



POCKET

BANGKOK

TOP SIGHTS • LOCAL EXPERIENCES

AUSTIN BUSH



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Welcome to Bangkok

For decades, Bangkok was seen as little more than a necessary stop-over before hitting the islands. But the Bangkok of today is a destination. What other city has such a no-holds-barred approach to eating? Bangkok's older districts retain the grit, charm and character of the past.





Temple housing the Emerald Buddha, Wat Phra Kaew (p32)

MIKI STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Top Sights

Jim Thompson House

Bangkok's most famous residence. **p96**



Chatuchak Weekend Market

The city's most impressive market.
p160

Wat Phra Kaew & Grand Palace

A sacred enclave.
p32



Wat Arun

The capital's most famous riverside temple. **p40**



NOOMNA NAKHONPHANOW/SHUTTERSTOCK ©



Wat Traimit

Visit the golden Buddha. **p78**



FAR LEFT: E P O S / SHUTTERSTOCK ©; LEFT: GOWARD LION / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Ayuthaya

Day trip to ancient Thailand. **p166**

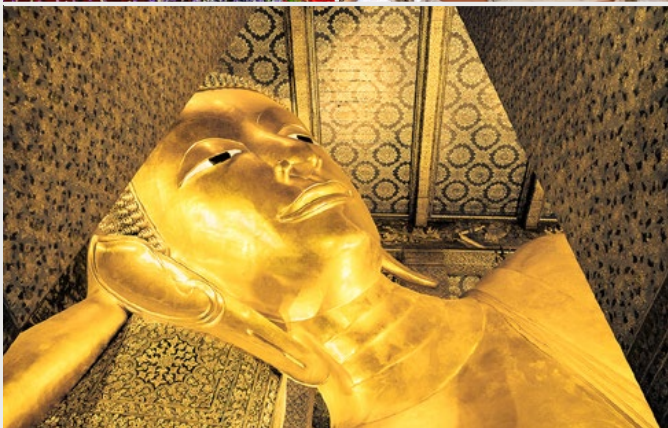
Dusit Palace Park

Bangkok's fairy-tale palace. **p74**



Ko Kret

Bangkok's island getaway. **p164**



Wat Pho

Bangkok's biggest reclining Buddha. **p36**

Eating

Nowhere else is the Thai reverence for food more evident than in Bangkok. To the outsider, the life of a Bangkokian appears to be a string of meals and snacks punctuated by the odd stab at work, not the other way around. If you can adjust your mental clock to this schedule, your visit will be a delicious one indeed.

Street Food

Open-air markets and food stalls are among the most popular dining spots for Thais. In the mornings, stalls selling coffee and Chinese-style doughnuts spring up along busy commuter corridors. At lunchtime, diners might grab a plastic chair at yet another stall for a simple stir-fry. In Bangkok's suburbs, night markets often set up in the middle of town with a cluster of food vendors, metal tables and chairs.

Fine Dining

Most people associate Bangkok exclusively with street food, but the city's eating scene is increasingly diverse. The fine-dining establishments range in cuisine from French to Thai, including several forays into fusion. Best of all, this is Bangkok, so there's little of the stuffiness associated with fine dining in the West.

Ethnic Cuisines

Contemporary Bangkok's menu extends far beyond Thai;

reconsider rice for a meal or two and jump head first into a dining scene where options range from Korean to Egyptian, touching on just about everything in between.

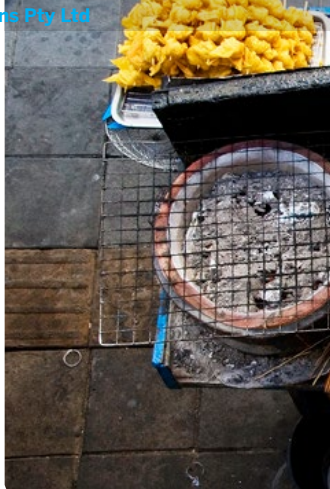
Best Street Food

Jay Fai Some of the most legendary – and expensive – noodles in town. (p63)

Pa Aew Stall specialising in Bangkok-style fare. (p49)

Thanon Phadungdao Seafood Stalls These stalls are so 'street' you risk getting bumped by a car. (p89)

Khun Yah Cuisine The flavours of Bangkok and central Thailand in one convenient location. (p87)





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Best Fine Dining

nahm Widely considered to be Southeast Asia's best restaurant. (p125)

Eat Me Eclectic, eccentric modern cuisine, paired with great service. (p125)

Appia Sublime yet homey Italian. (p147)

Sra Bua by Kiin Kiin A modern, innovative venue where Thai flavours, ingredients and presentation are taken to the next level. (p107)

Le Normandie Dress up for an upmarket and old-world 'Continental' dining experience. (p129)

Best Ethnic Cuisines

Jidori Cuisine Ken Perfect Japanese-style chicken skewers. (p147)

Tonkin-Annam Some of the best Vietnamese food in Bangkok. (p49)

Fou de Joie French in a retro setting. (p87)

Shoshana This backpacker staple has been proffering the flavours of Jerusalem

for more than 30 years now. (p63)

Din Tai Fung Famed Taiwanese chain that is *the* place to go for *xiao long bao*, Chinese 'soup' dumplings. (p104)

Chennai Kitchen Bangkok's best southern Indian cuisine. (p128)

Nasir Al-Masri Authentic Middle Eastern in the heart of Bangkok's Middle Eastern hood. (p149)

Foodie Websites



Keep with the ever-changing food scene in Bangkok by following the Restaurants section of **BK** (bk.asia-city.com/restaurants) or **Bangkok 101** (www.bangkok101.com).

