



**nileGUIDE**

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



# Bangkok and Beyond

## **Bangkok, 7 Days**

### Table of contents:

- Guide Description 2
- Itinerary Overview 3
- Daily Itineraries 5
- Bangkok Snapshot 14

# Guide Description



**AUTHOR NOTE:** If you have a full week in Bangkok, you'll have a chance to really explore and get to know the city and nearby locations. This itinerary guides your way through temples, museums, day trips, restaurants, and activities, guaranteeing that you'll leave Bangkok satisfied.

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

## Day 1 - Bangkok

**DAY NOTE:** With all your energy at the onset of an exciting trip, take advantage of your first day in Bangkok. This is a great day to see some of the main sites, including the Grand Palace, Wat Pho, and Wat Arun. While you're in that area, check out Sala Rim Naam for lunch before heading north on the river to explore the area around Khao San Road (including Phra Sumeru Fortress). At the end of the day, enjoy the progressive atmosphere of Cabbages and Condoms for dinner before relaxing with a glass of wine at the Living Room.



### World Fellowship of Buddhists

Meditation and education in Benjasiri Park



### Wat Pho

Temple of the famous Reclining Buddha



### Grand Palace

Golden chedis, glittering facades and a rare jade Buddha at the former home of Kings

## Day 2

**DAY NOTE:** Kanchanaburi is one of the most interesting close trips to take out of Bangkok. Get an early start, as to ensure you make your two days in the province memorable. Base yourself in the city of Kanchanaburi, from where you can visit the Bridge on the River Kwai, JEATH War Museum, and Erawan National Park. The train from Bangkok leaves daily and lasts less than three hours.

## Day 3 - Bangkok

**DAY NOTE:** Getting back to Bangkok in the early evening, you will probably want a relaxing night in the city. Siam Square is a nice area to stroll about, and it is home to numerous theaters where you can go and check out a Thai movie if you're up for it. Face is a beautiful restaurant, serving top notch Thai and Indian food...not to be missed. If you're in the mood for a drink before bed, Shades of Retro is a very low-key bar...and most of what's inside is for sale!



### Shades of Retro

Drinks and home décor

## Day 4 - Bangkok

**DAY NOTE:** A great way to ease back into Bangkok after Kanchanaburi is to visit a few of the city's notable museums and architectural sites. Not far from the Siam Society is Tamarind Cafe, a charming restaurant that serves strictly vegetarian dishes guaranteed to satisfy everyone...even the meat fanatic. To end the day, try out Beirut for some outstanding Lebanese.



### Siam Society

Library and Ethnological Museum for the Literary-inclined



### Beirut

Authentic Lebanese food

## Day 5 - Bangkok

**DAY NOTE:** Today you should be ready to take on a little more Bangkok action. Get an early start at Crepes & Co. for a delicious breakfast before stopping by the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute and Snake Farm. You can even see a snake milking on Saturday mornings. Later, take a stroll around Lumpini Park while you people watch, and then head to Chinatown for an exciting afternoon of markets, temples and food. Leave yourself time to get tickets for a Saturday night fight at the premier Lumpini Boxing Stadium and cap off the night with some drinks and live music at Saxophone Pub.



### Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute and Snake Farm

Demos and lectures on snakes



### Lumphini Park

Paddleboats, Paths, Aerobics in the Park

## Day 6 - Bangkok

**DAY NOTE:** As your time in Bangkok starts nearing its end, there are a few more musts to be experienced. Start with a morning at Chatuchak Weekend Market, where you can buy all the last minute items you've been waiting to purchase. Drop off all your bags and grab an Indian lunch at Akbar before indulging at a spa...well deserved after such a week. The Oriental Spa is luxurious, but there are places to get massages and treatments all over the city...consult your budget to decide. Shin Daikoku offers exceptional Japanese food in a well-thought-out setting

# Itinerary Overview

things to do  
restaurants  
hotels  
nightlife

for dinner. Afterwards, stop by Erawan Shrine on the way to the Calypso Cabaret for a night of true Bangkok entertainment.



## Chatuchak Park

Cheap, labyrinthine street market next to a lovely park



## Oriental Spa (The)

Health baths in style



## Erawan Shrine

A Busy, Glittering, Incense-infused, Four-Faced Brahma Shrine

## Day 7

**DAY NOTE:** Now that you've really gotten a chance to discover Bangkok, make the short trip to Ayutthaya to explore the centuries-old ruins of an ancient Thai Kingdom. Perfect for a day trip, you'll be back by dinner. Harmonique is a wonderful restaurant to have your last meal in Bangkok...the food is fantastic and the decor is friendly and unique. End your trip with a bang at Vertigo Bar, where you can reflect on the past week with a drink, overlooking Bangkok's lit skyline.

# Day 1 - Bangkok

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** With all your energy at the onset of an exciting trip, take advantage of your first day in Bangkok. This is a great day to see some of the main sites, including the Grand Palace, Wat Pho, and Wat Arun. While you're in that area, check out Sala Rim Naam for lunch before heading north on the river to explore the area around Khao San Road (including Phra Sumeru Fortress). At the end of the day, enjoy the progressive atmosphere of Cabbages and Condoms for dinner before relaxing with a glass of wine at the Living Room.

### contact:

tel: +66 2 661 1284-90  
fax: +66 2 661 0555  
<http://www.wfb-hq.org/>

### location:

616 Sukhumvit Road, Soi  
Medhinivet  
Bangkok Bangkok 10110

## World Fellowship of Buddhists

**DESCRIPTION:** A global organization of Buddhists, whose Thailand headquarters lie behind Benjasiri Park. On the first Sunday of every month, it holds a Buddhist forum and free meditation instructions and practices for English speakers. On selected Sundays there is also a dhamma talk--a brilliant opportunity to experience Buddhist instructions from world experts. The forum is an open discussion on a topic of spiritual interest. © wcities.com



Kevin Revolinski

### contact:

tel: +66 2 222 5910 / +66 2  
226 2942 / +66 2 226 1743 /  
+66 2 225 9595  
fax: +66 2 225 9779  
<http://www.tat.or.th>

### location:

2 Sanamchai Road  
Bangkok Bangkok 10200

### hours:

Daily 8am-5pm; massages  
offered until 6pm

## 1 Wat Pho

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Get a Thai massage in an air-conditioned salon inside the temple complex. Some signage may spell this as Wat Po, without the H. A rose by any other name...

**DESCRIPTION:** Over 200 years old, Wat Pho is one of Bangkok's largest and oldest temple complexes. For an entry fee of 50 baht, visitors can roam the grounds with or without a guide, stopping along the way at numerous notable temples and sites. The most famous of Wat Pho's relics is the Temple of the Reclining Buddha, wherein lies an impressive 46 meter-long gold-plated image of a reclining Buddha. A first grade royal monastery, Wat Pho is also Thailand's oldest learning center and the birthplace of traditional Thai massage. Take a Chao Phraya River ferry to Tha Thien (pier). The Grand Palace is a short walk from Wat Pho. You can also cross the river from the pier to see Wat Arun. Beware that scam artists (often tuk-tuk drivers) will try to claim that the temple is closed for the day. Don't believe it.

