkok, while highlighting the life of the Buddha also show that hell is never far.

Two temples in Bangkok are adorned with spectacular murals showing delicate pictures evoking the Buddha's life or people's daily life in old Siam. But hell is also depicted... Open your eyes and find them.



Wat Suthat

Wat Suthat Thep Wararam (simply called Wat Suthat) is easy to find, as it faces the Bangkok City Hall and the Giant Swing. This first class Royal Temple was built between 1807 and 1843. Inside the wihan (prayer hall), the eyes are caught by the giant statue of the Buddha, transferred from Sukhothai and

dating back to the 14th century. The statue is surrounded by two columns. The left one is indeed dedicated to life in hell showing torture, burning, and crucifixion done by demons.



Wat Saket

A 5 to 10-minute's walk away from Wat Suthat stands Wat Saket, best known as Golden Mount. While most visitors will climb to the top – a bit of hell actually due to the hot weather! - very few will visit the “Consecrated Convocation Hall”. It is the first religious structure with a direct access from Worachak Road. The murals are some of the most beautiful in Bangkok with large figures of the Buddha, deities and traditional demons. In the middle of the hall sits a giant smiling Buddha made of bronze. Murals behind the statue show



the statue show scenes of torture but also... hell. Go behind the statue to look at gruesome scenes of torture of any kind and deceased ... Scenes that probably inspired some Thai film directors to do horror movies.

Wat Mahabut

Talking about horror movies, a legendary character, Nang Nak, has been the theme of many horror movies. Nang Nak was a young woman who lived in the 19th century. Her husband went away to war leaving her alone and pregnant. However, she died during her child's birth. When her husband returned, he lived again with his wife and child without knowing she is a ghost until he discovering the truth. Today, a temple reveres Nang Nak. Wat Mahabut is close to Habito Mall and along Pridi Banyomong Road Soi 2. Inside the temple compound is a hall where people worship a golden statue representing the lady. Locals dress her and give offerings. Pregnant women and ladyboys come to ask for the ghost's benevolence. The former to provide their child with a smooth birth and the later to avoid being conscripted in the army.



FREE GAME : What is what?



1. Italian-style Palace?



2. Temple?



3. Church?

Not only temples: mosques and churches

Bangkok is of course the city of hundreds of temples. But religious tolerance is also expressed churches and mosques. Churches can actually be spectacular with classical architecture reminiscent of their counterparts in Europe. Romanesque art inspired is the grand Assumption Cathedral. Built by the French 120 years ago, it has been recently restored with a beautiful painted ceiling and stained glass. Nearby, Kalawar Church is a charming 100-year-old gothic construction. Another similar structure is the Santa Cruz Church in Thon Buri, which also bears a painted ceiling.

Not only churches or temples were designed by Italians. Traditional mosques also took their inspiration from the Italian style. Hidden by warehouses along Songwat Road, Luang Khocha Isahak Mosque looks like a charming Palladian-style villa from Northern Italy. Recently painted in bright yellow colours, Bang Ao Mosque in Thon Buri, located in a traditional Muslim village, is nestled along the Chao Phraya River.

Church-looking Wat and Wat-looking Mosque

Bangkok's witty spirit might have inspired architects. Across from the Bang Pa-In Palace near Ayutthaya, stands a beautiful looking neo-gothic church. But it is a traditional Thai temple. Wat Niwet Thammaprawat Ratchaworawihan was commissioned by King Rama V the Great who asked architect Joachim Grassi to design the temple in the Western style. Wat Niwet is thus a fantastic neo-gothic structure reminding of a medieval castle.

As confusing as Wat Niwet is a temple-looking structure in Thon Buri, which is a mosque. Located in Arun Amarin Soi 7 in Thon Buri, a few minutes' walk to the Royal Marine Headquarters and Wat Arun, Bang Luang is actually the only mosque built in the Thai traditional style using a temple shape. It is also one of the oldest mosques in Bangkok, as it was constructed around 1830. The simple façade is supported by 30 pillars, which evoke the 30 chapters of the Koran.

Answer

1. Wrong!
Luang Khocha Mosque
in Songwat Road

2. Wrong!
Bang Luang Mosque
in Thonburi

3. Wrong!
Wat Niwet temple across
Bang Pa-In Palace near Ayutthaya

SHOP UNTIL YOU DROP



We all know. All your best friends told you that Bangkok is just fantastic for shopping. It is indeed difficult to deny. Bangkok is full of shopping malls but more fun is to just explore thousands of small shops and outlets selling the creations of the Thai people. Impossible to list all of them. But here are a few tips to discover some of them...



Not only Chatuchak! Vintage markets of Bangkok

You feel like a hipster, so you must looove retro! A few years ago, young Bangkokians were rushing to the **Railway Market (Talat Rotfai)** to look for unique retro stuff. Located next to Bangkok's famed **Chatuchak Weekend Market (JJ Market)**, the place was a strange mix of abandoned rail coaches, collapsing warehouses, where it was easy to find second-hand objects, antiques, retro furniture, vintage clothing, and of course food and booze. The Market has since been relocated to Srinakarin Road Soi 51. The trains are gone, but the Market has retained its name and is still considered the best place to look for vintage and retro objects.

These days, there are many alternatives. Back to the Chatuchak area, across from the Weekend Market stands a rather unattractive mall very typical of the early 80s. Known before as **JJ Green**, it has now been converted into the '**Chatuchak Playground Flea Market**'. Pay a look at the ubiquitous sellers in front of the mall and then explore the three floors of shops. There are dozens of shops specialising in retro furniture and home accessories while the third floor is more specialised into antique and vintage toys.



And of course, it is impossible to miss the Chatuchak Weekend Market. Its thousands of shops have turned it into the largest flea market in the world. Over the years, the Market has turned increasingly more professional with many brands present in malls having an outlet at Chatuchak. However, it is still heaven for treasure hunters and fashionista with many shops selling trendy T-shirts and shirts, designed objects and a comprehensive art section. But you can also buy plastic flowers, fake antiques, goldfish and vintage magazines. A good tip: Friday night is the perfect time to visit Chatuchak Market to avoid both the heat and crowds. Some of the best deals are to be found as the evening opening time is reserved for wholesale goods.

Kneel for Bae Kar Din...

You do not know what is bae kar din even if you probably pass dozens of them every day? This is actually the kind of pop-up shops that are spread on the pavement and bridges with people selling some stuff on the ground (actually the translation in English of 'bae kar din'). Open your eyes, you might find the bargain of your day.

Malls with a theme

The Siam Square/Ratchaprasong area is Bangkok's shopping heart where malls offer a large choice of goods pleasing any budget. While **MBK**, **Big C** and the **Pratunam Mall** mostly care for budget-conscious travellers, **CentralWorld**, **Erawan**, **Siam Centre** and **Siam Paragon** cater for middle- to upper-class shopaholics. **Siam Discovery**, **Gaysorn Plaza** and **Central Embassy** are a haven for tourists and locals looking for luxury items.

