

Bangkok

Samut Prakan





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Baromratchonani Road

Tha Thewet
Thewet Market
Rama VIII Bridge

Tha Bang Lamphu
Tha Phra Ram Paet
Phra Sumeru Fortress

The Royal Barge
National Museum
Thon Buri
Railway Station
Siriraj Museum

Tha Phra Pinklao
Phra Pinklao Bridge
Phra A-thit Road

Sam Sen Road

Bang Lamphu
Wat Chana Songkhram
The National Gallery
Khaosan Road
Museum

Anun Amnarin Road

Tha Phra Chan
Thammasat University
Sanam Luang

Ratchadamnoen Avenue

Tha Phran Nok
Tha Maha Rat
Tha Chang

Wat Mahadhatu
Silpakorn University
Lak Mueang

Wat Ratchanatdaram

Tha Ratchaworadit
The Grand Palace &
Wat Phra Kaeo

Wat Rajbopit
Suan Saranrom

Lang Krasuang Market
The Grand Palace &
Wat Phra Kaeo

Isaraphap Road

Tha Tian
Wat Arun

Wat Pho
Maharat Road

Phahurat Area
Central
Merry Kings

Tha Rachini

Pak Khlong Talat Market

Tha Saphan Phut
Phra Phutthayotfa Bridge
Phra Pokklao Bridge

Tha Din Daeng

Intharaphithak Road

Prachathipok Road

Lat Ya Road

Robinson
Wongwian Yai (King Taksin Monument)
Merry Kings





 Thailand

 Unforgettable.



Bangkok
Samut Prakan







Wat Phra Kaeo

Bangkok

Bangkok offers visitors the opportunity to experience fascinating glimpses of Thailand's gentle culture amidst the bustle of a great and dynamic metropolis.

Bangkok was founded in 1782 by the first monarch of the present Chakri dynasty. It is now the country's spiritual, cultural, diplomatic, commercial and educational hub. It covers an area of more than 1,500 square kilometres, and it is home to approximately ten million people or more than 10% of the country's population.

Over the last few decades, Thailand's capital city, Bangkok, has changed into a modern, exciting and sophisticated city. It offers to visitors not only the cosmopolitan amenities they would expect from other big cities, but also a unique treasure trove of cultural attractions. Thailand, in the heart of South-east Asia, was never colonised and thus kept its unique culture and heritage intact. Bangkok offers visitors the opportunity to experience fascinating glimpses of Thailand's gentle culture amidst the bustle of a great and dynamic metropolis. This great city has had astounding success in combining the ancient and modern world.

For tourists, Bangkok has a feast of attractions to offer. The city is dotted with 400 glittering Buddhist temples of great beauty and fascination, magnificent palaces, classical dance extravaganzas, numerous shopping centres and traditional ways of life, especially along the "Venice of the East" timeless canals and the Chao Phraya River or the "River of Kings" winding through the city. It is worth taking a trip along its waters before exploring further into different canals to take a glimpse of old Bangkok.

Temples and Buildings of Cultural Interest

Bangkok takes great pride in its large number of fascinating temples around the capital. The major ones can be found in the Rattanakosin area on the western side of the city.

Shopping Centre on Rajdamri Road Kinaree Statue in Wat Phra Kaeo





The Grand Palace

Stupa in Wat Phra Kaeo

The Rattanakosin area is called an island but has been incorporated into the city. A trip there will allow visitors to see many attractions within a short distance of one another.

The Grand Palace & Wat Phra Kaeo (The Temple of the Emerald Buddha)

The splendid Grand Palace enclosure is home to many ornate temples and buildings with a variety of architectural styles. Gold leaf, reflective tiling and Buddha images are to be seen everywhere. The magnificent Wat Phra Kaeo, a treasure trove of Thai arts and home to the Emerald Buddha, Thailand's most revered Buddha image, is at the heart of the complex, but there is much else of interest to be seen in the Grand Palace compound, such as the Royal Thai Decorations and Coin Pavilion, where a permanent exhibition of royal regalia, decorations, medals and coins dating back to the early 11th century is on display.

The complex is open daily from 8.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. except on special days designated for royal ceremonies to be announced later. The admission fee is 200 baht which includes entry to Vimanmek Mansion and the Coin Pavilion. Visitors are advised that polite and modest dress is essential.
Tel. 0 2623 5500 ext. 3100
Website: www.palaces.thai.net

Ananda Samakhom Throne Hall

Located on Ratchadamnoen Nok Avenue, this beautiful Throne Hall was built in the reign of King Rama V using marble for construction in the Italian Renaissance architectural style. The ceiling of the dome is highlighted by exquisite fresco paintings of important royal functions during the reigns of King Rama I up to King Rama VI of the Royal House of Chakri.

Nowadays, Ananda Samakhom Throne Hall is primarily used to hold important royal and state ceremonies. Recently, the Hall welcomed leaders from many countries participating in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2003 hosted by the Royal Thai Government. The Hall opens only on the 2nd Saturday of January (Children's day). However, the outdoor portion is open daily from 9.30 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Wat Mahadhatu

Located across the street from Wat Phra Kaeo on the west side of Sanam Luang, Wat Mahadhatu, known as the Temple of the Great Relic, is the national centre for the Mahanikai monastic sect. The temple houses Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, one of the two highest seats of Buddhist learning in Thailand and offers meditation instruction in English for interested visitors. The temple is open daily and admission is free. For more information on the Meditation Centre, Tel. 0 2222 6011.

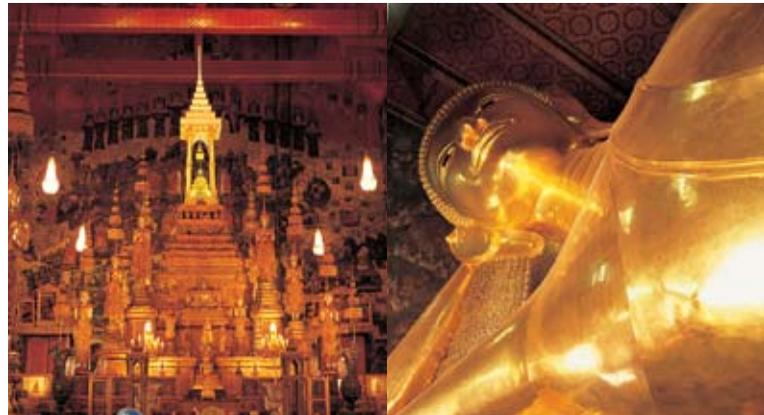
Vimanmek Mansion

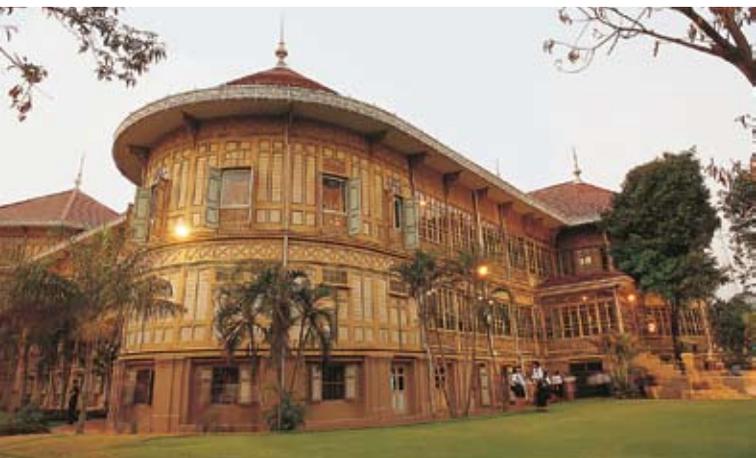
This is the largest golden teakwood building in the world, built in 1901 by King Chulalongkorn the Great (Rama V) as a royal residence. It is located behind the National Assembly Building. The 3-storey mansion contains 81 rooms, halls and antechambers. It was renovated and extensively restored by the order of H.M. Queen Sirikit to house priceless treasures and a collection of late 19th and early 20th century royal memorabilia.

