

# BANGKOK

ENCOUNTER

AUSTIN BUSH

Bangkok Encounter

Published by **Lonely Planet Publications Pty Ltd**  
ABN 36 005 607 983

**Australia** (Head Office) Locked Bag 1, Footscray,  
Vic 3011  
☎ 03 8379 8000 fax 03 8379 8111

**USA** 150 Linden St, Oakland, CA 94607  
☎ 510 250 6400  
toll free 800 275 8555  
fax 510 893 8572

**UK** 2nd fl, 186 City Rd  
London EC1V 2NT  
☎ 020 7106 2100 fax 020 7106 2101

**Contact** talk2us@lonelyplanet.com  
lonelyplanet.com/contact

This 3rd edition was written by Austin Bush. Austin also wrote the 2nd edition. China Williams authored the 1st edition. This book was commissioned in Lonely Planet's Melbourne office and produced by: **Commissioning Editor** Ilaria Walker **Coordinating Editor** Carolyn Boicos **Coordinating Cartographer** Csanad Csutoros **Layout Designer** Yvonne Bischofberger **Assisting Editor** Janet Austin **Managing Editor** Annelies Mertens **Managing Cartographer** Amanda Sierp **Senior Editor** Susan Paterson **Cover Research** Sabrina Dalbesio **Internal Image Research** Rebecca Skinner **Managing Layout Designer** Jane Hart **Thanks to** Bruce Evans, Lisa Knights, Shawn Low

**Cover photograph** Th Yaowarat, Chinatown, Austin Bush/Lonely Planet Images

All images are copyright of the photographers unless otherwise indicated. Many of the images in this guide are available for licensing from Lonely Planet Images: lonelyplanetimages.com

10 98 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 3rd edition  
ISBN: 978 1 74179 821 0 Printed in China

Lonely Planet and the Lonely Planet logo are trademarks of Lonely Planet and are registered in the US Patent and Trademark Office and in other countries.

Lonely Planet does not allow its name or logo to be appropriated by commercial establishments, such as retailers, restaurants or hotels. Please let us know of any misuses: lonelyplanet.com/ip.

© Lonely Planet 2011. All rights reserved.



Paper in this book is certified against the Forest Stewardship Council™ standards. FSC™ promotes environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

### Colour-Coding & Maps

Colour-coding is used for symbols on maps and in the text that they relate to (eg all eating venues on the maps and in the text are given a green knife and fork symbol). Each neighbourhood also gets its own colour, and this is used down the edge of the page and throughout that neighbourhood section.

Shaded yellow areas on the maps denote areas of interest – for their historical significance, their attractive architecture or their great bars and restaurants. We encourage you to head to these areas and just start exploring!

### Prices

Multiple prices listed with reviews (eg 100/50B) indicate adult/child.

*Although the authors and Lonely Planet have taken all reasonable care in preparing this book, we make no warranty about the accuracy or completeness of its content and, to the maximum extent permitted, disclaim all liability arising from its use.*

**Send us your feedback** We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to postal submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition, and the most useful submissions are rewarded with a free book.

Visit **lonelyplanet.com** to submit your updates and suggestions or to ask for help. Our award-winning website also features inspirational travel stories, news and discussions.

Note: We may edit, reproduce and incorporate your comments in Lonely Planet products such as guidebooks, websites and digital products, so let us know if you don't want your comments reproduced or your name acknowledged. For a copy of our privacy policy visit lonelyplanet.com/privacy.

### AUSTIN BUSH

Austin came to Thailand in 1998 on a language scholarship to Chiang Mai University. The lure of city life, employment and spicy food eventually led Austin to Bangkok. City life, employment and spicy food have managed to keep him there since. Austin is a native of Oregon and a freelance writer and photographer who often focuses on food; samples of his work can be seen at [www.austinbushphotography.com](http://www.austinbushphotography.com).



### AUSTIN'S THANKS

Thanks to the folks at Lonely Planet, including Ilaria Walker, David Connolly and Bruce Evans, to the previous author of this book, China Williams, not to mention to the kind people on the ground in Bangkok, including Prempreeda Pramroj Na Ayutthaya, Richard Hermes, Wesley Hsu, Natchaphat Itthi-chaiwarakom, Gene Kasidit, Nym Punlopruksa, Maher Satter, David Thompson, Pailin Wedel, Patrick Winn and Sirin P Wongpanit.

**Our readers** Many thanks to the travellers who wrote to us with helpful hints, useful advice and interesting anecdotes. Brendan Dempsey, Kristine Gapay, Rochelle Hogan, Trent Paton, Fred Prager, Michelle White.