[Note: Pho is pronounced with a P like Paul not an F like a Vietnamese noodle soup]

© NileGuide



**contact:**

tel: +66 2 694 1222 (Tourism Authority of Thailand)  
fax: +66 2 694 1220 1  
<http://www.palaces.thai.net>

**location:**

Phra Borom Maha Ratchawang  
Bangkok Bangkok 10500

**hours:**

Daily 8:30am-3:30pm; most individual buildings are closed to the public except on special days proclaimed by the King

**2 Grand Palace**

**DESCRIPTION:** Bangkok's Grand Palace served as the official residence of Thailand's kings from the time it was built in 1782 until midway through the 20th Century. Although the entry fee is considerably higher than most at 300 baht, the grounds are gorgeous and provide an unforgettable glimpse at Thai history and architecture. Sitting on over 215,000 square meters, the Grand Palace houses government offices, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, and royal residences. A trip to the Grand Palace is worth combining with Wat Pho, its next-door neighbor of equal cultural importance. © NileGuide



# Day 2

**DAY NOTE:** Kanchanaburi is one of the most interesting close trips to take out of Bangkok. Get an early start, as to ensure you make your two days in the province memorable. Base yourself in the city of Kanchanaburi, from where you can visit the Bridge on the River Kwai, JEATH War Museum, and Erawan National Park. The train from Bangkok leaves daily and lasts less than three hours.

# Day 3 - Bangkok

**DAY NOTE:** Getting back to Bangkok in the early evening, you will probably want a relaxing night in the city. Siam Square is a nice area to stroll about, and it is home to numerous theaters where you can go and check out a Thai movie if you're up for it. Face is a beautiful restaurant, serving top notch Thai and Indian food...not to be missed. If you're in the mood for a drink before bed, Shades of Retro is a very low-key bar...and most of what's inside is for sale!

---

**contact:**

tel: 66 2 714 9657

**location:**

522/3 Soi Thonglor  
Bangkok

## Shades of Retro

**DESCRIPTION:** Sells retro/vintage furniture and décor, including lamps, rugs, clocks, chairs, and stereos. But apart from being a furniture shop, Shades of Retro is a low-key bar perfect for a relaxing night out with friends.

---



# Day 4 - Bangkok

---

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** A great way to ease back into Bangkok after Kanchanaburi is to visit a few of the city's notable museums and architectural sites. Not far from the Siam Society is Tamarind Cafe, a charming restaurant that serves strictly vegetarian dishes guaranteed to satisfy everyone...even the meat fanatic. To end the day, try out Beirut for some outstanding Lebanese.

---

**contact:**

tel: +66 2 661 6470  
fax: +66 2 258 3491  
<http://www.siam-society.org>

**location:**

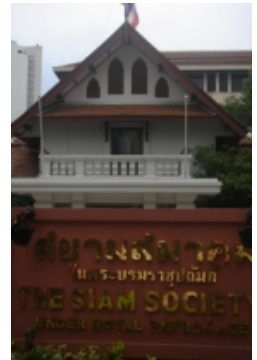
Sukhumvit 21 Road  
Bangkok Bangkok 10110

**hours:**

Tues-Sat 9am-5pm

## 1 Siam Society

**DESCRIPTION:** \*\*On November 20, 2009 fire destroyed the offices and shops but only caused some damage to the library. Events in the auditorium continue, but check the website for updates.\*\* The Siam Society makes for an interesting, intellectual stop outside of the typical tourist path. It was founded in 1904 as a result of cooperation between Thai and foreign scholars who dedicated themselves to promoting the study, enjoyment and availability of Thai art, science, culture and natural history. Nowadays, the Siam Society acts as a non-profit organization committed to the same causes as its founders, offering library facilities, an ethnological museum, and various activities ranging from performances to study tours. © NileGuide



wcities

---

**location:**

Sukhumvit Soi 2, Phloen Chit  
Center, basement  
Bangkok Bangkok 10110

**hours:**

M-Su 10 a.m. - 10 p.m.

## Beirut

**DESCRIPTION:** Don't shun the basement location. This "down to earth" place is popular with foreigners and Thai alike. Located in Phloen Chit Center Tower, Beirut brings the best Lebanese fare in the city with the usual hummus and falafel but also a variety of meat combos. © NileGuide

# Day 5 - Bangkok

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** Today you should be ready to take on a little more Bangkok action. Get an early start at Crepes & Co. for a delicious breakfast before stopping by the Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute and Snake Farm. You can even see a snake milking on Saturday mornings. Later, take a stroll around Lumpini Park while you people watch, and then head to Chinatown for an exciting afternoon of markets, temples and food. Leave yourself time to get tickets for a Saturday night fight at the premier Lumpini Boxing Stadium and cap off the night with some drinks and live music at Saxophone Pub.

### contact:

tel: +66 2 252 0161 x4  
fax: +66 2 254 0212  
<http://www.bangkoktourist.com/>,  
[http://www.bangkoktourist.com/backup/places\\_queen\\_saovabha\\_memorial\\_institute.php](http://www.bangkoktourist.com/backup/places_queen_saovabha_memorial_institute.php)

### location:

1871 Rama IV Street  
Bangkok Bangkok 10330

## 1 Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute and Snake Farm

**DESCRIPTION:** This is a great place to see cobras, kraits, vipers and pythons in all their glory. You can also hold a giant python and see snakes "milked" of their venom and see lectures and demonstrations delivered in English and Thai. The snake farm is part of a larger research facility operating a traveler immunization clinic where visitors can get vaccinated against rabies, hepatitis A and B, typhoid fever, tetanus, polio, Japanese encephalitis, influenza and cholera. © wcities.com



### contact:

tel: +66 2 694 1222 (Tourism Authority of Thailand)  
fax: +66 2 694 1220 1  
<http://www.tat.or.th>

### location:

Entrances on Rama IV Road, Sarasin Road, Wireless Road and Ratchadamri Road  
Bangkok Bangkok 10330

## 2 Lumpini Park

**DESCRIPTION:** Smack in the heart of the city lies Lumpini Park, an oasis of nature within bustling Bangkok. The first of its kind in Bangkok, plans for the public park began in 1925. Lumpini Park is named after the Buddha's birthplace and covers approximately 58 hectares, gracing the city with greenery and waterways for picnics, pick-up sports and paddleboat rides. Early mornings are unforgettable: hordes of fitness group regulars engage in synchronized aerobics, while others jog peacefully and practice tai chi. Lumpini Park is a great place to take a timeout during a long day of sightseeing. © NileGuide



# Day 6 - Bangkok

## QUICK NOTE

**DAY NOTE:** As your time in Bangkok starts nearing its end, there are a few more musts to be experienced. Start with a morning at Chatuchak Weekend Market, where you can buy all the last minute items you've been waiting to purchase. Drop off all your bags and grab an Indian lunch at Akbar before indulging at a spa...well deserved after such a week. The Oriental Spa is luxurious, but there are places to get massages and treatments all over the city...consult your budget to decide. Shin Daikoku offers exceptional Japanese food in a well-thought-out setting for dinner. Afterwards, stop by Erawan Shrine on the way to the Calypso Cabaret for a night of true Bangkok entertainment.