Situated on the east wing of Vimanmek Mansion is Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall, a one-storey teak building built in the reign

The Emerald Buddha

The Reclining Buddha, Wat Pho





Vimanmek Mansion

of King Rama V. The Hall is now Thailand's first handicraft museum where Her Majesty the Queen collects handicraft masterpieces, created by members of her SUPPORT Foundation. In the museum, visitors will find handicrafts such as nielloware, Thai silk with various unique designs, Liphao basketry made from finely split jungle vines like beautiful trays and handbags studded with jewels in different designs such as the green metallic wings of an indigenous beetle.

Near the entrance to Vimanmek Mansion is the Royal Carriage Museum with splendid examples of ancient horse-drawn carriages.

Vimanmek Mansion is open daily from 9.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m. Tickets are available until 3.00 p.m. There are Thai classical dance performances at 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Admission is 100 baht. For visitors with a ticket to the Grand Palace, admission is free. Golf car rental is 400 baht per hour. Polite and modest attire is required. Tel. 0 2280 5928 Website: www.vimanmek.com

Royal Elephant National Museum

This is the first building on the right when entering the Vimanmek compound, containing a life-like model of the white elephant. The myth and legend of the white elephant began in Southeast Asia - The Land of the White Elephant. In the story of the Lord Buddha, the white elephant is connected to fertility and knowledge. On the eve of giving birth to the Lord Buddha, his mother dreams that a white elephant comes to present her

with a lotus, a symbol of purity and knowledge.

The white elephant is above an ordinary tusker. In Thailand, this creature is sacred as it represents the prosperity of the town. Indeed, the Siamese put the white elephant on their new flag. When elephants were no longer so vital for warfare, elephant hunts became less common, and fewer of the rare albino elephants were found. The Siamese king passed a law demanding that any white elephant found in the kingdom had to be presented to the king. He sent out scouting parties and offered rewards. The discovery of a white elephant became a special event, a time for national celebration. In this museum, the visitor can see pictures of elephants promoted to the title of "royal elephants" by past kings. The museum opens everyday from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. Admission is 5 baht. For visitors with a ticket to the Grand Palace, admission is free. Tel. 0 2282 3336

Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha)

Neighbouring the Grand Palace enclave, this temple is considered the largest in Bangkok. The famous Reclining Buddha, constructed in 1832, is enshrined in this temple. This 46-metre long and 15-metre high gold-plated Reclining Buddha, the eyes and feet inlaid with mother-of-pearl brings to mind the Lord Buddha's entry into Nirvana. The sole also shows 108 auspicious characteristics of the true "Buddha".

Wat Pho was also the first centre of public education in the Kingdom. Nowadays, it is an important centre for the teaching and administering of traditional Thai massage. Wat Pho is open daily from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and the entry fee is 20 baht. Modest attire is required. Tel. 0 2222 7831, 0 2225 9595

Wat Pho

Wat Phra Kaeo





Sanam Luang

Website: www.watpho.com

San Lak Mueang (City Pillar Shrine)

On the southeast corner of Sanam Luang, this shrine houses a city pillar placed there by King Rama I to mark his new capital, Bangkok. It is reputed by many to have the power of granting wishes. The city pillar is made of the wood of “Javanese Cassia” and contains the city’s horoscope.

Sanam Luang (Phramen Ground)

Sanam Luang, an oval public area in front of the Grand Palace, is used for various royal ceremonies including Royal Cremations and the Royal Ploughing Ceremony held each May. Located near its borders are several important institutions such as the Fine Arts Department, Thammasat University, Bangkok National Museum and National Gallery.

Bangkok National Museum

Near the National Theatre and not far from Sanam Luang, one of the largest and most comprehensive museums in Southeast Asia, the National Museum houses an important and superb collection of artefacts and objets d’art ranging from the Bronze Age to the Bangkok period. The complex consists of several old and beautiful buildings once used as a palace. The museum is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m., except Monday, Tuesday and national holidays. The admission fee is 40 baht. Tel. 0 2224 1307 Website: www.thailandmuseum.com

The National Gallery

Located across from the National Museum on Chao Fa Road, this building was once the old Royal Mint and was converted into the National Gallery in 1974. It displays permanent traditional paintings and contemporary paintings by leading Thai artists. There are regular temporary exhibitions. The admission fee is 30 baht and a package ticket is 80 baht.

It opens on Wednesday to Sunday from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Tel. 0 2281 2224, 0 2282 2639 Ext. 14, 17

Website: www.thailandmuseum.com

The Queen Sirikit Arts Exhibition Centre

The gallery, located on Phan Fa intersection, was established in response to the gracious wish of H.M. the Queen to provide a permanent place for the exhibition of a wide range of visual arts - a public gallery deemed an important means for the promotion of Thai culture and Thai artists as well as younger talents with exceptional skill and obvious potential. Gallery hours are from 10.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. daily (except Wednesday). Admission is 20 baht.

Tel. 0 2281 5360 Website: www.queengallery.com

Silpakorn University

Beside Sanam Luang is Silpakorn University, the first university of art in Thailand. All kinds of art have been passed down from generation to generation, keeping Thailand abreast of changes in modern art.

Professor Silpha Bhirasri (1892 - 1962), an Italian artist serving the Royal Government, committed himself wholeheartedly to developing art education in Thailand. He was the founder of this university.

National Gallery

Bangkok National Museum





Wat Arun

The University has 4 galleries which display many kinds of traditional and contemporary arts such as paintings, sculptures, graphic designs, and architecture. These works are by students and faculty members. In addition, leading Thai and foreign artists also have exhibitions here.

Art Galleries

- *The Art Gallery of the Faculty of Painting Sculpture and Graphic Design*

Gallery hours 9.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. from Tuesday to Sunday.

Tel. 0 2225 8991, 0 2221 0820

Website: www.bhirasrigallery.com

- *The Gallery of Silpakorn University*

Gallery hours 9.00 a.m. - 7.00 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

Tel. 0 2221 3841 Website: www.art-centre.su.ac.th

- *The Gallery of Art and Design, Faculty of Decorative Art*

Gallery hours 10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday.

Tel. 0 2224 5874

- *Phra Phrombhichitr Gallery (Architecture)*

Gallery hours 10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. from Monday to Saturday.

Wat Arun

(The Temple of Dawn)

This famous Bangkok landmark is on the Thon Buri side of the Chao Phraya River, directly opposite the Grand Palace complex and easily accessible by boat from the Bangkok side. The temple dates back to the Ayutthaya period. The temple was enlarged by King Rama II and King Rama III. Renovations were completed in the reign of King Rama IV. The Emerald Buddha was enshrined in this temple for a brief period before King Rama I built the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaeo on the Bangkok side.

The landmark of this temple is a 79-metre-tall massive central pagoda, “Phra Prang”, and four smaller ones at each corner. The ornamentation of the central pagoda consists of encrusted pieces of porcelain which sparkle in the sun. Despite its name, the best photographic opportunities are in the late afternoon with the sun setting in the red sky behind the temple.

To visit the temple, shuttle boats from the Tha Tian Pier at the south-west side of the Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaeo area are provided regularly. The Chao Phraya Express Boat stops at the Tha Tian Pier and there are several Thon Buri canal tours, which include the temple. Enter the temple from 7.00 a.m. to 5.20 p.m. for 20 baht. Website: www.watarun.org



Wat Benchamabophit



The Golden Buddha, Wat Trimit

Wat Trimit

(Temple of the Golden Buddha)

Located at the end of Chinatown's Yaowarat Road, this temple houses the extraordinary 700-year-old golden Buddha image, a seated figure composed entirely of five and a half tons of gold. Previously, it had been covered with plaster and once broken off, the true treasure beneath was suddenly revealed - the figure was found to be composed entirely of gold. It is now an important and sacred Buddha image of unique beauty. The temple is open daily from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. with an admission fee of 20 baht.

Website: www.wattrimit.com

Wat Benchamabophit

(The Marble Temple)

Situated on Si Ayutthaya Road, near the intersection with Rama V Road, this unique marble temple was constructed during the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868 - 1910 A.D.). Its proportions are classically beautiful, with European influences evident in its stained glass windows and the use of Carrara marble. The temple houses a superb cloister collection of bronze Buddha images and many reckon the temple to be one of the finest in the world as far as its craftsmanship and architectural splendour are concerned. It attracts large numbers of visitors every year. Admission is 20 baht. The temple is open daily from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Wat Suthat

Located on Bamrung Mueang Road, the temple is renowned for its superb murals and elaborate woodcarving door panels created during the reign of King Rama II. The preaching hall contains a collection of gilded Buddha images. The temple was

constructed in the early 19th century and there are four smaller chapels constructed on each of its corners.

