

# Bangkok, Thailand

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## Introduction



Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is called Krung Thep in Thai which means City of Angels. Bangkok is a tropical, vibrant city which has award-winning hotels and restaurants to suit all budgets and tastes, extensive entertainment and numerous attractions. It is one of the world's most exotic and colourful cities with a unique blend of the traditional and ultra-modern.

Then, of course, there's the exquisite cuisine to feast upon! Treat yourself to a memorable night on board one of Bangkok's most luxurious restaurant boats. Relax in modern comfort and dine on a variety of Thai dishes while you slowly cruise along the River of Kings, Chao Phya River, passing the Temple of Dawn (Wat Arun), the Grand Palace and life along the river as it slowly starts to unwind after a busy day.

Explore Bangkok and discover the fabulous Wat Phra Keo (Emerald Buddha Chapel), the fabulous royal barges and unrivalled shopping opportunities for some of the world's most admired handicrafts.

## Facts & Figures

### Climate

Bangkok's climate is a tropical one. The hot, dry season is from February to May and the wet season (monsoon) from June to October. The cool season from November to January is the most popular time for overseas visitors and is the high season. During the monsoon some of the streets may flood.

### Government

The King is the Head of State and exercises legislative power. A National Assembly with a 200-member Senate and 500-member House of Representatives formulate the legislation. The King is able to mediate between political factions and has in the past exercised this power.

### Population

The population as at June 2008 is about 65 million with about seven million people living in Bangkok. The total area of Thailand is 514,000 square kilometres making a population density of 12 people per square kilometre. This makes up 80% of the population with the balance being Chinese (12%), Malay (4%) and a mixture of backgrounds for the remaining 4%.

## Tourist Information

### Essentials

**Emergency = 191**

#### Drugs

Punishment for possession of drugs is a very serious offence resulting in death sentences in certain cases in Thailand. Nightclubs can be raided and all patrons tested for drugs by giving a compulsory urine test.

### Emergency Numbers

Ambulance 191  
Fire 199  
Police 191  
Tourist Police 1155

### Banks

Banking hours are from 0830 to 1530, Monday to Friday. Exchange booths are open much longer and available around Bangkok. ATMs are everywhere but do sometimes fail.

### Electricity

Electricity is 220V and uses flat or round two pin plugs without an earth.

### Police Services

The emergency number is 191. For the tourist police call 1155 who speak English and will be most helpful.

### Telephones

You must dial the full number in Thailand and so, in Bangkok, dial the 02 as part of the number. The international dialling code for Bangkok is 66. For overseas dial 00 and then the number, dropping the initial zero. Public call boxes accept coins and cards. Pre-paid mobile phone SIM cards are available and mobiles work well in Bangkok. For directory enquiries call 1133 for Bangkok, 183 for the Provinces and 100 for International. For operator assistance call 13.

**Embassies**

Australian Embassy: 37 Thanon Sathorn, South Tai.  
Telephone 02 287 2680.

British Embassy: 1031 Thanon Witthayu, Pathumwan.  
Telephone 02 305 8333.

Canadian Embassy: 15th Floor, Abdul Rahim Place, 990  
Thanon Rama 1V. Telephone 02 636 0540.

New Zealand Embassy: 14th Floor, M-Thailand Building,  
87 Thanon Witthayu. Telephone 02 254 2530.

USA: 120-122 Thanon Witthayu, Pathumwan. Telephone  
02 205 4000.

**Foreign Exchange**

There is no limit to the foreign currency that can be brought  
into Thailand but only \$10,000 can be taken out unless you  
have declared a larger amount on arrival.

**Time**

Bangkok is seven hours ahead of GMT. In the winter this  
means that Bangkok is seven hours ahead of London and  
12 hours ahead of New York.

**Tipping**

Tipping is not required, however tips after a meal are  
accepted with thanks and 10% would be the maximum. A  
smaller amount is very acceptable and if you do not feel like  
tipping then do not! Tipping is also appreciated for room  
service, portage and by tour guides. For taxis, rounding up  
the fare is appreciated due to the low rates on the meter.

**Health**

Bangkok is well served for hospitals and high quality care is available. There are no particular risks other than those that are to be expected in a city in the tropics. The most likely health problem is vehicle safety and great care needs to be taken when travelling and, in particular, when crossing streets.

Do not drink tap water and use mineral water which is available everywhere. Food is safe with the exception of raw seafood which carries the risk of causing diarrhoea, hepatitis A and E, cholera and typhoid.

Vaccinations are a personal issue but many visitors consider vaccines for hepatitis A, hepatitis B and Japanese encephalitis. There is a risk of rabies and deaths do occur, therefore avoid contact with all stray dogs. If bitten by a dog then seek immediate medical help and go to the Rabies Post Exposure Clinic as the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute located at 1871 Rama IV Road, Surwanong. Telephone 02 252 6117.

HIV/AIDS is prevalent in Bangkok. Huge efforts by the government have made awareness of the disease commonplace and condoms are readily available and widely used. Dengue fever is becoming a problem in many countries and transmitted by mosquitoes particularly those that bite in the daytime. It is not an easy disease to treat. Bangkok is free of malaria but it is found in some rural areas. Worms are common in Thailand and caught from eating food that is not well cooked.

There have been outbreaks of avian flu so it is wise to avoid animal markets and live poultry.

**Hospitals**

Hospitals are excellent and now treat people from all over the world. Bangkok is a good place to have a check up and offered at very reasonable prices. The medical system is based on an American model.

Bangkok Adventist Hospital. Telephone 02 281 1422.

Bangkok Christian Hospital. Telephone 02 233 6981.

Bangkok Hospital. Telephone 02 310 3456.

BNH Hospital. Telephone 02 632 0550.

Bumrungrad Hospital. Telephone 02 667 1000.

Samitivej Hospital. Telephone 02 711 8181.

St. Louis Hospital. Telephone 02 675 5000.

Thai Nakin Hospital. Telephone 02 361 2712.

**Lost Property**

Airport call 02 535 1254.

Buses call 02 246 0973.

Sky Train call 02 617 7141.

If you lose your credit card the local numbers are American Express 02 273 5500; Diners Club 02 238 3660; Master Card 02 260 8573; Visa 02 256 7324.

**Business Hours**

Private offices are open from 0900 to 1700, Monday to Friday. Government offices open from 0830 to 1630 and banks from 0930 to 1530.

**Internet**

Bangkok has internet cafes everywhere and very good value at about one baht per minute and sometimes less. They are mostly open until very late.

**Postal Services**

The main post office is on Charoen Krung Road between the Sheraton and the Oriental hotel and open 24 hours.

**Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited in all public areas and on public transport but allowed in designated areas of restaurants and bars.

## Crime

Bangkok is a relatively safe city but, like any large city in the world, is not crime free. As in any location, it is wise to leave your valuables in the hotel safe. It is just as easy to lose them as have them stolen. You are most unlikely to meet any muggers or armed robbers and reports of such incidents amongst foreigners are extremely rare. If such an event were to happen, the Thai authorities take it very seriously which deters such actions. Women should feel generally safe but should take care when alone at night. If you are robbed call the Tourist Police on 1699 or 02 652 1721.

Do not lose sight of your credit card as credit fraud does take place. In the large stores where your credit card is taken away to be processed, they have a central location and of course you can go with the sales assistant.

There have been a few incidents of crime in taxis. Only use marked taxis and do not use taxis that are standing outside the hotel gates. If you need a taxi at a hotel, ask the doorman to call one for you from the street or move onto the street and take a running taxi.

Street touts will offer emeralds and rubies; do not go with them as they are likely to be fake. Men may be offered a "massage"; again, ignore them. There are many genuine massage parlours that are easy to find yourself. Do remember that prostitution is illegal in Thailand.

In some of the sleazy bars it is possible that you will be overcharged. In such places, check the price first and pay as you go. If there is an incident call the Tourist Police as they will respond. However in most cases the problem can be solved by negotiation. Beware of drinks being spiked by prostitutes/lady boys as some of the drugs used lead to ongoing mental problems.

Drugs are a very serious crime in Thailand and possession can result in the most severe penalties of death or life time imprisonment.

## Cultural Norms

Show respect for the monarchy - criticism is an offence. Stand for the king's anthem whenever played in public and at cinemas. Do not point with feet or touch the head and eat with your right hand. The Buddha is an image to be respected and you must not hang anything from the Buddha or even pose in the same photograph. Inside temples wear appropriate clothing. You will not be let into the Grand Palace if not properly dressed. If things are not going your way, resist the temptation to lose your temper, it does not work and very upsetting to Thais. Use a positive friendly style and things will happen.

## Local Laws

You should not become involved with drugs of any kind. Possession of even very small quantities can lead to imprisonment. Possession of marijuana can lead to a prison sentence of up to 15 years plus a fine of 150,000 baht. Amphetamines and Ecstasy are regarded as a class A drugs and possession or trafficking of them carries the same penalties as, for example, heroin. Possession of 20 grams, or over, of a class A drug at a point of exit from Thailand results in a charge of illegal possession, possession for distribution and attempt to smuggle and export, i.e. trafficking. A guilty verdict usually attracts the death sentence.

It is a criminal offence to make critical or defamatory comments about the King or other members of the Royal family, punishable by a sentence of three to 15 years.

The official drinking age is 18. Bars close at 2am prompt and it is enforced.

The age of consent is 15 but a higher minimum age of 18 applies in the case of prostitutes. All adult Thais must carry an identity card. Soliciting and pimping is illegal, however enforcement is weak. It is not illegal to pay for sex or to pay a 'barfine', the fee the bar takes if you take a girl away.

## Money

The currency is the Thai baht. Bank notes are brown (10 baht); green (20 baht); blue (50 baht); red (100 baht); purple (500 baht) and grey for the largest bank note at 1,000 baht.

Prices are generally good and a lot cheaper than most countries for the same goods. For example, a metered taxi will cost about 300 baht from the airport to the central areas and a reasonable dinner might cost about 350 baht, however there is a lot of variance and it is possible to eat for 100 baht.

## Newspapers

Bangkok newspapers are the Bangkok Post and The Nation which have full listings and international news. A range of international papers is also available at most newsstands.

## Scams

Beware of offers for gems and precious stones. Beware of tuk tuk drivers offering cheap all-day fares, where the driver makes money from commissions if you buy something. In the go-go bar zones, beware of touts who try to entice you into the upstairs bars with offers of 100 baht beer, as you might be charged for the show and that is not cheap.

## VAT Refund

A VAT refund is available at the airport, on departure, to anyone who has been in Thailand less than 180 days but is not an airline crew member. A VAT refund only applies to goods taken out of Thailand within 60 days of the date of purchase. Goods must be purchased from stores displaying a "VAT refund for tourists" sign. You must complete a VAT refund form in the store and attach the original tax invoice to the form. The value of each item must be at least B2,000 and a total of B5,000 spent. The form with invoices should be presented at the VAT desk at the airport and a refund of VAT will be made.

**Worship**

All religions are represented in Bangkok and churches, temples, mosques and synagogues can be found around the city.

**Places of Worship**

- Anglican Church, 11 Convent Road. Telephone 02 234 3634.
- Assumption Cathedral, 23 Soi Burapha. Telephone 02 234 8556.
- Beth Elsheva Synagogue, 121 Soi Sai Nam Thip 2, Sukhumvit Soi 22. Telephone 02 663 0244.
- Calvary Baptist Church, Sukhumvit Soi 2. Telephone 02 251 8278.
- Haroon Musjid (Hindu), 2 Soi Wat Muagnkae. Telephone 02 630 9435.
- Holy Redeemer Church, Soi Ruam Rudee. Telephone 02 256 6157.
- International Church of Bangkok, Soi Pramuan. Telephone 02 260 8187.
- Sikmh Gurudwara (Sikh), Chakraphet Road. Telephone 02 222 3000.
- Wat Boworn Nives (Buddhist), Prasumaen Road. Telephone 02 280 0869.
- World Fellowship of Buddhists, 616 Benjasiri Park. Telephone 02 661 1284.

**Language**

English is widely spoken and is improving all the time.

**Thai Language**

Thai language is based on tones. A slight change in tone changes the meaning. A common word 'kau' means rice, white, mountain or even news depending on the tone used. Some phrases that might help are shown below and Thais will appreciate your efforts.

<b>Some phrases showing the tones:</b>	
Hello (male)	Sawadee-krup
Hello (female)	Sawadee-ka
I want to go	Dee-chan yak pai (low tone on first e and second a; falling tone on first a)
My name is (male)	Pom che (make the o and the e with a falling tone)
My name is (female)	Dee-chan che ( second e low tone; last e and the a falling tone)
Never mind	Mai pen rai (a falling tone on the first a)
Please call the police	Chway riak tam-ruat duay (falling tones except first u a low tone)
Thank you (male)	Khop khun krap (o with a low tone)
Thank you (female)	Khop khun ka
Where is the ...?	Yu tee nai ...? (first u low tone; first e and on the a use falling tone)
Where is the toilet	Hong suam yu tee nai (falling tones except second u a low tone)

<b>Numbers:</b>	
0	soon
1	neung
2	sorng
3	sarm
4	sii
5	har
6	hok
7	jet
8	peht
9	gow
10	sip
100	roy
200	sorng roy
300	sarm roy

<b>Other common words and phrases:</b>			
airport	sanam bin	how many?	gii?
bank	tanakan	how much	tao rai
beef	nua	I am a vegetarian	gin jae
bottled water	nam kwat	no	may ao
bus	rot-meh	rice	kao
chicken	kai	shop	raan
coffee	ca-fee	stop	yut
enough	phaw-laew	tea	naam-cha
expensive	paeng	turn right	liaw-khwaa
go	pai	turn left	liaw-saai
help	chuay-duay	water	naam
how long?	naan thao rai?	yes	chai

<b>Days of the week:</b>	
Sunday	wan-aa-thit
Monday	wan-jan
Tuesday	wan-ang-khaan
Wednesday	wan-phut
Thursday	wan-pha-reu-hat
Friday	wan-suk
Saturday	wan-sao

## Getting There

### Bangkok Airport

#### Airlines

Bangkok is the geographical hub of Asia and competes with Singapore as a transit point. Numerous flights arrive from Europe, Australia, Asia and some direct flights from the USA and Africa. International flights and most domestic flights arrive at Suvarnabhumi Airport. Don Mueang Airport, to the north of the city, is for domestic flights only.

**Air France:** 20th Floor, Vorawat Building, 849 Silom Road. Telephone 02 635 1191.

**Bangkok Airways:** Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre. Telephone 02 229 3456.

**British Airways and Qantas:** 990 Rama IV Road. Telephone 02 636 1747.

**Emirates:** 54 Sukhumvit Soi 21. Telephone 02 664 1040.

**KLM Airlines:** 21/133 - 134 Sathorn Tai Road. Telephone 02 697 1100.

**Singapore Airlines:** Silom Centre. Telephone 02 236 0440.

**Thai Airways:** Silom Office, 485 Silom Road. Reservations: 02 628 2000. Domestic Flight Information 02 535 2081. International Flight Information: 02 535 2846.