**location:**  
Chatuchak, Bangkok 10900,  
Thailand  
Bangkok Bangkok

## 1 Chatuchak Park

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Take the SkyTrain to Mor Chit station or the subway to Chatuchak.

**DESCRIPTION:** Although greenery may be hard to come by in Bangkok, Chatuchak Park surely has a lot of it. A sanctuary for joggers, bicyclists and picnickers alike since 1980, Chatuchak Park is home to a variety of trees, a winding artificial lake and public exercising equipment for all to enjoy. It borders Chatuchak Weekend Market, thus also making it a haven for exhausted shoppers who need a break from the crowds. And although it is a bit hidden, the rolling extension of the park to the northwest cannot be missed. © NileGuide

**contact:**  
tel: +66 (0)2659 9000  
fax: +66 (0)2659 9284 / +66  
(0)2659 9285  
<http://www.mandarin-oriental.com>

## 2 Oriental Spa (The)

**DESCRIPTION:** Ask yourself whether your body needs to be pampered through and through, and if the answer is yes, head to the Oriental Spa. Located in Oriental Bangkok (The), one of the world's great hotels, this spa, and its professional health and beauty attendants, live up to the reputation of the hotel they are housed in. Services include papaya body polishes, full-body aroma therapy massages, mud wraps, bust-firming enhancement, foot massages and seaweed treatments. Advance booking is recommended and you must check in fifteen minutes before your session. © wcities.com

**location:**  
48 Oriental Avenue  
Bangkok Bangkok 10500

**hours:**  
Call for details

**contact:**  
tel: +66 2 225 7612(Tourist  
Information)  
fax: +66 2 225 7615(Tourist  
Information)

## 3 Erawan Shrine

### OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Most will refer to this as the Four-Faced Buddha.

**location:**  
494 Ratchawithi Road (corner  
of Ploenchit and Ratchiwitthi)  
Bangkok Bangkok 10330

**hours:**  
Daily dawn-8pm

**DESCRIPTION:** In the middle of the glitz and traffic of downtown commercial Bangkok stands Erawan Shrine, a very unique place of worship that is a must-see. Devoted to the Hindu god Brahma, Erawan Shrine was built in 1956 to honor the spirits that once resided in trees that were chopped down during construction of the nearby Erawan Hotel. Nowadays, the shrine is constantly flooded with worshippers praying for good



Kevin Revolinski

fortune as they burn incense, light candles and place carnation garlands at offering tables. Traditional Thai dancers perform on a stage around the clock, and tourists are welcomed to partake in the spirituality. The open-air fills with pleasant scents and the good vibes are abundant. Erawan Shrine is a Bangkok must. © NileGuide

---

# Day 7

**DAY NOTE:** Now that you've really gotten a chance to discover Bangkok, make the short trip to Ayutthaya to explore the centuries-old ruins of an ancient Thai Kingdom. Perfect for a day trip, you'll be back by dinner. Harmonique is a wonderful restaurant to have your last meal in Bangkok...the food is fantastic and the decor is friendly and unique. End your trip with a bang at Vertigo Bar, where you can reflect on the past week with a drink, overlooking Bangkok's lit skyline.

# Bangkok Snapshot

## Local Info

### Introduction

With its intense humidity, hedonistic nightclubs and hurly-burly taxiing of tuk-tuks, Bangkok is an exhilarating attack on the senses. Sukhomvit's malls and gleaming skyscrapers are just a veneer of modernity for a city firmly rooted in ancient Buddhist beliefs and traditions. Watch saffron-robed monks on their morning alms rounds, clouds of incense rising above the Grand Palace's golden spires, and long-tail boats gliding along the Chao Phraya River at dusk to discover Bangkok's underlying sense of calm and the spirit of old Siam.

### Things to Do

Open-air massage and fresh coconut juice between temples keeps you cool and calm when sightseeing in Bangkok. Arrive early and dress modestly to seek out the dazzlingly intricate **Grand Palace's** sacred Emerald Buddha and neighboring **Wat Pho's** 46-meter-long Reclining Buddha. Families send colorful dragon kites soaring at the nearby **Sanam Luang** square, while locals practice morning tai chi in lake-dotted **Lumpini Park**. Take a long-tail boat along the **Chao Phraya River** as the setting sun silhouettes palace spires and bell-shaped stupas.

### Shopping

Aromatic spices, fighting cocks and every Thai craft imaginable attract shoppers and people-watchers to the 15,000-stall **Chatuchak Weekend Market**. Rise early to explore the market at its coolest and be prepared for good-humored haggling. Monks in flowing robes drift through atmospheric **Amulet Market** near the Grand Palace, while locals forage for wholesale food in labyrinthine **Chinatown**. **Sukhumvit's** shiny malls and boutiques are the go-to place for designer fashion, leather and a tailor-made silk outfit from **Jim Thompson**.

### Nightlife and Entertainment

Elephants parade past party-mad clubbers and tuk-tuks dart through crowds on neon-lit **Khao San Road**, where anything goes in the pulsating bars and live music joints. Go-

go girls perform in hedonistic **Patpong** and **Soi Cowboy**, but few have the supermodel figures to rival the ladyboys at **Calypso Cabaret**. **Silom** and **Sukhumvit** are packed with clubs and cocktail bars, like the 61st-floor **Vertigo Bar** with its dazzling view of twinkling Bangkok.

### Restaurants and Dining

With cooks juggling woks on every corner, Bangkok is all about grazing for street food. Backpackers head for food stalls in **Banglamphu's** narrowsois, where a few baht buys a sticky pad thai or spicy papaya salad. Choose the **Phahurat** Indian quarter's teahouses for authentic biryanis and curries or buzzy **Chinatown** for noodles stir-fried to perfection. The Skytrain speeds you to high-rise **Sukhumvit** and **Silom**, where expats and dressy locals go for global cuisine from Middle Eastern to Italian.