The main Buddha image, Phra Si Sakayamuni was originally cast in the Sukhothai period (1238-1438 A.D.) Eight-metres tall, on a six-metre pedestal, the image is the largest bronze-cast one in the kingdom and considered one of the most beautiful Buddha images in Thailand. The cloisters within the complex are pleasantly quiet and contain many Buddha images.

With an admission fee of 20 baht, the temple is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Website: www.watsuthat.org

The Giant Swing

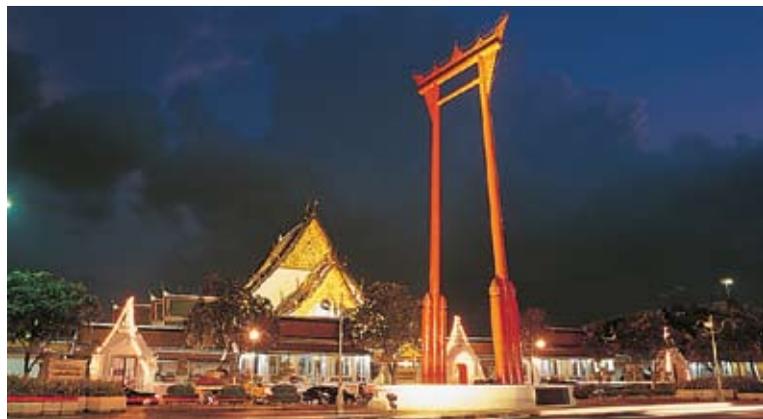
This unusual 200-year-old red swing outside Wat Suthat was once used in Brahmanic ceremonies to honour the highest God Shiva. Furthermore, it was used competitively in a contest designed to seek the brave man who could swing the highest to seize a money bag from a 25-metre-high pole. But the contest was outlawed many years ago, when accidents and deaths became too common. www.watsuthat.org

Wat Rajbopit

South of Wat Suthat is the impressive Wat Rajbopit, built in the reign of King Rama V (1868-1910 A.D.) Its most striking features are the 5-colour porcelain mosaics encrusted in the main stupa. The architecture of the main chapel is in Thai-style, while its interior decorations reflect a European influence with some Gothic details. Visitors will particularly be impressed with the delicate mother-of-pearl inlays and the exquisite bas-reliefs on the window and door panels of the main chapel. The temple is open daily from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Admission is free.

Wat Saket

The Giant Swing



(The Golden Mount)

Located near Ratchadamnoen Avenue, this temple houses a 58-metre-high stupa surmounted by a golden cupola. The relic of the Lord Buddha is enshrined here. Visitors can climb the 318 steps to the cupola. Before entering the cupola area, however, it is interesting to see Thais placing flowers, lighting candles and paying homage to Buddha images. This room beneath the cupola is redolent of sandalwood and incense and attracts many Thai visitors.

The climb to the top gradually reveals views of the temple below and the panorama of Bangkok. For only 10 baht to enter the enclosure at the top of the edifice, the visitor can see the golden cupola entirely covered with small golden squares. These reflect the sun which give the building its name the Golden Mount.

On each side of the square enclosure, a panoramic view of Bangkok is offered, especially of the Rattanakosin area, the enclave which houses the Grand Palace and other historic buildings. The Golden Mount understandably attracts many visitors. It is an unusual and pleasant experience to enjoy the silence of the cupola area in this bustling city. The temple is open daily from 7.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. and admission is 10 baht.

Wat Ratchanatdaram

Located behind the King Rama III Memorial Statue on Ratchadamnoen Avenue, this temple is considered one of the most original temples in Bangkok. It was constructed during the reign of King Rama III and completed in recent years by the Fine Arts Department. The temple contains a pyramid-shaped pink Loha Prasat (metal-spined Pagoda) inspired by the one in Sri Lanka. The Loha Prasat stands 36-metres high with 37 surrounding spires, the only one of its kind left in the world.

The Golden Mount



Wat Rajbopit



Wat Ratchanatdaram

In front of this temple, there is a memorial statue of King Rama III and a Pavilion “Maha Chetsadabodin” which is used for performing an official welcoming ceremony to the visit of Heads of States. On the opposite side of the temple, there is Mahakan Fortress which is a part of an ancient city wall. The temple is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. Admission is free.

Wat Indharavihan

On Wisutkasat Road, visitors will enjoy a visit to this temple with its impressive 32-metre-high standing Buddha image and other buildings within its complex which are well worth seeing. The temple is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and there is no charge for admission.

Website: www.watindhara.org

Other Temples of Interest

Wat Si Sudaram or Wat Chi Pa Khao

The temple was built during the Ayutthaya period and renovated by King Rama I. The interesting buildings including Tam Nak Daeng (a pavilion), Sala Kan Parian (a sermon hall) and the residence of Sunthon Phu (the greatest poet of the Rattanakosin period, designated by UNESCO as a classic poet of the world), are located within the temple compound. Moreover, visitors can enjoy feeding a number of freshwater fish here.

Wat Chalok

Located on Khlong Bangkok Noi in Nonthaburi province, this temple is assumed to have been constructed during the



Wat Pho Bang-o



Wat Indharavihan

Sukhothai period as some Buddha images in the Sukhothai style were found in front of the main chapel (Ubosot). Open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and admission is free.

Wat Pho Bang-o

Constructed during the reign of King Rama III, this temple has a chapel with a wooden roof and is famous for its mural inside the chapel. The mural was painted several centuries ago. Open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Wat Bang Oi Chang

This temple houses a 200-year-old Buddha footprint, which was found by Phra Khru Nawa Kam Koson (the first abbot of this temple) while travelling in Phitsanulok province during 1986. The temple is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and admission is free.

Wat Suwannaram

Visitors will be fascinated with the murals depicting the life of the Lord Buddha and the Buddha image of Subduing Mara (the Buddhist devil) inside the main chapel of this large royal temple. The temple was constructed during the reign of King Rama I and subsequently renovated during the reign of King Rama III. These works of art from the early Rattanakosin period (19th century) are considered some of the best surviving mural paintings in Bangkok.

Wat Kao Fa

This ancient temple is located in an open area next to Khlong

Bangkok Noi. According to archaeologists, many buildings and art objects here were constructed in the Ayutthaya style; for example, the Ubosot, the Buddha image, the boundary stones, the boundary wall, the Chedi behind the Ubosot and the Chedi with the 12-sided pillars. The temple was later renovated during the Rattanakosin period. The temple is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and admission is free.

Wat Prasat

Built during the late Ayutthaya period, the temple is well known for its gable made of carved timber and well-preserved mural painting made by artisans of the Nonthaburi School of Painting. Visitors who arrive by boat have to walk about 2 kilometres through orchards from the pier. Open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Wat Amphawan

Constructed during the late Ayutthaya period, this temple houses Ho Trai (a magnificent Thai-style wooden scripture hall), which is situated in the middle of a pond. Open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.

Further Attractions

Phra Sumeru Fortress

(Also spelled Phra Sumen)

Located on the corner where Phra Athit Road and Phra Sumeru Road meet, this fortress was constructed in the reign of King Rama I in 1783 along with 14 other fortresses and battlements surrounding the capital. Its shape is an octagonal one with ~~the same design~~ ^{inside} the walls, there are steps leading up to the





Suan Pakkad Palace & Museum

fortress. Altogether, there are 38 rooms for ammunition and weapons. The roof collapsed during the reign of King Rama IV or V, but was restored by the Fine Arts Department in the early 1980s using old photographs as a guide. Nowadays, there is a small park surrounding the fortress. Visitors can enjoy a pleasant walk along the Chao Phraya River all the way to Phra Pinklao Bridge.