#### Arrival procedures

Suvarnabhumi Airport opened in September 2006 and is an excellent airport with all the facilities you need. Located 30 kilometres to the east of Bangkok, Suvarnabhumi Airport is pronounced "soo-wanna-poom". Useful telephone numbers are, for the Help Desk 02 132 3888, and for flight information 02 132 0000.

#### Customs

Customs clearance is efficient and you will be asked to present a customs declaration form that you should have been given on the plane. If you have nothing to declare use the green channel. You can expect to be waved through but if you are stopped and are importing banned items, the consequences are serious. Do not bring any drugs, pornography, firearms and agricultural products into Thailand. Tourists may bring one litre of alcohol and 200 cigarettes. If in doubt, declare it! When leaving the country, you cannot export antique or authentic Buddha images and other antiques unless authorised by the Fine Arts Department who can be contacted on telephone number 02 221 7811.

#### Health Certificates

Yellow Fever certificates are required if arriving from some African and South American countries.

### Transport to the City

#### Bus

There is a bus stop outside the 1st floor exit for airport express buses which operate hourly on four routes, each taking about 60 to 90 minutes:

AE1: Suvarnabhumi- Silom

AE2: Suvarnabhumi- Khan San Road

AE3: Suvarnabhumi- Sukhumvit

AE4: Suvarnabhumi- Victory Monument-Hua Lamphong (train station)

For local public buses take the free shuttle bus ride to the public transport centre.

549: Suvarnabhumi to Bangkapi

550: Suvarnabhumi to Happy Land

551: Suvarnabhumi to Victory Monument (BTS)

552: Suvarnabhumi to On Nut (BTS)-Klong Toei

552A: Suvarnabhumi to Sam Rong

553: Suvarnabhumi to Samut Phrakan

554: Suvarnabhumi to Rangsit

555: Suvarnabhumi to Rangsit (Expressway)

556: Suvarnabhumi to Southern Bus Terminal

558: Suvarnabhumi to Central Rama II

559: Suvarnabhumi to Rangsit (Outer Ring Road)

Intercity buses operate to many destinations from the Public Transportation Centre.

#### Limousine

The easiest but most expensive way is to use one of the airport limousine services that have desks in the arrival hall on the 2nd floor.

## Taxi

If choosing a taxi from the airport, ensure that it is a metered taxi (with 'Taxi Meter' written on the roof) and that the driver uses the meter. A limited number of ordinary metered taxis are available outside the exit on the ground floor or alternatively take the free shuttle bus to the satellite terminal which has more taxis. The journey will take 40-60 minutes depending on traffic.

## Visas

Visas are not required for stays of up to 30 days from many countries, including Australia, UK and USA. Tourist visas can also be obtained at the airport on arrival for certain other countries provided you have a confirmed outward ticket and extra passport photos. Do make sure that your passport is valid for more than six months after you arrive. Visa extensions are available from the Immigration Office at 507 Soi Suan Phu (telephone 02 287 3101-10). Do not use the services of a travel agent or visa shop as there is a danger of false visas being inserted which carries stiff penalties. Overstaying your visa also results in harsh penalties.

If you lose your passport and need a new visa go to the Immigration Bureau, Section 4, Subdivision 4, Immigration Bureau on Soi Suan Phlu, South Sathorn Road (telephone 02 287 3911). Make sure you take a police report along with your new passport.

## Getting About

### Bangkok Transport

There is plenty of choice for transport in Bangkok. The city offers ordinary buses, minibuses, air-conditioned buses, microbuses, ferries, express boats, the Bangkok Skytrain, taxis and tuk-tuks, roughly in ascending order of cost.

### Buses

The buses go everywhere but are slow because of the congestion. They are also difficult to get to know because there are so many routes. However the ordinary buses, which tend to be hot and overcrowded, are so cheap that making a few mistakes hardly matters in terms of cost.

One of the priorities is to obtain a bus map. Such maps are sold by many shops in the travellers' areas and by many hotels and guest houses. It is worth noting, however, that the TAT office also gives out a map which has bus numbers on it and that map is generally better, being more up-to-date as well as free, of course.

Ordinary buses come in two principal hues. The blue bus (blue/yellow) is cheaper at five baht than the red bus (red/yellow) which costs seven baht for a fixed-price fare. When catching a bus, look at the sign in the front window. If the sign is blue, the bus is operating over the entire route. If it is red, it is operating over only part of the route, so consider where you want to go and whether the bus is likely to go that far. If the sign is yellow, the bus is operating as an express over part of the route, usually by taking the elevated expressway so there will be no hope of alighting during that part of the journey.

Air-conditioned buses are of two types: the older ones are predominantly dark blue and the newer ones are predominantly orange or sky blue. Both types charge by distance so, unlike the ordinary buses, it is necessary to know where you are going. They cost a bit more than the buses mentioned above. When air-conditioned buses were first introduced, they were given their own set of numbers but later many of the air-conditioned routes simply duplicated the ordinary routes and used the same numbering system. This anomaly has not been corrected so some air-conditioned buses operate over completely different routes from ordinary buses with the same numbers. Be careful therefore! For example, air-conditioned fours travel to, from and via different places from ordinary fours. It is possible to identify such deviants. Look at the route number. If the air-conditioned bus is travelling the same route as its ordinary counterpart, it will usually bear only the route number. If it has a different route, it will bear the route number preceded by two, and only two, Thai characters. Fortunately though, when you want to travel from the airport to the city, you will find that air-conditioned 29s or 59s travel the same routes as ordinary 29s or 59s.

Micro buses that are often called purple buses have a fixed fare of 25 baht. They do not allow standing and provide a TV and reading material. They are a good way to cheaply explore the city. Do not be confused with the green micro bus which are only four baht and are driven fast and can be very crowded.

Each bus has a conductor who deals with the fares. Do keep the ticket as it might be inspected. Be careful of pickpockets who are found on some buses. If you are confused, just ask someone Thais will be very happy to help you become really lost, then just leave the bus and switch to a taxi.

### Canal Boats

Canal boats serve some of Bangkok's many canals and are cheap. Watch your step when boarding and disembarking. Pay the fare to the ticket collectors who hang onto the outside of the boat. One useful line runs up and down Khlong Saen Saep, parallel to Petchaburi Road, and provides the easiest access from the city centre to the Golden Mount. There's a boarding pier across from the WTC under the bridge where Ratchadamri crosses the Khlong near Petchburi.

### Car Hire

Many car hire companies are found in Bangkok. Cars can be hired with drivers.

### Ratanakosin Tram

This is a tram service on Ratanakosin Island that passes by Wat Phra Kaew, Santichai Prakarn Park at 30 minute intervals.

## River Ferries

A fun way to travel is to use the river ferries. They run from piers along the river. You can use the larger Chao Phraya Express Boats, which have white hulls with red stripes, or private long-tailed boats or the flat shuttle boats with just a few seats. Boats do not stay for long at the pier so be quick but also take great care as they move off suddenly! Fares start at 10 baht. A good place to try out the ferries is from the Oriental Hotel and from here you can have a good value trip up north to the Grand Palace. This is one of the best value trips in Bangkok.

## River Taxis

Long-tailed boats can be chartered and will cost about 400 baht per hour depending on your bargaining skill.

## Skytrain

The Bangkok Skytrain is a fast way to travel around parts of Bangkok. The Bangkok Skytrain operates two lines, the Sukhumvit and Silom lines. The Sukhumvit line runs from Mo Chit station, Paholyothin Road (near Chatachuk to the north and the southern end is On Nut Station at Sukhumvit Soi 77. The Silom line runs between Saphan Taksin station on the Chao Phraya River and National Stadium Station on Rama I road. The lines meet at Silom Square where you can change by moving up or down a level. Fares depend on the number of stations but range between 10 and 40 baht. Tickets are purchased at the stations. Single tickets can be bought from ticket machines which only accept five and 10 baht coins but will give change. Trains run every few minutes between 0600 and midnight.

## Songtaews

These are small pickups which run on the small streets called sois and are useful as they connect to the main roads. They cost about 10 baht and you catch them by flagging them down. Just press the buzzer when you want to stop.

## Subway

The subway, which opened on 3rd July 2004, is what some might call the metro. It runs from Bang Sue to Huahamphong with a series of stations along the way. At Chatuchak, Sukhumvit and Silom there is an interchange with the Skytrain. The fare is between 14 and 36 baht.

## Taxis

Bangkok taxis all have meters and are a good way to travel around. They bear the legend 'Taxi Meter' on the roof. The price starts at B35. There is no need to tip although it is appreciated. To call a taxi phone 02 880 0888; 02 911 5772; 1661;1681 or 02 878 9000, which will cost 20 baht extra. Make sure the meter is switched on as you move off. If the driver refuses, leave that taxi or insist that the meter is used. It is illegal not to use the meter and you are within your right to report the taxi driver to the police. For long distance destinations such as the airport the price can be negotiated but is normally cheaper to use the meter.

## Motorbike Taxis

If in a hurry or late for a tour then motorbike taxis are quick. You must, by law, wear a helmet which the driver will supply. They are spotted easily due to the coloured vests and the way they collect at certain points. Fix the price first.

## Tuk-tuks

Tuk-tuks are those charismatic little three-wheelers with a padded bench for two in the semi-open rear. They are two-stroke vehicles, named onomatopoeically for the sound made by their engines which belch out, at high volume, noxious fumes to pollute even further a city already swimming in carbon monoxide and pummelled by noise. Fares in tuk-tuks are negotiable which is not to be misinterpreted as meaning that they are cheap. Since customers seem to prefer the comfort and fixed fares of metered taxis, it has become even harder to bargain for a reasonable price in a tuk-tuk. The shortest journeys will cost about B30 and that will cover only about two kilometres. In general they are no cheaper than metered taxis, although more colourful. If using one, be careful with possessions. Since the rear is only partially enclosed, anything on the extremity of the seat is vulnerable to the hand of a passing motor-cyclist, for example.

## Accommodation

Due to the huge quantity and variety of accommodation available in Bangkok, we recommend that you browse to find your choice and book online at [Travel eGuides](http://www.traveleguides.com) prior to your departure.

## Orientation

One of the first surprises about Bangkok is that the city is not called Bangkok in the Thai language. It is called Krung Thep ('the City of the Angels') and the name Bangkok refers strictly to only a small part of the city. These days most Thais understand what foreigners mean when they say "Bangkok" but it is also useful for us to understand what Thais mean when they say "Krung Thep".

Thais have deep respect and love for the monarchy and portraits of His Majesty King Bhumibol and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit are proudly displayed across the Kingdom.

Bangkok is unusual in that it is difficult to say where the heart of the city lies, although if forced to choose, one would probably opt for the oldest part, around the Grand Palace. That is, after all, where King Rama I established the City Pillar and his own residence in 1782 when he moved the capital from the west (Thonburi) to the east side of the river. Good views of Bangkok can be had from the top of the Baiyoke Sky Hotel which is open to visitors and will help you find your bearings.

Large roads such as Silom or Sukhumvit are called thanon often shortened to Th. Side streets are called soi. Sois are numbered, with even numbers on one side and odd ones on the other. Many sois have an additional name for example Soi 3 is "Soi Nana" and has the address "25 Soi Nana". Some short alleys are called trok.

Some of the larger streets such as Sukhumvit change names at different stages and for example is called Sukhumvit on one side of the tollway and changes to Ploenchit just at Thanon Witthayu and then Thanon Rama I. A good landmark is the Chao Phraya River as it passes around most of the tourist areas.

### Chao Phraya River

The river passes through the centre of Bangkok and has played an important part in history. Today it remains busy with barges, ferries and cruise boats. Lining the river are the large international hotels, apartment blocks, temples, international offices and small dwellings. Express boats run a taxi service up and down the river from 6am to 6pm and a good trip is on the public express boats from the Oriental Hotel to Nonthaburi which will take about one hour.

On the opposite side of the river from the city is Thonburi which still has the canals in place. The best way to travel around the canals is to hire a long-tailed boat, made famous by James Bond. These boats cost about 400 baht an hour. They travel fast and can manoeuvre around the many ninety degree bends in the canal system. There is a floating market in the early morning but it is better to visit the one at Damnoen Saduak.

At night time there are a number of cruise boats and it is popular to combine dinner with a cruise. They can be booked at the jetty by the River City.

### Chinatown

To the south-east of the old city and west of Hualampong Station lies an extensive and interesting Chinatown full of crowded, narrow streets. Many of the Chinese shops deal in gold and jewellery but there are also fabric merchants, food stores, Chinese hotels and many other types of businesses. Visit the "Thieves Market" with its antiques, many of which are reproductions. The largest Chinese temple is Wat Mangkon Kamalawat.

### Khao San Road

Khao San Road, where so many budget travellers stay, lies just north, but outside the limits, of the old city. It is within a few minutes walk of many of the interesting sights. Here one can find cheap to medium priced accommodation of all types and qualities in a street of restaurants, travel agents, souvenir shops, taxi drivers and hawkers of fake student cards. It is also a good place to look for onward tickets and for useful information. North of this area, incidentally, the old markets still exist, especially near the banks of the river. They have just been pushed back a little by the foreign influence. The old markets were made famous in the film "The Beach".

### Patpong

Moving south-east along Rama IV Road we come to an area named Patpong. This district is an odd mixture of sexy bars and nightclubs and airline offices, but rather more famous (or infamous) for the former. Patpong is the name of two roads running the short distance between Surawong Road and Silom Road and these two roads are just packed with bars, which start to wake up in the early evening and continue all through the night. It is an interesting area to wander through in the evening with a market in the middle.

### Siam Square

North of Patpong is the Siam Square area. This is the high class district of Bangkok where many of the first class hotels can be found, together with expensive restaurants and department stores selling luxury, imported goods. Everything here is modern and clean. Siam Square is linked to the Skytrain.

### Sukhumvit Road

Running away from Siam Square to the east, then turning south-east and eventually south, is Sukhumvit Road. This road actually continues for several hundred kilometres but you do not need to go that far to find the collection of moderately-priced hotels which makes this a popular area for travellers to stay. With the hotels patronised principally by overseas customers, restaurants catering to foreign needs have sprung up together with plenty of bars frequented by plenty of bar girls. There are bookshops selling foreign language books and newspapers together with numerous travel agents.

### The Old City

In fact the old city is not so very old, especially in comparison with many other towns in Thailand, but it is full of temples, palaces and monuments making it a most interesting place. The limits are easily defined as King Rama I used the Chao Phraya River as the western boundary of Bangkok and then dug a canal to define the eastern boundary. Thus he had created an artificial island easily defensible if necessary. The atmosphere of this area is historic. It is not primarily a residential district. It is an area of temples, government offices and official institutions and an area containing the most important of the city's sights.

### Tours

There is a large choice of tours available in Bangkok. We recommend that you browse to find your choice and book online at [Travel eGuides](http://Travel eGuides). Book safely and securely with best operators before you arrive. Save hassle, miss the touts and relax in knowing that your Bangkok tours are booked. Once a voucher is issued there is flexibility to change the dates on arrival if needed by local telephone.