© 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

## History

In just over 200 years, Bangkok has grown from a small collection of villages scattered among canals and rice paddies alongside the Chao Phraya River to an enormous sprawl of a capital. Extending upward and outward to become Thailand's dominant city, Bangkok mirrors the long, continuing reign of the Chakri dynasty that founded it. The seeds of this growth were sown back in 1767 when invading Burmese armies razed the old capital of Ayutthaya by tearing down its temples. Those that survived, including the royal family, were carted off as slaves. Out of this chaos, a Thai general named Phraya Thaksin founded a new capital at Thonburi on the western bank of the Chao Phraya River, opposite modern Bangkok, proclaimed himself king and immediately set about recapturing much of the surrounding country. One of the few surviving legacies from this period is Wat Arun, or "Temple of the Dawn." It has since been enlarged and reconstructed, but was originally part of Thaksin's royal temple.

Following his military successes, Thaksin became more and more excessive in his

behavior and was finally ousted in a coup that transferred power to another general, Chao Phraya Chakri. Chakri kicked off the modern history of Bangkok by transferring the capital from Thonburi to the eastern bank of the river, founding Bangkok in 1782 on the fortified island of Ratanakosin. Chakri refurbished many of the existing temples in the area, such as Wat Po, and built present-day tourist sites, including Wat Phra Kaew, the Grand Palace and Lak Mueang, the shrine dedicated to the guardian deity of Bangkok. The National Museum, built originally for Chakri's vizier Prince Wang Na, also dates from this period.

Under Chakri and his successors, Bangkok continued to expand, mainly because of trade. New communities such as Yaowarat (mainly Chinese traders) and Pahurat (the Indian quarter) were established, extending outward from Ratanakosin. The third king in the Chakri dynasty, Phra Nang Klao, developed a new system of royal titles, naming himself Rama III and his predecessors Rama I and Rama II. Rama III was responsible for expanding Wat Pho and Wat Arun to their present form and also initiated the aborted construction of Wat Saket, the spectacular Golden Mount Temple, completed further down the line by Rama V.

Rama IV, also known as Mongkut, is probably best known by Westerners as the ruler in *The King and I* and the more recent *Anna and the King*. Thais tend to find these interpretations offensive and growing evidence now suggests the accounts of Anna Leonowens, on which the movies were based, to be pure fiction at best. The real Rama IV was a brilliant leader who skillfully negotiated treaties with foreign powers that prevented the colonization of Thailand. Under his reign, Bangkok benefited from his trade policies with an expanded port and, for the first time, paved streets.

Rama V (also known as Chulalongkorn or "The Great King") took on the throne in 1868 at the age of 15 and continued his father's reforms, setting down

## Bangkok Snapshot continued

the foundations for the modern Thai government as well as moving the royal palace to Dusit and building Bangkok's first railway system. The grounds of his old Chitlada Palace feature the Vimanmek Teak Mansion and the Abhisek Throne Hall, both excellent examples of royal Thai architecture. During this time, both the Victory Monument and Democracy Monument were constructed to designs by Corrado Feroci, an Italian credited with helping found Thailand's modern art movement. Rama V's long reign brought peace and stability to Thailand and his death in 1910 ushered in a period of great change. The first in a long series of coups was launched unsuccessfully in 1912 by a group of disgruntled soldiers. Another coup in 1932 by Western-educated students proved more successful, ending the absolute monarchy and replacing it with a constitutional model.

Rama VII abdicated in 1935, leaving the 10-year-old Rama VIII in his place. Power passed into the hands of Field Marshall Phibun, the first in what would prove to be a long line of military dictators. Probably one of the best examples of 1930s architecture is the Neilson Hays Library in downtown Bangkok. Phibun allied with the Japanese during World War II, sparing the capital from destruction, but lost his position of absolute power to a democratic civilian government after the war. He regained absolute power under murky circumstances surrounding the death of Rama VIII.

The current King Bhumibol (Rama IX) was crowned in 1946, and the first few decades of his reign were marked by the rise of communism in Indochina, leading to growing American military aid and a continuing succession of military dictators. The enduring legacy in Bangkok of this time are the bars of Patpong and Soi Cowboy, which catered to American soldiers on R & R from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Another reminder of this turbulent time is Jim Thompson's House and Museum, preserved exactly as the silk magnate left it when he mysteriously disappeared.

In 1973, massive student demonstrations forced General Thanom, the military ruler,

to leave the country. A civilian government took over, but lasted only until 1976, when more student demonstrations against the return of Thanom were brutally crushed by right-wing forces fearing a communist takeover. General Prem Tinsulanonda, a moderate, took power in 1980 and is credited for leading Thailand out of this mess, granting amnesty to the communists and overseeing a period of growth and stability that turned Bangkok into the vibrant modern capital it is today.

One downturn in this trend of liberalization has been another military coup in 1991, overthrown the following year by bloody Bangkok street demonstrations. Since then, a succession of four civilian governments has seen the capital enjoy a much more stable political climate. The only other crisis of note was the 1997 Asian economic meltdown, whose legacy is still apparent in scores of unfinished condominiums and office towers.

In 2006 amidst widespread protest and accusations of human rights abuses, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who came to power with the Thai Rak Thai Party in 2001, was removed in a bloodless coup, staged while he was out of the country. Political turmoil has continued to show itself in street demonstrations and most visibly with the blocking by protesters of airport and transit links in late 2008.

©

### Hotel Insights

Bangkok offers a wide variety of accommodations to suit every taste and budget. A visitor can live royally in an elegant five star hotel or stay comfortably in a guest house on a modest budget. Since many hotels are often fully booked during the peak season from November to March, it is recommended that visitors make advance reservations if they plan to visit during this time.

The main hotel districts are around Siam Square and Ploenchit Road, next to the Chao Phraya River, along Silom Road and Suriwong Road, and along Sukhumvit Road. There are other areas

such as Banglampoo where backpackers favor inexpensive guesthouses. More inexpensive accommodation is available across the river where some modern high-rise hotels are planned and in Chinatown, which is one of the most vibrant and typically Asian parts of Bangkok.

#### Siam Square and Ploenchit Road

In the area around Siam Square, you will find some very nice places to stay, along with a whole variety of shops, restaurants and nightspots. The less expensive places are concentrated on Soi Kasemann 1 and near Jim Thompson's House and Museum. These places, such as Wendy House, offer a guesthouse atmosphere with hotel comfort.

In a quiet enclave opposite Siam Square stands an elegant low-rise modern Thai building, the classy five-star Siam InterContinental. Another nearby luxury hotel is the Amari Watergate Hotel, near the World Trade Center. The Grand President Bangkok is a 30-year-old landmark aimed primarily at business travelers. Next to the Erawan Shrine and across from the Central World Plaza, you will find the Grand Hyatt Erawan, another stylish five-star hotel. Reputation precedes itself at Four Seasons Bangkok while less expensive accommodation can be found at the well known Indra Regent and Bangkok Palace.