Suan Pakkad Palace & Museum

Located on Si Ayutthaya Road not far from the intersection of Phaya Thai, Suan Pakkad Palace is the former residence of Princess Chumbhot of Nagara Svarga, one of Thailand's leading gardeners and art collectors. In the compound of the palace, visitors will see 8 traditional Thai houses. Collections include: Asian art and antiques, seashells, mineral crystals, pottery and bronze objects from the prehistoric burial ground Ban Chiang, in Northeast Thailand. The complex is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and the entrance fee is 100 baht. Tel. 0 2245 6368 Website: www.suanpakkad.com

Royal Barges National Museum

Located on Khlong Bangkok Noi off the Chao Phraya River and not far from the Phra Pinklao Bridge, this shed has a display of several ornately carved royal barges with unique designs and decorative details. These barges are used on royal and official occasions and formerly served as war vessels.

The most beautiful and well-known barge "Suphannahong" is used by the king only when he makes his royal river procession



Suphannahong Royal Barge

for the Kathin Ceremony, a Buddhist tradition of offering robes to monks, usually held during October or November. There is also "Narai Songsuban Ratchakan Thi Kao", the latest royal barge especially built on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of His Majesty the King's Accession to the throne in 1996. The royal barges were also used during the Rattanakosin bicentennial celebrations and the reception ceremony of the APEC 2003.

The shed is open to the public every day from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. There is an admission fee of 30 baht and extra charges for shooting videos and photographs (100 baht per camera). Tel. 0 2424 0004

The Erawan Shrine

At the corner of Ratchadamri and Phloen Chit Roads, countless Thais and other Asian tourists who seek good luck visit this very popular shrine, as it is reputed to have the power of granting wishes. Many come to pay homage by offering flower garlands and pray to the four-headed image of the Hindu God "Brahma" to grant their wishes. To reinforce the wish or express appreciation to the God, they will donate wooden elephants or hire a group of Thai classical dancers to perform a dance with live music. The number of dancers and the length of the performance are directly tied to the generosity of their donation. All around plumes of incense smoke rise so thickly that they overcome the traffic fumes at this busy intersection.

Prasat Museum



The Erawan Shrine



Jim Thompson's House

Located at No. 9 Krung Thep Kritha Road Soi 4, Bang Kapi in the eastern area of the city, the museum houses a vast collection of artefacts from prehistoric to Rattanakosin periods (from 1782 A.D. to the present). Within the museum complex, there are various styles of architecture, like a baroque building, a smaller replica of the Red Palace in the National Museum, and a replica of Ho Tri Klang Nam (Tri Pitaka Pavilion - a library for Buddhist scriptures) of Wat Yai Suwannaram. Prasat Museum is open daily from 10.30 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. except Monday, with an admission fee of 500 baht a person (in case of one person, a minimum admission fee of 1,000 baht will be charged). The tours run from 9.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. (about 2 hours) and must be arranged in advance.
Tel. 0 2379 3601, 0 2379 3607

Jim Thompson's House

An early partner in the Oriental Hotel, Jim Thompson, an American serving here, decided to devote his energies to develop a thriving Thai silk industry. Due to his efforts, Thai silk is now famous all over the world and justly renowned for its quality, colours and patterns. Thompson, trained as an architect and gardener, also built a fine collection of traditional Thai houses, fashioned into one dwelling where he lived during his lifetime.

After his tragic death, the house remains preserved as a museum containing a priceless collection of Asian objets d'art. The museum, located centrally at Soi Kasemsan 2 on Rama I Road, is accessible by bus, taxi and the sky train. Entrance fee is 100 baht. The museum opens daily from 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. with

the last tour at 4.30 p.m. Tel. 0 2215 0122, 0 2216 7368.
Website: www.jimthompsonhouse.com

Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute

(The Snake Farm)

Located near Chulalongkorn Hospital, on the corner of Henri Dunant and Rama IV Roads, the Snake Farm contains an interesting collection of poisonous snakes which are "milked" for their venom from which anti-snake bite serum is produced.

It is open from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on weekdays and 8.30 a.m. to 12.00 a.m. on holidays. Visitors can watch the venom extracted from the snakes by experts, in demonstrations at 11.00 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. on weekdays and at 10.30 a.m. on holidays. The admission fee is 70 baht. Tel. 0 2225 0161-4
Website: www.redcross.or.th

Dusit Zoo

Situated on Rama V Road, in the Dusit District, near the Royal Plaza, Bangkok's oldest zoo contains a collection of popular African and Asian mammals and birds in a botanical garden. With an additional section for children, it is ideal for a family outing.

The zoo is open every day from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. The admission fee is 30 baht for adults and 5 baht for children.
Tel. 0 2281 2000, 0 2282 7111-3 Ext. 128
Website: www.zoothailand.org

Kamthieng House Museum

Located in the garden of the Siam Society on Sukhumvit Road Soi 21 (Asok), this newly renovated and refurbished 200-year-old northern Thai-Lanna-style wooden house contains a collection of traditional tools and implements used by Northern Thai

Dusit Zoo





Bangkok Dolls Museum

farmers and fishermen.

It is open from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. from Tuesday to Saturday. The admission fee is 100 baht. Tel. 0 2661 6470-7
Website: www.siam-society.org

Bangkok Dolls Museum

Located at 85 Soi Ratchataphan (Soi Mo Leng), off Ratchaprarop Road, the museum houses an interesting collection of handmade Thai and foreign dolls. Bangkok Dolls have also won several awards for their miniature creations. The museum is open daily from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. with free admission, except for Sunday and national holidays. Tel. 0 2245 3008 Website: www.bangkokdolls.com

Museum of Imaging Technology

Located in the same building with the Faculty of Science, Chulalongkorn University, this is the first camera and photograph museum established in Thailand and Asia. Historic photographs and imaging equipment, as well as its technological evolution are on display. Modern photographic arts, techniques and printing technology are also exhibited. Admission fee is 100 baht and the museum is open Monday to Friday from 10.00 a.m. to 3.30 p.m.

Siriraj Museum

Siriraj is one of Bangkok's most prestigious hospitals. It has another claim to fame, its Forensics Museum, a little chamber of horrors. Among several other museums, the best ones to see

are the Museum of Criminology and the Museum of Anatomy. Here the visitor can meet *Si Oui*, or rather his embalmed body. This serial killer had the appalling habit of eating a victim's liver. Now he stands forever in a glass case, defiant to the end. The bodies of various other criminals, the embalmed corpses of suicides, the victims of hideous accidents and murders are also on display. There are photographs of the results of accidents as well.

In the Museum of Anatomy, visitors can see embalmed legs, arms, internal organs and organs of malformed humans. If this is not enough, move on to the Museum of Parasitology. The museum is fascinating, but only for those who have a very strong stomach. Entry to the Siriraj Museum is free and it is open from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. on weekdays.
Website: www.bma.go.th/bmaeng/bangkoknoi/

National Science Museum

The astonishing geometric architecture of the National Science Museum attracts not only children but also adults for its entertaining combination of science and technology. The museum provides both education and entertainment, along with exhibits of technological advancements in agriculture by local Thais. The museum is divided into two halls: Hall I is about scientific knowledge, and nature from around the globe is on display in Hall II. Admission for each hall is 50 baht per adult, or two for 60 baht. Children under 12 get in free. Open from Tuesday to Sunday 9.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.
Tel. 0 2577 9999
Website: www.nsm.or.th

Science Centre

Situated near the Eastern Bus Terminal (Ekamai) on Sukhumvit Road, this exhibition centre houses an interesting aquarium, computer world, a planetarium, as well as many devices created for fun and education. The science centre consists of two sections. The first is the Bangkok Planetarium where you can explore the stars and sky. Open on Monday, Tuesday at 11.00 a.m. / 2.00 p.m. and Saturday, Sunday at 10.00 a.m. / 11.00 a.m. / 1.00 p.m. / 2.00 p.m. The second part is the science exhibition centre. Open Tuesday to Friday from 8.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. The admission fee for adults is 40 baht and 10 baht for children.

Lumphini Park



Lumphini Park

The largest park in Bangkok is considered the “green lung” of the city. It is situated between Wireless and Ratchadamri Roads. Lined with trees and shrubs, many paths run through the park, and an artificial lake lies in the centre, where boats can be rented. For Thais and visitors, it is an attractive place to visit and relax. In the morning, joggers use its many paths for keeping fit, and many Thai-Chinese people come here to do Tai Chi. There are restaurants within the park and plenty of places to find a cool drink. Entrances to the park are at all four of its corners. Admission is free, and it is open from 5.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m.

