

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Most of Bangkok's street-food vendors close up shop on Monday, so don't plan on eating in Chinatown on this day.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Th Phadungdao Seafood Stalls (p98)
- ➔ Royal India (p98)
- ➔ Nay Mông (p95)
- ➔ Nay Lék Ün (p95)

For reviews, see p98 ➔

Best Markets

- ➔ Talat Mai (p94)
- ➔ Pak Khlong Market (Flower Market) (p96)
- ➔ Phahurat (p96)
- ➔ Sampeng Lane (p96)

For reviews, see p94 ➔

Best Temples & Churches

- ➔ Wat Traimit (p93)
- ➔ Wat Mangkon Kamalawat (p94)
- ➔ Church of Santa Cruz (p97)
- ➔ Holy Rosary Church (p94)

For reviews, see p94 ➔

Explore: Chinatown

Chinatown embodies everything that's hectic, noisy and polluted about Bangkok, but that's what makes it such a fascinating area to explore. Be sure to set aside enough time to do some map-free wandering among the neon-lit gold shops, hidden temples, crumbling shopfronts and pencil-thin alleys, especially the tiny winding lanes that extend from Soi Wanit 1 (aka Sampeng Lane).

For ages, Chinatown was home to Bangkok's most infamous traffic jams, but the arrival of the MRT (Metro) in 2005 finally made the area a sane place to visit. Still, the station is about a kilometre from many sights, so you'll have to take a longish walk or a short taxi ride. An alternative is to take the Chao Phraya Express boat to the stop at Tha Ratchawong, from where it's a brief walk to most restaurants and a bit further to most sights.

The whole district is buzzing from dawn until after dusk, but Chinatown is at its best during these two times. The best time to eat is from 7pm to 9pm but forget Mondays: that's when most of the city's vendors stay home.

Local Life

➔ **Street Food** Although Chinatown seems to be dominated by restaurants serving shark fin and bird's nest soup, the true Chinatown meal is prepared by the street vendors that line Th Yaowarat after dark. Locals come from all over Bangkok to eat at Chinatown's stalls.

➔ **Markets** The Phahurat (p96) and Chinatown districts have interconnected markets selling fabrics, clothes and household wares, as well as wholesale shops and a few places selling gems and jewellery.

➔ **Living on a Prayer** In many of Chinatown's temples, you'll see locals shaking cans of thin sticks called *seeam see*. When a stick falls to the floor, look at its number and find the corresponding paper that gives a no-nonsense appraisal of your future in Thai, Chinese and English.

➔ **Nightlife** Or should we say, lack thereof... Other than Cotton (p98), there's zilch in the realm of non-dodgy nightlife here. Instead, fuel up on street eats first, then head to nearby Banglamphu or Silom for drinks.

Getting There & Away

➔ **MRT** Hua Lamphong.

➔ **River boat** Tha Marine Department, Tha Ratchawong, Tha Saphan Phut (Memorial Bridge).

➔ **Bus** Air-con 507 and 508; ordinary 1, 4, 25, 33, 37, 49 and 53.