#### Chao Phraya River, Silom Road and Suriwong Road

This district encompasses some of the older sections of Bangkok. The area around Silom Road and Suriwong Road is considered the financial district, and has a number of hotels and restaurants not far from the Patpong Night Market with its easy shopping and entertainment. For a centrally located top-class hotel geared for both business and leisure, try the Dusit Thani on the corner of Silom Road. Then there are two luxury establishments, the Montien Bangkok features a distinctly Thai character, and the Sukhothai, which boasts an elegant decor inspired by the walled city of Sukhothai.

## Bangkok Snapshot continued

Continue farther west, and you will reach the riverbank, where some of the leading hotels in Bangkok are to be found. The Royal Orchid Sheraton offers riverfront luxury oriented toward tour groups. For decades, the Shangri-La has claimed to be Bangkok's finest hotel, though there are now many others in its class. The Oriental, another stylish riverside hotel, is often voted as one of the world's top hotels. The Peninsula and Marriott Spa Resort are two other plush hotels overlooking the Chao Praya River.

### Sukhumvit Road

This is another area well known for shops and nightspots, including the seamy bars of Soi Nana and Soi Cowboy. There are some mid-range hotels and inns here, including the Atlanta Hotel and the Bangkok Inn, but the better four-star and five-star hotels tend to be more oriented toward business travelers than tourists. However, what they may lack in character is made up for in facilities. The brand-new JW Marriott Bangkok is a deluxe hotel geared toward business travelers and boasts one of the most modern fitness centers in the city. The Landmark and the Westin Grande Sukhumvit are two of the most luxurious hotels on Sukhumvit, while the Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit is an old mainstay with business travelers. Novotel Lotus caters to business clientele. For modern-sized, unpretentious topnotch accommodation, try the Amari Boulevard, where all the rooms have nice views of the Bangkok skyline. More budget oriented options can be found at Zenith Hotel and the Danish style Stable Lodge.

Wherever you decide to stay in Bangkok, the friendly people here in the "Land of Smiles" will make it easy to relax and enjoy your time in this hospitable city.

©

## Restaurants Insights

Thai cuisine has spread across the globe in the past three decades at an unprecedented speed. The reason is not hard to fathom-- the food is

absolutely delicious. There are two types of Thai cooking: royal Thai cuisine and "common" fare. The former is traditionally served to royalty, and usually garnished with exquisitely carved fruits and vegetables. "Common" Thai food is what Thais eat every day. Each of the four regions in Thailand has a distinct cuisine, but unless you are dining in a restaurant specializing in regional cooking, you are likely to find a blend of cuisines on most menus.

In the central region, the food is known for being hot, salty, sweet and sour. Dishes such as nam prik (dips) and soups served with boiled rice are standard fare. In the northeastern region, sticky rice is the staple accompaniment to such popular dishes as som tam (green papaya salad), gai yang (barbecued chicken) and laap (salads of meat and fresh herbs). Much of the street food in Bangkok is from the northeast, due to the large number of vendors coming from the region. Food from the north tends to be mild, salty and sour, but not sweet. Fermented sour pork sausages (you can see them being barbecued on the street) are a favorite. In the south, fish and sour curries (without coconut milk) are the normal diet.

### Phra Nakorn

There are plenty of restaurants in this district where you will find the best in Thai cuisine. Phranakorn Bar & Gallery has a popular rooftop bar where the drinks are reasonably-priced. Be sure to try an authentic Thai whiskey and enjoy the local, contemporary music playing in the background. The restaurant Thiptara built on the Chao Praya River has been made to resemble a traditional Thai compound. Rim Nam Terrace can be found within the Royal River Hotel, and serves local Thai cuisine in a modern dining room. The tiny and ancient Chote Chitr has been turning out court style food for over 90 years while the Brick Bar serves up beer and satisfying Thai snacks.

### Thonburi

On the other hand, if it is international cuisine you are hungry for, Bangkok will satisfy you all the same. From Indian to Greek, Middle Eastern and Latin — name

your cuisine and somewhere there will be a waiter ready with an appropriate menu. Sample Pacific Rim offerings at Jestors or riverfront Supatra House. Enjoy Cantonese favorites at Mei Jiang. Trader Vics Polynesian bar in Bangkok is always ready to welcome the wayfaring traveler.

### Sathorn/Silom/Bangrak

If you're in the mood for fresh seafood, try Harmonique, where the menu is Thai and the main ingredient is fish. Good places to start your Thai culinary adventure include Baan Khanitha, where the food is a favorite of locals and visitors alike. Large hotels usually have excellent Thai restaurants, among them the Celadon. While European restaurants are relatively new on the scene, there has been a recent boom in Italian cuisine, with oldies such as Angelini's attracting huge crowds. Several French restaurants have also opened to rave reviews, one of the best is Le Café Siam. Coffee is enjoying a boom in Bangkok, and although Starbucks may now be everywhere, other chains like Au Bon Pain are springing up with great success.

Then there are the "international" restaurants serving Asian and Italian-inspired dishes, but which refuse to be easily pigeonholed: Eat Me and Indigo are just two that defy labels. Bangkok's pubs and bars are up there with the best, although it is worth noting that steep taxes on wine push even basic table vino into the expensive bracket. At its very core, Bangkok is a beer-and-whiskey town. In many establishments you can order a bottle of whiskey which will be kept for your next visit. There are a number of micro-breweries to keep ale lovers happy and plenty of bars for spirit sippers, such as the more upmarket Barbican.

### Pathumwan

Then there are the pubs where live bands play popular Thai songs and, at some stage in the evening, the ubiquitous Hotel California. Henry J Bean's is just such a pub. Note that pubs and bars in Bangkok serve delectable food, making an evening of bar-hopping a fine way to pass the time.



## Bangkok Snapshot continued

Try the area around Phra Arthit Road or Narathiwat Soi 15.

Bangkok is dotted with literally hundreds of eateries and nightspots. Do not be afraid to be adventurous because it is difficult to find a bad meal in the "City of Angels." In fact, dining and drinking will most likely become one of the highlights of your trip here.

©

### Nightlife Insights

Bangkok is a city of endless diversity, where boredom is never an option. There is a whole lot more to Bangkok than its already legendary nightlife.

Traditional Thai Dance and Drama,  
Contemporary Theater and Cabaret

For something a little more cultural, Bangkok features some excellent examples of traditional Thai dance and drama. Known as *akhon*, these performances involve masked actors portraying heroes, heroines, monkeys and demons from the *Ramakian* (the Thai version of the Hindu *Ramayana*). Two of the best places to see *akhon* are the National Theatre and the Chaloem Krung Royal Theatre. In addition, there are many dinner theaters catering largely to tourists, where admission includes dinner and the show. *Sala Rim Naam*, which is run by the Oriental Hotel, features one of the more extravagant settings of any dinner theater. Others worth visiting are *Baan Thai* and *Maneeya Lotus Room*. *Lakhon kae bon*, *akhon* variant, can be seen free of charge at the Erawan Shrine and Lak Mueang. These performances are commissioned by worshipers whose wishes have been granted by the deities of these busy city shrines.