The reinvention of **Siam Centre** and **Siam Discovery** by Siam Piwat CEO Chadatip Chutrakul turned the shopping complex into a favourite among trendsetters. Siam Centre is Bangkok's oldest shopping mall, as it was opened back in 1973. It was renovated in 2013 to create an 'Ideopolis' where shops have all been created with a design-mind attracting many local brands of young Thai creators. They mostly have their outlet on the third floor of the Siam Centre.

Next to the Siam Centre, Siam Discovery was also totally reinvented to create an exciting environment for shoppers. Called the Shopping Lab or Exploratorium, the mall is like a giant concept store, mixing innovative design shops with food outlets, resting and exhibition spaces. You will love the way items, high tech and fashion are presented in a chic, sleek, elegant way. You can drink a coffee prepared by talented barista surrounded by the latest of Thai home design and organic products. Open your eyes when strolling around: the place is a favourite among Thai celebs and models.

Have a peaceful and serene moment in the leafy forest or inside the temple halls of Wat Pathumwanaram, a royal temple complex dating back to 1857 before heading to the next mall, CentralWorld. Groove is the newest addition to the mall with lifestyle fine dining while ZEN is a very special department store targeting young people and, of course, young-at-heart!



Siam Discovery



Icon Siam

ICONSIAM, shopping and glamour along the Chao Phraya River

Stretching on a large portion of land along Bangkok's mighty river, the mall offers spectacular architecture with shapes reminiscent of Thai heritage, Asia's longest light and water show, luxury hotel residences, an art museum, roof gardens and terraces, an auditorium, piers to come by boat, and tons of shops. A dedicated area called 'Sooksiam' presents the best from Thailand's 77 provinces in an exciting setting.

The more discreet **Central Embassy** next to **Central Chidlom** and **Central World** are one of the largest shopping complex in Bangkok. Central Chidlom was Bangkok first luxury department store and retains today all of its glamour. While Central World targets middle class visitors, Central Embassy looks at the upper end of the market with its exclusive brands- some being the only store present in Thailand.

Hipster and groovy: The Commons

They call themselves community mall and it has turned into a favourite among upper classes in chic Thonglor district. The Commons is a special mall. No well-known brands but shops, eateries and coffee counters run generally by food or art passionates. The mall itself is an interesting architectural piece with large open spaces which let wind bring a welcome breeze. Many art and community events take place regularly on week-ends. And this is also the place to meet local artists and celebs!



Siam Center

Buy Thainess: Design and fashion made in the Thai spirit

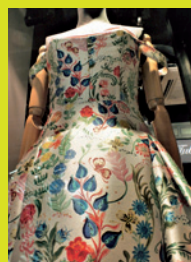


Fashion

Bangkok is filled with Thai creators who can be considered among the most inventive in Asia, inspired by Thai traditional arts and crafts with a modern twist. Impossible to list all of them, but this is a selection of Thai creators, known or less known.

Dare to look different, very different? Check the following fashion designers at the Siam Centre; such as, *Theatre, Her La Femme and Kanapot Aunsorn* (both inside the Wonder Room), *FlyNow III* with its shop looking like a carnival parade, *Gin & Milk, Pattric Boyle* - both the latest offering a particularly flamboyant style, mixing influences from Europe and Thailand.

Intrinsically Thai but of understated elegance with their line of black and white clothing are *Painkiller* and *Six PM*, both located also within the Siam Centre. *Tube Gallery* is reinventing the 1950s and 1960s for girls with amazing gowns while men will find a large collection of shirts including jabot ones.



A bit away from the Ratchaprasong area, *Issue Thailand* is one of the best known fashion brands and a true hit. The shop is located between the Ari and Saphan Kwai BTS Stations (110/2 Soi Rawadee School, Pradipat Road, Phayathai). The design is colourful inspired by Tibetan Buddhism with colourful flowerish dresses and shirts enhanced by jewels and accessories more inspired by Europe.

Accessories and home design

Siam Discovery is ideal for seeing the wide range of goods created by Thai designers. The ODS (Object of Desire) space on the fourth floor shows all kinds of objects from Thai designers; from home accessories, kitchenware to furniture and purely decorative objects. Many of those are reasonably priced, and it would be hard to resist the temptation. And the staff there is particularly attractive looking.

Pay a look at **Isaan Object** which has managed to blend Northeastern Thailand traditional objects with a contemporary design including clothes. Or **Deesawat**, one of Thailand largest wood companies, established back in 1972, which over the last decade abandoned its old fashioned way to create slick, funky contemporary furniture. They do not only sell chairs or tables, but also accessories that are easier to put in a suitcase.

On the fifth floor, organic and sustainable designs are also available. If you feel attracted to the late 60s, then look at the objects of **BeigeButton**.

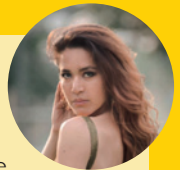
Their colourful cushions, plaids but also fashion is directly inspired by Flower Power mixed with motives from Northern Thailand's ethnic groups. On the M-Floor, pay a look at **Tepp bags**. Inspired by the army design, the bags are, however, elegant and above all, solid.

In nearby Siam Centre, check the funky shop **Kloset & Etcetera** for its range of bags in colourful motives, or **Bangkok Tales**, which produces Chock Dee bags (lucky pouches and bags) evoking Thailand's old days.



Transgender Top Model Naeya Umar

I moved 14 years ago and I felt excited, coming from Pattani to move to this huge city with its big LGBTQ community. There are more opportunities in Bangkok than anywhere else for jobs while anonymity protects us. I like to dress up and strike the pose and love when people want to take pictures with me. I enjoy fashion and design and of course, Bangkok offers a wide range of places to enjoy shopping and for any budget. I like, for example, Pathurat near Chinatown. This is a very good place to find accessories, especially jewellery but also some clothes. And this is so cheap. CentralWorld has many stylish shops mixed with local brands and designs. Meanwhile, talking about design, JJ Market (Chatuchak) is always a discovery on its own. For food, I fancy Baan Ice in Thong Lo for its Southern Thai specialties. And to go out, Maggie Choo is a must-do, but I also like Sing Sing Theatre in Thong Lo, designed like a Chinese theatre and filled with rich and famous dancing to international DJ music.





Pratunam and Asok: shopping for all

If your budget is a bit limited, or you just want to buy a couple of presents for your friends, go to Terminal 21 at Asok. Easy to reach by Skytrain and the MRT, the mall is designed like an airport terminal; each level being modelled after a destination. While the Tokyo floor carries ladies' accessories and fashion, the London floor is supposedly dedicated to men with tons of funky shirts and T-shirts. "Supposedly" as many girls also enjoy funky stuff! An insider tip: the top floor has a food court, which is one of the cheapest in Bangkok. Lots of delicious food starting from 30 Baht and- consequently- lots of queues.

