

# Bangkok

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**Population:**

Approx. 9,804,600

**Currency:**

Thai Baht

1 Baht = 100 Satang



## BANGKOK

Dynamic, exotic and richly cosmopolitan, Bangkok is one of South East Asia's most vibrant and cherished travel destinations. A city of contrasts, this cultural epicentre and shopping paradise entices millions of travellers each year to its bountiful markets, luxury hotels, stunning scenery and tantalizing cuisine. Where ancient and modern coincide, Bangkok's glorious golden temples and world-class skyscrapers await. Revel in the frenetic pace as you soak up the sights, shop until you drop then tuk-tuk around town for a zesty slice of Bangkok's indulgent and risqué nightlife.

## THE CITY



To arrive in Bangkok is to be thrust into the pulsing heart of the Orient, a sprawling mega city encompassing 50 districts and six ever-expanding provinces. Truly, the engine room behind 'Amazing Thailand', Bangkok will amaze, dazzle and humble the most seasoned global wanderers with its exciting fusion of cultural, spiritual, historical and cosmopolitan charm.

Dusit is the political core of Thailand, home to lavish architecture and gardens, while Bangkok's rustic 'Old Town' Rattanakosin holds 'must see' sights such as the Grand Palace, Wat Pho and royal gardens of Sanam Luang.

The city throbs and pulses with relentless heat and frantic pace, as tuk-tuks zip along concrete boulevards and Skytrains zoom overhead. Glitzy Siam Square carves the city's commercial core with an array of shops, malls and boutiques - a true shopper's paradise. Multicultural Yaowarat and Pahurat provide a feast for the senses, with the cuisine of Chinatown and flurry of Indian markets.

Sensational Sukhumvit Road roars at night with fine restaurants, bars and raunchy clubs, while the ever-indelible Khaosan Road area is a delight for budget travelers and revellers alike, buzzing with curbside vendors, stalls and wild nightspots. Known to the Thai's as 'Krung Thep,' South East

Asia's own 'City of Angels' epitomizes the East meets West tradition, where ancient trends blend and thrive with cutting edge sophistication.

## DO & SEE



With a relentless array of sights, sounds, scents and tastes all immersed in a bevy of hidden treasures, Bangkok has an overwhelming variety of things to discover and absorb. Here is a brief list of the city's highlights:

### Grand Palace

Home to the famous Emerald Buddha, the most revered Buddha image in Thailand, the Grand Palace is a spiritual hub and glorious architectural feat. Get in early to bypass the bustle and crowds, and remember to show respect by wearing long pants – no shorts allowed! Take a taxi or tuk-tuk direct to the palace. Alternatively, catch a Skytrain to Sapan Thaksin and jump on a river boat to Phra Arthit pier.

### Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)

Directly adjacent the Grand Palace, Wat Phra Kaew is known as the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and is the most sacred Buddhist temple in the country. It houses

the magnificent statue of the Emerald Buddha, carved from a single piece of jade.

### Wat Phra Chettuphon (Wat Pho)

Directly adjacent to the Grand Palace, Wat Pho is known as the Temple of the Reclining Buddha, the largest reclining image of Buddha in the nation, at an impressive 46m long and 15m high. It is adorned with mother of pearl and gold plating. Not limited to the one attraction, Wat Pho temple is home to over 1,000 images of the Buddha, towering statues, buildings and stupas. It is also home to the renowned Thai massage school for monks, and visitors can have this exceptional service on the grounds.

### Wat Arun (The Temple of Dawn)

Named after the Indian God Aruna. Take in the majestic white porcelain spires of the iconic 19th-century 'Temple of Dawn.' Linger in mythical gardens, climb the steep white stairs and soak up the romantic views at sunset. Take a taxi or a river ferry at Tha Tien Pier on Thai Wang Road across the Chao Praya River to the Thonburi area.

### Wat Saket and Phu Khao Thong (The Golden Mount)

Thailand's revered King Rama IV built this temple's large golden chedi atop the ruins of previous temple buildings. The chedi is layered with centuries of gold leaf. Visitors can take the easy winding stairs that encircle the mount to the viewpoint at the top. A small entrance fee allows you to enter the terrace and the temple area where you'll have a 360-degree view of Bangkok.

### **Siam Ocean World**

Found in Siam Paragon Mall in the Siam shopping district, Siam Ocean World is Bangkok's modern, sleek aquarium complex, and the largest aquatic centre in South East Asia. Kids and adults alike will enjoy Ocean World's 30,000 aquatic creatures from 400 different species. Marvel at this remarkable underwater world and dive with the sharks if you dare!

### **Lumphini Park**

Expansive, lush green Lumphini Park is Bangkok's green lung – a magnificent sprawling park with gardens, ponds, lawns and stages in the heart of the city bustle. Named after Buddha's Nepalese birthplace, it is replete with karaoke singers, tai chi artists, joggers and kite flyers. Join the throng and take a break from Bangkok without having to leave the city.

### **Abhisek Dusit Throne Hall**

This pinnacle East-meets-West structure was built by King Chulalongkorn, the first Thai monarch to visit Europe. Visions of his travels must have still been swimming in his head when he commissioned this stunning, grandiose building with distinct Western influences fusing with a glorious Thai exterior and oriental charm.

### **Jatujak Weekend Market (also: Chatuchak)**

Thailand's largest weekend market is a

shopper's dream, with locals and tourists hitting Jatujak's labyrinthine stalls en masse. Housing more than 10,000 stalls, you'll discover amazing prices on silks, handicrafts, clothes, antiques, collectibles and plants, to name a few. Get there early to avoid afternoon crowds and the sweaty hustle and bustle.