Also of interest for the theatrically inclined, the Bangkok Playhouse serves as a regular venue for contemporary Thai theater and performance art. Lastly, there are at least two big tourist-friendly transvestite cabaret shows worth seeing— *Calypso Cabaret* at the Asia Hotel, which is the most famous and possibly the best, and *Mambo Cabaret* on Sukhumvit Road, a newcomer already

packed with tourists. A new take on nightlife can be found at Twisted Republic.

Thai Boxing

Culture of another sort, though no less incredible, the national sport of *muay thai* is better known overseas as Thai kick-boxing. Two major stadiums and many smaller ones scattered around Bangkok offer ample opportunities to see *muay thai*, complete with all its ritual rappings. Lumpini and Ratchadamnoen feature some of the best fighters in the country, with matches alternating between the two stadiums over the course of a week. Apart from the action in the ring, added entertainment is provided by the musical accompaniment played by a traditional ensemble centered around the *pipii*, or Thai oboe, plus the sight of the big, rowdy crowd betting away.

Cinema

Bangkok has been recently hit by the multiplex revolution. Almost every big shopping mall has an attached cineplex showing the latest Hollywood blockbusters as well as some Thai and Thai-dubbed Hong Kong films. In addition, Bangkok hosts at least three big film festivals a year, while the cultural centers of the French, German and Japanese embassies show selected films once a week. Some of Bangkok's better cinemas include United Artists at the Emporium, Major Multiplex at the Central World Plaza and Lido Multiplex in the heart of Siam Square.

Theme Parks

Whether or not you are traveling with children, there are several big theme parks on the outskirts of Bangkok worth visiting. *Dream World*, features rides that are a big hit with the kids. If you prefer to cool down, *Siam Water Park* will do just fine. With an enormous wave pool, lots of water slides, whirlpools and other forms of aquatic chaos, it gets crowded with families seeking to escape the heat on the weekends. At *Safari World*, a drive-through wildlife park, you can observe a teeming array of animals through the windows of your car or tour bus.

Museums, Galleries & Libraries

Bangkok's many museums, galleries and libraries present an oasis of solitude in an otherwise hectic city. The National Museum displays Thailand's cultural treasures, and offers excellent guided tours. On the gallery front, while the National Gallery will certainly interest pure art fans, there is a surge in gallery and bar combinations. This is best typified by *About Studio/Café*, which succeeds admirably in presenting art in more relaxed surroundings. The Neilson Hayes Library in downtown Bangkok houses what is possibly Bangkok's best collection of English literature in a stunning 1930s era building. A visit to Bangkok Children's Discovery Museum will please any child. Explore traditional Thai culture at the Kamthieng House or Vimanmek Museum. The National Science Museum has rotating hands-on exhibits.

Massage/Meditation

If all this activity leaves you completely drained, what better way is there to revive your spirits than with a traditional Thai massage? Nowadays, particularly in tourist areas, there is a plethora of reflexology and massage parlors, but you probably get the best value for your money at *Wat Pho*, Bangkok's oldest Buddhist temple. Meditation courses also represent a good way to experience a different side of Bangkok. For non-Thai speakers, *Wat Mahathat* and *Wat Pak Nam*, both of which have many foreign students, are probably the best places to visit.

©

### Things to Do Insights

Bangkok may seem a bit overwhelming at first, with so much to see and do, but once you get used to all the traffic and confusing geography be ready to experience the time of your life.

Unlike many other cities around the world where you immediately feel a sense of awe and wonder, Bangkok's contrasts might require an adjustment when first arriving. However, it is certainly worth exploring this amazing capital. There are a number of areas inside and outside the city where an

## Bangkok Snapshot continued

abundance of sights and attractions can be visited on a day tour.

### Grand Palace

The most famous of Bangkok's sights, the Grand Palace is a square mile of royal white buildings surrounded by white walls. Within the complex is Wat Phra Kaew, which contains the Emerald Buddha. To gain an overview of Thai history and art, go to the nearby National Museum, which offers free guided tours in English. Not far south from the Grand Palace is Bangkok's oldest and largest temple, Wat Pho, famous for its enormous Reclining Buddha and its school of traditional Thai massage. Dip through the Pak Klong Talat fruit and flower market on your way to nearby Wat Mahathat, the most important place of Buddhist learning in Southeast Asia. Finish up your day on the rooftop of the Phranakorn Bar & Gallery with a refreshing drink and a curry.

### Democracy Monument

Near the Democracy Monument, which forms the centerpiece of a roundabout, you will find a variety of important and interesting temples. Wat Sa Ket may look undistinguished, but from the top of this "Golden Mount," you can enjoy some truly stunning views of the city. Built by Rama V, the unusual Chinese-influenced design of Wat Ratchabophit makes it one of the city's prettiest temples. Wat Indravihara, is worth visiting for a glimpse of the towering 32-meter-high Standing Buddha. Nearby is the spacious, leafy area of Dusit, a royal district since the reign of Rama V. The last major temple built in Bangkok, Wat Benchamabophit incorporates an intriguing mix of classical Thai and 19th century European design and is often referred to as the "Marble Temple" because of its Carrara marble walls. The Dusit Zoo, set in a beautiful park, houses some rare animals, including the Komodo dragon, the world's largest reptile. The elegant National Library is also in this area, alongside a smaller library built as a tribute to the present King, Rama IX. Not far away is the backpackers' hangout, Banglampoo, where you can do some shopping and

have a bite to eat in a number of good restaurants, including the Sidewalk Café.

### Chinatown

The markets, shops and remnants of old-style architecture make Chinatown interesting for tourists. Check out the China House, located at the Oriental Hotel, for fine dining, or the Bamboo Bar for live jazz and drinks. There are also some interesting temples in the area. Wat Chakrawat, which overlooks the Chao Phraya River, is home to several crocodiles and monkeys. Wat Ga Buang Kim is a typical neighborhood temple where local residents socialize and the occasional worshiper drops by. Inside Wat Traimit, you will find the world's biggest solid-gold Buddha, which is more than three meters tall and weighs five and a half tons. Stop in at Thai Nakon Intimex to admire the traditional craft of nielloware, or metalwork. Although Bangkok is generally a very safe city, this is one area that can be dangerous for tourists at night.

### Thonburi

Thonburi became linked to central Bangkok by the construction of the Memorial Bridge in 1932, but it retained its separate identity until 1971. For an authentic Thai cuisine experience try the Blue Elephant, located in the historic Blue Elephant Cooking School. Beside the Memorial Bridge lies Wat Prayoon. This temple is worth visiting for its unusual collection of miniature chedis or Thai Buddhist monuments and shrines. A popular way to see the sights in Thonburi is to embark on a canal tour by chartering a boat at Tha Chang, in front of the Grand Palace. A canal tour will take in one of Bangkok's most memorable landmarks, Wat Arun, also known as the "Temple of Dawn." Another highlight of a canal tour is the museum of the Royal Barges, where you will see a variety of fantastically ornamented boats used in ceremonial processions on the river. Stop in at Chao Phraya River Cultural Center to see how local crafts are made. You can purchase the ones you like, or come back in the evening to see one of their regularly held performances. If your visit falls on a Saturday or Sunday, head to the Taling

Chan District Office, to buy fresh fruits and more at the Floating Market.