Meet tall ladies and drag queens at the Watergate Pavilion

In Ratchaprarop, just across from Pratunam Market, here is Watergate Pavilion, where cabaret dancers and drag queens generally hang out to find extravagant outfits, but where also tall girls will go to find reasonably priced bridal gowns. Enjoy the fourth floor with its special shops. (567 Ratchaprarop Road Makkasan. Opening hours from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.)

Film Director and Artist Ark Saroj



How to start about Bangkok?

For creative people, Bangkok is the best city. Not only because it has incredible energy, but it remains very affordable to all. You can feel creative at work in a cheap but high quality way. Material is cheap, the cost of living is decent, and food is very reasonably priced. It is just amazing, even for a Thai! I am in love with this young generation of fashion designers. I love the creativity of fashion labels; such as, Gin & Milk or Patrice Boyd. The first one is very 80s while the second is really flamboyant. I also enjoy Open Space; finally a unique bookshop concept in Bangkok and probably in Asia. But what excites me these days is Bangkok's music scene. It is booming thanks to so many talented musicians. Hip hop is just fabulous here, and I highly recommend exploring the rapper kids from Khlong Toei district.

To bring or not to bring

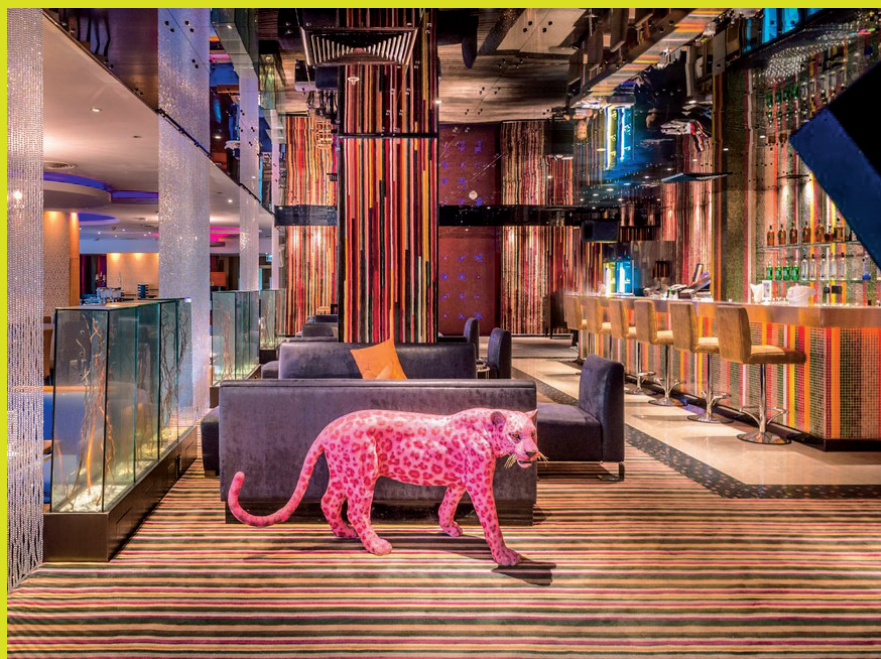
Many tourists have the temptation to buy a Buddha statue and take it back home. Buddha images are considered religious objects and are legally not allowed to be taken out of the country. This is particularly true for Thai antiques, so you must acquire an export certificate. Small reproductions of Buddha statues - mostly created for tourists and less than five years old - are however tolerated to be taken out of Thailand. Other items are, however, not submitted to this restriction.

SLEEPING BEAUTIES

You can of course sleep in a shared apartment through apps; such as, Airbnb or Mister B&B, but competition is so strong in the hotel industry that even luxury properties are very affordable, turning Bangkok into one of the best bargains for quality accommodation. There are over 80,000 rooms available in Bangkok's hotels. So it would be impossible that you could not find the right place.



So Sofitel Bangkok



Dream Bangkok

Affordable luxury at Bangkok hotels

Bangkok has at least three dozen luxury hotels, and new ones are being added every year. This keeps the market extremely competitive with some 5-star properties to be already sold for less than 5,000 Baht. Check on your favourite website for the best bargains.

Among hotels offering discerning elegance, absolute luxury and a trendy touch are the **Banyan Tree** (its club Vertigo is hosting regularly LGBTQ events), the **Centara Grand**, the **Park Hyatt**, the **Peninsula**, the **So by Sofitel** (its monthly swimming pool party is a favourite among the LGBTQ communities), the **St Regis**, the **Waldorf Astoria** or the **W Hotel** (also a popular place for LGBTQs).

Looking for trendy arty hotels? See the list of properties in the Bangkok Art

section over hotels combining hospitality and arts. To the already mentioned hotels, the **M-Gallery Hotel Muse** Bangkok could be added. This boutique hotel is a stylish property designed in a 1920s European style, close to Lumpini Park - perfect to run in the morning or evening - as well as to Ratchaprasong Road, the perfect to rush to shopping malls. **Dream Bangkok** is a contemporary property near Terminal 21 praised by travellers for superb bed comfort and a unique blue light therapy in room, which will give you the feeling to be part of an Avatar movie!

If you fancy very distinctive hotels with a strong Thai identity, there are at least a dozen hotels in the luxury or four-star segments.

Try the **Sukhothai** with its beautiful gardens and its timeless elegance. The



The Sukhothai Bangkok

swimming pool is well known and is inspired by the water basins of the historical Sukhothai site. The **Mandarin Oriental** remains the grand old lady of Bangkok's hospitality industry, as it has been around for over 150 years. It is a bit old fashioned, but so Thai looking and a true heritage property. Do not miss the amazing flower arrangement in the lobby and a lovely cup of tea at the Authors Lounge, located in the historical wing of the hotel. The **Siam Kempinski** with its beautiful gardens, its flower arrangement and collection of Thai antiques is another perfect Thai-style property with the advantage of being adjacent to Siam Paragon and Siam Centre.



The Mandarin Oriental Bangkok

If you look for a true environmentally friendly property, stay at the brand new **Akyra Sukhumvit**. The 4.5-star hotel vows to be a zero-plastic hotel with less than 5% of its supply still using single-use plastic: Cotton bags, bamboo straws and bathroom accessories made of corn starch are part of the hotel's efforts.



W Hotel Bangkok

Last but not least, what would be LGBTQ Bangkok without the famous **Babylon Hotel**. The all-male hotel is integrated within the Babylon spa and sauna complex. The hotel offers individual, elegant rooms and suites with private bathrooms but also with sharing baths. The choice is yours!



Sala Rattanakosin – riverfront restaurant & rooftop bar

Chao Phraya Romance: boutique hotels on the river

If romantic atmosphere turns you upside down, Bangkok's best location is definitely along the Chao Phraya River with its range of luxurious intimate boutique hotels. The **Siam** is an exclusive property located next to the River, which belongs to an incredible Thai family of businessmen but also artists. Two of the owners are talented singers, and a third one is a singer and actor. The Siam blends contemporary design and traditional style. It is filled with antiques and precious furniture, all surrounded by gardens.