## Day Trips

### **Ayutthaya**

Ayutthaya was the ancient capital of Thailand and has some magnificent temples that are popular to visit. Ayutthaya can be reached by boat from Bangkok or by car.

The Buddha image at Wihan Phra Mongkhon Bophit is one of the largest bronze images in Thailand. The Ancient Palace was built by King U-Thong and over years other buildings have been added. Wat Phra Si Samphet is the most important temple within the Palace. There are many other wats to visit and the Chao Sam National Museum with its collection of Buddha images.

### **Floating Markets**

The most likely place for a one-day trip is the Floating Market. There are, in fact, two floating markets, one at Klong Dao Kanong in Thonburi and one further out at Damnoen Saduak in Ratchaburi Province. It is generally agreed that the Thonburi market is disappointing because it has become primarily a tourist attraction, with more visitors than boats. Damnoen Saduak is one hundred kilometres from Bangkok and one needs to go early.

Enjoy an exhilarating, narrow, long-tailed speedboat ride through the marshes to the unique market of the Damnoen Saduak floating market. Catch a glimpse of everyday life in Thailand as Thai-style canoes laden with colourful fruits, vegetables, sweets and meats gently ply their way through the canal.

At Damnoen Saduak one will find hundreds of small boats, mostly operated by women, selling everything from meat to T-shirts. The buyers are mostly those living along the banks of the canal, those who come down to the waterside to buy and those in other boats. It is a colourful scene, although it has become very touristy.

Buses leave from the Southern Bus Terminal in Bangkok. From Hualampong Station take a bus number 40 or air-conditioned 7. From Sukhumvit Road take a bus number 40 or air-conditioned 11. From Khao San Road, walk across to Sanam Luang and take bus number 30 or 124, or, from Democracy Monument, take air-conditioned bus numbers 3, 11 or 17. Early in the morning these journeys will be quite speedy.

From the Southern Bus Terminal, take bus number 78 or 996 (the number is written on the side) to Damnoen Saduak. It will take two hours and buses operate every 20 minutes starting at 6am. The fare is B57 each way. You should try to go as early as possible otherwise you will be too late for the best part of the market.

### **Kanchanaburi**

Kanchanaburi lies 120 kilometres west of Bangkok and is the site of the '**Bridge over the River Kwai**'. Trains run from Hua Lampong Station or Bangkok Noi Stations with connections to Kanchanaburi.

### **Muang Boran (Ancient City)**

This is a large park covering 300 acres which has replicas of ancient monuments and buildings well spaced out and makes for enjoyable viewing on foot or from a bicycle or car. Located 35 kilometres south-east of the city in Samut Prakan on Sukhumvit Road, close to the crocodile farm. The entrance fee is B50. Telephone 02 323 9253.

### **Nakhon Pathom**

The main town on the way back from the Floating Market is Nakhon Pathom, which is probably the oldest town in Thailand dating from the third century B.C. It was the principal city in the Dvaravati Kingdom in the sixth to eleventh centuries. Nowadays, however, it would be just an ordinary town but for the huge orange Phra Pathom Chedi which stands not far from the railway and bus stations and which dominates the landscape. It is the tallest single Buddhist monument in the world rising to 127 metres. The original chedi, now hidden inside the current monument, was built in the early sixth century. In the eleventh century, the city was captured by the Khmer and a Brahman structure was constructed over the top but, in 1057, the Burmese invaded and destroyed the city leaving the monument in ruins until King Mongkut decided to restore it in 1860. It was he who built this gigantic chedi over the remains of the old ones.

From Damnoen Saduak, bus number 78 (but not number 996) will pass Nakhon Pathom on its journey. From Bangkok, there are additional buses this far. The journey between Nakhon Pathom and Bangkok takes about 75 minutes. The 56 kilometre ride costs B32 for an air-conditioned bus. By train it costs only B14 in third class.

### **Rose Garden**

Between Nakhon Pathom and Bangkok, 24 kilometres from the former and 32 kilometres from the latter, is the Rose Garden which is another candidate for a stop. It has very pleasant gardens and a type of 'instant Thailand' show each afternoon at 2.45pm in case you do not have time to explore the whole country yourself. The show includes Thai boxing, folk dancing, swordsmanship and an elephant display. It costs B300. Telephone 02 435 1199.

### **Samphran Elephant Ground and Zoo**

Just one kilometre from the Rose Garden is the Samphran Zoo. Its show times are 12.45pm and 2.20pm (also 10.30am on holidays). The shows include crocodile wrestling, elephants and magic. Admission costs B300. Telephone 02 284 1873.

## River trips

Trips on the river in the longboats are very popular. You can charter your own from the quay at the Oriental Hotel if you do not want to travel as part of a tour group.

## Thai Culture

### The Wai

Thais respect each other. This is demonstrated using the wai where respect is shown to superiors. Foreigners are not expected to use the wai and Thais will extend a hand. However to us the wai is appreciated and is done by pressing your palms gracefully together, fingers pointing upward and tilt your head forward. Don't wai maids, children or others who might feel lower in the social order first, wait until they wai you and then wai in return.

### Addressing People

The word khun is the best way to address someone; it means Mr., Mrs. or Miss and is used in front of the name. You will then here your name as khun David. The polite term krab and ka is used often. If you say hello as a man the phrase sawat dee krab if you are a man and if a woman say sawat dee ka.

### Communication

Thais are direct and will refer to a foreigner as a farang. Thais appreciate people who behave in a polite manner both in verbal and non verbal communication. This means smart dress is appreciated. Speak in a quiet voice and do not raise your voice.

Expressing anger is not on in Thailand and any outburst is sure to fail. Anger must be contained and a negotiated settlement reached. The words mai pen rai are used to defuse situations and means "never mind". The Thai term "Jai yen" means keep cool and do not lose your temper.

To tell someone to come to you keep your right palm down and move your fingers, rather than point. Don't whistle, clap or wave arms to signal a waiter use the palm signal. Use only the right hand for eating and for receiving and giving gifts. Do not walk over animals or other people, walk around.

### Head and feet

The head is the most important part of the body in Thai custom due to where the spirit stays. This means that the head should never be touched and treat hats with respect. Humility is shown by placing a head below the other person which is why in some restaurants the staff will kneel or stoop when they take your order. The feet are the least important and should not be used to point at anything.

### Monarchy

The current King His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej (Rama IX) has ruled since 1946 and has unanimous popularity within the kingdom. The King has total respect and visitors need to be aware that to show disrespect to the King is a very serious issue. This respect is for anything that bears the image of the King. Royal Palaces have been built in Bangkok, Chiang Mai and Hua Hin. The King is well known as a photographer, jazz player and for dinghy sailing. The National Anthem is played in cinemas, radio and TV and everyone stands to attention. King Bhumibol is the world's longest serving monarch and his consort Queen Sirikit is also very well respected. Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn, who was born in 1952, is the official heir to the throne.

### Religion

Buddhism is the main religion although there are is a small minority of other religions the largest being Muslims who tend to live in the south of the country. Buddhism is practiced on a daily basis as part of normal lifestyle. Shrines are found at every office and house which houses the spirit of the Buddha. Every day the Shrine will be attended to and flowers, food and joss sticks will be lit. Thais will pay respect to the shrines every day.

Buddha means "enlightened one" and he was an Indian Prince, Gautama Siddhartha who died in 483 BC and lived in the North of India. The Thai school of Buddhism is called Theravada Buddhism and is a variation on Buddhism found in China, Japan and Korea. The principle is enlightenment and achieved by individuals doing good deeds and avoiding evil. The more good you do the more merits earned. One method to gain merits (tam boon) is for Thai men to spend part of their life as monk and wear the distinctive saffron robes. They must live according the strict rules of being a monk and have to find food by relying on the generosity of others. This means you will see monks walking around the streets every day carrying bowls for people to give them food.

Buddhist temples are everywhere and are places of respect. Temples are the centre of community life. Most temples consist of several buildings with the bot being the most important which houses the Buddha statue. Most temples will have a bo tree to represent the place the Lost Buddha found enlightenment. Foreigners are very welcome to visit temples, just show respect. Do not wear shoes inside a temple and dress respectfully which means no sleeveless or revealing blouses.

Buddhism exists with earlier animist beliefs that everything has a spirit. When a house or other structure is built Thais build a small house for the spirits on the land and these are seen all over Bangkok and at the entrance to hotels. The spirit is looked after and candles and joss sticks lit for the spirit.

### Symbols

The orchid which is presented to all female passengers arriving on Thai is the national flower. The elephant symbolizes good luck. The lotus is the symbol of Buddhism and it is said that lotus flowers grew under the Buddha's first steps and became the symbol of enlightenment.

## Thai Houses

The traditional Thai house arose from the need to be above the flooding and create a cool interior. A veranda with an overhanging roof provides protection from the sun, and windows and high ceilings all help in cooling. The correct method must be determined before construction by an astrologer and a ceremony held to appease the spirit occupying the land. The entrance should be to the south and the bedroom at the northern end. Unfortunately in Bangkok there are not many traditional Thai houses left although some wealthy Thais are constructing them and often by moving from rural areas as teak is now scarce.

Islam is more dominant in the far South although a Muslim community lives in Bangkok. There are a few Thai Christians and some Christian educational institutions.

## Visiting

Most Thais will prefer to take you to a restaurant rather than their house. If you do enter a Thai house take off your shoes. It is normal to be taken to one room and not shown around the house. Gifts are appreciated such as flowers or chocolate and make sure they are well presented. It is not the custom to make a fuss when receiving a gift.

## Festivals

Festivals are part of Bangkok life and include three New Year celebrations: the Western New Year, the Chinese New Year in February and the Thai New Year in April.

### Loy Krathong

Held normally in November when there is full moon in the 12th lunar month. The festival is celebrated by Thai people making candlelit floats and placing them on the river or in water. Fireworks are also let off at the same time. Best observed from, or on, the river as part of an organised tour as it is very crowded on the Chao Phraya River.

### H.M. The King's Birthday Celebration

Thais have great respect for His Majesty and, on 5th December, lights and decorations are found all around the Grand Palace area and along Ratchadamnoern.

### H.M. The Queen's Birthday Celebration

On 12th August, Bangkok, particularly around the Grand Palace, is decorated with many lights to celebrate the Queen's Birthday.

## Songkran

This festival, which celebrates the Thai lunar new year during the period 13th to 15th April, is a great experience if you do not mind getting wet. Basically everyone throws water around and you get wet! It is limited in Bangkok and more widely celebrated in Chiang Mai.

## Restaurants

Eating in Bangkok has to be a highlight of the visit to Bangkok. Excellent restaurants abound and not just Thai - a full range of cuisines can be found. They are open all hours, found on the sidewalks, in hotels, high up on the rooftops, on boats ... everywhere! Food is a passion in Bangkok. Food stalls are generally safe as the food is cooked at high temperatures. Cheap eating is available in the food courts in the basements or top floors of the plazas where you buy vouchers first and exchange for food from the stalls. Unused vouchers can be cashed back.

Thai food obviously dominates and is presented in many styles. Thai food consists of salads with varying degrees of spice levels, dips which can be a full meal or served as an entrée, curries that are based on ground spices and, of course, the famous soups. Thai desserts are sweet but welcome after a spicy meal. Thai food should be ordered to be shared and a mix of unspiced food and curries ordered. Soup is served as part of the meal not as a starter.

The eGuide team have selected a number of Bangkok restaurants. Do call ahead to make a reservation and the team is always grateful if you can mention that you found them on [Bangkok eGuide](#). Your feedback is most welcome and helps us to monitor each restaurant.

We suggest that you use a taxi to reach these restaurants and, to make it easy, ask the hotel to write the address *in Thai* and carry the telephone number with you as the driver will call the restaurant if he has difficulty locating it.

## Typical dishes

The curries are well known and are green (geng pet kiau), red (geng pet deng) or mussaman which is a Malay curry. The hot, spicy soup is tom yam and comes with either prawns or chicken. Rice comes either as plain (kau sooy) or fried (kau pat). Thai salads are spicy and referred to as 'yam'. There is normally a full range of noodle dishes, including noodle soup (kuai tio nam), dry noodles (kuai tio haeng) and crispy noodles (mi krop). Don't ignore the wonderful starters which are all delicately presented.

## Drinks

Jasmine tea is popular with Thais and a good non-alcoholic alternative. Thai beer is generally strong with the most famous being Singha beer. Heineken and Carlsberg are brewed in Thailand and easily available. Wines tend to be expensive and little wine is produced in Thailand although that is increasing. Thai men enjoy spirits, making whisky and brandy widely available. A common Thai

spirit is Mekhong. Many establishments will add on a 10% service charge and 7% VAT to the prices shown. This is normally shown with the ++ symbol.

Below is a small sample of the many different restaurants in Bangkok.

### American

**Charley Brown's**, 1/23 Sukhumvit Soi 11. Telephone 02 651 2215.

**Great American Rib Company**, 32 Sukhumvit Soi 36, Bangkok. Telephone 02 661 3801.

**Hard Rock Café**, 424/3-6 Siam Square, Soi 11 Pathumwan. Telephone 02 658 4090.

### Brazilian

**Fogo Vivo**, President Tower Arcade, Ground Floor, 873 Ploenchit Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 656 0384.

### Chinese

**Chinese Restaurant**, Grand Hyatt, Erawan. Telephone 02 254 1234.

**Garden Court**, Chaophya Park Hotel, Bangkok. Telephone 02 290 0125.

**Liu Chinese Restaurant**, Conrad Bangkok, All Seasons Place, 87 Wireless Road. Telephone 02 690 9999.

**Liu Yuan**, 93 Lung Suan Road, Soi 5 Phloenjtit, Lumpinee, Bangkok. Telephone 02 254 5820.

**Lok Wah Hin**, Second Floor, Novotel Bangkok, Siam Square. Telephone 02 209 8888.

**Shu Xin**, Novotel Bangna, Bangkok. Telephone 02 366 0505.

**The Empress**, Royal Princess Hotel, 269 Larn Luang Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 281 3088.

**The Good Earth**, Arnoma Hotel Bangkok, 99 Rajdamri Road. Telephone 02 255 3410.

### Dinner Cruises

Many of the boats also offer a lunchtime cruise. Most cruises take about two hours. Some of the boats are modern with live, modern music and others are traditional rice barges.

**Chaophraya Cruises**, River City. Telephone 02 541 5599.

**Loy Nava Dinner Cruises**, Si Phraya Express Boat Pier. Telephone 02 437 4932.

**Manohra Cruises**, Marriott Resort and Spa. Telephone 02 476 0021.

**Shangri -La Horizon Cruise**, Shangri-La Hotel. Telephone 02 236 7777.

**The Royal River Cruise**, Royal River Hotel. Telephone 02 422 9222.

**Wan Fah**, 292 Ratchawong Road, Chakkrawat. Telephone 02 622 7657.

**Yok Yor Restaurant**, 885 Somdet Chao Phraya 17 Road, Klongsan. Telephone 02 863 0565.

### Dutch

**Khun Kho's**, 112/8 Soi Suwansawat, Rama IV Road. Telephone 01 818 4397.

### Egyptian

**Egyptian Restaurant**, Sukhumvit Soi 3/1. Telephone 02 253 5582.

**Sharazad**, 6/8 Sukhumvit Soi 3/1. Telephone 02 251 3666.

### English

**The Cup**, Third Floor, Lake Rajada Office Complex, 193/21-22 Ratchadapisek Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 264 0247.

