

Siam Square, Pratunam, Phloen Chit & Ratchathewi

SIAM SQUARE, PRATUNAM & PHLOEN CHIT | RATCHATHEWI

Neighbourhood Top Five

1 Visiting **Jim Thompson House** (p110), 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** (p120).

3 Exploring **Baan Khrua** (p112), 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** (p111).

5 Enjoying the luxury of what must be one of the world's best-value cinemas, **Paragon Cineplex** (p118).



For more detail of this area see Maps p271 and p274 →

Explore: Siam Square, Pratunam, Phloen Chit & Ratchathewi

Siam Sq, Pratunam and Phloen Chit combine to form the de facto geographical and commercial centre of modern Bangkok. Huge malls, towering hotels, international fast-food chains and open-air shopping centres dominate this area, 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. Likewise, try to avoid Sundays when half of Bangkok seems to flock to the area's air-conditioned malls. Siam Sq is most easily accessed via the BTS (Skytrain), and if you're going to hit all the area's malls, it makes sense to start at National Stadium and work your way east, taking advantage of the bridges, mall corridors and elevated walkways that link the various shopping centres.

Ratchathewi has less to offer; the attractions in this area can be covered in a couple hours, and most are within walking distance of the BTS stop at Victory Monument.

Local Life

- ➔ **Mall-hopping** On weekends a significant part of Bangkok's population is drawn to this area's malls to socialise in stylish settings and air-con 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 Sq area malls.
- ➔ **Wholesale retail** For local penny-pinchers and visiting wholesalers, the ultimate destination is Pratunam district, where a seemingly never-ending clothing bazaar stocks both locally made and cheap import items.
- ➔ **Keeping it real** For a view of Bangkok without the malls, fashionistas and tourists, take the BTS north to the Victory Monument in Ratchathewi district, where you'll find ordinary Thais doing ordinary Thai things.

Getting There & Away

- ➔ **BTS** To Siam Sq, Pratunam and Phloen Chit: Siam, National Stadium, Chit Lom, Phloen Chit and Ratchadamri. To Ratchathewi: Ratchathewi, Phaya Thai and Victory Monument.
- ➔ **Klong boat** To Siam Sq, Pratunam and Phloen Chit: Sapan Hua Chang Pier, Pratunam Pier and Wireless Pier. To Ratchathewi: Pratunam Pier.
- ➔ **Bus** To Siam Sq, Pratunam and Phloen Chit: 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.

Lonely Planet's Top Tip

They may lack street cred, 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 using English-language menus, so ordering is a snap.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ MBK Food Island (p115)
- ➔ Nuer Koo (p114)
- ➔ Din Tai Fung (p114)
- ➔ Sam-Ang Kulap (p117)

For reviews, see p114. ➔

Best Drinking & Entertainment

- ➔ Hyde & Seek (p117)
- ➔ Red Sky (p117)
- ➔ Saxophone Pub & Restaurant (p118)

For reviews, see p117. ➔

Best Places to Shop

- ➔ MBK Center (p120)
- ➔ Siam Square (p120)
- ➔ Siam Center (p120)
- ➔ Siam Paragon (p120)
- ➔ Baiyoke Garment Center (p120)

For reviews, see p120. ➔