The **Praya Palazzo** on the Thon Buri side is an exquisite 100-year-old mansion designed in an Italian style with its courtyard and manicured gardens. It represents the perfect Siam dream of Europe in the old days. Near the Museum of Siam and Wat Pho, the **Chakrabongse Villas** is a historical property built for a prince and converted into a hotel. A discreet retreat with a beautiful garden. Many of the Sino-Thai style rooms face Wat Arun.



Praya Palazzo

In the four-star category, two hotels offer sweeping views of the river with a romantic sunset over Wat Arun. The **Sala Ratanakosin** blends its minimalist contemporary style to the romance of watching the river while the **Riva Arun Hotel** with its white furniture and walls is perfect for a hide-away. Some of the bathrooms even have a bathtub overlooking the River.

Finally, if you dream to be in a seaside resort despite being in Bangkok, ideal accommodation is the **Anantara Riverside Bangkok Resort**. Located on the River on the Thon Buri side, the hotel is known for its huge pools, spa facilities, its 10 restaurants and large gardens. You might never leave it to explore the rest of town.



Trendy and affordable: Bangkok hostels

You are romantic, trendy, but on a budget. Well, Bangkok is also looking after you with some great hostels offering attentive service and great atmosphere.

Sleep Bangkok is a real hostel with dormitories, but also individual rooms. The furniture will remind you of wooden pallets while the lobby is colourful with its large paintings.

Hide Bangkok Hostel is a bit outside the city centre - but only 15 minutes away from Siam by skytrain - with rooms decorated individually by various artists and king-size beds.

Vivit Hostel Bangkok is located in a heritage building near Khao San Road and decorated in vivid 60s-style colours.

The *Yard Hostel Bangkok* in Ari area is eco-friendly with rooms created from former containers. Private rooms are stylish, surrounded by gardens where parties and yoga sessions are organised.

Near to the Golden Mount, the City Hall and Rommaninat Park, *Niras Bangkok Cultural Hostel* is a charming heritage property offering an Old Siam style with a boutique hotel atmosphere.

In Silom, *Good'uck Hostel* has been created by young Thai architects in a sleek minimalist style.







Wandering
around
BANGKOK



Passion for FOOD

The reputation of Bangkok as a food paradise is not to be proved anymore. Just stroll around the city and you will see that food is absolutely everywhere. It is not only available in restaurants, markets or at food stalls, but also in any skytrain or MRT stations, at any street corner, on bridges, in front of temples, and even spread out in front of food markets. Such an abundance of terrestrial pleasures gives visitors an unmatched choice at affordable prices.

From Royal Thai food to contemporary creations, from regional cooking from Isan to Japanese snacks, from Mexican tacos to French high cuisine, from Spanish tapas to Persian kebab or Vietnamese Pho, almost all the cuisines of the world are home in Bangkok. Most difficult is not to eat 24 hours a day and still maintain a slim silhouette. Thank God, Bangkok has enough dance clubs and fitness centres to shed the extra kilos!



They are young, beautiful and creative. They are not top models - although some could be - but chefs! Go around Bangkok to taste their skills. Bangkok has so many chefs from all over the world, but in recent years, there has been an influx of young Thai culinary entrepreneurs.

Thai Contemporary Twist

Of course, we all love traditional Thai food with Tom Yam Kung and papaya salad. But Thailand's cuisine is changing with many chefs redefining the way to present dishes by combining Thai flavours with a modern contemporary twist.

Try the Michelin-star **Saawan**, run by Chef Sujira 'Aom' Pongmorn, one of the youngest chefs in Bangkok to be distinguished by the famed gastronomy guide. Saawan gives an authentic flavourful cuisine through a ten-course menu that brings any guest to 'Heaven'. This is actually what 'Saawan' means in Thai, and Best of it: all ingredients are locally sourced and organic while the restaurant is turning increasingly as the new hang-out for the LGBTQ community, thanks to Chef Aom fame... (39/19 Soi Suan Phlu, Sathon)

Chim by Siam Wisdom offers a more contemporary approach to Thai cuisine than its sister restaurant Siam Wisdom. It has reasonable prices, not-to-be-missed curries, a Michelin one-star and a Thai chef with the most striking hipster-style moustache of in Bangkok! (66 Soi Sukhumvit 31, Yaek 4).

The house is painted in an unusual dark pink while inside, the decoration balances between tradition and kitsch. While the ground floor is a true bar with



a DJ playing often disco music, the upper floor is more like a home and is reserved for fine-dining. **Namsaah Bottling Trust**, offers intriguing gastro bites and a signature cocktail list in the bar while the menu blends Thai and European flavours, created by a star celebrity Chef Ian Kittichai, one of the most prominent culinary personalities in the Kingdom.

He is Thai and she is Japanese. They both run **80/20 Restaurant** in Charoen Krung, which is fusion food but with a deep-rooted Thai approach to cuisine. Executive chef Napol Jantraget looks after the main dishes while his wife Saki Hoshino prepares fresh pastries. They create new flavours for traditional Thai dishes, rediscovering forgotten Thai herbs and cooking methods. The result is indeed surprising. All the ingredients are fresh and prepared at customers' requests. It means that the restaurant can only accommodate 50 guests per day. Better to go a bit later for dinner, as the peak hour is between 7.00 and 8.00 p.m., maybe after strolling around Chinatown, (Charoen Krung Soi 26).

Classic Thai Restaurant

Where could it more Thai than at the **Blue Elephant?** In a heritage-listed house which used to be the headquarters of the Bombay Burmah Trading Company Chef Nooror Somany Steppe, a Muslim lady, is the founder

of the Blue Elephant Cooking School and Restaurant. Exquisite Thai traditional and Royal dishes in a lavish decoration of antiques makes it a truly romantic place. A set menu for lunch is an affordable option (233 Sathon Tai Road).



Blue Elephant

Ruen Urai is set in a century-old traditional Thai house made from golden teak wood. The house used to belong to an herbal medicine doctor during the reign of King Rama V the Great. The restaurant is filled with antiques and ancient furniture and offers delicate Thai dishes. The restaurant is located behind Silom and all the LGBTQ bars and clubs of Silom Soi 2 and Soi 4 (118 Surawongse Road).

Chef Sujira 'Aom' Pongmorn, Sawaan Restaurant



Bangkok is this day increasingly opened to gay influences and the nice thing about this town is that LGBTQ life fluctuates between old fashion traditions and contemporary lifestyle. Bangkok gay life is not only about glamour but rather open to all. For example, I love the fashion from Vatanika. Clothes are simple, adapted for daily life.

