

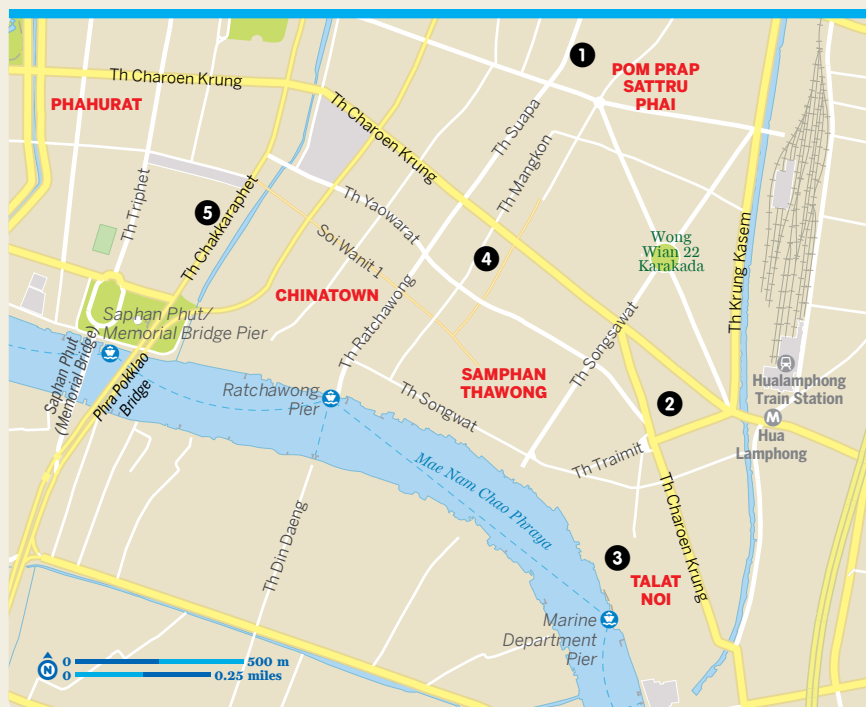
Chinatown

Neighbourhood Top Five

- ❶ Dining alfresco at decades-old street-food stalls such as **Nay Hong** (p105).
- ❷ Witnessing 5.5 tonnes of solid gold Buddha at **Wat Traimit** (p101).
- ❸ Checking out the oil-stained machine shops, hidden Chinese temples and twisting lanes of **Talat Noi** (p102).
- ❹ Watching chaos and commerce battle it out in **Talat Mai** (p102), China-

town's frenetic, photogenic fresh-food market.

- ❺ Enjoying Bollywood-style markets and Indian food in **Phahurat** (p103).



For more detail of this area see Map p272 ➔

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

Bangkok's street stalls and family-run restaurants operate frustratingly inconsistent business hours. So if you're heading to Chinatown with the intent of eating at a specific stall, it's always a good idea to have a Plan B. And remember, 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

- ➔ Nay Hong (p105)
- ➔ Samsara (p106)
- ➔ Th Phadungdao Seafood Stalls (p106)
- ➔ Royal India (p106)

For reviews, see p105. ➔

Best Markets

- ➔ Talat Mai (p102)
- ➔ Pak Khlong Talat (p102)
- ➔ Sampeng Lane (p105)

For reviews, see p102. ➔

Best Temples & Churches

- ➔ Wat Traimit (p101)
- ➔ Wat Mangkon Kamalawat (p103)
- ➔ Church of Santa Cruz (p103)
- ➔ Holy Rosary Church (p105)

For reviews, see p101. ➔

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. The area's big sights – Wat Traimit (Golden Buddha) and the street markets – are worth hitting, but 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 Ratchawong Pier, 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. There aren't many interesting lunch options in the area, so eat between 7pm and 9pm instead.

Local Life

➔ **Street Food** Although Chinatown can appear dominated by restaurants serving shark-fin and bird's-nest soup, the true Chinatown meal is what's usually prepared by the street vendors lining Th Yaowarat after dark. Locals come from all over Bangkok to eat at Chinatown's stalls, and so should you.

➔ **Markets** The Phalurat (p103) and Chinatown districts have interconnected markets selling fabrics, clothes and household wares, as well as wholesale shops for every imaginable bulk item and a few places selling gems and jewellery.

➔ **Prayers** In many of Chinatown's temples, you'll see locals shaking cans of thin sticks called *see-am 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 a few new bars on Soi Nana, there's little in the realm of non-dodgy nightlife in Chinatown. Instead, eat here, then head to nearby Banglamphu or Silom for drinks.

Getting There & Away

➔ **MRT** Hua Lamphong.

➔ **River boat** Marine Department Pier, Ratchawong Pier, Saphan Phut/Memorial Bridge Pier and Pak Klong Taladd Pier.

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