

# Ko Ratanakosin & Thonburi

## Neighbourhood Top Five

- ❶ Trying to stop your jaw from dropping to the floor upon encountering the enormous reclining Buddha at **Wat Pho** (p65) for the first time.
- ❷ Basking in the glow of the Emerald Buddha at **Wat Phra Kaew** (p60).
- ❸ Getting up close with the iconic riverside temple known as **Wat Arun** (p69).
- ❹ Getting lost in the weirdness of commerce that is the **Amulet Market** (p70).
- ❺ Learning about the origins of Thai culture at the **Museum of Siam** (p70).



For more detail of this area see Map p265 ➔

## Explore: Ko Ratanakosin & Thonburi

The birthplace of Bangkok, the artificial island of Ko Ratanakosin is where it all started more than 200 years ago. The remnants of this history are today Bangkok's biggest sights. The big-hitters, Wat Phra Kaew and the Grand Palace, and Wat Pho, are a short walk from the Chao Phraya Express Boat piers at Chang Pier, Maharaj Pier and Tien Pier, and are within walking distance of each other, although the hot sun may make doing this a more demanding task than it appears. Alternatively, túk-túk (pronounced *dúk dúk*) are a dime a dozen around here. If you're planning on visiting several sights, arrive early in the morning for the cooler weather and to avoid the crowds. Evening is best for photography, particularly if you're hoping for the classic sunset shot of Wat Arun.

Across the river, neighbouring Thonburi has significantly less to offer in terms of sights, but is great for those who fancy urban exploration. The area is accessible via the 3B river-crossing ferries at Chang Pier and Tien Pier.

## Local Life

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

➔ **Dance Floor** Lak Meuang (p73) receives daily supplications from Thai worshippers, some of whom commission classical Thai dancers to perform *lá-kon gâa 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, dozens of shophouses feature family-run herbal medicine and traditional massage shops.

## Getting There & Away

➔ **River boat** To Ko Ratanakosin: Tien Pier, Chang Pier, Maharaj Pier and Phra Chan Tai Pier. To Thonburi: Wang Lang/Siriraj Pier, Thonburi Railway Station Pier and Phra Pin Klao Bridge Pier. Several cross-river ferries also connect to Bangkok piers.

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

➔ **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.

➔ **Taxi** Best taken outside of rush hours.

## Lonely Planet's Top Tip

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

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Pa Aew (p75)
- ➔ Ming Lee (p75)
- ➔ Err (p75)
- ➔ Khungkung (p76)

For reviews, see p75. ➔

## Best Temples

- ➔ Wat Phra Kaew (p60)
- ➔ Wat Pho (p65)
- ➔ Wat Arun (p69)

For reviews, see p60. ➔

## Best Museums

- ➔ Museum of Siam (p70)
- ➔ National Museum (p70)
- ➔ Siriraj Medical Museum (p70)

For reviews, see p70. ➔