Before opening Sawaan restaurant, I liked to hang out with friends along Phra Sumen Road, Ratchada or along the Chao Praya River such as Yok Yor Restaurant. I love Thong Lor for a snack or a drink after finishing work. I would recommend Funky Lam Kitchen for traditional Isan/Lao food with musicians playing pop and traditional songs on Isan instruments. I visit also Bottom's Up in Thong Lor, a great wine bar. For food aficionados, I recommend to visit Khlong Toey wet market early in the morning. Lots of great spices and herbs come direct from farms in Isan. And I love Yaowarat as it brings me back to childhood memory. You find there incredible Chinese-style desserts, dry Japanese or Chinese scallops and Yunnan Ham, which looks like Parma Ham, and is impossible to find anywhere else...

Iconic Dishes

Baan Phadthai is a lovely old Thai style bistro which serves the iconic Phat Thai dishes in various versions, as well as traditional Isan style snacks. Despite its success, the restaurant remains very reasonably priced.

P'Aor is dubbed a top restaurant for a creamy Tom Yam Kung (prawn) with noodles. The small shop is attracting lots of fans although it might be a bit difficult to find (68/51 Phetchaburi Soi 5, between Sois 5-7).

Health-conscious? Try **Phed Phed Restaurant** in the Ari area. It serves very typical Isan, food including a Som Tam - papaya salad - considered one of the best in town by food experts. The choice is incredible with some 20 different papaya salads on the menu. As the restaurant is always packed with only 24 seats, better to try your good luck outside lunch and dinner time or to make a booking (Phaholyothin Soi 8, Samsennai, Phayathai). Alternatively, try **Somtum Der** on Sala Daeng Road, just next to Silom (5/5 Sala Daeng Road).

Hung Sen is a small restaurant specialised in all types of Thai noodles, dry or with soup. Hung Sen offers vegetarian, Isan Central Region and Northern noodle dishes. Try the Khao Soi, a speciality from Chiang Mai or Sukhothai noodles among others. Dishes are cheap, and the place is open every day, up to 9 p.m. (1/6 Woof Pack, Saladaeng Soi 1, Rama 4 Road).

If your focus is indeed Khao Soi curry noodles and generally Northern-style

food, **Madame Musur** is the perfect place. The house specialties are not only the delicious Khao Soi, but also the Sai Uea (pork sausage), the Nam Phrik Ong (chili paste with minced pork with cherry tomatoes) accompanied by home-made pork skin crisps (Kap Mu). Madame Musur prepares also Northern inspired drinks including cocktails (41 Soi Rambutri across from Khao San Road or 76 Samsen Soi 2).



Eat Me

THE Gay-friendly restaurant

This is an institution and one of the most celebrated restaurants, as it is part of the list of the 50 Top restaurants in Asia. **Eat Me** on Convent Road offers international contemporary food. The place is known to be one of the most gay-friendly in Bangkok. If you do not feel attracted to the regular art exhibitions of Thai artists, then you will not be able to resist the fabulous cocktails, juicy tender meats, extensive selection of wines, and generally the great vibes and dining experience of the restaurant, before heading to Silom (Soi Pipat 2, across from Convent Road).

Explore Bangkok's famous FOOD STREETS



In recent years, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration has started to clean up some of the streets famed for food with stalls lined up along the roads. Well, some of them have not disappeared, but they have been relocated to sheltered areas mostly on the side of the roads they used to be or to less frequented alleys to allow a better fluidity in Bangkok's often clogged streets. Follow the flow of people or just the smells of the cooking!

Famed for tourists are the areas of Yaowarat (mostly for Chinese food amateurs), in Rattanakosin Island, Sukhumvit Soi 38, Sukhumvit Soi 79 near On Nut Road (just after Q-House condominium), Suriwongse and the back of Silom.

Not to forget is the Ramkhamhaeng Night Market and streets across the market, which offer Bangkok's largest choice of Muslim food including Malay-Thai style dishes. The area is indeed home to an important Muslim community from Southern Thailand.

Stalls along **Khao San Road** have been moved to new premises on side streets, but they can still continue to operate from 6 p.m. until midnight. The most famous food hawkers are the one selling Phat Thai noodles, mango sticky rice dessert and ... fried bugs coated in sugar.



Yaowarat's small alleys are filled with hawkers selling crispy Peking-style duck, wonton, and noodle soups; such as, fish balls with egg or rice noodles served in a broth or mango sticky rice desserts.

Sukhumvit Soi 38 stalls moved to a covered area on the right of the street from the Thong Lo BTS Station. All the usual Thai dishes are available in a more comfortable area with ample seating and fans.

Sukhumvit Soi 79 near the On Nut BTS Station is a pedestrian street with many stalls selling traditional Thai food including many Southern-style curries with a high number of hawkers offering grilled meat and seafood brochettes.

Suriwongse's food stalls mostly cater for workers in entertainment venues in Silom and the surrounding streets. These places are indeed open very late at night, ideal when coming out of Silom's various clubs.

Caffeine World



It used to be tea and particularly Thai-style tea (a tea with condensed milk), which was the main hot drink for Thais. But over the last five years, Thais have turned increasingly to coffee. There are great coffee places everywhere across town, and they are generally not the usual coffee chains that you see all around the world that look a bit boring.

Looking for a chic, contemporary but eco-conscious place to sip your cup of Java? There are two coffee shops inside the Bangkok Art and Cultural Centre (BACC) worth visiting. **Gallery Drip Coffee** proposes coffee from all over the world with specially selected Thai coffee from Chiang Rai's hill tribes. Across is the **Art Café by Brown Sugar**, a place decorated by murals.

During your shopping spree at Siam Discovery, drop by **Brave Roasters** with its great choice of carefully selected coffee beans. Good-looking waiters and waitresses, home-made cakes and coffee specialists already awarded the title of Bangkok best barristas. The place is generally filled with hip and elegant Thai kids. Also, try their branch in Thong Lo or make an appointment to visit their torrefaction factory in a trendy renovated warehouse (3rd floor of Siam Discovery or 251/1 Thong Lo Soi 13, Sukhumvit Soi 55).

Kaizen Coffee Company: This Japanese name for this minimalist-style coffee shop is known for its nitro-brewed coffee. But it is possible to also drink traditional coffee and have a bite (Tai Ping Tower 582/5 Ekkamai Road).

Let's be frank about the food and coffee at **Café de Norasingha**. They are correct but not exceptional. However, pay a visit to that place because of its

old European-style atmosphere with its stucco-decorated ceiling, wooden panels and frescoes. It used to be the private lounge of Thai kings when Phaya Thai Palace was a hotel 100 years ago (315 Ratchawithi Road inside the Phaya Thai Hospital). Perfect to visit before exploring the Dusit district.

Last but not least, when visiting Chatuchak Market or the Ramkhamhaeng University area, look for stalls preparing the 'Kopi or Teh Tarik' outlets. This is a speciality from the Deep South, Coffee or tea is stirred from one pot to another to give a foamy drink ... And it is often the opportunity for sellers to show their acrobatic skills when stirring up the beverage.