### Ethiopian

**The Abyssinya Café**, 16/11 Sukhumvit Road, Soi 3, Bangkok. Telephone 02 655 3436.

### French

**A'Letage**, 28-28/1 Sukhumvit Soi 39, Bangkok 10110. Telephone 02 662 6336.

**Auberge Dab**, 1st Floor, Mercury Tower, 540 Ploenchit Road, Bangkok 10330. Telephone 02 658 6222.

**Le Banyan**, 59 Sukhumvit Soi 8, Silom. Telephone 02 245 5556.

**Le Bistingo**, 71/1 Saladaeng Soi 1/1, Silom Road, Bangkok 10500. Telephone 02 234 2225.

**Le Bouchon**, 37/17 Patpong Soi 2, Surawongswe Road, Bangkok 10500. Telephone 02 234 9109.

**Le Cafe Siam**, 4 Soi Sri Akson, Chua Ploeng Road. Telephone 02 671 0030.

**Le Pre Grill**, 73/2 Lang suan soi 4, Ploenchit, Lumpinee, Prathumwan, Bangkok 10330. Telephone 02-253 5919.

**Cafe de Paris**, Patpong Soi 2, Silom Road, Bangkok 10500. Telephone 02 237 2776.

**Cafe Le Notre**, Ground floor, Natural Ville Executive Residence, 65 Soi Langsuan, Bangkok 10330. Telephone 02 250 7050.

**C'est Bon**, President Place, 975 Ploenchit Road, Bangkok 10330. Telephone 02 656 1531.

**Charlies**, 924 Ruam Ruid Soi, 2 Ploenchit Road,. Telephone 02 253 8134.

**D'Sens**, 22nd Floor, Dusti Thani Hotel, 946 Rama IV Road, Bangkok 10500. Telephone 02 200 9000.

**Lyon**, 33/2 Soi Ruamrudee, Bangkok 10330. Telephone 02 253 8141.

**Le Normandie**, The Oriental Hotel, 48 Oriental Avenue, Bangkok 10500. Telephone 02 659 9000.

**Le Pichet**, 220/4 Sukhumvit Soi 1, Bangkok. Telephone 02 252 0311.

**Les Nymphes**, Imperial Queen's Park Hotel, 199 Sukhumvit Soi 22, Bangkok 10110. Telephone 02 261 9000.

**Mes Amis**, 102/3 Soi Thonglor 5, Sukhumvit Soi 55, Bangkok 10110. Telephone 02 260 6445.

**Philippe Restaurant**, 20/15 - 17 Soi 39, Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 10110. Telephone 02 662 7657.

### German

**Bei Otto**, 1 Sukhumvit Soi 20, Bangkok. Telephone 02 262 0892.

**Ratsstube**, 18/1 Soi Goethe, South Sathorn Road. Telephone 02 286 4258.

### Greek

**Athena**, 594 Sukhumvit Soi 63. Telephone 02 392 7644.

### Hungarian

**The Budapest**, Sukhumvit Soi 55/4. Telephone 02 392 1881.

### Indian

**Haveli Indian Restaurant**, President Tower Arcade, Hotel Intercontinental, Ploenchit Road. Telephone 02 656 0102.

**Himali Cha Cha & Son**, 2 Sukhumvit Soi 35, Bangkok. Telephone 02 258 8843.

**Indian Hut**, 311/2-5 Surawong Road. Telephone 02 635 7876.

**Rang Mahal**, Rembrandt Hotel, Sukhumvit Soi 18. Telephone 02 261 7100.

**Rang Me Up**, Rang Mahal, 26/F, Rembrandt Hotel, Sukhumvit Soi 18. Telephone 02 261 7100.

**Royal India**, 392/1 Chakrapet Road, Wang Burapa, Bangkok. Telephone 02 221 6565.

**Tandoor**, Holiday Inn Silom, 981 Silom Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 238 4300.

**Indonesian**

**Bali**, 15/3 Soi Ruam Rudi, Ploenchit Road. Telephone 02 250 0711.

**Bali Garden**, 1055/7, Moo 12 Sri Nakarin Road, Bang Na. Telephone 02 743 0901.

**International**

**Eat Me**, 1/6 Soi Pipat, 2 Convent Road, BTS Saladaeng, MRT Silom. Telephone 02 238 0931.

**Kuppa**, 39 Sukhumvit Soi 16, Bangkok. Telephone 02 663 0450.

**Vanilla Restaurant**, Playground Building, 818 Soi Thonglor, Thonglor. Telephone 02 714 9652.

**Vertigo**, Banyan Tree Bangkok, 21/100 South Sathorn, Silom. Telephone 02 679 1200.

**Italian**

**Angelini**, Shangri La Hotel, 89 Soi Wat, Bangkok. Telephone 02 236 7777.

**Antonio's Trattoria**, 59/1 Soi Sawasdee, Sukhumvit Soi 31, Bangkok. Telephone 02 258 4247.

**Beccofino**, 146 Sukhumvit Soi 55, Sukhumvit. Telephone 02 392 1881.

**Bella Napoli**, 3/3 Sukhumvit Soi 31, BTS Phrom Phong, Bangkok. Telephone 02 259 0405.

**Big Mama's**, 139 Asoke Soi 1. Telephone 02 259 0232.

**Blue Sky**, 2/2-2 Sukhumvit Soi 18. Telephone 02 663 4735.

**Cafe Buongiorno**, 22 Sukhumvit Soi 33, Klongton Nua, Wattana, Bangkok. Telephone 02 258 7700.

**Calderazzo**, 59 Soi Lang Suan, Chit Lom Station, Bangkok. Telephone 02 252 8108.

**Ciao**, Oriental Hotel, Bangkok. Telephone 02 659 9000.

**Da Vinci Restaurant**, Rembrandt Hotel, Sukhumvit Soi 18, Klongtoey. Telephone 02 261 7100.

**Don Giovanni**, Sofitel Central Plaza, 1695 Phaholyothin, Chatuchak. Telephone 02 541 1234.

**Grappino**, Amari Watergate Hotel, 847 Petchaburi Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 653 9000.

**Holy Pizza**, 442 Siam Square Soi 4, Rama 1 Road. Telephone 02 654 6373.

**Italianate**, Conrad Bangkok, 87 Wireless Road Bangkok. Telephone 02 690 9999.

**La Piola**, 32 Sukhumvit Soi 13, Bangkok. Telephone 02 651 2648.

**L'Opera**, 53 Sukhumvit Soi 39. Telephone 02 258 5606.

**Sorrento**, 66 North Sathorn Road, Silom. Telephone 02 234 9933.

**Spasso's**, Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel. Telephone 02 254 1234.

**Toscana Trattoria Pizzeria**, 13/25 Sukhumvit Soi 33. Telephone 02 662 3710.

**Via Vai**, 25 Sukhumvit Soi 8. Telephone 02 253 1200.

**Zanotti**, 21/1 Soi Saladaeng, BTS Saladaeng, Bangkok. Telephone 02 636 0002.

**Japanese**

**Hagi**, Sofitel Central Plaza, 1693 Phaholyothin Road, Chatuchak. Telephone 02 937 2222.

**Kisso Japanese Restaurant**, Westin Grande Sheraton, Sukhumvit Road. Telephone 02 207 8000.

**Koi**, 26 Sukhumvit Soi 20, Bangkok. Telephone 02 258 1590.

**Nami**, JW Marriot Bangkok, Sukhumvit Road. Telephone 02 656 7700.

**Shin Daikoku**, 32/8 Sukhumvit Soi 19, Bangkok. Telephone 02 254 9981.

**Shintaro**, The Four Seasons Bangkok, Rajdamri Road. Telephone 02 251 6127.

**Tou Tou**, 74 Sukhumvit 26, Soi Pichai Narong Songkram, Klongton, Klongtoey. Telephone 02 261 4897.

**Wasabi**, 34 Sukhumvit Soi 11. Telephone 02 252 3274.

**Korean**

**Kongju Korean Restaurant**, Pathumwan Princess Hotel. Telephone 02 216 3700.

**Namkang Korean Restaurant**, 5/3-4 Silom Soi 3. Telephone 02 233 1480.

**Kosher**

**Chabad House**, 96 Rambutri Road, Banglampoo. Telephone 02 282 6388.

**Lao**

**Café de Laos**, 16 Silom Road, Soi 19, Silom Bangkok. Telephone 02 635 0118.

**Lebanese**

**The Cedar**, 6/1 Sukhumvit Soi 49/9, Bangkok. Telephone 02 714 7206.

**Malaysian**

**Malaysian Auntie**, Sukhumvit Soi 8, Bangkok.

**Mediterranean**

**Aldo's**, Level 7, The Ascott, 187 South Sathorn Road. Telephone 02 676 6969.

**Cy'An**, 27 South Sathorn Road, Tungmahamek. Telephone 02 625 3333.

**Extase**, HI Complex, 998 Sukhumvit Soi 55, Thong Lor. Telephone 02 652 0681.

**Sirocco**, The Dome, State Tower, Level 63, State Tower, Silom. Telephone 02 642 9555.

**Vertigo**, 61st Floor, Banyan Tree Bangkok, 21/100 South Sathorn Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 679 1200.