Suan Luang Rama IX Park



Siam Park



Dream World

Opened in 1987 on the east side of Bangkok on Sukhumvit Soi 103 (Udomsuk) is this 200-acre botanical garden, Suan Luang Rama IX Park. It was built to commemorate the 60th birthday of King Rama IX. Here is a haven of peace and quietness, beautiful flowers, shrubs and trees where you can enjoy some pristine moments. The admission fee is 10 baht and the park is open from 5.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. Tel. 0 2328 1972, 0 2328 1395 Website: www.suanluangrama9.or.th

Siam Park

On the outskirts of Bangkok in Min Buri district lies this very popular water and amusement park. Some of its attractions are a man-made sea with artificial surf for swimmers, whirlpools, fountains, waterfalls and towering slides. Other attractions include a children’s playground, aviaries, an open zoo, a botanical garden and plenty of places where refreshments are available. Opening hours are 10.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Tel. 0 2919 7200-19 Website: www.siamparkcity.com

Dream World

Situated on Rangsit - Ong-kharak Road near the airport, this classic European-style fantasyland, theme park with miniature versions of legendary sites and a huge variety of modern amusements is ideal for the family. It is open Monday to Friday from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and Saturday to Sunday from 10.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. Tel. 0 2533 1152 Ext. 156 Website: www.dreamworld-th.com



Safari World

Safari World

On the perimeter of Bangkok towards Min Buri is this 300-acre complex ideal for a family trip, divided into four sections, Safari Park, with African and Asian mammals, Bird Park, Macaw Island and Games Corner. The complex is open daily from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

Tel. 0 2518 1000-19

Website: www.safariworld.com

The Chao Phraya River and Bangkok's Canals (Klong)

In the nineteenth century, Bangkok's had a complex network of canals that served as the major arteries of transportation. The population drew upon the river not only for transport but also for accommodation and trade, with stilted houses thronging the riverbanks and foreign ships arriving in Bangkok. Hence, Bangkok was once known as "The Venice of the East".

The river and canals can still be conveniently explored and offer the visitor a glimpse of that waterborne life of yesteryear.

Express Boat Service

To connect Bangkok with the neighbouring province of Nonthaburi, the express boat service, with fares depending on the colour of the flag on the boat, is provided from the terminal pier near Krung Thep (Bangkok) Bridge. It stops at various piers on both sides of the Chao Phraya River to collect many Bangkokians who take the boat for commuting to and from their places of work.

Major sights to be seen from the river include the Temple of



Chao Phraya River

Dawn, the Grand Palace and Thammasat University. The piers for these sights are Tha Chang and Tha Phra Chan. This bustle-free river journey is a welcome difference from the traffic-ridden fumes of the capital, and offer a different and refreshing view of the capital with a fresh river breeze. The express boat service operates daily from 6.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. Tel. 0 2623 6001-3 Ext. 100, 106 Website: www.chaophrayaboat.com

Klong Mon

Boats leave every thirty minutes, daily, from 6.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. from the Tha Tian Pier behind Wat Pho. The fare is minimal. This trip is very picturesque, allowing the passenger fascinating insights into the Thai way of life, including views of canal-side temples, orchards, orchid farms and fascinating insights into the water-borne life of the inhabitants who live along the canal banks.

Klong Bang Khu Wiang and Klong Bang Yai

Inexpensive ferries leave Tha Chang Pier near the Grand Palace every 20 minutes between 6.15 a.m. and 8.00 p.m. Visitors will enjoy various scenic attractions including canal-side temples, the Royal Barge Boat Shed, Thai-style houses and the early morning Khu Wiang Floating Market which operates between 4.00 a.m. and 7.00 a.m.

Chao Phraya River Dinner Cruises

Riverine Bangkok offers some of the capital's most superb sights, particularly at night when the weather is cooler and re-

flections from the water bestow upon Bangkok a magical effect of flickering lights and shadows. An ideal way of combining dining with river enchantments is to enjoy a dinner cruise along the Chao Phraya.

- *Loy Nava Co., Ltd.*,
Tel. 0 2437 4932, 0 2437 7329 Website: www.loynava.com
- *Yok Yor Marina*
Tel. 0 2863 0565-6 Website: www.yokyor.co.th
- *Khanab Nam Restaurant*
Tel. 0 2433 6611, 0 2424 8453-4
- *Mam Mos (Ban Khun Luang)*
Tel. 0 2243 3235, 0 2241 2282, 0 2241 0928
- *Riverside Co., Ltd.*
Tel. 0 2883 1588 Website: www.riversidebangkok.com
- *Manohra*
Tel. 0 2476 0021-2 Ext. 1416 Website: www.manohracruises.com
- *Dairy Queen*
Tel. 0 2921 8670-5
- *Supatra River House*
Tel. 0 2411 0305
Website: www.supatrariverhouse.com

In addition, many riverside hotels offer their own trips along with useful information on finding suitable cruises.

Special Interests

Muai Thai

With feet, arms, fists and knees used in the fights, the unique martial art of “Muai Thai” has caught on in many countries. Boxers undergoing long periods of specialised training are immensely fit and strong although slight in build. It comes as no surprise when much larger men without the specialised training, feeling that they can easily win, find themselves on their backs in a few seconds when up against these steely-muscled fighters.

“Muai Thai” can be seen throughout the week at two major boxing stadiums, Lumpini (Tel. 0 2251 4303) on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday and at Ratchadamnoen (Tel. 0 2281 4205) on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday. And at the Channel 7 Stadium (Tel. 0 2272 0010) only on Saturdays.

Programmes generally feature eight bouts and commence around 6.00 p.m. Admission fees, apart from ringside seats, are reasonable.

Meditation

Meditation is one of the most popular aspects of Buddhism,



Muai Thai

practised by numerous Thais and laymen as a means of inspiring inner peace and well-being. The World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) located on Sukhumvit Road between Soi 22 and 24 is the most convenient and useful place to learn about Thai Buddhism and meditation practised in certain Bangkok temples.

- *WFB meditation*
Tel. 0 2661 1284-7 Website: www.wfb-hq.org
- *Wat Mahadhatu*
Tel. 0 2222 6011
- *Association for the Science of Creative Intelligence*
Sukhumvit Road, Soi 21
Tel. 0 2258 3257 Website: www.tm.org
- *Young Buddhist Association of Thailand*
Phetkasem Road Tel. 0 2413 1706 Website: www.ybat.org
- *House of Dhamma*
Lat Phrao Soi 15 Tel. 0 2511 0439
Website: www.angelfire.com/al/dhamma/home.html

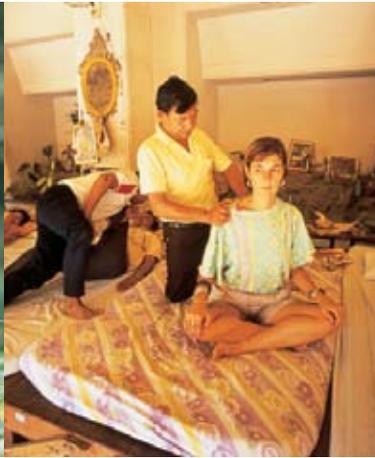
Entertainment

Thai and international cultural performances including symphonies, ballet, mime, modern dramas, jazz and pop concerts from world-famous artists are often staged in Bangkok. Details of current events are regularly advertised in Bangkok’s major English-language newspapers or www.thaiticketmaster.com.

- *National Theatre (at Sanam Luang)*
Tel. 0 2224 1342, 0 2225 8457-8, 0 2222 1352
- *Thailand Cultural Center (on Ratchadaphisek Road)*
Tel. 0 2247 0028 Website: www.thaiculturalcenter.com



Meditation



Thai Massage



Suan Lum Night bazaar

- *Traditional Thai Puppet Theatre (Suan Lum Night bazaar)*
Tel.0 2252 9683-4 Website: www.joelouis-theatre.com
- *Sala Chaloe Krung (on Charoenkrung Road)*
Tel. 0 2225 8758
- *Patravadi Theatre (near Wat Rakhang)*
Tel. 0 2412 7287
Website: www.patravaditheatre.com
- *Queen Sirikit National Convention Center*
(on New Ratchadaphisek Road) Tel. 0 2229 3000-9
Website: www.qsncc.co.th
- *BEC TERO Hall (Suan Lum Night Bazaar)*
Tel. 0 2252 9292 Website: www.bec-terohall.com
- *Impact Arena, Exhibition and Convention Center*
(Muang Thong Thani)
Tel. 0 2504 5050 Website: www.impact.co.th

Traditional Thai Massage

This therapeutic and highly soothing form of massage purportedly evolved from Brahmin hermit ascetics some 2,500 years ago, who relieved the stress of extended periods of meditation by adopting certain postures. Today, those practised in the art can bring great relief, reduce muscle stress and bring a sense of well-being to the body.