Brave Roasters barrista

Let them eat cake!

Never would be the famous sentence from French Queen Marie-Antoinette more appropriate than for the cakes of Philippines-born Icko Cruz. Settling in Bangkok, Icko has a passion: creating incredible cakes which can take any possible shape, from Planet Earth to a giant rafflesia, or a rainbow cake. It is surprisingly creative. Book between 5 and 8 days to get the cake of your dreams on Icko's Facebook page ... Worth the try for unforgettable memories!

Food markets



Everyone has an address of a food market in Bangkok, and best is to explore a local wet market to avoid tourist-oriented places. You will generally be impressed by their impeccable cleanliness.

Admiring perfect fruit

Talat Tor Kor or Tor Kor Market is the official farmers' organisation's fresh market. It is located across from Chatuchak Market on Kamphaeng Phet Road. There are plenty of beautiful vegetable and fruits, as well as fresh seafood, fishes and home-made chilli sauces and pastes to be bought there. Unfortunately, prices have gone up quite a lot since the market is increasingly visited by large groups of tourists. The place has maybe turned to become famous following its listing as one of the world's best markets on the US TV network CNN.

A well-preserved European-style market

Nang Loeng Market is an over 100-year-old market, as it opened in 1900. It has still managed to preserve its European-style Italianate architecture and is often neglected by travellers, as it is located in a not-so-popular area between Dusit and Siam. The 1900 architecture is still visible today with the two-storey shop houses surrounding large halls where sellers settled. The Market still remains famous for its specialties. Among them are So Samran Noodles with duckling in a five-spice sauce as well as Rungruang Noodles and Grilled Duckling. Many traditional Thai desserts are also available.



The most authentic Thai market

Khlong Toei Wet Market has a 24-hour activity and is easily accessible from Queen Sirikit Convention Centre MRT Station. It is chaotic with its alleys full of stalls selling raw meat, livestock, fruit and vegetables, fish and seafood, dried food as well as kitchenware. There is a permanent 'ballet' of sellers and buyers pushing hand trolleys with shouting vendors adding their voice to the chorus. This is far from an opera-style performance, but authenticity is around each corner.



For the environment-conscious: Bangkok Farmers Market

Fresh organic veggies, fruits and dishes, lots belonging to local Bangkok people who have (re) discovered the pleasure of having a piece of land and growing organic products. Regular venue is at the Gateway Ekamai mall. However, look at the BKKFM website to find the exact location as it is rotating (<http://www.bkkfm.org/events-list/#!event-list>).

A hotel dedicated to the culinary arts

Want to mix culinary pleasures and have a sound sleep? Next to Phaya Thai BTS Station and the Suan Pakkad Palace Museum, here is the Akara Hotel Bangkok, a boutique-style four-star hotel which cultivates a passion for gastronomy thanks to its owner, Mai Vannaying, who admitted a true dedication for cuisine since he was 12. The hotel offers to its visitors a lounge with one of Bangkok's most extensive libraries about gastronomy; most of the books belonging to Mai Vannaying.

The hotel integrates the Roschas Cooking School for anyone curious to learn about the spirit behind authentic Thai cooking. There is also Ross Kitchen, the hotel restaurant where dishes inspired by grandmother's cooking is served in a 70s vintage setting. However, be careful of the water flavoured with herbs served during the meal. You might be attracted by the pink colour but the taste is something that you may have never had before. "This drink was served because it has a cooling effect," explains Mai Vannaying. By the way, you can also sleep at the Akara Hotel with its comfy bedrooms decorated in a neo-classical style (372 Si Ayutthaya Road).

Everyday Night Fever' IN BANGKOK



We probably open one of the most expected chapters of this guide book. In Bangkok, entertainment is written with a large E, and venues are just everywhere and are constantly changing. Thais' love for clubs, discos, places to listen to music, and trendy bars just goes along with the local idea of 'sanook' (fun). If you explore Bangkok's nightlife, know that if you want to talk to the local people, do the first step to start a conversation as people are rather shy ... Yes, they actually are! A smile, tossing drinks is the best way to start a conversation and make new friends ... well, if people do speak English or if you eventually speak Thai!



Know Bangkok's beautiful people (LGBTQ bars and cafes)

Silom is where most of the LGBTQ bars and clubs are concentrated with the famed **Soi 2** and **Soi 4** having the highest concentrations of outlets where people hang around and meet. Soi 2 is dedicated to clubs and gets generally busy from 11 p.m. onwards until closure at 2 a.m. **Soi 4** concentrates on bars and restaurants and is generally filled with people every night - except Monday, as all the community needs to rest. Meanwhile, if you are a regular visitor to Bangkok, Soi 4 is probably where you have the most chance to see people you know and to be recognised ... gossip included!

There are four main bars welcoming all visitors and particularly the LGBTQ community. The two oldest institutions are **Balcony** and **Telephone** that opened in the 1980s. Some 20 years ago, Telephone was famous, as customers could get called on when having a drink. Today, apps make the difference! The two are fixed features of the soi while another four to five bars have changed their name over time.



One of the most famous bars these days is **the Stranger** where cabaret performances are on display every night. It has witty shows and a casual atmosphere, as performers are keen to chat and interact with people. Another bar is **Connections** also offering a relaxed atmosphere while Hugs Bar over the Balcony is the place for bear-style gay tribes to hang out.

Soi 2 is home to Bangkok's LGBTQ most famous club, **DJ Station**. Getting busy from 11 p.m. onwards with a ladyboy's show, the place offers excellent music, plenty of space to chat and good drinks. DJ Station has been expanding and expanding over the years to a point that it might one day comprise the entire soi.

Best-kept secret: there is a natural 'typology' of the customer according to the area you decide to stay inside the club. The ground floor in front of DJ is mostly for bears while the bar across from DJ Station sees generally Thai youngsters and the young-at-heart. The second floor is generally where Westerners hang out with the area around the bar being mostly populated with local expats. The third floor is dedicated to intimate chats, which might conclude to a true romance.

Now that you know all the codes of DJ station, be aware that Saturday is extremely crowded and you might not be able to dance. But DJ station is not only about dancing. There are alternatives in the same alley with **Disco Disco Club** and **The Espresso**.

Sharing a dance not only with Queen Victoria

The Stranger Bar in Silom Soi 4 has turned in recent years to be very popular for the spectacular performances of ladyboys. Find them back in a glamorous environment every Sunday night at *Maggie Choo's*, a club located at the Novotel Silom. Just go there to enjoy the atmosphere of the place.

The atmosphere evokes an opium den in old Shanghai as well as the warehouses of the East Asiatic Trading Company, a trading enterprise which used to manage Bangkok's first port 100 years ago. Inside the club, vaulted ceilings and alcoves are highlighted by busts of an impassive Queen Victoria while her favourite (and well alive) sherpas are nonchalantly lying over the bar counter or sway on swings in the middle of the room.