**Mexican**

**Bourbon Street**, 29/4-6 Washington Square, Sukhumvit 22. Telephone 02 259 0328.

**Senor Pico**, Rembrandt Hotel, 19 Sukhumvit Soi 18, Bangkok. Telephone 02 261 7100.

**Tia Maria**, 120/29-30 Sukhumvit. Telephone 02 662 3737.

**Organic**

**Amaranth**, 545 Sukhumvit Soi 31, Bangkok. Telephone 02 662 0795.

**Anotai**, 976/17 Soi Praram 9 Hospital Huay Kwnag. Telephone 02 641 5366.

**Geo Organic Corner**, Sareerarom Tropical Spa, 117 Thonglor Soi 10. Telephone 02 391 9919.

**Glow**, The Metropolitan, 27 South Sathorn Road. Telephone 02 525 3333.

**Polynesian**

**Trader Vic's**, Bangkok Marriott Hotel, 257 Charoen Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 476 0022.

**Scandinavian**

**The Stable**, 39 Sukhumvit Soi 8. Telephone 02 653 0017.

**Seafood**

**Baan Klang Nam**, 3792/106 Soi 14, Rama III Road, Riverside. Telephone 02 292 0175.

**Lord Jim's**, The Oriental Hotel, 48 Oriental Avenue, Bangkok. Telephone 02 659 9000.

**Modapesce**, 131 Sukhumvit Soi 53. Telephone 02 712 9991.

**Pierside**, Ground Floor, Rivercity. Telephone 02 639 4751.

**Seafood Market and Restaurant**, 89 Sukhumvit Soi 24. Telephone 02 661 0037.

**Seafood Town**, 7 Sukhumvit Soi 24. Telephone 02 661 0037.

**Somboon**, 32/25 Soi Udomsuk 60, Sukhumvit Soi 103, Bangkok. Telephone 02 746 6850.

**Suan Lum Seafood**, Suan Lum Night Bazaar, 1875 Rama IV Road. Telephone 02 251 2277.

**Talay Bangkok**, 557 Rimklong Samsennai Road. Telephone 02 641 4818.

**The Place Seafood**, 167/5-7 Surawongse, Bangkok. Telephone 02 634 3032.

### Spanish

**Rioja**, 1025 Ploenchit Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 251 5761.

### Steakhouse

**Chokchai Steak House**, 45 Prasanmitr Plaza, Sukhumvit Soi 23. Telephone 02 259 9596.

**Madison**, Four Seasons Bangkok, 150 Rajdamri Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 250 1000.

**New York Steakhouse**, JW Marriott Hotel, 4 Sukhumvit Soi 2. Telephone 02 656 7700.

**Outback Steakhouse**, Second Floor, Discovery Centre, Rama I. Telephone 02 658 0202.

### Swiss

**Chesa**, 5 Sukhumvit Soi 20,. Telephone 02 261 6650.

**William Tell**, 19/1 Sukhumvit Soi 20. Telephone 02 663 4474.

### Taiwanese

**Water**, 22 Sukhumvit Soi 39. Telephone 02 258 8308.

### Thai Restaurants

**Ana Garden**, 67 Soi Thong Lo, Sukhumvit Soi 55, Bangkok. Telephone 02 391 1762.

**Baan Khanitha**, 49 Soi Ruamrudee. Telephone 02 253 4638.

**Baan Rabiang Nam**, Nonthaburi 1 Soi 23, Nonthaburi. Telephone 02 968 1481.

**Ban Klang Nam**, 288 Rama III Soi 14. Telephone 02 292 0175.

**Basil**, Sheraton Grande, Sukhumvit, 250 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 649 8888.

**Benjarong**, Dusit Thani Hotel, Rama IV Road. Telephone 02 236 9999.

**Blue Elephant**, 233 South Sathorn Road, Silom. Telephone 02 673 9353.

**Buri Tara**, 762/2 Rama 3 Road, Chatuchak Rama 3. Telephone 02 682 9457.

**Cabbages and Condoms**, 10 Sukhumvit Soi 12. Telephone 02 229 4610.

**Harmonique**, 22 Charoen Krung Soi 34, Bangkok. Telephone 02 237 8175.

**Lai Thong**, Imperial Queen's Park Hotel, 199 Sukhumvit Soi 22. Telephone 02 261 9000.

**Mango Tree**, 37 Soi Tantawan, Surawong Road. Telephone 02 236 2820.

**Naj**, 42 Convent Road, BTS Saladeang MRT Silom. Telephone 02 632 2811.

**Nipa Thai**, Landmark Hotel, 138 Sukhumvit. Telephone 02 254 0404.

**Red Pepper**, Rembrandt Hotel, 19 Sukhumvit Soi 18. Telephone 02 261 7100.

**Sphinx**, 100 Silom Soi 4, Silom. Telephone 02 234 7249.

**Sukhothai**, Camp Davis, 88/5 Sukhumvit Soi 24. Telephone 02 204 0972.

**Supatra River House**, 288 Soi Wat Rakhang, Arun Amarin Road. Telephone 02 411 0305.

**Thai on 4**, Amari Watergate Hotel, 847 Petchuburi Road. Telephone 02 653 9000.

**Thiptara**, The Peninsula Bangkok, 333 Charoennakhon Road. Telephone 02 861 2888.

**The Palm Leaf**, 53 Wireless Road, Ploenchit. Telephone 02 253 8036.

**Wyndham Thai**, 41 Sukhumvit Soi 16. Telephone 02 258 1783.

### Vegetarian

**Anotai**, 976/17 Soi Praram 9 Hospital, Huay Kwang, Bangkok. Telephone 02 641 5366.

**Baan Suan Pai Sukaparp**, 304 Phahon Yothin Road. Telephone 02 615 1583.

**Chennai Kitchen**, 48/9 Pan Road, Silom. Telephone 02 238 4141.

**Chijuya**, Fifty-fifth Plaza, Thonglor Soi 2. Telephone 02 392 1877.

**Dosa King**, North and South Indian vegetarian cuisine, 153/7 Sukhumvit Road, Soi 11/1. Telephone 02 651 1651.

**Govinda**, 6/5-6/6 Sukhumvit Soi 22, Bangkok. Telephone 02 663 4970.

**Healthy Spice**, 434 Paholyothin Road. Telephone 02 663 4970.

**Indus**, 71 Soi 26 Sukhumvit Road, Klongtoey. Telephone 02 258 4900.

**Komala**, 15 Sukhumvit Soi 20. Telephone 02 663 5971.

**May Kaidee**, 117/1 Maykaidee Shop, Tanao Road. Telephone 02 629 4839.

**Rasayana Retreat**, 41/1 Sukhumvit Soi 39. Telephone 02 662 4803.

**Tamarind Café**, Sukhumvit Soi 20, Bangkok. Telephone 02 663 7421.

**Tiensin**, 1345 New`Road. Telephone 02 233 8716.

**Whole Earth**, 71 Sukhumvit Soi 26. Telephone 02 258 4900.

### Vietnamese

**Le Danang**, Sofitel Central Plaza, 1695 Phaholyothin Road. Telephone 02 541 1234.

**Le Dalat Indochine**, 14 Sukhumvit Soi 23, Bangkok. Telephone 02 661 7967.

**Pho Restaurant**, Alma Link Building, 25 Chidlom Road. Telephone 02 251 8945.

**Sweet Basil**, 1 Sriyeng Road, Silom. Telephone 02 238 3088.

**Thien Duong**, Dusit Thani Hotel, 946 Rama IV Road. Telephone 02 236 9999.

### Theatre Restaurants

**Baan Thai**, 7 Sukhumvit Soi 32. Telephone 02 258 5403.

**Piman Thai Theatre Restaurant**, 46 Sukhumvit Soi 49. Telephone 02 258 7866.

**Sala Rim Nam**, Oriental Hotel, 48 Oriental Avenue. Telephone 02 437 6211.

**Siam Erawan**, 468 - 478 Siam Square Soi 7. Telephone 02 250 1252.

**Silom Village Trade Centre**, 286 Silom Road. Telephone 02 234 4448.

## Attractions

### Museums

#### ***Air Force Museum***

Five hangars full of aeroplanes are on display at this museum. A great one for aviation buffs! Paholyothin Road. Telephone 02 534 1853.

#### ***Baan Khamthieng (Kamthieng House)***

A typical Lanna house over 150 years old, Baan Khathieng is an antique, wooden house from northern Thailand. The house is surrounded by gardens and contains ancient Thai manuscripts and an art collection. It is owned by the Siam Society who use it as a museum. It is open from 9am to 12 noon and 1pm to 5pm every Tuesday to Saturday. Located at the Siam Society No 131 Sukhumvit 21 Road, North Khlong Toei. Telephone 02 661 6471.

#### ***Bangkok National Museum***

Just to the west (river side) of Sanam Luang, the National Museum is only a short walk from Khao San Road on Na Phra That Road. There are English language tours at 9.30am on Wednesdays and Thursdays (no extra charge), in French on Wednesdays, Japanese on Wednesdays and German on Thursdays. The museum is closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and national holidays; open from 9am to 4pm on other days. Telephone 02 224 1370. Very many bus routes pass nearby, for example: 2, 3, 6, 9, 15, 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39, 42, 43, 44, 47, 51, 53, 56, 59, 60, 64, 69, 70, 79, 80, 90, 91, 103, 201 and 203, and air-conditioned 3, 7, 9 and 11.

#### ***Hall of Railway Heritage***

Just to the west of Suan Chatuchak is this train museum displaying steam engines and model and miniature trains. The area adjoins the yards of the State Railways of Thailand and can be seen from the train on the right as one departs from Bang Sue station, fifteen minutes after leaving Bangkok (Hualampong). The museum is open only between 5am and noon on Sundays. Buses 3, 8, 24, 26, 27, 28, 29, 34, 38, 39, 44, 52, 59, 63, 69, 77, 92, 96, 104, 107, 112, 122, 129, 134, 136, 138 and 145, and air-conditioned 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, 157 and 159, or Sky Train to Morchit.

#### ***House of Dolls***

This is a museum containing dolls from all over the world but especially from Bangkok. The address of this collection is Soi Ratchataphan, Soi Mor Leng, off Ratcha Prarop Road, so, as can be imagined, it is not so easy to locate. Closed on Sundays and national holidays. Admission is free. These buses run along Ratcha Prarop Road, from where the House of Dolls is a 10 minute walk: 14, 38, 62, 74, 77 and 204, and air-conditioned 4 and 13.

#### ***Jim Thompson's House***

Jim Thompson was a famous American who came to Thailand after the war and revived the silk trade. Even more famous is his disappearance in mysterious circumstances in 1967 in the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia, where no trace of him has ever been found. He built a traditional Thai house on the bank of a canal in Bangkok and that house is now a museum showing his collection of Asian antiques and handicrafts. Jim Thompson's House is in Soi Kaseman 2, off Rama I Road, which is the western extension of Sukhumvit Road. Admission costs B100 and it is open daily. From Khao San Road, take bus number 15 or 47 to the National Stadium. From Sukhumvit Road, take bus number 48, or air-conditioned number 8. Alternatively, take the Skytrain to National Stadium (W1). From Hualampong Station, bus number 73. Numbers 25, 29, 34, 40 and 113 also go very near. Alight at Siam Square. Telephone 02 216 7368.

#### ***King Prajadhipok Museum***

A museum that displays the effects of, and information related to, King Rama VII. The king was instrumental in reforms in the early part of the 20th century and these are described. The museum is open from 9am to 4pm from Tuesday until Sunday including national holidays with an admission of B40. It is located at 2 Lam Luang Road in the Pomprap District. Telephone 02 280 3414.

#### ***M.R. Kukrit's Heritage Home***

The site is a collection of a Thai teak houses collected from around Thailand all linked together in a small garden. Kukrit Pramoj was a writer, poet and politician and lived in the house in what was a very elegant Bangkok street. Located at 19 Soi Phra Phinit, South Sathorn Road. Take the BTS to Ching Nonsi. Telephone 02 286 8185.

#### ***Museum of Buddhist Art***

A large collection of Buddha images displayed in this well laid out museum. It is located on Soi 40 Pattanakarn Road and open from 10am until 5.30 pm every day except Monday.

#### ***Museum of Imaging Technology***

A museum devoted to cameras and photography. Open Monday to Friday 10.30am to 3.30pm with an admission of B100. It is located at the Department of Photographic and Printing Technology, Faculty of Sciences, Chulalongkorn University. Telephone 02 218 5583.

**Museum of Sciences and Planetarium**

These are next to the Eastern Bus Terminal (Ekkamai) at 128 Sukhumvit Road. They are closed on Mondays and national holidays and the planetarium has its last showing on other days at 2.30pm. Admission costs B30 for the museum and B30 for the planetarium. Buses 2, 25, 38, 40, 48 and 72, and air-conditioned 1, 8, 11 and 13, or Skytrain to Ekkamai. Telephone 02 392 1773.

**National Gallery**

This is just opposite the National Museum on Chao Fah Road and displays classical and contemporary Thai art including paintings by the King. The gallery is closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and national holidays. Admission costs B30. Telephone 02 281 2224. Very many bus routes pass nearby, for example: 2, 3, 6, 9, 15, 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39, 42, 43, 44, 47, 51, 53, 56, 59, 60, 64, 69, 70, 79, 80, 90, 91, 103, 201 and 203, and air-conditioned 3, 7, 9 and 11.

**National Science Museum**

A well organised museum with lots of hands-on things to do. Located at Soi Khlong 5 Rangsit and open every day except Monday from 9.30am until 5pm. Admission is B50. Telephone 02 577 9999.

**Old Cannon Museum**

A museum outside the Ministry of Defence with cannons from different times of Thai history. Telephone 02 226 3814.

**Rare Stones Museum**

An educational museum of stones and minerals. The museum also has ashtrays, coins, pipes and lighters. Located at 1054 Charoen Krung 26, New Road, Bang Rak and open daily from 10am to 5.30pm. Telephone 02 236 5655.

**Royal Barge Museum**

The royal barges are used on ceremonial occasions and otherwise stored in a museum on the Thonburi side of the river not far from the National Museum at the mouth of the Bangkok Noi Canal. They are remarkable old-style vessels up to fifty metres in length. The largest requires fifty oarsmen, seven parasol bearers, two helmsmen, two navigators, a flagman, a rhythm-beater and a chanter. Open daily from 9am to 5pm. Located on Klong Bangkok Noi close to the Pinklao Road. Buses 19 and 91 pass by the Royal Barge Museum. It is also possible to take a ferry or express boat to Thonburi Railway Station (Rot Fai) and then walk along beside the railway until reaching a bridge over the canal on your right. The museum is just across the canal. Telephone 02 424 0004.

**Royal Elephant Museum**

This is a collection of exhibits that centre on the role of elephants in Thai life. It is located at U-Thong Nai Road in the Dusit District and open every day from 9am to 4pm. The entry fee is B5. Telephone 02 282 3336.

**Silk Paradise Museum**

A relatively new museum about silk. Open 10am to 7pm on Monday to Saturday. Located on the first floor of the S.V. City Building on Rama III Road.

**Span's Cultural Gallery**

An art centre that focuses on folk costumes. A tableaux of Thai communities illustrate Thai culture. Located at Soi 62, Phahonyothin Road. Telephone 02 531 2013.

**Thai Human Imagery Museum**

A museum full of fibreglass human images to represent all forms of Thai life. A sort of Madame Tussaud's. Pinklao Nakhon Chaisi Highway. Telephone 032 332 109.

**Thai Labour Museum**

A museum that shows the history of the working people of Thailand over the years. Open every day except Mondays from 10am to 4pm, with free admission. Located on Makkasan Road, Ratchathewi District. Telephone 02 251 3173.

**Technopolis Science Museum**

A hi-tech museum that has something for all ages. Closed on Mondays and open from 9am to 5.30pm for the rest of the week. Located at Techno Thani, Thanon Rangsit-Nakhonnayok, North East.

**Other Museums**

Bangkok has a variety of specialist museums and these are listed below. It is suggested you call them first as many require advance notice and may not be generally open unless a request is made. Some will only open for special pre-arranged groups.

**Angkarn Kalayanapongse's Artist Museum**, Kinnarin Publishing House, Suan Luang. Telephone 02 732 0376.

**Antique Clock Museum**, Le Concord Building, Huai Kwang. Telephone 02 694 1705.

**Bank of Thailand Museum**, Phra Nakom. Telephone 02 283 5286.

**House of Bicycles**, Taling Chan District. Telephone 02 424 6464.

**Mental Health Museum**, Khlong San. Telephone 02 437 1298.

**National Sports Museum**, Raja Mangkhla Stadium. Telephone 02 718 5913.

**Natural Medicines Museum**, Chulalongkorn University. Telephone 02 218 8441.

**Royal State Railway Hall of Fame**, Chatachak. Telephone 02 373 9976.

**Royal Thai Army Museum**, Royal Thai Headquarters. Telephone 02 297 7859.

**Thai Movie Museum**, Department of Fine Arts. Telephone 02 441 0263.

**Thai Press Museum**, Thai Press Association. Telephone 02 669 7125.

## Palaces

### **Ananta Samakhorn Palace**

Once the parliament building, this palace was built during the reign of Rama V and completed by Rama VI. Uthong Nai Road, Dusit.

### **Chitralada Palace**

This is where the king actually lives. Therefore, it cannot be entered nor even viewed, except from a considerable distance. It is a little east of Wiman Mek Palace. If you are taking a long-distance train from Bangkok (Hualampong), you will see the palace on your left as you approach Samsen Station, the first stop, just five minutes along the line. You will also see the King's own special little station in front of the palace. Nearby buses include 5, 8, 12, 18, 28, 50, 72 and 108, and air-conditioned 3, 10 and 16.

### **Grand Palace**

The Grand Palace is in the centre of the city, if Bangkok can really be said to have a centre. The Grand Palace is not where the King lives. He has a residence a little further north (Chitralada Palace). The Grand Palace is now just a tourist attraction used for a very few ceremonial occasions. It costs B200 to enter. An audio guide can be hired for an additional fee of B100. The guide is available in English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese and Chinese (Mandarin). Tour guides can also be found at the Palace gate.

**Please note** that it is essential to be properly attired to visit the Grand Palace. No shorts, no sleeveless shirts, no short skirts and no informal footwear. Such garments are taken to express disrespect for the monarch and a group of clothing inspectors, stationed at the Palace Gate, will refuse admission or request wearers to wear more appropriate cover which will be provided for them.

The ticket received is in three parts. One part offers admission to the Royal Thai Decorations and Coins Pavilion just near the ticket office and entrance gate. The second part gives admission to the Palace and to Wat Phra Kaeo, which is within its confines, and is checked carefully at a turnstile. The third part gives admission to Wiman Mek Palace which is in a completely different part of the city and to which fewer people go. It is not necessary to visit Wiman Mek Palace on the same day as the Grand Palace. Just retain this part of the ticket in case you want to go there at a later date.

The Grand Palace is, as one might anticipate, a rather grand complex of buildings that includes:

#### **Amarindra Hall**

The Coronation Hall, previously a court of justice.

#### **Borombinan Hall**

A French-style building which used to be the residence of King Rama VI.

#### **Chakri Mahaprasat**

A British built, but Italian renaissance plus traditional Thai style, building constructed in 1882. The tallest mondop (shrine) contains the ashes of all the Chakri Dynasty kings whilst the smaller mondop contain the ashes of Chakri princes.

#### **Dusit Hall**

The Funeral Hall, originally a hall for royal audiences.

### **Phaya Thai Palace**

Built in 1909, this palace was originally used as cottage for Rama V. All that is left is the Throne Hall which is glass and wood building and has a western feel inside. King Mongkut Hospital, 315 Ratchwithi Road. BTS Victory Monument. Telephone 02 245 9770.

### **Suan Pakkad Palace**

This is a recent palace established in 1952 by the removal of some houses from Chiang Mai to Bangkok and the landscaping of what was originally a cabbage garden. This palace is now a museum of old statues, domestic items and Bronze Age discoveries from Ban Chiang, near Udon Thani in the north of the country. The gardens are also well known. There are examples of Buddhist and Hindu Art and a lacquer pavilion containing scenes from the Buddha's life and the Ramayana. Located on Si Ayutthaya Road. The following buses pass nearby: 14, 29, 34, 36, 38, 39, 54, 59, 63, 72, 74, 77, 201 and 204, and air-conditioned 2, 3, 4 and 13. Telephone 02 258 4934.