The best-known school of Thai traditional massage is located in Wat Pho (Tel. 0 2221 2974, 0 2221 3686), where a two-week course is taught for anyone interested in mastering this unique and fascinating art. Major hotels and spas in Bangkok also provide Thai massage services.

Thai Cooking

Thai cuisine is rapidly increasing in popularity worldwide and there is an increasing interest in learning the art. Visitors wishing to learn how to cook Thai food can contact:

- *Thai Cooking School at the Oriental Hotel*
Tel. 0 2659 9000
Website: www.mandarin-oriental.com/bangkok
- *Modern Housewife Centre*
Tel. 0 2279 2831-4
- *The Landmark Hotel*
Tel. 0 2253 4259 Website: www.landmarkbangkok.com
- *UFM Food Centre*
Tel. 0 2259 0620-30 Website: www.ufmeducation.com

Golfing Opportunities around Bangkok and Samut Prakan

Over the last two decades, there has been an explosion in golf course building, as more land has become available for exploitation. Today, Bangkok and Samut Prakan can boast many modern, professionally run courses, many of them designed by famous golfing names from Europe and America.

Golfing in Thailand is a golfer's dream. The courses are well-designed, very cheap compared to their Western counterparts, and caddies are always available. During the week, they are far less crowded than courses in other countries. Most courses allow the casual visitors to play, whether they are members or not. Here is a selection of the many courses available.



Thai Cuisine

- *Bangpoo Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2324 0320-9 Website: www.bangpooogolf.com
- *Green Valley Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2312 5883-9 Website: www.greenvalleybangkok.com
- *Kiarti Thane Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2707 1700-9
Website: www.kiartithaneecountryclub.com
- *Krung Thep Krittha Hua Mark, within city limits*
Tel. 0 2379 4954, 0 2379 3732
- *Natural Park Ramindra Golf Club*
Tel. 0 2914 1930-39 Ext. 133,134
- *Lakewood Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2312 6278-86
Website: www.lakewoodcountryclub.co.th
- *Muang Kaew Golf Course, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2316 3918-21 Website: www.muangkaewgolf.com
- *Navatane Golf Club, on outskirts of the city*
Tel. 0 2376 1034-6
- *Panya Park, skirting city limits*
Tel. 0 2989 4200-23 Website: www.panyagolf.com
- *President Golf Club, within city limits*
Tel. 0 2988 7555-63 Website: www.president.co.th
- *Subhapruek Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2317 0801, 0 2316 2636
Website: www.subhapruekgolf.com
- *Thana City Golf and Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2336 0568-74, 0 2336 1968-78
Website: www.golf.tnet.co.th/thanacity

- *Thanont Golf View and Sports Club, within city limits*
Tel. 0 2916 9100-4 Website: www.thanontgolf.com
- *The Royal Golf and Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2738 0133-7 Website: www.rogc.com
- *The Vintage Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2707 3820-7 Website: www.vintagethaigolf.com
- *Unico Golf Club, within city limits*
Tel. 0 2379 3752, 0 2379 3780
- *Windmill Park Country Club, Samut Prakan*
Tel. 0 2316 9591-2
Website: www.summitwindmillgolfclub.com

Cinemas

Thai, Western and Asian films with English subtitles are regularly screened at Bangkok's many cinemas. The cinemas are scrupulously clean and modern. A regular movie ticket costs around 100-120 baht. Details of current showings can be found in Bangkok's English-language press.

Shopping

Smart people arrive in Bangkok with empty suitcases and go back with full ones. The reason is that Bangkok is one of the world's best shopping centres. It has many advantages: quality, cheap prices, skilled artisans and friendly good-natured bargaining.

Favourite purchases include Thai silks and cottons, modern and traditional jewellery featuring precious gemstones such as sapphires, rubies, emeralds and diamonds, semi-precious stones

Golfing



including opal, jade, topaz, turquoise and zircon, nielloware, silverware, pewterware, ceramics, specially-fired celadon, woodcarved paintings, custom-tailored clothing and hundreds of other special buys.

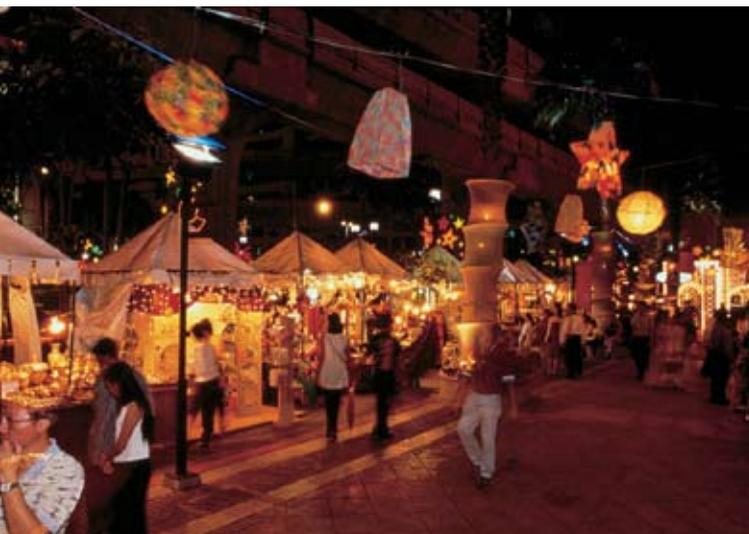
There is also the selection of authentic Thai handicrafts and contemporary crafts and housewares from “One Tambon One Product (OTOP)”, a project to promote quality cottage industry goods and folk handicrafts in Thailand.

Shopping in Thailand is divided into two types and several areas. Visitors can buy at street stalls and pick up clothing at very cheap prices, (but with no guarantees) or they can buy in plazas, shopping centres and supermarkets where prices are fixed. Surprisingly, street shopping such as at the Chatuchak Weekend Market often gives good value and quality and the prices are relatively low, although bargaining is expected and carried out with humour and with a smile. Supermarkets, plazas and supermarkets offer good value too compared to the West. Service is excellent and the establishment often contains cinema complexes and other entertainment areas, including excellent eating out facilities.

Patpong/Suriwong/Silom Areas

Major hotels in this area include the Montien, the Pan Pacific, the Sofitel and the Dusit Thani. Silom Road is the main artery of Bangkok’s commercial heart and paralleled by Suriwong Road, while Patpong runs crosswise between the two. At night, this area has a lot of vivid entertainment. In addition to housing

Ratchadamri Road



Patpong Night Bazaar

Chinatown

dozens of specialist shops and boutiques representing all the major products, this area also boasts many branches of well-known retailers and several shopping plazas. Street stalls also abound, most notably at Patpong’s famous night bazaar. This area comprises Bangkok’s major business and entertainment areas as well. A variety of shops, supermarkets and plazas spoil the shopper by offering jewellery, gemstones, antiques, ceramics, leather goods, clothing, handicrafts, Thai silks and cottons, electronic devices, cameras and computer gears and a variety of other goods.

Maheesak/Silom/Charoenkrung Road Areas

Besides major hotels including the Shangri-La, the Royal Orchid Sheraton, the Holiday Inn and the Oriental, this area contains a major gemstone-dealing and jewellery manufacturing area and houses boutiques, art galleries, department stores and plazas, including the River City Complex where a wide selection of goods can be found everywhere with an emphasis on antiques, tailored clothing and contemporary Thai and Asian paintings.

