



# Bangkok & Around

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ nahm (p121)
- ➔ Eat Me (p120)
- ➔ Krua Apsorn (p116)
- ➔ Jay Fai (p118)
- ➔ MBK Food Island (p124)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ AriyasomVilla (p112)
- ➔ Phra-Nakorn Norn-Len (p114)
- ➔ Siam Heritage (p108)
- ➔ Bangkok Tree House (p115)
- ➔ Lamphu Treehouse (p104)

## Why Go?

The rumours are true: Bangkok is everything you've heard it is. It's also much, much more.

Yes, the city's traffic can be brutal, but the BTS (Skytrain) or Chao Phraya Express Boat can whisk you across town in no time. There are indeed pockets of sleaze, but much more prominent than the go-go bars are Bangkok's surprisingly sophisticated bars and nightlife. The street food is justifiably legendary, but did you know that the city is also home to internationally acclaimed chefs? And you're much more likely to come across a hip hostel or a homey guesthouse than the type of budget nightmare described in *The Beach*.

What this means is that somewhere in Bangkok's eclectic jumble – glittering Buddhist temples edging glassy skyscrapers, monks sharing the sidewalk with teen fashionistas, outdoor markets next door to air-conditioned malls – is something for just about everyone.

## When to Go

- ➔ Bangkok is rated by the World Meteorological Organization as one of the world's hottest cities. There's little fluctuation in the temperature, and the average high sways between a torrid 32°C and a sweltering 34°C.
- ➔ The rainy season runs approximately May to October, when the city receives as much as 300mm of rain monthly.
- ➔ Virtually the only break from this relentless heat and humidity comes during winter, a couple of weeks of relative coolness in December/January.



## Bangkok & Around Highlights

- 1 Basking in the glow of all that gold at **Wat Phra Kaew & Grand Palace** (p61).
- 2 Taking in the immense Buddha statue at **Wat Pho** (p61).
- 3 Skipping between sightseeing spots on a **cruise of Thonburi's canals** (p76).
- 4 Encountering the best of Thai architecture and

- artwork at **Jim Thompson House** (p83).
- 5 Burning baht at **Chatuchak Weekend Market** (p138).
  - 6 Learning to make authentic Thai dishes at one of Bangkok's **cooking schools** (p99).
  - 7 Toasting the stars and the twinkling skyscraper

- lights atop one of the city's **rooftop bars** (p127).

- 8 Being blissfully pounded into submission at one of Bangkok's terrific-value **Thai massage centres** (p99).
- 9 Eating yourself into a stupor at **Chinatown's street stalls** (p119).
- 10 Getting out of Bangkok and visiting the canal-side town of **Amphawa** (p152).

## History

Now the centre of government and culture in Thailand, Bangkok was a historical miracle during a time of turmoil. Following the fall of Ayuthaya in 1767, the kingdom fractured into competing forces, from which General Taksin emerged as a decisive unifier.

He established his base in Thonburi, on the western bank of Mae Nam Chao Phraya (Chao Phraya River), a convenient location for sea trade from the Gulf of Thailand. Taksin proved more of a military strategist than a popular ruler. He was later deposed by another important military general,