

Historical Centre: Ko Ratanakosin & Thonburi

Neighbourhood Top Five

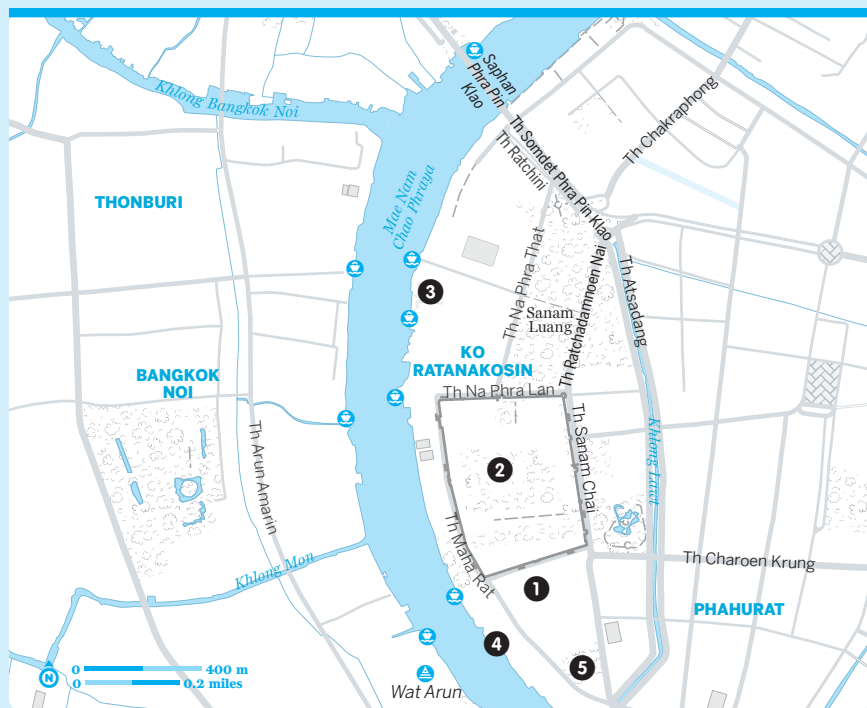
➊ Trying to stop your jaw from dropping to the floor upon encountering the enormous reclining Buddha at **Wat Pho** (p61) for the first time.

➋ Basking in the glow of the Emerald Buddha at **Wat Phra Kaew** (p58).

➌ Getting lost in the weirdness of commerce that is the **Amulet Market** (p66).

➍ Enjoying sunset views of Wat Arun and cocktails at **Amorosa** (p70).

➎ Learning about the origins of Thai culture at the **Museum of Siam** (p68).



Explore: Ko Ratanakosin & Thonburi

Birthplace of Bangkok, the artificial island of Ko Ratanakosin is where it all began more than 200 years ago. The remnants of this history – which today are Bangkok's biggest sights – draw just about every visitor to the city. The big-hitters, Wat Phra Kaew & Grand Palace and Wat Pho, are a short walk from the Chao Phraya Express boat piers at Tha Chang and Tha Tien, and, although within walking distance of each other, the hot sun may make doing this a more demanding task than it appears. Túk-túks (pronounced *đúk dúk*) are a dime a dozen around here. If you're planning on doing our walking tour or visiting several sights, it's best to arrive early in the morning, both to avoid the crowds and to take advantage of the cooler weather. Evening is best for photography, particularly if you're hoping for the classic sunset shot of Wat Arun.

Located across the river, neighbouring Thonburi has significantly less to offer in terms of sights, but is great for those who fancy urban exploration. The cool morning is a wise time to visit the area, which is accessible via the 3B river-crossing ferries at Tha Chang and Tha Tien.

Local Life

➔ **Local Life** Ko Ratanakosin is probably Bangkok's most touristy neighbourhood, but hop on any of the 3B river-crossing ferries and you'll be whisked across Mae Nam Chao Phraya to Thonburi, where regular Thai life carries on uninterrupted.

➔ **Dance Floor** Lak Meuang receives daily supplications from Thai worshippers, some of whom commission classical Thai dancers to perform *lākon gāa bon* (shrine dancing) as thanks for granted wishes.

➔ **Life Aquatic** Thonburi is home to several *klong* (canals, also spelt *khlóng*) that once were responsible for Bangkok's former nickname, 'Venice of the East'.

➔ **Traditional Healing** Along Th Maha Rat are dozens of shophouses overflowing with family-run herbal-medicine and traditional-massage shops, and street vendors selling used books and, oddly enough, dentures.

Getting There & Away

➔ **River boat** To Ko Ratanakosin: Tha Rajinee, Tha Tien and Tha Chang. To Thonburi: Tha Wang Lang (Siriraj), Thonburi Railway and Tha Saphan Phra Pin Klao.

➔ **BTS** To Thonburi: Krung Thonburi and Wong Wian Yai. To Ko Ratanakosin: National Stadium or Phaya Thai.

➔ **Bus** To Ko Ratanakosin: air-con 503, 508 and 511; ordinary 3, 25, 39, 47 and 53. To Thonburi: air-con 507 and 509; ordinary 21, 42 and 82.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Anyone standing outside of any of the big sights in Ko Ratanakosin who claims the sight is closed is either a gem tout or con artist; ignore them and proceed inside.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pa Aew (p69)
- ➔ Mangkud Cafe (p69)
- ➔ Coconut Palm (p69)
- ➔ Khungkung (p69)

For reviews, see 69 ➔

Best Temples

- ➔ Wat Phra Kaew (p58)
- ➔ Wat Pho (p61)
- ➔ Wat Arun (p63)

For reviews, see p64 ➔

Best Museums

- ➔ Museum of Siam (p68)
- ➔ National Museum (p65)
- ➔ Songkran Niyomsane Forensic Medicine Museum & Parasite Museum (p65)

For reviews, see 64 ➔