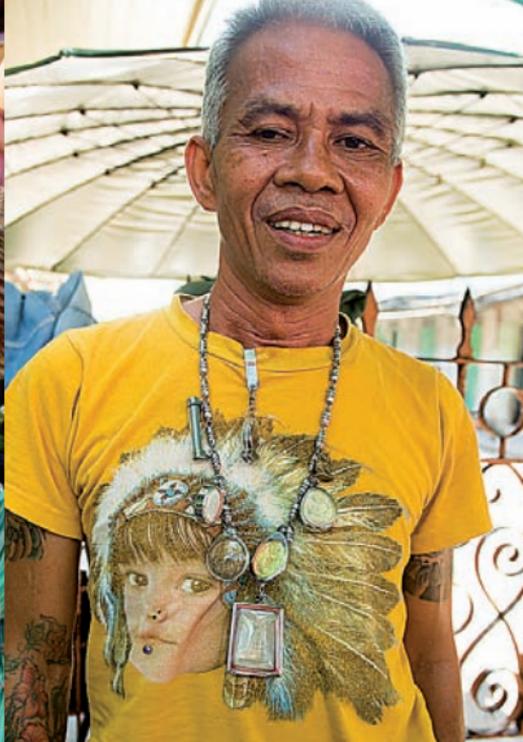


A meditative stroll through the streets of bustling Ko Ratanakosin (p40)

# CONTENTS

<b>THE AUTHOR</b>	<b>03</b>	>GAY & LESBIAN	
<b>THIS IS BANGKOK</b>	<b>07</b>	BANGKOK	164
<b>HIGHLIGHTS</b>	<b>08</b>	>SPAS & WELLNESS	
<b>BANGKOK DIARY</b>	<b>27</b>	CENTRES	165
<b>ITINERARIES</b>	<b>31</b>	>TRADITIONAL	
<b>NEIGHBOURHOODS</b>	<b>36</b>	MASSAGE	166
>KO RATANAKOSIN & THONBURI	40	<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>167</b>
>BANGLAMPHU	50	<b>DIRECTORY</b>	<b>179</b>
>THEWET & DUSIT	64	<b>INDEX</b>	<b>194</b>
>CHINATOWN & PHAHURAT	70		
>SIAM SQUARE, PRATUNAM & PLOENCHIT	78		
>RIVERSIDE & SILOM	92		
>LUMPHINI	108		
>SUKHUMVIT	114		
>GREATER BANGKOK	132		
<b>EXCURSIONS</b>	<b>143</b>		
>AYUTHAYA	144		
>KO SAMET	146		
>FLOATING MARKETS	148		
<b>SNAPSHOTS</b>	<b>150</b>		
>ACCOMMODATION	152		
>ARTS & ARCHITECTURE	154		
>BARS & CLUBS	156		
>FOOD	158		
>SHOPPING & MARKETS	160		
>TEMPLES & SHRINES	162		

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).



# THIS IS BANGKOK

Bangkok is excess in all of its unrestrained glory. Bigger, better, more: the city is insatiable, a monster that feeds on concrete, shopping malls and diesel exhaust.

The city demands that you be in the present and in the moment, not necessarily for a religious epiphany, but because the city is self-absorbed and superficial, blissfully free of wrinkle-inducing self-reflection. Smiles and *sà-nùk* (the Thai word for 'fun') are the key passports into Bangkok society. A compliment here, a joke there – the demands of social lubrication in this megalopolis are more akin to a small village than an anonymous city, and are a necessity for survival.

As Bangkok forcefully kneads out of you all demands for order and predictability, you'll understand the famous Thai smile. It is the metaphorical brakes on the urban overdrive. Packed into these concrete corridors are religious spectacle, unapologetic consumerism and multi-flavoured hedonism – corrupting and purifying souls within footsteps of each other. A tragicomic confluence of human desires and aspirations best viewed through a detached smile.

Of the famous and infamous attractions, Bangkok's best feature is its intermingling of opposites. A modern world of affluence orbits around a serene traditional core. Step outside the four-star hotels into a typical Siamese village where taxi drivers knock back energy drinks and upcountry transplants grill chicken on a streetside barbecue. Hop a BTS train to the glitzy shopping malls where trust-fund babies examine luxury brands as carefully as the housewives inspect produce at the open-air markets. Or appreciate the attempts at enlightenment at the city's famous temples and doorstep shrines, or simple acts of kindness amid the urban bustle.

You can jump between all of these worlds – wining and hobnobbing at a chic club, eating at a streetside market, getting plucked and pummelled into something more beautiful, or sweating profusely on a long unplanned march. Bangkok is an urban connoisseur's dream come true.

**Top left** Take your pick at Pak Khlong Market (p74) **Top right** Funky protection ware: amulets for all Thais **Bottom** Fearsome demons guard the gilded *chedi* (stupa) at Wat Phra Kaew (p42)