### Lumpini Park

Bangkok's downtown area includes the main financial district around Silom Road, the green expanse of Lumpini Park and a number of shopping centers around Sukhumvit Road and Siam Square, including the Ma Bun Krong Center. Around Siam Square, you can have coffee at Au Bon Pain, then go on a tour of Jim Thompson's House and Museum nearby. After visiting the famous Erawan Shrine, you can go across the street and visit the fabulous Thai Craft Museum, followed by some duty-free shopping at the World Trade Center. At the Snake Farm, near the intersection of Rama I Road and Silom Road, you can see venom extracted from live snakes two times a day. A few blocks away lies the Patpong Night Market, which is also well known for its many neon-lit go-go bars.

### Ayutthaya

There are a number of destinations outside Bangkok that are worth visiting. Ayutthaya, the ancient capital and a World Heritage Site, is situated 80 kilometers north of Bangkok. Kanchanaburi, best known as the location of the bridge over the River Kwai, is set in some limestone hills 120 kilometers (75 miles) to the northwest. Worth the trip is Damnoen Saduak Floating Market, 109 kilometers (68 miles) southwest of the capital. Here you will see canals crowded with paddle boats laden with fruits and vegetables.

After spending some time in Bangkok, the "City of Angels," you will see why many visitors keep coming back, some for business, some for holiday, and some to settle down.

### Bus Tours

Thailand For You (+66 2671 0235/<http://www.th4u.com/guide.htm/>)

### Walking Tours

Walking Tour of Bangkok (<http://www.visit-thailand.info/special-features/walking-tour-of-bangkok.htm/>)

## Bangkok Snapshot continued

Thailand For Visitors(<http://thailandforvisitors.com/central/bangkok/ctown-tour.html/>)

Bangkok Private Tours([http://www.bangkokprivatetours.com/bangkok\\_walk.html/](http://www.bangkokprivatetours.com/bangkok_walk.html/))

Boat Tours

Bangkok River Cruise Tours(+66 2651 9501/<http://www.bangkok.com/river-cruise-tours/index.html/>)

©

### Travel Tips

#### Planning a Trip

The **Bangkok Tourist Bureau** has offices at major junctions throughout the city. Call them with any questions at tel. **02225-7612**; or visit [www.bangkoktourist.com](http://www.bangkoktourist.com). They provide basic information services, maps, brochures, and recommendations. Their main office is at 17/1 Phra Arthit Rd., just under the Phra Pinklao bridge near Khao San, but they also operate out of the airports and in various kiosks around the city: opposite the Grand Palace, in front of MBK shopping mall, at River City mall, and along Sukhumvit. All offices are open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 4:30pm.

The **Tourism Authority of Thailand**(TAT; [www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org)) offers general information regarding travel in Bangkok and upcountry, and has a useful hotline(tel. **1672**) reachable from anywhere in the kingdom; it's open daily 8am to 8pm. Ironically, TAT's offices are not always conveniently located for foreigners who don't read Thai. It has a kiosk at Suvarnabhumi International Airport's arrival floor, open daily 8am to 10pm, but their main office is off the beaten track at 1600 New Phetchaburi Rd., Makkasan, Ratchathewi(tel. **02250-5500**).

**Useful Publications**-- TAT produces an enormous number of glossy tourist brochures on destinations, including Bangkok; but beware, many may be outdated. Bangkok's free magazines, available in hotel lobbies, are more current. Look for *Where* or *Thaiways*, with maps, tips, and facts covering Pattaya,

Chiang Mai, and Phuket. *Bangkok Dining & Entertainment* specializes mostly in restaurant reviews and nightlife. *BK Magazine* is a fun, free weekly with info on the capital's events(available at any Starbucks). English-language daily newspapers *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* have sections devoted to Bangkok must-sees.

#### Getting There

##### By Plane

Bangkok's **Suvarnabhumi International Airport**(airport code BKK), opened in September 2006, is now the main hub for all international travelers arriving to Thailand; it also handles domestic flights(with three-digit codes) in and out of the capital. It's 30km(over 18 miles) east of the city. Suvarnabhumi offers a wide range of services, including luggage storage, currency exchange, banks, a branch of the British pharmacy Boots, ATMs, a post office, medical centers(two are 24-hr. clinics), Internet service, and telephones. All of Suvarnabhumi's restaurant and shopping outlets are infamously overpriced(up to 10 times city prices), though; budget travelers would do well to stop by a downtown convenience store to stock up on snacks and drinks. Five minutes away is **Novotel Suvarnabhumi Airport**([www.novotel.com](http://www.novotel.com)), a five-star hotel. For more detailed information on Suvarnabhumi, see [www.airportthai.co.th](http://www.airportthai.co.th).

Old **Don Mueang Airport**(airline code DMG) is 24km(15 miles) north of the heart of the city and was closed for a period in 2006. It has recently reopened, serving some domestic flights(with four-digit codes) and all flights on One-Two-GO and Nok Air. It no longer offers the range of services it used to but still has cafes and diners as well as ATMs. **Amari Don Mueang Airport Hotel**([www.amari.com](http://www.amari.com)) is opposite the airport and accessed via a skybridge or a shuttle bus(book in advance). For more details on Don Mueang, see [www.bangkok-city.com/airport/airport\\_don-muang.htm](http://www.bangkok-city.com/airport/airport_don-muang.htm).

**Note:** As of 2007, passengers no longer pay any departure taxes. But there are no ATMs beyond Immigration(airside)

at Suvarnabhumi, so all those leaving Thailand-- or those in transit-- must ensure they have enough cash for their onward destination before they enter passport control, especially those paying for visas on arrival in countries such as Myanmar and Indochina, where airside airport ATMs may not exist or may have run out of cash.

**Getting to & from the Airports**-- From both Suvarnabhumi and Don Mueang, it takes about 40 to 60 minutes to drive to the city, depending on traffic, and over 90 minutes in heavy rain or at rush hour(or both). The city's larger hotels offer **pickup services** for a fee, but both airports have **public taxi, limousine, and bus services** to Bangkok; Suvarnabhumi also has buses to Pattaya. Taking a taxi into town is your easiest and fastest option for both airports.

At the Arrival Halls at either airport, don't be tempted by the many taxi touts. In both airports, simply follow signs to the public taxi or bus stands. Get some small change, torn satang in Thai, in the Arrivals Hall before you leave the airport, as you'll need this for the tollbooths. Without tolls, expect to pay between 250B and 300B(US \$7.10-US\$8.60/£3.85-£4.60) from either airport to reach most hotels downtown.