Shopping

Prime your credit card and shine your baht: shopping is serious business in Bangkok. Hardly a street corner in the city is free from a vendor, hawker or impromptu stall. It doesn't stop there: Bangkok is also home to one of the world's largest outdoor markets, not to mention Southeast Asia's second-largest mall.



Malls & Markets

Although the tourist brochures tend to tout the upmarket malls, Bangkok still lags slightly behind Singapore and Hong Kong in this area. The open-air markets are where the best deals and most original items are found.

Bargaining

At Bangkok's markets and at some of its malls, you'll have to bargain for most, if not all, items. In general, if you see a price tag, it means that the price is fixed and bargaining isn't an option.

Gems & Jewellery

Countless tourists are sucked into gem scams in which they are taken to a shop by a helpful stranger and tricked into buying bulk gems that can supposedly be resold in their home country for 100% profit. The expert con artists seem trustworthy and convince tourists that they need a citizen's help to circumvent tricky customs regulations. Unsurprisingly, the gem world doesn't work like that, and what most tourists

end up with are worthless pieces of glass.

Best Markets

Chatuchak Weekend

Market One of the world's largest markets and a must-do Bangkok experience. (p160)

Thanon Khao San Market

Elephant-print pants, Singha shirts, fresh-squeezed orange juice; all the backpacker essentials are available here. (p72)

Pak Khlong Talat Bangkok's famous flower market; come late at night and don't forget your camera. (p85)

Talat Mai This frenetic fresh market is a slice of China in Bangkok. (p84)



NENG TIEO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Best for Traditional Souvenirs

Heritage Craft Unique goods from just about every corner of the country. (p72)

Lofty Bamboo Hill-tribe inspired clothes and handicrafts. (p73)

Tamnan Mingmuang Classy items woven from rattan and water hyacinth. (p136)

Best for Quirky Souvenirs

The Selected A carefully curated assemblage of modern, mostly Thai-made homewares, knick-knacks, clothing and accessories. (p110)

Mowaan Lozenges, inhalers, oils and balms rooted in Thai herbal medicine. (p72)

it's going green Retro Thai-style homewares, soaps and other items that double as one-of-a-kind souvenirs. (p110)

Objects of Desire Store Design-focused contemporary ceramics, paper products, furniture and other homewares. (p110)

Chiang Heng Third-generation family-run kitchen-supply shop. (p136)

Best Malls

Siam Discovery Recently renovated, this is hands down the most design-conscious mall in town. (p111)

MBK Center A seemingly never-ending Thai market in a mall. (p111)

Siam Center The third floor here is one of the best locations to check out established local labels. (p112)

Insider Online Shopping Tips



Nancy Chandler's Map of Bangkok (www.nancychandler.net) is a colourful online guide that highlights the quirkiest types of shopping venues, which you won't find included on free tourist maps.

Drinking & Nightlife

Shame on you if you think Bangkok's only nightlife options include the word 'go-go'. As in any big international city, the drinking and partying scene in Bangkok ranges from trashy to classy and touches on just about everything in between.



Cocktails

Blue kamikazes no longer cut it in Bangkok; today the city is home to a growing repertoire of bars that take pride in mixing the classics or inventing new drinks altogether.

Beer

The domestic brews still corner most of the market, but labels from around the world have found their way to Bangkok (although they don't come cheap).

Rooftop Bars

Bangkok is one of the few big cities in the world where nobody seems to mind if you slap the odd bar or restaurant on top of a skyscraper. The options range from cheap to chic to and, likewise, range in view from hyperurban to suburban.

Live Music

Music is an essential element of a Thai night out, and just about every pub worth its salted peanuts has a house band.

Clubs

Clubs in Bangkok tend to heave on certain nights – Fridays and Saturdays, during a visit from a foreign DJ, or for a night dedicated to the music flavour of the month – then hibernate every other night.

Best for Cocktails

WTF The classics – done well. (p150)

Q&A Bar Sophisticated mixed drinks in a venue with a midcentury vibe. (p150)

Ku Bar Edgy cocktails in an even edgier locale. (p68)



SHANTI HESSE/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Best Rooftop Bars

Moon Bar The combination of casual ambience and stunning views make this our personal favourite of Bangkok's original rooftop bars. (p130)

River Vibe Budget guest-house prices, million-dollar views. (p91)

Sky Bar The sweeping Hollywood entrance and seemingly floating bar set the tone at this rooftop venue. (p139)

Best Clubs

Beam At press time, Bangkok's best nightclub. (p153)

Glow Club with underground cred. (p155)

Demo Where Bangkok's young and beautiful go. (p155)

The Club Dance with a virtual UN of partiers at this Th Khao San-based disco. (p68)

Best Live Music

Titanium Nightly performances by Unicorn, an all-girl band that's bound to get you bouncing. (p156)

Brick Bar Live-music den, famous among locals, for whom dancing on the tables is practically mandatory. (p70)

The Living Room As the name suggests, live jazz in a comfortable setting. (p155)

Best for Beer

Hair of the Dog A fridge full of bottles from around the world and 13 taps. (p108)

Pijiu Bar Craft brews and Chinatown-influenced charcuterie platters. (p90)

Mikkeller Some of the city's most unique micro- and craft-brews. (p152)

Guides to Bangkok's Nightlife



To find out what's on when you're in town, go to **BK** (bk.asia-city.com), **Bangkok 101** (www.bangkok101.com), the Bangkok Post's Friday supplement, *Guru*, or **Siam-2nite** (www.siam2nite.com)