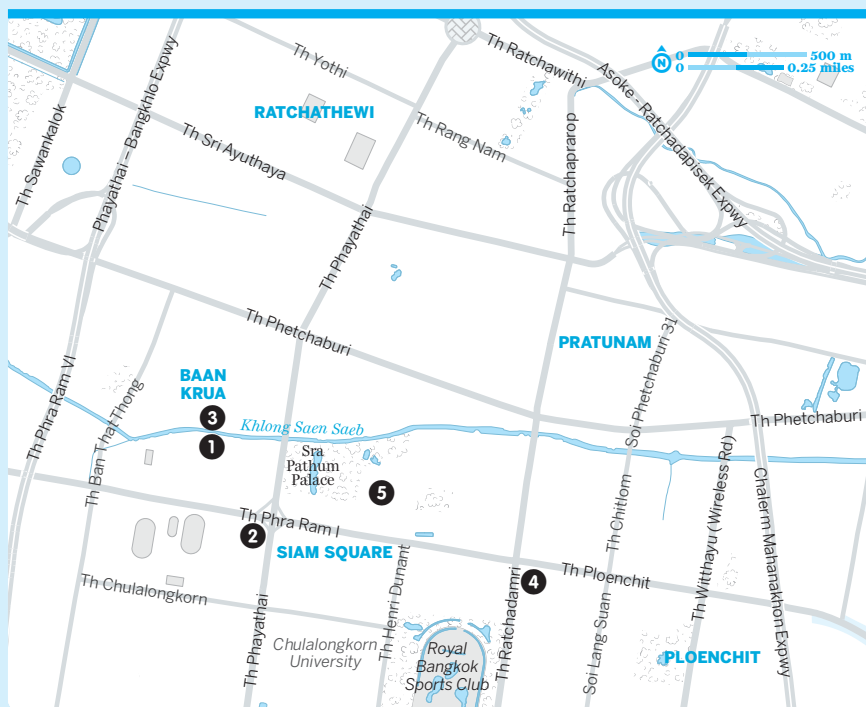


Shopping District: Siam Square, Pratunam, Ploenchit & Ratchathewi

Neighbourhood Top Five

- 1 Visiting **Jim Thompson's House** (p101) – the teak mansion that put Thai style on the map...before its ex-spy owner disappeared off that map.
- 2 Shopping at the malls, department stores and shops that surround Siam Square, such as **MBK Center** (p109).
- 3 Exploring **Baan Krua** (p102), the canal-side Muslim village where Jim Thompson first encountered Thai silk.
- 4 Making a wish at the crossroads of commerce and faith that is the **Erawan Shrine** (p103).
- 5 Enjoying the luxury of what must be one of the world's best-value cinemas, **Paragon Cineplex** (p108).



Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Admittedly, they tend to have all the ambience of a hospital cafeteria, but the mall-based food courts that abound in this part of town are among the most user-friendly introductions to Thai food in Bangkok. They're generally clean and convenient, and also have the benefit of having English-language menus, so ordering is a snap.



Best Places to Eat

- ➔ MBK Food Court (p105)
- ➔ Crystal Jade La Mian Xiao Long Bao (p104)
- ➔ Mallika Restaurant (p106)
- ➔ Sra Bua (p104)

For reviews, see p104 ➔



Best Places to Drink

- ➔ Co-Co Walk (p106)
- ➔ Hyde & Seek (p107)
- ➔ Wine Pub (p108)

For reviews, see p106 ➔



Best Places to Shop

- ➔ MBK Center (p109)
- ➔ Gaysorn Plaza (p109)
- ➔ Siam Square (p109)
- ➔ Siam Paragon (p109)
- ➔ Pratunam Market (p111)

For reviews, see p109 ➔

Explore: Siam Square, Pratunam, Ploenchit & Ratchathewi

Siam Square, Pratunam and Ploenchit combine to form the de facto geographical and commercial centre of modern Bangkok. Huge air-conditioned malls, towering hotels, fast-food chains and open-air shopping centres dominate, and if you're serious about shopping, set aside the better part of a day to burn your baht here. Try to arrive around 11am, when the crowds are minimal, and avoid Sundays when much of Bangkok seems to flock to the air-con malls. Siam Square is most easily accessed via the BTS (Skytrain); National Stadium is a good start.

Ratchathewi has a lot less to offer – unless of course you have a specific sight in mind or want to check out a more workaday side of Bangkok. The attractions in this area can be covered in a few hours, and most are within walking distance of the BTS stop at Victory Monument.

Local Life

➔ **Mall-hopping** Although there often appears to be more snacking than shopping, on Sundays a significant part of Bangkok's population is drawn to this area's malls to socialise in air-conditioned style and comfort.

➔ **Air-Conditioned Dining** A mall-based food court may not seem like the most authentic place to eat *pàt tai* (fried noodles), but several of Bangkok's most famous restaurants and stalls maintain branches at the various Siam Square area malls.

➔ **Wholesale Retail** For penny-pinchers and visiting wholesalers the ultimate destination is Pratunam district, where a seemingly never-ending clothing bazaar stocks locally made and cheap import togs.

➔ **Keeping It Real** For a view of Bangkok without the malls, bakeries, fashionistas and tourists, take the BTS north to the Victory Monument in Ratchathewi district, where ordinary Thais are doing ordinary Thai things.

Getting There & Away

➔ **BTS** To Siam Square, Pratunam and Ploenchit: Siam, National Stadium, Chit Lom, Phloen Chit and Ratchadamri. To Ratchathewi: Ratchathewi, Phaya Thai and Victory Monument.

➔ **Klong boat** To Siam Square, Pratunam and Ploenchit: Tha Hua Chang, Tha Pratunam and Tha Withayu. To Ratchathewi: Tha Pratunam.

➔ **Bus** To Siam Square, Pratunam and Ploenchit: air-con 141, 183, 204, 501, 508 and 547; ordinary 15, 16, 25, 47 and 73. To Ratchathewi: air-con 503, 513 and 536; ordinary 29, 36, 54, 59 and 112