### **Thonburi Palace**

This palace is now the home of the Royal Navy and was built in 1768. It consists of a number of halls that were built at different times. The palace is also referred to as the Old Palace and located at Arun Amain Road, Bangkok Yai District. The palace is open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 3.30pm. Entry costs B60. Telephone 02 475 4117.

### **Wat Phra Kaeo**

This is the most sacred temple in Thailand and it contains the Emerald Buddha, the most sacred Buddha statue in the country. The temple dates from 1782, the year when Bangkok became the capital of the country, and has been added to ever since so that there are now more than a hundred separate buildings occupying a total area of 945,000 square metres.

The Emerald Buddha enshrined here was discovered in 1434 covered in stucco and lived first in a temple in Chiang Rai. He was moved to Lampang for a while and then to Chiang Mai. From there he was stolen by Lao invaders in the seventeenth century and taken to the Lao royal city of Luang Prabang then later to the capital, Vientiane. He spent two centuries in Laos before being recaptured when King Taksin fought a war against that country. General Chakri brought the statue back to Thonburi which was, at the time, the nation's capital. General Chakri later became King Rama I, succeeding King Taksin and founding the Chakri Dynasty which has retained the throne ever since. He moved the capital to Bangkok and brought the Emerald Buddha to this location in 1785. It is actually quite a small statue, only about 75cms high. It is not, in fact, made of emerald but is a jade statue. King Rama I had two royal robes made for the Emerald Buddha, one for the hot season and one for the rainy season, and King Rama III added another, just in case it he should feel chilly during the cool season. The King himself changes these robes on the appropriate three dates every year. Note that no photographs of the Emerald Buddha are permitted.

Inside Wat Phra Kaeo you will also find a model of Angkor Wat, the famous Buddhist temple in Cambodia; a reminder that the ancient history of these two nations is closely intertwined. In front of the Grand Place is Sanam Luang, originally called "Thung Phramen", an oval public area surrounded by 365 tamarind trees. Ratchadamnoen Avenue was built during the period of King Rama V as the royal road from the Royal Palace to the Dusit Palace and was modelled on the Champs Elysees in Paris.

The Grand Palace is open from 8.30am until 3.30pm, with a lunch break from 11.30am until 1pm, but during the lunch break one can still enter the outer (free) area of the palace grounds. When a ticket is purchased, a brochure is provided giving more details of the buildings. The Grand Palace is within walking distance of Khao San Road. From Sukhumvit Road take bus number 2, 25 or 48, or air-conditioned number 1 or 8. From Hualampong Railway Station take bus number 25 or 53 (the latter goes nearer), or air-conditioned number 1 or 7.

### **Wiman Mek Palace**

This palace is located at Ratchawithi Road in the Dusit District near the King's current residence and behind the National Assembly. It is a traditionally constructed Thai, teak building of three storeys but with European architectural influence. Built in 1868 as a summer house, it moved to its current location in 1901 where it was used as a favourite royal residence by King Rama V (King Chulalongkorn). It was disused from 1935 until 1982 when it was reopened to mark the bicentenary of the city as the national capital. There are 81 rooms and it claims to be the world's largest building made exclusively of golden teak. No nails are used in its construction. It has Thailand's first indoor bathroom.

Displays include the first Thai typewriter, old china, furniture and paintings. The Royal Carriage Museum, within the palace area, has a collection of imported turn-of-the-century European carriages and the Aphisek Dusit Throne Room has a collection of paintings. The Wiman Mek Palace is open from 9.30am until 4pm. The same rules regarding dress apply as for the Grand Palace. Located behind the National Assembly building.

The following buses pass Wiman Mek Palace: 9, 12, 18, 28, 56, 70, 72, 108 and 110, and air-conditioned buses 3, 9, 10 and 16. From Khao San Road take a 9, 12, 56 or 70. From Sukhumvit Road, take number 2, or air-conditioned number 11, and alight immediately after crossing the railway tracks from where it is about 20 minutes walk. If that is too far, continue to the Democracy Monument and change to a 9, 12, 56 or 70. From Hualampong Station, take a number 53 to its terminus from where it is about 10 minutes walk. Telephone 02 282 8683.

## **Shrines and Monuments**

### **Democracy Monument**

In the centre of Ratchadamnern Klang Avenue is the Democracy Monument built in 1932 by Silpa Bhirasi to commemorate the first constitution. Seventy-five cannon balls are buried at the base of the monument to represent the Thai year of construction (2475).

### **Erawan Shrine**

This was a shrine connected with the Erawan Hotel, now demolished and replaced with the Grand Hyatt Erawan. (Erawan is Brahma's thirty-three-headed elephant.) It is famous for bringing good luck, so if you stand around for a while you will usually see some ceremony taking place, often classical Thai dancing to petition or thank the Gods for their mercy. The Erawan Shrine is on the corner of Ploenchit Road, which is an extension westwards of Sukhumvit Road. Buses 2, 13, 14, 15, 17, 25, 40, 45, 48, 54, 73, 74, 77, 119 and 204, and air-conditioned 1, 4, 5, 8, 11 and 13, or Skytrain to Chitlom.

### **Goddess Thap Thim Shrine**

Located near the Thonburi Bridge and adorned with a triangular red cloth a symbol to protect fishermen when fishing.

### **King Rama V Equestrian Monument**

Built to commemorate King Chulalongkorn the Great (Rama V) in 1908.

### **Lingham Shrine**

A shrine surrounded by carved stone and wooden lingam built by Nailert to honour Jao Mae Thapthim, a female deity who, it was thought, lived in the banyan tree. Popular with female worshippers seeking fertility. Located behind Nai Lert Park on Wireless Road.

### **San Chao Phor Sua**

The Tiger God Shrine with a tiger-shaped deity with tiger bones inside. The statue is believed to have the spirit of a tiger and protect people from evil.

### **San Lak Muang**

This shrine, called the City Pillar Shrine, is just opposite the southern (Grand Palace) end of Sanam Luang enclosing the wooden city pillar erected by King Rama I in 1782 when Bangkok became the capital of the country. King Chulalongkorn later added five more deities to the shrine. The spirit of the pillar is the guardian of the city so many people come here to pray and it is usually crowded. This shrine has its own special atmosphere and is worth a visit, especially as it is so near to Khao San Road and to many of Bangkok's other major attractions. Sometimes classical Thai dance performances can be witnessed here. Buses 2, 3, 6, 9, 15, 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39, 42, 43, 44, 47, 51, 53, 56, 59, 60, 64, 69, 70, 79, 80, 90, 91, 103, 201 and 203, and air-conditioned 3, 7, 9 and 11. From Khao San Road it is easy walking distance.

### **Victory Monument**

The Victory Monument was built in 1941 to commemorate the deaths of soldiers in the conflict between France and Thailand.

## **Temples**

### **Maha Uma Devi Temple**

Maha Uma Devi is a Hindu temple built in the 1860s. As usual with such temples, it has an elaborately carved façade, featuring hundreds of Hindu gods. The façade has Hindu deities and inside are a number of statues. Located on Silom Road. Buses 15, 16, 17, 76, 77 and 115, and air-conditioned 2, 4 and 5, or Skytrain to Surasak (S5).

### **Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn)**

Known as the Temple of the Dawn, Wat Arun is an impressive temple to view from a distance. It is on the 'wrong' side of the river, i.e. the Thonburi side, and is a seventeenth century temple named after Aruna, the Indian God of the Dawn. Originally known as Wat Chaeng, renovations started during the reign of King Rama II were completed in the reign of King Rama IV. King Taksin made it a royal temple when Thonburi was the capital of the country because it was the first temple to catch the rays of the rising sun. The Emerald Buddha was housed here at one time. The main Khmer-style prang (steeple) is 104 metres high and the terraces at its base can be climbed by means of steep steps. It is covered with porcelain previously used as ballast by ships visiting from China. Located across the river from Tha Thien Pier. Buses no. 19, 40, 56, 57, 83 and 149 pass nearby. From Khao San Road, take bus number 56, or take an express boat from Phra Arthit pier to Tha Tien (or walk there) and then a ferry across the river to the temple. From Sukhumvit Road, take a bus number 40 to near the temple, or bus number 25 or air-conditioned number 8 to Tha Tien (which is the terminus for those two buses) and then a ferry. From Hualampong Station, take a bus number 40 to near the temple, or bus number 25 or 53 to Tha Tien and then a ferry.

### **Wat Benjamabophit (Marble Temple)**

Wat Benjamabophit is often known as the Marble Temple. This beautiful piece of architecture is near Wiman Mek Palace. It is a relatively modern building constructed a century ago in white Carrara marble under the direction of King Chulalongkorn. The inside of the Wat has cross beams of lacquer and gold. Wat Benjamabophit is located on Si Ayutthaya Road. The following buses pass close by: 9, 12, 18, 28, 56, 70, 72, 108 and 110, and air-conditioned buses 3, 9, 10 and 16. From Khao San Road take a 9, 12, 56 or 70. From Sukhumvit Road, take number 2, or air-conditioned number 11, and alight immediately after crossing the railway tracks, from where it is about 20 minutes walk. If that is too far, continue to the Democracy Monument and change to a 9, 12, 56 or 70. From Hualampong Station, take a number 53 to its terminus, from where it is about 10 minutes walk.

### **Wat Bowon Niwet**

Just round the corner from Khao San Road, Wat Bowon Niwet's claim to fame is that many of the royal family enter the monastery for a while to serve as monks. The present King did so, for example. Although the temple was not founded until 1829, it houses an impressive Buddha statue dating from 1357. It also operates a Buddhist university, Mahamakut University, one of the two in Bangkok (Wat Mahathat houses the other). Due to the temple's proximity to Khao San Road, no doubt, there is also an English language Buddhist bookshop across the street and a Thai herbal medicine clinic. Bus 56 and air-conditioned 11 go right past the gate but any of those listed below for Wat Ratchanatdaram pass close.

### **Wat Kalayanamit**

This is a mid-nineteenth century temple on the Thonburi side of the river. It was built by King Rama III. It contains a particularly large Buddha statue and some fine murals. Outside is the biggest bronze bell in Thailand and an old Chinese stone pagoda. Buses 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 21, 25, 37, 52, 60, 73, 82 and 85, and air-conditioned 1, 6, 7, 8 and 12 to Pak Klong Talad Pier and then a ferry across the river to the temple. Alternatively, an express boat to Rajini and then ferry across the river.

### **Wat Khaek**

Built in 1879 and devoted to the Hindu Goddess Uma Dhevi.

**Wat Leng Noi**

The Dragon Temple is a Chinese temple located on Charoen Krung Road and built in 1871.

**Wat Mahathat**

Just to the west of Sanam Luang, Wat Mahathat is an eighteenth century temple which features a fruit and vegetable market at weekends, a religious market of amulets just outside the grounds every day and has an impressive collection of pigeons. It also houses a Buddhist university, Mahathat Rajavidyalaya University, and offers Buddhist meditation instruction in English once per month, on the second Saturday. Located on Na Phrathat Road. Buses 2, 3, 6, 9, 15, 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 39, 42, 43, 44, 47, 51, 53, 56, 59, 60, 64, 69, 70, 79, 80, 90, 91, 103, 201 and 203, and air-conditioned 3, 7, 9 and 11, but from Khao San Road it is easy walking distance.

**Wat Pho**

Wat Pho is famous for its huge Reclining Buddha and is the oldest temple in Bangkok. It dates from the sixteenth century but was completely rebuilt in 1781 by King Rama I. It is also the largest temple in the city. The Reclining Buddha is on a pedestal and is 46 metres long and 15 metres high, the largest Reclining Buddha in Thailand. He is covered in gold leaf and features mother-of-pearl inlaid soles to his feet. One can approach this Buddha closely, in fact so closely that taking his photograph is difficult because of his size. Wat Pho is also the centre for Thai traditional massage. One can obtain a massage here or learn massage techniques. From Khao San Road, Wat Pho is within walking distance. From Sukhumvit Road, take bus number 25 or 48, or air-conditioned number 8. From Hualampong Station, take bus number 1, 25 or 53. Telephone 02 222 0933.

**Wat Ratchabophit**

This temple is near Wat Pho and was constructed in 1869 by King Chulalongkorn. It offers some elaborate and unusual architecture, with European influence, a trait of that monarch. Especially notable is the mother-of-pearl decoration around the windows and doors. Buses 1, 25 and 48 and air-conditioned 1, 7 and 8. Many others pass nearby.

**Wat Ratchanatdaram**

Opposite Wat Saket is Wat Ratchanatdaram, built in 1846. It features unusual Burmese-influenced architecture consisting of a central spire 36 metres high with 37 surrounding lesser spires. It is also well known for its market of Buddhist amulets. Buses 2, 5, 35, 39, 44, 56, 59, 60, 70, 79 and 201, and air-conditioned 3, 9, 11, 12 and 44 pass right outside and many others go nearby.

**Wat Ratchapradit**

Just across the canal from Wat Ratchabophit, this temple was established by King Rama IV and is known for its murals depicting the annual ceremonies performed by the monarch. Buses 1, 25 and 48 and air-conditioned 1, 7 and 8. Many others pass nearby.

**Wat Saket (Golden Mountain)**

Wat Saket is also known as the Temple of the Golden Mount. During the time of King Rama III, a chedi (pagoda) which was being built collapsed due to the soft nature of the earth. The pile of rubble was left for many years until King Rama IV ordered the construction of a small chedi on top. King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) enlarged the chedi and then the base was concreted this century. Now one can climb the steep steps to the top and obtain a good view of the city. One can climb to the top free but to go inside one is invited to make a contribution. Ring the bells as you go! In November there is a candle-lit procession up the steps. Located off Worachak Road. From Khao San Road, again this is easy walking distance. From Sukhumvit Road, bus number 2, or air-conditioned number 11. From Hualampong Station, bus number 35 (walk across the canal to catch it).

**Wat Suthat**

Wat Suthat is just a short walk south of the Democracy Monument and is known for the giant swing outside. The swing was formerly used in a harvest festival competition when people would swing from it and try to reach a bag of coins on a pole but now only the frame sits outside the temple. The red swing is 21.2 metres tall and used for Brahmanic ritual such as the Triyampawai Ceremony' or the Swinging Ceremony to honour the highest God, Shiva, a practice discontinued in 1935. Inside the temple there is a fourteenth century Buddha statue and the small lucky Buddha. Located on Bamrung Muang Road. From Khao San Road, once more this is walking distance. From Sukhumvit Road, bus number 2, or air-conditioned number 8 or 11. From Hualampong Station, bus number 35 (walk across the canal to catch it) to its terminus.

**Wat Traimit**

Wat Traimit is the relatively small temple, near Hualampong Station and just on the edge of Chinatown, which houses the Golden Buddha. But for an accident, it might never have become famous. In 1952, a plaster Buddha was being moved to the temple by crane when the rope slipped and the statue was dropped. The plaster broke and a metal statue underneath was revealed. When the plaster was peeled off, a beautifully formed, solid gold Buddha was found inside. It appears to date from the fourteenth century and weighs over five tons. It was probably concealed in the plaster to prevent the Burmese from stealing it during one of their invasions. The glow of the solid gold is unforgettable. Located near Hualampong Station on Traimit Road. From Khao San Road, take bus number 35 to its terminus, then walk to the front bus in the line and take number 35 again to Hualampong Station. From Sukhumvit Road, take a bus number 25 or 40 or air-conditioned number 1.