Queen Victoria and her sherpas' stolidity is in sharp contrast with another queen of Bangkok nights, the famed Pangina



Drag queen artist Pangina Heals and her father
Photo courtesy of Tom Politis

Heals. She is now a real local star giving to all Thai drag queens an exposure that was not conceivable a decade ago. These days, Pangina is just everywhere on TV shows and in advertising. At *Maggie Choo's*, she and her team perform, play and interact with a wild crowd. Probably the most extravagant show in town for now (Novotel Bangkok Silom, 320 Silom Road).

Pan Pan Nakprasert Aka Drag Queen Pangina Heals

Bangkok is a fabulous town. Buddhism is certainly fundamental to make people tolerant. I feel safer in Bangkok than anywhere else, especially to perform as a drag queen. I am proud to be present in so much media and campaigns these days, as I am happy to perform at *Maggie Choo's*, which is exactly what I wanted to see for a show. Fun and relaxing where they are no boundaries between performers and visitors. My favourite hang-outs? Pak Khlong Talat, the flower market for its incredible colours; Vesper is an excellent bar, elegant and trendy; I enjoy also the *Stranger Bar* and *KIKA Kitchen and Bar*. For food, well we beat any other town with our street food open 24 hours a day. Near the river, I enjoy the *Love Bar and Restaurant* along the *Chao Phraya River*: Excellent seafood there! For shopping, *Siam Centre* is great for its young Thai designers. We must support Thai creativity indeed!! But *Union Mall* has excellent and cheap men's suits while *Watergate Pavilion* allows me to find high heel shoes my size!





Drag Queen artist Kana Warrior

Queens of Pop

Where can visitors see how Thais can turn extraverted? Trasher Bangkok is a community spearhead by a group of young Thai friends, mostly with a background in cinema. The group is famed for producing video parodies of international singers (most can be seen on YouTube) and for theme parties

where all Bangkok comes costumed. From Madonna and Lady Gaga theme parties packed with dozens of clones of the two famous singers to fake wedding parties, or Halloween style, Bangkok Trasher is a testimony that Thais are not as shy as they claim to be! All their events are generally packed with the opportunity for dozens of selfies and new friends (www.facebook.com/trasherbangkok).

Queers are Queens

GRRRL has existed since 2013 and acts as a clubbing and night party community. Run by a group of gay girls and boys who share the same love for partying and indie music, GRRRL aims to bring the best of indie - rock - electro tunes for special nights. Events are particularly lesbian-friendly, but of course open to all. Check their events under www.facebook.com/gogrrrls/.





GLAMOUROUS AND CHIC: go party at hotels and restaurants

LGBTQ nights are definitely fashionable in Bangkok, and there are lots of hotels or restaurants now hosting their own LGBTQ event.

- Banyan Tree organises a party with a performance once a month on Saturday at the Vertigo TOO.
- Hotel Muse by the M Gallery collection has a girls' night each Friday on the rooftop bar (55/555 Langsuan Road, Lumpini).
- So Sofitel Bangkok organises each last Saturday of the month its Pool Party. The fittest men and women are there, and the event is extremely LGBTQ friendly. From 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Perfect timing then to move to other clubs and venues!
- On Wednesday, the W Bangkok has a special free flow of sparkling wines for men at Woobar in the lobby of the hotel. The price is only 400 Baht and the special treatment ends at 9.30 p.m.
- LaVida Kika stands for a traditional gay Tea Dance on Sunday and organise buy 2 for 1 only for boys on Thursday. (4/2-3 Convent Road)
- LESLA Party is entirely dedicated to ladies. The group organises a music and dance event every first Saturday of the month at Why Here Bar & Bistro (1839/9 Phaholyothin Road, Latyao, Chatuchak).



LaVida Kika

“I’m Dreaming Over White Party”

Dressed in white or just little dressed, six-pack body-shaped, you are ready to enjoy Bangkok’s yearly event to celebrate the jump into the new year. The White Party goes non-stop for three days, starting on 29 December to end up as the New Year kicks off. The White Party is where the world’s hippest DJ, meet the hottest guys on the planet. Tickets are sold months in advance under www.facebook.com/WhitepartyBKK/. The White Party is organised by Circuit Festival Asia which is also involved in other major events around the world (www.circuitfestival.net).

Splash of Colours

“Kolour in the Park” is not an exclusive LGBTQ event despite its name. However, this festival hosted near Bangkok, is the largest outdoor festival, a mix of songs,

dances, food and art with a kind of groovy techno vibe. It has been already rewarded as one of the top festivals in Asia. To check out where the event will be held, click on www.kolourinthepark.com.

Not only Silom...

Bangkok’s LGBTQ entertainment is not just concentrated around the Silom area. There are dozens of other places across Bangkok although it is mostly frequented by the local people.

In northern Bangkok, two areas are popular with the LGBTQ community. Along Kamphaeng Phet Road near the Chatuchak Market, ViVa26 is only opened during weekends and during the daytime. The bar looks more like a second-hand and vintage shop and is very LGBTQ friendly.

Ratchadapisek Road is a popular venue for clubbing in the vicinity of Rama 9 Road. **Fake Club**. It is now the largest LGBTQ club in Ratchada offering live music, male model shows and finally a dance floor. The crowd is mostly Thai and Asians. The Club is getting famed with its Songkran Special with its festive atmosphere evocating a Brazilian carnival made in Thailand. (Ratchada Soi 4/1). Fake Club Songkran is organised by GCircuit,

ICK is a very local style gay pub. The atmosphere is a bit old fashioned, but it gives a good idea how traditional local Thais can have fun (Ramkhamhaeng Soi 89/2).



ESCAPE Bangkok Heat

Fed up of Bangkok's concrete jungle? There are plenty of excursions to be done in just an hour to 1½ hour's drive away from the city.

Bang Pa-In, a Siam-made Versailles

An hour north of Bangkok on the way to Ayutthaya, here is a dream castle complex with most of the present buildings constructed between 1872 and 1889 by King Rama V the Great. Many of the buildings are designed in the European style and ordered around splendid gardens with statues and fountains. Exceptional is the Aisawan Diphya-Asana Pavilion constructed in the middle of a pond in the Thai style as well as the Chinese-style Warophat Phiman. Across the Palace compound is Wat Niwet Thammaprawat, a temple complex completed in 1878 and built ... like a typical gothic church.

Seven centuries of wisdom and beauty in Ayutthaya

Siam's second historical capital is 1½ hours away from Bangkok and accessible by train or by bus. The Ayutthaya Historical Park covers the ruins of the ancient city of Ayutthaya, which was destroyed by the Burmese army in 1767. The historical park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site stretching over 280 hectares including dozens of temples. The not-to-be-missed temples are the majestic Wat Chaiwatthanaram, Wat Mahathat, Wat Phra Si Samphet with its three chedis and Wat Ratchaburana.