### **Sala Chalerkrung Theatre: Khon Masked Dance**

Savour Thailand's classical masked dance at the Sala Chalerkrung Theatre, regarded as one of the most refined styles of performing art in the world. Once privy only to the royal court of the King, Khon's masked dance is held every Thursday and Friday evening and is a rare treat for the culturally savvy.

### **Damnoen Saduak Floating Market**

This floating market is truly an impressive sight as vendors on long boats brimming with fruits or brightly coloured trinkets, navigate the 'klong' (canal) to sell their produce to the tourists and locals standing along the canal's edge. This world-famous market from the James Bond movie is 80km outside of Bangkok, but it's certainly worth the journey. Take an organised tour, or a regular bus from the Southern Bus Terminal and see what all the hype is about.

### **Khaosan Road**

Enter a bustling, exciting, vibrant mix of eateries, bars and lines of street stalls selling clothes, jewellery and tantalizing Thailand souvenirs. With the rich smoky

scents of vendors cooking fresh Pad Thai on the curbside, t-shirt and jewellery stalls decorating the road walkways, and a maze of ferny alleys lined with local and travelling characters, a trip to Bangkok is incomplete without a stroll through its most lively, action-packed area. The area was once the infamous backpackers haunt, but is now a family-friendly area where tourists towing prams and elite Bangkokians come to spend the day. Nightlife here is still robust however, and many are up until dawn enjoying the revelries on this street.

## EATING



If nothing else, Bangkok serves as an epicentre of South East Asian culinary sensation, with endless cuisine varieties and flavours to boot. Tantalize your taste buds with a journey thorough Bangkok's endless flurry of fine restaurants, delectable eateries and simmering roadside food stalls. Comprising the best places to dine with such a short list is an impossible task. However, here's what each of Bangkok's main culinary areas have to offer the gastronomic aficionado, with a sneak selection of some of the stand outs:

- **Yaowarat Road**
- **Phahurat Road**

- **Siam Square**
- **Sukhumvit Road**
- **Silom Road**
- **Khaosan Road**
- **Eat Me Restaurant**
- **Los Cabos California Mexican Grill**
- **Suda Restaurant**
- **Baan Khanitha**
- **La Dalat Indochine**
- **Roti Mataba**
- **Took Lae Dee**
- **Lan Na Thai - Face bar**

## SHOPPING



Have we mentioned that Bangkok is a veritable shoppers' paradise? You'll find pretty much everything and anything you could ever want, need or desire in this town - from fashion to electronics,

novelties and crafts. Hit up and indulge in Bangkok's enormous array of modern shopping hubs, contemporary stores, cosmopolitan boutiques and exotic, labyrinthine markets for every conceivable consuming penchant.

### **Clothing & Tailors**

Bangkok is known for its inexpensive clothing and talented tailoring industry. There are tailor shops throughout the city, but it is best to ask around for reputable places. Some tailor shops will take your money, but won't deliver quality products.

- **Peninsula Tailors**
- **Step One Tailor**

### **Jatujak Weekend Market (also: Chatuchak)**

With over 10,000 stalls, you'll find literally everything and anything at this extravagant weekend bazaar, from plants to crafts, pets, clothes, food and antiques – you name it. You'll need a map so you don't get lost in the maze of aisles, though the market is incredibly organized considering its behemoth size. Take the BTS Skytrain to Mo Chit Station, or the underground MRT to Chatuchak Park Station.

Watch out for pickpockets!

### **Patpong Night Bazaar**

Infamous Patpong is home to the steamier side of Bangkok's night scene, but also caters for die hard shopaholics these days. At around 7pm every day, the sidewalks of Patpong and Silom Rd come alive with a plethora of stalls offering clothing, trinkets, music, watches and myriad varieties of treats.

### **Antiques**

Antique sales in Bangkok are strong, but antiques aren't always what are sold. The word antique could actually mean that it was made to look old yesterday. That being said, Thailand antiques, whether old or young, display intricate craftsmanship and make for great gifts and decoration. There are antique stores around the city, especially in the more touristy areas of Siam, Silom, Sukhumvit and Khaosan Road.

### **Mahboonkrong (MBK) Center**

The 'grand-daddy' of Bangkok's big shopping centres yields a market feel in indoor air-conditioned comfort, with floor upon floor of shops selling just about anything, and is topped with a movie theatre. An entire floor is devoted to mobile phones and digital cameras. Ample clothes, bag and furniture stores spread across the remaining levels. Tourists can apply for a special Tourist Discount Card (MBK) at the information desk, which entitles you to between 5–30 percent discounts on selected merchandise and in some restaurants.

### **Siam Paragon**

Holding centre stage in the heart of the Siam shopping district, Paragon is modern, sleek and spacious. With names like Armani, Chanel and Maserati on hand, the Paragon is decidedly high-end, but its monumental cinema screens, delectable food court options and Asia's largest aquarium will keep you sheltered from the heat.

### **The Emporium**

The emporium is a high-class centre located on Sukhumvit Road at the Phromphong Skytrain station. With a variety of high and mid-end stores, this happening hub is popular with foreign residents and wealthy locals for beauty, fashion, threads and more.

### **Siam Centre & Siam Discovery**

Set side-by-side and connected by a sky walk on the fourth floor, these sister malls are yet two more fabulous shopping centres in the Siam shopping district. Siam Centre is geared toward the teenager crowd with frequent singing and fashion shows and a live radio broadcasting booth where up-and-coming pop stars cut their tunes. Discovery is more upscale, with many artsy furniture stores and upscale clothing stores.