**Private limousine services** such as AOT offer air-conditioned sedans and drivers from both airports. Look for the booth in Arrivals. Trips from Suvarnabhumi start at 1,200B(US\$34/£18). Advanced booking is not necessary.

**Airport Express buses**(tel. **02995-1252**), located on Suvarnabhumi Level 1 at Gate 8, are a convenient and inexpensive alternative into the city and cost 150B(US \$4.20/£2.30). Buses run every 30 minutes from 5am to midnight and cover four routes and most major hotels. For local and intercity buses, you will need to get on a free shuttle located at Level 2 or 4, going to the **Public Transportation Center**. From there, buses costing around 35B(US \$1/55p) cover 11 city routes, including major BTS stops and the Southern Bus Terminal. For intercity services, go to the relevant ticket counter(daily 6am-9pm) at the Public Transportation Center; three

## Bangkok Snapshot continued

routes serve nearby Pattaya, Jomtien, and Chonburi.

### By Train

While a few southern-bound locomotives still use Thonburi's Bangkok Noi Station, most intercity trains to and from the capital stop at **Hua Lampong Station** (tel. **02223-7010** or the hotline at 1690), east of Yaowarat (Chinatown). Lying at a major intersection of Rama IV and Krung Kasem roads, it's notoriously gridlocked at morning and evening rush hours, so allow 40 minutes extra for traffic delays. Inside the station, clear signs point the way to the public toilets, pay phones, food court, and baggage check area. One bag costs 20B (50¢/30p) per day.

"Officials" may approach you in the station offering help. Be careful-- not all may actually be officials; proceed to the ticketing counter or information booth directly.

Metered taxis from the station cost about 50B to 100B (US\$1.40-US\$2.85/75p-£1.55) to nearby Sala Daeng BTS on Silom Road, depending on the time of day; there is an **MRT** (subway) station at **Hua Lamphong** for connections to the BTS. For Sukhumvit Road, take the MRT to the Sukhumvit stop and then transfer to the Asok BTS.

### By Bus

Bangkok has three major bus stations, each serving a different part of the country. All air-conditioned public buses to the West and the Southern Peninsula arrive and depart from the **Southern Bus Terminal** (tel. **02434-7192**) on Nakhon Chaisi and Phra Pinklao Road (near Bangkok Noi Station in Thonburi; west

of the river over the Phra Pinklao Bridge from the Democracy Monument). Service to the East Coast (including Pattaya) arrives and departs from the **Eastern Bus Terminal**, also known as **Ekkamai** (tel. **02391-2504**), on Sukhumvit Road opposite Soi 63 (Ekkamai BTS). Buses to the north arrive and leave from the **Northern Bus Terminal**, aka **Mo Chit** (tel. **02936-2841**), Kampaengphet 2 Road, near the **Chatuchak Weekend Market**, and a short taxi or bus ride from Mo Chit BTS or MRT stations. Affordable, long-distance VIP buses leave from various locations in town and can be booked by any of the agents along Sukhumvit or Khao San roads.  
© 2000-2010 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.

### Fun Facts

Top 12 Interesting Facts About Bangkok

1. Bangkok is better known as Krung Thep by the Thai, but even that is a shortened name. The full name in Thai is Krung Thep Mahanakhon Amon Rattanakosin Mahinthara Yuthaya Mahadilok Phop Noppharat Ratchathani Burirom Udomratchaniwet Mahasathan Amon Phiman Awatan Sathit Sakkathattiya Witsanukam Prasit. But who has time for that little fun fact? Bangkok it is.
2. Due to heavy (literally) development, Bangkok is sinking at a rate of 2-5 cm per year. This combined with rising sea levels may make the city a bit more Venice-like in the not-so-distant future.
3. Bangkok nicknames include Venice of the East and City of Angels.
4. Travel+ Leisure Magazine has rated Bangkok the Number One city in the world in both 2008 and 2010. (In 2010, Thailand's

second city Chiang Mai took #2 in that ranking!)

5. Bangkok's Chatuchak Weekend Market (J.J. Market) is one of the largest markets in the world covering an area of 27 acres.
  6. The word soi means side street and most major roads will have numbered sois along its length. You will also notice an abundance of stray dogs which many refer to as "soi dogs."
  7. One interesting fact is that many Thai believe that leaving bottles of water along the front of a building will discourage soi dogs from urinating there. You can see shopfronts at the end of the day with a row of plastic water bottles on the sidewalk.
  8. The popular Erawan Shrine downtown was built to appease angered spirits that were causing delays and accidents during the construction of what is now the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel.
  9. Every April Bangkok hosts the world's largest street water fight during the Thai New Year holiday known as the Songkran Festival.
  10. Here's a random fact: the Guinness Book of World Records lists the stage at Bangkok's Siam Niramit as the highest in the world.
  11. Thailand was known as the Kingdom of Siam until the kingdom took its present name on June 23, 1939.
  12. The 5.5-ton Golden Buddha at Wat Traimit in Bangkok is the not only the largest solid gold Buddha in the world, but also the most valuable (moneywise) religious object.
- © NileGuide

## Bangkok Snapshot continued

### Weather

| Statistics     | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May  | Jun  | Jul  | Aug  | Sep  | Oct  | Nov | Dec |
|----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|
| Temperature C  |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |     |     |
| Average High   | 32  | 33  | 34  | 35  | 34   | 33   | 33   | 33   | 33   | 32   | 32  | 32  |
| Average Mean   | 27  | 28  | 30  | 31  | 30   | 29   | 29   | 29   | 29   | 28   | 28  | 27  |
| Average Low    | 23  | 24  | 26  | 27  | 27   | 26   | 26   | 26   | 25   | 25   | 24  | 22  |
| Temperature F  |     |     |     |     |      |      |      |      |      |      |     |     |
| Average High   | 90  | 92  | 94  | 96  | 94   | 92   | 92   | 91   | 91   | 90   | 90  | 89  |
| Average Mean   | 81  | 84  | 86  | 88  | 87   | 85   | 85   | 84   | 84   | 83   | 82  | 80  |
| Average Low    | 73  | 76  | 78  | 80  | 80   | 79   | 79   | 78   | 77   | 77   | 75  | 71  |
| Rainy Days     | 1   | 1   | 3   | 3   | 9    | 10   | 13   | 13   | 15   | 14   | 5   | 1   |
| Rain Fall (cm) | 0.7 | 1.4 | 3.2 | 5.8 | 17.1 | 11.2 | 11.8 | 16.0 | 25.2 | 20.7 | 3.2 | 0.3 |
| Rain Fall (in) | 0.3 | 0.5 | 1.3 | 2.3 | 6.7  | 4.4  | 4.6  | 6.3  | 9.9  | 8.2  | 1.3 | 0.1 |

©