**Wat Indra Wihan**

This is another temple in the vicinity of Khao San Road. It is famous for its huge standing Buddha, 32 metres tall. Buses 3, 6, 10, 12, 19, 30, 31, 32, 33, 43, 49, 53, 64 and 90, and air-conditioned 6.

## Amusement Parks

### Dream World

A big theme park to the North of Bangkok at Rangsit Nakornnayok. Plenty of things to do for the whole family. Open every day from 10am until 5pm and until 7pm on Saturday and Sunday. A number of different ticket options exist to make it more economical.

### Ice Skating Rink

Located on the roof of the World Trade Centre it is very popular with young Thais and welcomes overseas visitors. Best to go early in the day as becomes very busy in the afternoon and evening.

### Leoland Water Park

Located on the roof of the Central City shopping mall and visible from many roads it is easy to find. Lots of waterslides, pools and very suitable for younger children. Located at 1093 Thanon Bangna, and opens at 11am every weekday and 10am at the weekends.

### Ocean World

Some way out of Bangkok past Chon Buri at Bang Saen is Ocean World, a water park with wave pool and slide. Open from 10am every day.

### Siam Park

This is where you can find a beach in Bangkok and man-made waves! Waterslides, amusement park, small zoo and children's playground will amuse the kids. Siam Park is at 99 Serithai Road, Khannayao and open from 10am until 7pm every day.

## Animal Attractions

### Dusit Zoo

An attractive zoo with botanical gardens that continually improves. There is a children's zoo, play area and paddleboats to provide fun for kids. The zoo is open every day from 8am until 6pm. Located on Rama V Road between Wiman Mek and the National Assembly on one side and the King's Chitralada Palace on the other, this is quite an old zoo with a range of animals and birds. Inside the zoo are lakes which make for a pleasant walk. For an extra charge there is a wild animal show which runs at several times during the day. There are some small rides for the kids. Buses 5, 18, 28, 70 and 108, and air-conditioned 10 and 16. If you travel by Skytrain, use Victory Monument station. Telephone 02 281 2000.

### Safari World and Marine Park

A contrast to the rest of Bangkok and a place to enjoy cool sitting areas and relax. A well presented natural habitat for zebras, giraffes and other African and Asian animals. Shows are organised during the day with the dolphin show being the highlight. Very popular with kids with its zoo and amusement park. Safari World is 25 kilometres east of Bangkok and a cab charter to reach Safari World would cost about 1,000 baht. Alternatively use bus 26 from Victory Monument to Minburi and from there a mini bus to Safari World. Located at 99 Thanon Seri Thai, North East and open from 10am to 6pm every day. Telephone 02 518 1000.

### Samphran Elephant Ground

Elephants and crocodiles with regular elephant shows. This is an afternoon trip and can be done in a private taxi or as part of a tour. Lots of demonstrations of elephants at work. Telephone 02 284 1873.

### Samut Prakan Crocodile Farm

Want to see 60,000 crocodiles? Then this is the place to do it. For entertainment there is a acrobatic elephant show and crocodile wrestling event. Located in Samut Prakan about 30 kilometres south east of Bangkok. A cab charter would cost about 1,200 baht. Telephone 02 703 4891.

### Siam Ocean World

Located in the basement of the Siam Paragon Shopping Mall in the centre of Bangkok. A large aquarium arranged around seven zones: Weird and Wonderful World, Deep Reef, Living Ocean, Rainforest, Rocky Shore, Open Ocean and Sea Jellies. Telephone 02 687 2000.

### Snake Farm

The Snake Farm is part of the Red Cross facilities on Rama IV Road in the centre of Bangkok. Snakes are milked of their venom in order to produce anti-venom serum. Milking demonstrations are held at 10.30am and 2.30pm every day and at 2pm on weekdays. At weekends, the Snake Farm opens only in the morning. Buses 4, 16, 21, 46, 109, 119 and 141, and air-conditioned 2 and 7. The nearest Skytrain stop is Sala Daeng. Telephone 02 252 0161.

## Parks

### Benjasiri Park

Built in 1992 to commemorate the 60th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, Benjasiri Park features some contemporary sculpture, landscaped gardens, skating rink and swimming pool. Located on Sukhumvit Road near Soi 24 and open daily from 5am to 8pm.

### Chatuchak Park

A popular park at the weekends which has the Hall of Railway Heritage in its grounds. It is next to the Chatuchak weekend market. Nearby is the Queen Sirikit Park with its lotus ponds.

### Lumphini Park

This is a pleasant park, very popular with Thais especially in the early mornings and at the weekend. It is situated on Rama IV Road and near Chulalongkorn University and was named after the birthplace of Buddha on the border of India and Nepal. The park contains a lake and wooded areas and, at the entrance on Rama IV, a statue of King Rama VI. There are food stalls within the park and even fresh snake blood available, if you happen to fancy it! Buses 4, 13, 14, 15, 17, 22, 45, 46, 47, 50, 62, 67, 74, 76, 77, 106, 109, 115, 116, 119, 141 and 149, and air-conditioned 2, 4, 5 and 7, or Skytrain to Ratchadamri (S1) or Sala Daeng (S2).

### Princess Mother's Memorial Park

This park was built to preserve the childhood home of the H.R.H The Princess Mother. It is a public park with a collection of buildings which is free to enter. Open between 6am and 6pm with a museum which opens from 9am to 4pm every day. Located at Somdet Chao Phraya 3 Soi Khlong San District.

### Phuttamonton Park

A main attraction is the 16 metre high walking Buddha statue. A large park with plenty of space, lakes, bamboo and other reminders of the Buddha. Utthayan Road, Pin Klao Nakhon Chai Si Highway.

### Rama IX Suan Luang Park

Built to celebrate the golden anniversary of His Majesty the King in 1987, this park covers an extensive 200 acres. Admission is free and it is open every day from 6am to 8pm. Located at Sukhumvit 103 Road, Nong Born and Prawes District.

### Saranrom Park

Opened in 1960, the park has a number of monuments including a memorial to Queen Sunantha Kumareerat. Located near the old cannon museum, Sanam Luang.

## Views of Bangkok

### Baiyoke Sky Hotel

Good views of Bangkok can be seen from the tallest building in Bangkok. There is a glass elevator from the ground floor. The very top is a revolving outdoor view point. There is a restaurant and bar near the top of the tower with an extensive buffet. Telephone 02 656 3500.

### Golden Mount

The Golden Mount is a stupa within Wat Saket. Climb the 300 plus steps for some good views of the Rattanakosin area of Bangkok.

### Moon Bar

The Moon Bar, on top of the Banyan Tree, is an upmarket outdoor skyline retreat. Smart sofas, classy drinks and an efficient grill restaurant provide for romantic views across Bangkok. Floor 61, Banyan Tree, Bangkok. Telephone 02 679 1200.

### Royal Navy Institute

The Royal Navy Institute is on the west side of the Chao Phraya River providing good views across to the Grand Palace.

### Sirocco

An open air restaurant 67 floors up and known as the Dome at the State Tower.

### Suptra River House

A Thai restaurant on the banks of the Chao Phraya River on the Thonburi side with good views of the river at sunset.

## Active Bangkok

Bangkok has plenty of active things to do.

### **Bowling**

**RCA Bowling**, 31/5 RCA Plaza, Royal City Avenue. Telephone 02 641 5870.

### **Golf**

**Lakewood Country Club**, Bangna-Trad Road Km 18. Telephone 02 312 6278.

**Rose Garden Golf Club**, Pet Kaem Road, Nakhon Pathom. Telephone 02 295 3261.

**Thai Country Club**, Bangna-Trad Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 651 5300.

**Thana City Golf Course**, Bangna-Trad Highway Km 14. Telephone 02 336 1968.

### **Fitness**

**Absolute Yoga**, Amarin Plaza. Telephone 02 252 4400.

**California Fitness**, Silom Head Quarters. Telephone 02 631 1122.

**Cascade Club**, South Sathorn Club. Telephone 02 676 6969.

**Clark Hatch Fitness Centre**, Silom Road. Telephone 02 231 2250.

**Fitness First**, Bio House Building, Sukhumvit 39, Wattana. Telephone 02 262 0520.

**Now Fitness**, 720-726 Sukhumvit Road, Suang Laung. Telephone 02 332 5682.

**Prana Yoga**, Wireless Road. Telephone 02 685 3775.

### **Horse Riding**

**Bangkok Equestrian Centre**, 20/1 Moo 2 Soi Chadsanahannua, Sukhumvit Soi 103. Telephone 02 328 0273.

## Pampering

### **Spas**

Spas have emerged everywhere over the last few years and often well managed and beautifully presented.

**Ananda Spa**, President Solitaire, Sukhumvit Soi 11, Bangkok. Telephone 02 255 7200.

**Banyan Tree Spa**, Banyan Tree Bangkok, 21/100 South Sathorn Road. Telephone 02 679 1052.

**Being Spa**, 88 Sukhumvit 51, Bangkok. Telephone 02 662 6171.

**Divana Spa**, 7 Sukhumvit Soi 25, Sukhumvit. Telephone 02 661 6784.

**Harmony Spa**, Park Ploenchit Tower, Sukhumvit. Telephone 02 655 6555.

**Healthland Spa and Massage**, 120 North Sathorn Road, Chong Nonsi, Bangkok. Telephone 02 637 8883.

**Jivita Spa House**, 57/155 Silom Terrace Building, Saladaeng Soi 2. Telephone 02 635 5422.

**Sense of Spa**, Second floor, 323 United Center Building, Silom Road. Telephone 02 635 5488.

**Vareena Spa**, Westin Grande Sukhumvit Hotel, 259 Sukhumvit Road. Telephone 02 651 1000.

### **Thai Massage**

Thai massage provides therapeutic healing with a history going back 2,500 years. A good massage takes two hours but many take just one hour or even half an hour which is too rushed. You can tell the masseur whether you want hard, medium or soft and it is a good idea to point to where you have pains that can be dealt with. Foot massage is an alternative and takes one hour reclining in a chair.

Massage parlours exist all over Bangkok where you normally lie in a cubicle and are given baggy pyjamas to wear. Alternatively massage is popular in your hotel room and most hotels have an arrangement with a local massage company.

There is also non-traditional massage sold under many names such as special body, in the privacy of your room and other similar names. This is not traditional massage and means extras are provided.

**BKK Massage**, 133/204 Romklao Road, Ladkrabang. Telephone 02 907 6476.

**Chiva Som Academy**, Modern Town Building, 87/104 Ekkamai Road, Sukhumvit Soi 63, Bangkok. Telephone 02 711 6900.

**Foundation for the Employment Promotion of the Blind**, Massage by blind persons. 2218/86 Chan Road, Chongnontri Yannawa, Bangkok. Telephone 02 678 0763.

**Wat Pho Thai Traditional Medical School**, 2 Sanamchai Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 221 2974.

## Entertainment

Bangkok has excellent entertainment to suit everyone.

### Bars

The Bangkok Bar and Club scene is active and ranges from large ultramodern busy clubs, to small clubs in the Sois to the sleazy. In some of the sleazy clubs, or where there is entertainment, check on prices before you order. If you do have a disagreement, pay it and then immediately call the Tourist Police on 1155 who will respond and try and reclaim your money.

#### **Go-Go Bars**

The go-go bar is a Bangkok institution where girls dance in bikinis. Some put on shows where girls perform on stage. The main areas are around Patpong, Nana Entertainment Plaza and Soi Cowboy.

**87+**, Conrad Hotel, All Seasons Place. Telephone 02 690 9999.

**Brown Sugar**, 23/20 Sarasin Road, Chit Lom. Telephone 02 250 1826.

**Face Bangkok**, 29 Sukhumvit Soi 38, Bangkok. Telephone 02 713 6048.

**Opera Winetheque**, 53/3 Sukhumvit Soi 39, Phrom Phong. Telephone 02 258 501.

**Syn Bar**, Nai Lert park Swissotel, 2 Wittahayu Road, Ploen Chit. Telephone 02 253 0123.

**The Barbican**, 9/4-5 Soi Thaniya Silom Road, Saladaeng. Telephone 02 234 3590.

**Tokyo Joe's**, 9-11 Sivaporn Plaza, Sukhumvit Soi 24. Telephone 02 661 0359.

### Cinemas

Many cinemas show English language films with Thai subtitles and large cinema complexes are found in the shopping areas including the World Trade Centre, Siam Square. A large IMAX cinema runs shows all day long and is on the sixth floor of the Major Cineplex, Paholyothin Road.

**APEX Lido**, Rama I Road. Telephone 02 252 6498.

**APEX Scala**, Siam Square Soi 1. Telephone 02 251 2861.

**APEX Siam Square**, Siam Square, Rama I Road. Telephone 02 251 3508.

**EGV Grand**, Siam Discovery Centre, Rama I Road. Telephone 02 812 9999.

**EGV Metropolis**, Ratchadamri Road. Telephone 02 812 9999.

**House**, 31/8 Royal City Avenue, Petchuburi Road. Telephone 02 641 5177.

**Major Cineplex Central World Plaza**, Central World Plaza. Telephone 02 511 5555.

**Panasonic IMAX Theatre**, Major Cineplex, Ratchayothin. Telephone 02 511 5810.

**SF Cinema City**, MBK Centre, MBK, 444 Phayathai Road. Telephone 02 611 6444.

**SFX Cinema Emporium**, Emporium, Sukhumvit 24. Telephone 02 260 9333.

### Cultural Centres

**Alliance Francaise**, French and Thai art with many exhibitions during the year. 29 Sathorn Road, Saladaeng. Telephone 02 670 4200.

**Goethe Institute**, German and Thai art. 18/1 Goethe Gase, Soi Attakarn Prasit, Soi 1 Sathorn Road. Telephone 02 287 0942.

**Japan Foundation**, Serm-mit Tower Soi 21 Sukhumvit Road. Telephone 02 260 8560.

**Thailand Cultural Centre**, a cultural centre with a range of music, dance and theatre. Ratchadaphisek Road, Huay Kwang. Telephone 02 247 0028.

### Entertainment Areas

#### **Khao San Road**

This area is popular with the backpackers and has a lot of small bars and dance clubs. A very relaxed and busy area that now spreads beyond the immediate road. Made famous in various songs and films.

#### **Royal City Avenue (RCA)**

RCA is a designated party area with lots of bars and clubs. Very popular with the younger crowd. There is also a bowling alley, cinema and go-kart track.

#### **Siam Square**

Siam Square, which is on Rama I Road and linked to the Skytrain, has a collection of discos and bars, some in the hotels in the area.