Yaowarat is what the Thais call Chinatown and a purely Chinese community has lived here for many years. The inhabitants, of course, consider themselves Thai now and many can no longer speak Chinese, but a look at their faces will tell their origins. It is an interesting place to explore. Two of Chinatown’s symbolic roads are Yaowarat Road leading westwards from near Wat Trimit, and Sampheng Lane,



Silom Road

running parallel south of Yaowarat. Busy Yaowarat Road is Chinatown's main street, and has surely one of the greatest concentrations of gold shops anywhere. There are dozens of shops, all in red and gold, most with competitive prices. Much of the gold is over 99% pure. Thais buy it not only for decorative purposes but also as savings for a rainy day, because gold shops will gladly buy back gold at the daily rate, for a small charge. This area is also famous for fine Chinese food, where you can get bird's nest soup, dim sum, and other traditional Chinese delicacies. Shops also offer selections of Chinese herbs for sale. The narrow, crammed Sampheng Lane is a very busy predominantly pedestrian street. It is a hive of constant commercial activities, mostly in textiles and cloth, and a fascinating street to walk along.

Phahurat Bombay Market

There is a large Indian minority in Thailand. Merchants have spread out all over Asia from Southern India and many have come to Thailand. Many have arrived to trade the brightly-coloured cloth used to make saris and the beautiful ankle-length dresses Indian women like to wear. In Phahurat Market, on Phahurat Road parallel to Yaowarat Road just west of Chinatown and towards the river, visitors will find a variety of supplies to suit the clothing needs of those Indian ladies and more. The market sells all kinds of cloth from plain white cotton to batik to silk, to cover every need; for cushions, curtains, upholstery coverings, suits, dresses and skirts. Think of the cloth requirements or even the buttons and tassels one needs, and it is a good bet one will find what one wants here. Cloth is sold by

the metre, straight from the bolt. It is usually very cheap.

Phahurat is a market really worth exploring. Not only is it a cloth centre, but a spice centre as well. As visitors go round the market, they will be aware of that spicy, Indian smell made up of incense, which they can buy here, and of course Indian curry. Visitors can buy incense to lend their living room an exotic atmosphere; search the tiny side streets for spices and other Indian specialties, household goods and shoulder bags in Thai silk.

Sukhumvit Area

This long thoroughfare is Bangkok's major artery and its major hotels include the Landmark, Ambassador and Sheraton Grande. The major shopping areas are concentrated between Soi Nana (Sukhumvit 3) and Sukhumvit 24 and there is a thriving street market. A variety of shops, shopping centres, plazas and department stores including Robinson and the Emporium (mostly imported brand-name merchandise) offer a great range of choices to buyers. Also, check out H1 on Sukhumvit Soi 55, a very hip place for a trendy lifestyle in Bangkok, which has a shop with imported furniture from Italy, a graphic bookshop, restaurants and home-made ice cream. The area is a group of white buildings surrounded by trees and bushes.

Phloen Chit/Pathumwan Areas

Big-name hotels include the Grand Hyatt Erawan, Arnoma, Regent, Imperial and Novotel. The area has several department stores and shopping centres, including the Central World Plaza, on the 7th floor of which the duty-free shopping outlet is located, Central Chitlom, Gaysorn Plaza, Siam Square, Siam Discovery Centre, and MBK Center. Visitors will certainly find something they take a fancy to.

Suan Lum Night Bazaar

Suan Lum Night Bazaar is located on the east side of Lumpini Park. It is a big new place for shoppers to spend their time and money shopping at night from 5.00 p.m. to 12.00 p.m. The large area has many restaurants, pubs, beer gardens, and stalls (fashionable clothes, handicrafts and handmade products, mostly OTOP).

There are traditional small Thai puppet shows (Tel. 0 2252 9683-6) and the BEC-TERO Hall where visitors can catch internationally famous classical, rock and pop concerts and ice-skating shows.

Pratunam/Phetchaburi Road Areas



Pathumwan

The area is best known for inexpensive ready-made clothing, which is sold partly in a street market where bargaining is the order of the day. Major hotels include the Amari Watergate and the Indra Regent. A few hundred metres west along Phetchaburi Road from the Amari Watergate Hotel and across the street, is an enormous computer goods establishment called Pantip Plaza for the cyber-connoisseur, devoted to hardware, software and other electronic goods. It offers incredibly good value. This is a place to spend a whole day in, the true Aladdin's cave for computer geeks.

Not only can visitors buy a brand-name computer and a tailor-made computer assembled on the spot with very low prices, but they can also buy second-hand computers and have their com-

puter repaired for a very reasonable price. As in all Thai plazas, there is good food to eat, too. www.pantipplaza.com

Also in this area is Baiyoke Tower II, the highest edifice in Bangkok with buffet restaurants on the 77th and 78th floors that offer a spectacular panorama of the city. Around its base, there are many small markets and shopping streets to explore.

Banglamphu

Near the river exists this lively market and commercial area favoured by locals for its good bargains; however, over the last twenty years, it has become famous for Khao San Road, where backpackers and budget travellers have found a home away from home. The road has gone more upscale in recent years, however, and now has a Boots and Burger King.

Although the street is not very long, Khao San Road is extremely interesting with people from all over the world examining the market stalls, looking for accommodation, eating in cheap restaurants and using cyber cafes. This is where you can buy second-hand books and cheap clothing, reserve a really inexpensive hotel or guesthouse, or just sit in an open-air restaurant watching people go by and guessing where they come from. In the evenings, loud music takes over and during the Songkran water festival, visitors will not escape a soaking. It is a good humoured friendly place and well worth visiting. Website: www.khaosanroad.com

Bo Be Market

This well-known clothing market opens at 10.00 a.m. and is situated along Krung Kasem Road, near Saphan Khao and the Department of Technical and Economic Cooperation on the

Pratunam





Chatuchak Weekend Market

intersection with Lan Luang Road. It is largely wholesale; therefore, bargaining is necessary if one is preparing to buy large quantities.

Pak Khlong Talat

This market is at the base of Phra Buddha Yodfa Bridge along Chakrawat Road. Also known as the “flower market”, most people come to buy flowers from lilies, carnations, roses, daisies to orchids, and so on. Vendors can arrange beautiful bouquets for every occasion.

Chatuchak Weekend Market

Located near the Bangkok Bus Terminal (Mo Chit II), this enormous weekend market, hugely popular with local and foreign shoppers is open every weekend from dawn to dusk approximately 7.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. Chatuchak Weekend Market is a Bangkok landmark where visitors can buy just about everything from all over Thailand, ranging from clothing to pets and everything in between - a paradise for browsers and bargain-hunters. It is also where professional and amateur art-lovers and artists meet.

Thewet Market

Reachable by the river taxi, as well as road transport, this market is best known for potted plants and shrubs.

Langkrasuang Market

Between the Royal Hotel and the Ministry of Interior, a row of shop-houses sell moderately priced second-hand goods, like

antique cameras, typewriters, musical instruments, radios and all manner of electrical goods. Bargaining is recommended.

Woengnakhon Khasem

Better known as the “Thieves Market”, located between Yaowarat Road and Charoenkrung Road, this area sells antiques including Thai and Chinese objets d’art, porcelain, brassware, copperware and furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Bargaining is essential.

Nightlife

At night, when most of the city’s attractions are closed and visitors feel like the day has not yet been completed, feel free to spend the night time in various exquisite pubs, clubs, karaoke, and bars in Bangkok. Here are some selections for your choice of interest. There, let the vibes go into your veins and lose yourself in the music.

Q Bar

A visually stunning nightclub on Sukhumvit 11, known as Q Bar, is presently the hottest bar for those who have a party heart. With its black upholstered wall highlighted by vivid lighting and 50s and 60s retro decorations, Q Bar ushered in a new standard for bars and nightclubs in South-east Asia. House music, Hip-Hop, Chill out lounge, and Soulful Jazz will satisfy one’s thirst for great music.