Wat Niwet Thammaprawat

All of Thailand in an afternoon at Muang Boran

Muang Boran or Ancient City is an outdoor museum in the shape of Thailand built in Samut Prakan province. It shows famed monuments and buildings from all across Thailand as life-size or reduced replicas. This is the best place to discover the various shapes of Thailand's architecture and travel all across the country in just a couple of hours. There is also a rebuilt floating market as well as a reconstruction of the former Grand Palace in Ayutthaya, which was destroyed by fire by the Burmese troops in 1767 (www.ancientcitygroup.net).



Mrigadayavan Palace

Bang Krachao, a tropical jungle at the doorstep of Bangkok

Called the green lung of Bangkok, Bang Krachao is an island in Phra Pradaeng district, which belongs to Samut Prakan. The area is surrounded by the Chao Phraya River, which meanders taking the shape of a snake. Bang Krachao has been miraculously spared by urban development and still preserves its rainforest. Tours are organised on bike to discover this incredible piece of wild nature at Bangkok's doorstep with specialist biking tours organising three- to four-hour bicycle trips. There is also the possibility to rent a bike when arriving at the island pier.

A tour to Bang Saen Beach

Bang Saen is located in Chon Buri province but is the closest beach to Bangkok, less than 90 minutes' drive from the city centre. The beach has its fair share of restaurants famous for their seafood, small resort hotels and bungalows and is far less crowded than Pattaya except during weekends when Thai tourists come. An enjoyable alternative for a short beach break and getting a natural sun tan.

King Rama VI fairy-tale palaces

When Siam dreamed to emulate Europe, King Rama VI built a string of palaces around Bangkok as summer residences with a distinctive European character. Two of these palaces are *Mrigadayavan Palace and Sanam Chandra Palace*. The first one is located between the seaside resort stations of Cha-am and Hua Hin. Mrigadayavan is composed of a series of delicately carved pavilions made of teak wood and intra-linked by corridors and exposed to a cool sea breeze, as they are all built on stilts. It is a very romantic place overlooking the sea.

In Nakhon Pathom province, *Sanam Chandra Palace* is another popular royal residence. It is also composed of various palaces with the highlight being the Chalemongkolasana Residence, a pastiche of a Southern German castle (despite the fact that local historians say that the structure was inspired by French medieval architecture). King Rama VI came here after 1917 with his troops of the Wild Tigers Corp for military training but also to play theatre. Many pictures inside the palace testify of King Rama VI's literature and theatric times.





BANGKOK'S
Practical
Information



Practical Information



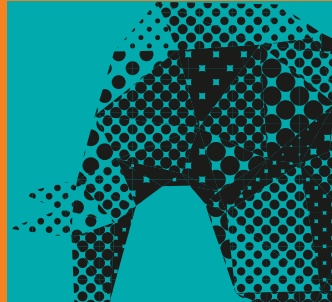
Health

Having health insurance when coming to Thailand is highly recommended to avoid any bad surprise in case of illness or accident. Normal illnesses and diseases can easily be treated in small private clinics at a reasonable price, and surgery is generally expensive. Insurance coverage is then wise to have.

For people affected by HIV, there are many addresses to look for advice while the Thai Red Cross Hospital near Silom has a service dedicated to HIV-infected people, including foreigners. Addresses for AIDS-infected people can be found under www.aidsmap.com/HIV-AIDS-services/Thailand/cat/1295/page/1871278/.

Police

You will discover that the police force is rather efficient and helpful. A Tourist Police force with English-speaking officers is present all across Bangkok. If you need help, call the Tourist Police hotline 1155.





Tourist Information

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has a vast network of 29 international offices in various locations worldwide and 45 domestic offices all across Thailand. In Thailand, the TAT Head Office has a Tourist Information Counter; provides tourist attraction brochures of the 77 provinces in both Thai and English versions including e-brochures that are available for downloading at www.tourismthailand.org. Tourists can inquire for tourist information at the Tourist Information Counters. There are 3 service counters open daily:

Furthermore, TAT has further developed a Live Chat service to be used with mobile phone apps (<https://www.tatcontactcenter.com/en/Main>) where tourists can easily chat with staff through their smartphone and iPad.

TAT Call Centre 1672 is also one of the TAT's services. Tourists can directly inquire for tourist information from the TAT Call Centre officers; the service is available daily from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration also has a network of information offices across the city - particularly in popular tourist destinations; such as, around Sanam Luang and the Grand Palace, Hua Lamphong Railway Station and Yaowarat, as well as around the malls of Ratchaprasong and Sukhumvit.

- **TAT Head Office**, 1600 Phetchaburi Road, Makkasan, Ratchathewi, Bangkok 10400; Tel. (+66) 2250 5500 Ext. 2199, 2100; Fax. 0 2253 7440. Open between 8.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.
- **Ministry of Tourism and Sports** Building 4 Ratchadamnoen Nok Road, Wat Somanat, Pom Prap Sattru Phai, Bangkok 10100; Tel. (+66) 2283 1556; Fax. 0 2356 0720. Open between 8.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.
- **Suvarnabhumi Airport Gate 3**, Level 2, Arrivals Hall Tel. (+66) 2134 0040 Open 24 hours.

Mobile phone SIM cards and Wi-Fi

Sim cards from various local Thai telecom companies are easily available at airports, malls, supermarkets and specialised shops. Packages for a week's Internet roaming starts from 100 Baht. A passport is necessary to complete the registration.

Many shops, restaurants, malls as well as both Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang International Airports offer also free Wi-Fi.

VAT Refund

Thailand proposes a VAT refund for any purchase of over 1,500 Baht in the same shop. VAT Refund documents are provided directly at the shops. The refund is then provided in cash or by credit card at airports.



Catalan artist Dani Manfort for Serindia Art Gallery



My little LGBTQ Thai Vocabulary

LGBTQ communities -like the rest of the world- use a specific vocabulary with colourful expressions to describe some characters or situations. Here are a few words which might impress your friends and show that you totally embrace Thai LGBTQ life.

Ka theoy: Certainly, the best known word to describe a transvestite. Within the community, some take it as offensive, some others find it normal.

Lam Yai: Originally this Thai word is for a longan fruit but it also refers to someone being always annoyed and complaining to much...

Man Man: Describes a guy looking extremely masculine...

Park Whan: sweet mouth





About the author

French national **Luc Citripot** has been living for 15 years in Bangkok. A journalist by profession, Luc has been also working in the airline industry as a consultant and has been behind the creation of heritage trails focusing a lot on history and architecture. He has a keen interest on colonial and European style architecture, in Southeast Asia, on arts as well as design. His interest to write a LGBTQ guide about Bangkok received a warm support from the Tourism Authority of Thailand as he wanted to write a booklet targeting all travellers with a keen interest for Bangkok's life, however with a gay touch...





Open to
The
New **Shades**
of Diversity