### ***Silom and Patpong***

This area includes the streets made famous during the Vietnam War, Patpong 1 and 2. The clubs lining Patpong are the home of the sex shows where doormen will try to entice you to enter. The shows tend to be on the second level and the go-go bars on the first level. In these bars check the prices before you enter and before you buy a drink. Some add on a high cover charge which should be clarified before entry. The whole area is lively and most people should feel comfortable. Many tourists who would not be regulars in the red light district can be seen and many, out of curiosity, visit the shows! There are many good 'straight' bars in this area popular with foreign expatriates living in Bangkok. The gay area is at Soi 2 "Soi Twilight" which is close to Patpong.

### ***Sukhumvit Road***

In all the Sois that line Sukhumvit are bars and clubs. It is easy to move along the street using the Skytrain. Many of the clubs are huge with international DJs and very professionally run. Soi Cowboy is a red light district that is more relaxed than Patpong. Soi Cowboy is located between Sukhumvit Soi 23 and Soi 24. The name is from "Cowboy Edwards" who ran one of the original go-go bars. Moving up Sukhumvit is Soi 4 the "Nana Plaza" another red light area with go-go bars and more.

### **Night Clubs**

You will need to be over 20 to enter any Bangkok night club. Many clubs ask that you carry your passport with you or at least a copy. Most charge an admission and include in that a few drinks. Clubs generally do not allow sandals and vest tops.

**87+**, Conrad Hotel, All Seasons Place, 87 Wittahayu Road, Ploen Chit. Telephone 02 690 9999.

**Bed Supper Club**, 26, Sukhumvit Soi 11, Bangkok. Telephone 02 651 3537.

**Club Sugar**, Soi 24, Sukhumvit, Bangkok. Telephone 02 261 5212.

**Concept CM2**, Novotel Siam Square, Bangkok. Telephone 02 255 6888.

**Glow**, 96/4-5 Sukhumvit 23, Bangkok. Telephone 02 261 4446.

**Narcissus Club**, Soi 23, Sukhumvit, Bangkok. Telephone 02 258 4805.

**Q Bar**, 34 Sukhumvit, Bangkok. Telephone 02 252 3274.

**Tapas**, 114/17-18, Silom Soi 4, Saladaeng, Bagnkok. Telephone 02 632 7982.

**The Grove Kitchen**, 1-3 Sukhumvit 55, Bangkok. Telephone 02 391 1762.

### **Performing Arts**

#### ***Cabaret***

There are several cabaret shows that have become famous due to the fact that the performers are all men (lady boys) performing as women. The shows are fast moving, full of glitz and special effects. Try Calypso Cabaret at the Asia Hotel. Telephone 02 261 6355; Mambo at Washington Square, Sukhumvit Soi 22. Telephone 02 259 5128; Golden Dome Cabaret at Rachadapisek Soi 18. Telephone 02 692 8214; or Ratchada Cabaret Show at Ratchadapiesek Road. Telephone 02 642 3704.

#### ***Thai Boxing***

Thai Boxing is a sport and an art form and uses feet, fists, elbows and knees. Special shows are put on at many locations and at the two main stadiums at Ratchadamnoen. Telephone 02 281 4205. and Lumpini Stadium on Rama IV road. Telephone 02 251 4303.

#### ***Thai Classical Dancing***

The easiest way to see Thai dancing is combined with a dinner and most hotels offer a Thai Cultural Show. Often Thai dancers will be seen in front of the Erwan Shrine who will be amusing Brahma. The National Theatre at 1 Na Phra That Road often has Thai classical dance shows. Telephone 02 224 1342.

#### ***Thai Puppets***

Thai puppets are a different kind of theatre that can be watched at the Joe Louis Theatre,. Located at Suan Lum Night Bazaar where shows are held every evening at 7.30pm and sometimes at 9.30pm. The show tells the story of Hindu epic Ramayana. Telephone 02 252 9683.

### **Pubs**

**Black Swan**, 326/8-9 Sukhumvit, Sheraton Grande. Telephone 02 229 4542.

**Irish X Change**, 1/5-6 Convent Road, Silom. Telephone 02 266 7160.

**O'Reilly's Irish Pub**, 62/1-4 Silom Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 632 7515.

**The Bull's Head**, Sukhumvit Soi 33/1. Telephone 02 259 4444.

**The Dubliner Irish Pub**, 440 Sukhumvit Road, Phrom Phong. Telephone 02 204 1841.

**The Londoner**, UBC II Building, Sukhumvit Soi 33. Telephone 02 261 0238.

**Witch's Tavern**, 306/1 Sukhumvit Road. Telephone 02 391 9791.

## Theatres

**Ban Chang Thai.** Thai puppet shows and Thai boxing is held at certain times of the year. Located on Soi 10, Ekkamai Road, Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok. Telephone 02 391 3807.

**Joe Louis Puppet Theatre.** A live puppet show based on the ancient Ramayana a classic Hindu epic. The puppets are very life-like and it is a popular show for visitors. Suan lum Night Bazaar. Telephone 02 252 9683.

**National Theatre.** Classical Thai drama, musicals and cultural events. Next to the National Museum 2 Rachini Road, Sanam Luang. Telephone 02 222 1352.

**Playhouse.** Different shows put on by local and visiting groups. Located on Phetchaburi Road. Telephone 02 679 8548.

**Siam Niramit Theatre.** A real extravaganza with many performers, scene changes and effects. The show runs nightly and houses 2,000 people. Tiam Ruannit Road. Telephone 02 649 9222.

**Thai Chalerm Krung Royal Theatre.** A range of performances, some modern and some classical. 66 Charoen Krung Road, Phra Nakhon. Telephone 02 222 8757.

**Thai Cultural Centre.** A venue for both local and international performances. Ratchadaphisek Road, Huay Kwang. Telephone 02 247 0028.

**Thai Patravadi Theatre.** An outdoor theatre on the other side of the Chao Phraya River opposite the Grand Palace. 69/1 Soi Wat Rakhang, Arun Amarin Road. Telephone 02 412 7287.

## Shopping

Bangkok shopping has everything and lots of bargains can be found. As a major producer of clothing, fashion boutiques are everywhere along with bargains. Custom tailoring is also possible. Thai silks are famous along with Thai cotton and batik. Bangkok is a good place to buy coloured gems such as sapphires and rubies but only buy from authorised shops. Antiques, ceramics and pewter ware can all be found. Furniture, orchids and just about everything else can be found somewhere in Bangkok.

Shops extend all over Bangkok but important areas are Silom Road, Sukhumvit Road and Rama I Roads. The markets are great fun. Fixed prices are displayed in all the main shops and bargaining is a must in the markets. The Central and Robinson's Department stores are spread around the city.

Do not use any touts or let anyone offer to help you shop. There are many scams in operation and commission is paid to touts.

## What to buy

### Antiques

Many shops sell antiques and many are fake. Buddha images cannot be exported. Antiques may require permission from the Department of Fine Arts. Telephone 02 221 7811.

### Crafts

Thailand is a major manufacturer of all sorts of crafts and endless shops display an enormous range of craft items made from a full range of materials.

### Fake Goods

Fake goods are found all over the city and in all the markets. Many are of a very high quality and large numbers are sold.

### Fashion

Fashion shops are all over the city. In the plazas they are genuine and in the markets they are often fake copies. Small tailors will make up a suit or other fashion items in as little as 24 hours.

### Jewellery

Thailand mines sapphires, rubies, garnets, zircons and turquoise and imports all their other gemstones seen in shops. Make sure you are not conned into buying fake gemstones and if you have suspicions that you might have been cheated, contact the Tourist Police. Be very careful when buying jewellery and remember there are no official jewellery shops in Bangkok. The best jewellery shops should provide a full refund within 90 days if you are not happy with your purchase.

### Silk

Thai silk is found in numerous shops. If not sure whether it is silk, take a thread and ask for it to be burnt and the smell will be similar to singed hair.

## Bangkok Shopping Hours

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Saturday and Sunday 10am to 4pm. Some stores have later trading on Thursday or Friday evenings.

## Shopping Centres & Malls

**All Seasons Place.** Inside a major office building but has a good selection of branded goods and a marketplace supermarket. 87 Wittahyu, next to Conrad Hotel. Telephone 02 654 3888.

**Amarin Plaza.** A modern plaza on Ploenchit Road near the Erwan Shrine and mainly selling imported name products. Recognisable by the high columns. 496-502 Ploenchit Road. BTS: Chit Lom. Telephone 02 256 9111.

**Big C Ratchadamri.** The biggest of the many Big C's but with an EGV Metropolis and good food court. Located opposite Central World Plaza. BTS: Chit Lom. Telephone 02 250 4888.

**Bangkok Central Chidlom.** A popular Central department store with lots of variety and a large food hall. 1027 Ploenchit Road, BTS: Chit Lom.

**Bangkok Central City.** Large shopping centre with the Central department store which is part of the Central chain. Bang Na 1090 Moo 12, Bang Na-Trat. Telephone 02 361 1010.

**Central World Plaza.** A huge, recently renovated mall. Zen department store and Isetan department stores are located in the Central World Plaza. Upmarket food court on the 7th floor with eat in, take away and supermarket. Inside the Central World Plaza are cinemas and many restaurants. Corner of Rama I and Rajadamri Roads, BTS: Chit Lom. Telephone 02 255 9400.

**Emporium Bangkok.** A popular mall with department store and many other quality shops. There is a cinema on the sixth floor and food court on the fifth floor. The top floor has a free Thailand design exhibition presented in English and Thai. Connected to BTS Skytrain station at Phrom Phong and located at 622 Sukhumvit Raod. Telephone 02 664 8000.

**Erawan Bangkok.** A "boutique mall" with designer labels and an upmarket food stall on the third floor. Located next to the Erawan Hotel at BTS Chit Lom Station. Telephone 02 650 7777.

**Fortune Town.** Supermarket, stationery, clothing and food hall. 7/1 Ratchadapisek Road.

**Gaysorn.** An upmarket mall with luxury items. Located opposite the Central World Plaza in the Ratchaprasong shopping area. Telephone 02 656 1149.

**MBK.** Lots of small shops in a market style but in air-conditioned comfort. Full range of goods and good prices to be had. Tokyu Department store is located inside MBK. Tends to be very busy. Located at Siam Square, use BTS National Stadium Station.

**Narayana Phand.** Handicrafts from around Thailand. Located opposite the Central World Plaza and north of Gaysorn's. Telephone 02 252 4670.

**O.P. Place.** Next to the Oriental Hotel, this is an old building with Thai silk, jewellery, antiques and such like. 30/1 Charoen Krung Road , Soi 38. BTS: Saphan Taksin.

**Panthip Plaza.** A huge computer mall that sells everything to do with computers at great prices and lots of software and DVDs. Located near the Pratunam market on Petchaburi Road.

**Playground.** A shopping mall popular for the younger generation and designed in the form of a 'loft' with book stores, restaurants, cinemas and lots more. Located on Sukhumvit 55.

**Pratunam Centre.** Four floors of textile wholesalers, open to the public and with low prices for volume. Opposite the Amari Watergate Hotel on Phetburi Road. BTS: Chit Lom Station.

**President Tower Arcade.** Tailors, jewellers, Thai handicrafts at the Intercontinental Hotel. Located on Ploenchit Road. BTS: Chit Lom Station. Telephone 02 656 0444.

**River City.** The place for quality antiques and next to the River. Exhibitions are held in the central area. Located at 23 Trok Rongnamakaeng next to the river. Telephone 02 237 0077.

**Seacon Square.** One of the largest retail and entertainment complexes in the world. Robinsons and Lotus shopping centres are located in the complex. There is an amusement park for kids on the top floor. 904 Moo 6, Srinakarin Road, Nongbon. Telephone 02 721 8888.

**Siam Centre.** A modern "hip" mall that wants to be trendy, being promoted as "the magical glass box". 979 Rama I Road, next to Siam Discovery Centre opposite Siam Square. Telephone 02 658 1000.

**Siam Discovery Centre.** Modern home decorations, bookshop and fashion in a well laid out mall at Siam Square and connected to the Siam Centre. Children's play area on the top floor. Cinema with love seats. 989 Rama I Road and next to Siam Centre opposite Siam Square. BTS: Siam.

**Siam Paragon.** A new mall with shops and entertainment next to the Siam Centre. An upmarket food court and inside is the Siam Ocean World and an IMAX cinema. Rama I Road opposite Siam Centre and close to Central World Plaza. BTS: Siam.

**Siam Square.** Not a mall as such but a collection of popular shops and restaurants and cinemas. Rama I Road opposite Siam Centre. BTS: Siam.

**Silom Complex.** A large mall in the central business District. Silom Road. BTS:Sala Daeng Station. Telephone 02 632 1199.

**Times Square.** Designer labels, Asia Books and other high quality shops. Sukhumvit Road Soi 10-12 next to Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit.

## Markets

Bangkok Markets are a popular visitor attraction. You should bargain in all markets. Be fair, if you say a low price just to keep the seller happy and they say 'yes' the deal has been struck and you should honour your price. Of course the best bargains can be had when you are not all that bothered if you buy.

**Bo Be Market.** A wholesale clothing market on Krung Kasem Road open from early morning.

**Khao San Road.** Famous amongst backpackers and good for CDs, second-hand books and excitement. Starts from about 1pm and becomes very lively late at night.

**Khlong Toe.** Good for the ingredients for Thai cooking but come early as it closes down at midday.

**Lang Krasuang.** A market that sells used electronic goods is located near the Royal Hotel.

**Nakhom Kasem.** Commonly called "thieves market" and located in Chinatown it is good for antiques and second hand goods.

**Memorial Bridge Night Market.** Located at the Memorial Bridge in Chinatown, it has clothing and lots of other goods. It starts about 7pm and closes at 2am.

**Pahurat Cloth Market.** Sometimes called the Indian Market but located in Chinatown on Sampeng Lane with a good collection of goods from all over Asia.

**Pak Khlong Talad.** A busy floral market near Saphan Phut Bridge open day and night.

**Patpong Night Market.** Located at the centre of the sex show areas on Soi Patpong 1, this is a popular market in the evenings for fake goods and cheap clothing.

**Pratunam Market.** Next to the Indra Hotel on Ratchaprarop Road, the place to buy bargain clothes amongst the tight alley ways. It is a wholesale market so buy in volume and save lots of cash.

**Samyan.** A wet market close to Chinatown.

**Suan Chatuchak Weekend Market.** This area, near the Northern Bus Terminal (Morchit), is open land during the week but is a vast market at the weekend. The prime commodity is clothing but almost everything is sold there and it is well worth a visit. The size is 35 acres making it the biggest market in Bangkok and some argue the largest market in Asia. It opens from about 8am every Saturday and Sunday and closes around 5pm. Easy to reach by Sky Train.

**Suan Lum Night Bazaar.** A night bazaar selling many bargain goods. The food court and beer garden is popular. Located at Lumpini Park.

**Taling Chan Floating Market.** The real floating market, best reached by long-tailed boat, that operates on weekend only. A real secret and not included on the main tour programmes.

**Thewet Market.** A plant market near the flower market.

**Watch Market.** A specialist market for watches in Chinatown.

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