Tel.0 2252 3274 Website: www.qbarbangkok.com

Bed Supperclub

For those who have an edgy heart and torn apart soul, this could be the destination for tonight. The Bed Supperclub is a “dining in bed” experience and an upscale restaurant, club, art gallery, theatre, and stage combined with spectacular and fashionable decorations. Housed in a custom-built new building and set in a futuristic all-white environment, the club crosses a divide between dining and cutting-edge entertainment. Funky House, Asian fusion, Bhangra, and Hip-Hop are on the decks.
Tel.0 2651 4443 Website: www.bedsupperclub.com

Bangkok Bar

Bangkok Bar is a stone’s throw from Khao San Road and always jam-packed with a cosmopolitan crowd of college students and tourists. The bar has 2 storeys with a mezzanine floor where one can spot everyone downstairs. It was designed to be both a restaurant and a bar. House, Trance, Funk, Dance, Drum n’ Bass, Garage, Big Beat, Break Beat and Acid Jazz are served up along with delicious and inexpensive food. It has an intriguing “East meets West” design concept and outrageous fun is guaranteed.
Tel. 0 2629 4443

Transportation

Trains

The main station is Hua Lamphong. This beautiful 100-year-old building is designed in the shape of an arc. The Italian architect who designed the station was also responsible for the marble Ananda Samakhom Throne Hall. For information, please contact the Travel Service Unit, State Railways of Thailand.
Tel. 0 2220 4334, 1690
Website: www.railway.co.th

Buses

Plentiful and cheap are the regular non-air buses. Air-conditioned buses and minibuses are only a fraction more expensive. A bus route map is available at most hotels, bookshops and the Tourism Authority of Thailand’s office on New Phetchaburi Road.

Subway

Opened in 2004, the city’s new subway system (MRTA) connects many of the top tourist attractions with accommodation areas, markets, and the business district. The trains run from 6 a.m. to midnight, daily.



BTS Skytrain

BTS Skytrain

Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS) provides safe, cheap and rapid rides to popular areas of Bangkok. The service is excellent and the stations and trains are immaculately clean. There are two lines, intersecting at Siam Square. It is the best way to avoid traffic and pollution.

Taxis

Hotel taxis have set rates. Street taxis known as “Taxi Meters” charge a minimum of 35 baht for the first 2 kilometres and 5 baht for every following kilometre.
Tel. 1661, 1681

River Taxis

Even more unusual, though equally convenient, river taxis ply the Chao Phraya River. While some are just cross river ferries, others serve many piers on both banks and cover a route that goes up as far as the northern suburb of Nonthaburi.

Tuk-Tuk

These 3-wheelers are popular for short journeys. Fares must be bargained in advance. They are not much cheaper than taxis and perhaps the odd mode of transportation is the attraction.

Motorcycle Taxis

Bangkok is such a busy city with many traffic jams that everyone wants to get to their destination on time and as fast as they could which is why motorcycle taxis are so popular. The fare depends on the distance but is about the same as a taxi.

Major Events

Besides nationally celebrated events on public holidays, including Buddhist holy days, Bangkok hosts a number of important annual events.

New Year Celebrations

Thailand celebrates the Western New Year as well. On 31st December, there are the Bangkok countdown celebrations at several major sites: Sanam Luang, Central World Plaza, Rama VIII Bridge, and the National Stadium. Buddhist merit-making in the morning and evening folk entertainment take place on 1st January.

Songkran Festival

(Thai Traditional New Year, 13, 14, 15 April)

This is a time of joyful family reunions and Bangkok half-empties as people head for their hometown to visit their beloved ones. Traditionally, children pour water onto their elder's hands and invite their blessings before going off to happily splash around elsewhere in town or near the rivers and canals. At Sanam Luang in Bangkok, the highly revered Buddha image "Phra Buddha Sihing" will be displayed and bathed by thousands of Buddhists. The celebrations involve water fights but it is April and hot, so it is a good-humoured way of cooling down. Khao San Road, in the Banglamphu area, is one of the city's high watermarks to experience the water-throwing activities between locals and tourists. Those who

New Year Celebrations



Loi Krathong Festival

do not fancy a soaking can always stay home.

Royal Ploughing Ceremony

Staged every year at Sanam Luang, and presided over by H.M. the King, this Brahmin ritual marks the official commencement of the rice-growing season around the beginning of May.

H.M. the Queen's Birthday

Celebrated on 12th August, Mother's Day in Thailand is marked by brightly illuminated public buildings in the Ratchadamnoen and Grand Palace areas, and a lot of fireworks and cultural performances in Sanam Luang.

Chulalongkorn day

Celebrated every 23rd October around the equestrian statue of King Chulalongkorn (1860 - 1910), this ceremony honours the king who abolished slavery, saved the country from colonisation, and modernised the country.

Loi Krathong Festival

This most charming of all Thai celebrations takes place on the full moon night of the 12th lunar month which usually falls in November. Celebrants place joss sticks, coins, candles, betel and flowers in a lotus-shaped receptacle or *Krathong*. Then the candles and joss sticks are lit and the *Krathong* is launched at the waterside, while the owners watch anxiously in the hope that the candle light will not fade away. The flame means fulfillment of dreams and a long life. Along the riverside, visitors can buy ready-made, cheap *Krathong* and join in the festivities. On the

water, a thousand twinkling lights bob up and down, representing people's hopes and dreams. This celebration is a delight for all the family and should not be missed.

Trooping of the Colours

Celebrated on 3rd December, the elite Royal Guards swear their allegiance to their monarch in a colourful ceremony in the Royal Plaza.

H.M. the King's Birthday

His Majesty's birthday on 5th December is also Father's Day in Thailand and is celebrated with Buddhist merit-making, spectacular evening illuminations around the Grand Palace and Ratchadamnoen areas, and public entertainment principally in the form of folk dramas and open-air film screenings.

Also known as Pak Nam, this province, located at the mouth of the Chao Phraya River only 25 kilometres south of Bangkok, can easily be reached by bus or taxi. Visitors, for example, can take a #511 air-conditioned bus (Pinklao - Pak Nam) which passes along Ratchadamnoen Avenue and New Phetchaburi Road during the earlier stage of the journey.

Major Attractions

Golf is a great attraction here, and readers will find Samut Prakan courses elsewhere in this book.

The Royal Naval Museum

Opposite the Naval Academy, 10 km. from Bang Na intersection on Sukhumvit Road, the museum, open daily between 9.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m., displays models of the Royal Barge procession, as well as equipment and utensils used on warships.

Website: www.navy.mi.th/navalmuseum



Musical Fountains during Songkran Festival



The Ancient City

Opposite the City Hall, this remarkable white pagoda, commonly called “Phra Chedi Klang Nam” as its original location was on an island near the river mouth, attracts visitors who enjoy the pagoda’s annual celebration, usually lasting nine days in October.

Essentially an open-air museum, this very large complex, located at Km. 33 on Sukhumvit Highway and open daily from 8.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. with a reasonable admission fee, contains

almost-real-scale replicas of religious complexes, monuments and buildings found throughout Thailand.

Tel.0 2226 1936, 0 2224 1057, 0 2323 9253

Website: www.ancientcity.com

Phra Chulachomklao Fortress

Called for short “Pom Phra Chun”, this old fortress, located 7 km. south of Phra Samut Chedi on Suksawat Road, is open to the public daily and displays an old warship named “Ruea Luang Mae Klong”, as well as several old cannons and pairs of binoculars.

Bueng Tako

Also known as Club Tako, this is a place for people who love water sports such as water-skiing and windsurfing from 12.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. on weekdays and 10:00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. at weekends.

Tel.0 2316 7809-10.

Bang Pu Seaside

About 10 km. from the town on Sukhumvit Road, a pier stretches out over a tidal muddy beach and affords a long walkway for those visitors who enjoy a pleasant seaside atmosphere every evening in the cool season, watching marine bird life and dining at a seafood restaurant nearby.

Samut Prakan Crocodile Farm

Located in the vicinity of Tambon Thai Ban, the complex of

The Royal Naval Museum





Samut Prakan Crocodile Farm

more than 60,000 freshwater and marine crocodiles and a mini-zoo also offers an exciting show of keepers playing with these dangerous animals. The farm opens daily from 7.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Tel. 0 2703 4891-5, 0 2703 5144-8.

Major Events

Phra Pradaeng Songkran Festival

Held annually after 13th April, this is the famous and enjoyable festival of the Mon people in the Phra Pradaeng area to celebrate their New Year with religious observances, colourful parades and folkloric processions.

Yon Bua Festival

Held by Bang Phli residents, this “Yon Bua” or “Tossing the Lotus” festival is a long merit-making tradition on the 14th day of the waxing moon of the 11th month (around October). Large crowds of people wait to toss lotuses onto a boat bearing a Buddha image, sometimes covered with a floral tribute almost up to the statue’s head.

Phra Pradaeng Songkran Festival





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