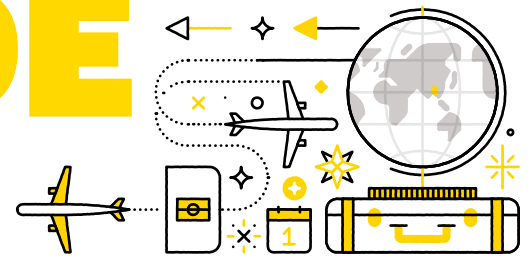


# Mini GUIDE

## BANGKOK



“Bangkok straddles like no other metropolis the boundary between acrid and sweet, soft and hard, sacred and profane.” —Tom Robbins, *Villa Incognito*



Bangkok is two-faced. At once serene and spicy, frenzied yet romantic, Thailand's capital is the best of both worlds. The golden tiles of the temples wink eternal, the steam from Chinatown hawkers' woks carry the peppery scents of fragrant herbs, and down alleys the twisted arms of aged banyan trees wrap the gates of rickety wooden homes. At the same time, baristas hand over lattes made with Thai coffee beans. Bitters and Bénédictine line the

back bar at cocktail joints. And when the faded teak doors of the shophouses roll open in the early morning, you'll find tables stocked by independent, young designers. Bangkok is unlike any other city on Earth. —Jenny Adams

**The Wat Arun temple sparkles on the Chao Phraya River.**





# BOOK IT BANGKOK



Lap up Bangkok's skyline in the Okura Prestige's infinity pool.

The majority of the rooms in **SIAMOTIF** (●), a 70-year-old wooden canal house turned bohemian boutique hotel, were hand-painted by a local artist. Amenities here include balconies overlooking the canal, bikes for exploring neighboring temples, and rotating Thai breakfast offerings. At the colonial-chic **RIVA ARUN** (●), opened in 2016, the view steals the show, whether you're dining on larb ped salad with foie gras on the rooftop or parting the gauzy curtains of your suite's floor-to-ceiling windows. The

backdrop is Wat Arun, meaning Temple of Dawn, even though it's ironically best at sunset when silhouetted against a bright pink sky. To feel like you've fallen into a James Bond flick, head to **OKURA PRESTIGE** (●). Each of the 240 rooms features a Japanese bidet, rain shower, and touch pad that controls the room's lighting. But the infinity pool is what you'll likely remember most. With views of the city's skyscrapers, it's 82 feet long and cantilevered off the 25th floor, hanging high above the busy streets of Bangkok.

## Hotel Chic: Thai Rooms With a View

- CLASSIC
- NEW
- TRENDY

### Go With Nat Geo

Let National Geographic Expeditions be your guide to southern and northern Thailand. [natgeojourneys.com](http://natgeojourneys.com) /explore; 800-281-2354



### FOR THE BEACH LOVER

Snorkel around sandy island shores, kayak along the coast, and discover watery caves aboard an iconic long-tail boat on the eight-day National Geographic Journeys with G Adventures' "Explore Southern Thailand" trip.



### FOR THE HISTORY BUFF

Listen to Buddhist monks chant at a traditional temple, visit World War II spots, and dine in a UNESCO World Heritage city on National Geographic Journeys with G Adventures' eight-day "Thailand Journey" trip.

# SEE IT BANGKOK

## Four Ways to Do Bangkok Like a Local

Cruise through the capital by bike, then take a stroll through a vintage night market



### Spas

**1** For a quick recharge, head to Soi Rambuttri street in Old Town, where curbside chaise-longue foot massages are \$5 for half an hour. At Ruen-Nuad Massage Studio, inside an 80-year-old house with gardens, fountains, and lemongrass-scented rooms, request its herbal compress massage, where tamarind, makrut lime, and salt are designed to relieve inflammation at \$15 for an hour. A pampering session at the Siam hotel's Opium Spa is more of an expensive indulgence, but includes free transport to the spa via private boat.

### Art Galleries

**2** The Bangkok Art and Culture Centre is home to a revolving array of contemporary arts, from design to music, film to theater. After the expansive, opt for the intimate: At Dialogue, the eclectic coffeehouse and gallery on Phra Sumen Road, you can enjoy the attic exhibitions and also snag an art map of Old Town Bangkok. It lists nearby gems like the Foto United Gallery, with work for sale by local photographers, and the new Pipit Banglamphu Museum, a former printing facility now dedicated to the neighborhood's history.

### Bike Tours

**3** Many hotels in the city provide bikes for solo exploration, but guided bike tour options abound. Follow Me Bike Tours has a four-and-a-half-hour tour of Old Town along the Chao Phraya River, which threads through back streets and includes temple stops and ferry rides. You also get a link to photos of your day. If you crave greenery, Bangkok Bike Adventure will take you to Bang Krachao, nicknamed Bangkok's Green Lung. This thick swath of jungle is filled with towering palms, tropical birds, reptiles, and ancient canals.

### Markets

**4** Start with the sunrise at Pak Khlong Talad, the city's premier flower market, where locals purchase *phueng malai*, or garlands for good luck. During the day, 27-acre Chatuchak market sells everything from spa products to knockoff Ray-Bans. After 5 p.m. venture just outside the city to Talad Rot Fai, a sprawling, outdoor night market that focuses on the nostalgic, such as antique lamps, vintage clothing, and '57 Chevys. You can also get a 10 p.m. shave in the garage barbershop or sip a beer in a converted VW-bus bar.



Check out the Chatuchak weekend market, home to more than 8,000 stalls.

FRANK HEUER/LAIF/VAULT ARCHIVES/REDUX (POOL), TAMER KOSELI (ALL ILLUSTRATIONS); OPPOSITE PAGE: FRANCESCO LASTRUCCI (MARKET); OPENING PAGE: JACK KURTZ, ZUMA WIRE (TEMPLE)



# EAT IT BANGKOK



IF YOU LIKE

**Pad Thai**

THEN TRY ▼

**Pad Thai Omelet**

At the famous Thipsamai restaurant, Thailand's most recognizable dish is nearly unrecognizable to overseas visitors. A true pad thai in Bangkok is actually an omelet with dried shrimp, tamarind-dressed noodles, and soft tofu nestled inside an egg wrapper.



IF YOU LIKE

**Papaya Salad**

THEN TRY ▼

**Pomelo Salad**

This salad originally hails from Nakhon Pathom Province, but to have Bangkok's best, make a reservation at Issaya Siamese Club. Its modern adaptation arrives with fresh pomelo wedges, hard-boiled eggs, and wok-fried shrimp in a chili-lime dressing.



IF YOU LIKE

**Tom Yum Soup**

THEN TRY ▼

**Kuay Teow Neau**

Kuay teow neau is Thailand's rich beef noodle soup. Join the communal tables at Kuay Teow Neau Nai Soi on Phra Athit Road, and dig into the braised beef and gooey glass noodles in a lightly spiced broth with hints of vinegar, cinnamon, and star anise.



IF YOU LIKE

**Chicken Satay**

THEN TRY ▼

**Pork Satay**

Even though chicken satay is common in the U.S., the pork version is the norm in Bangkok. Try the skewers, served upside down in a plastic sack with spicy dipping sauce splashed inside, at the prime place for street food: Chinatown's vibrant Yaowarat Road.

## Thai Faves, With a Twist

Go beyond Thai staples and sample Bangkok's best savory bites



Skewers of satay grilled on the street (above); beef larb salad (left) at the Cabochon Hotel

## Three Drinks to Sip in Bangkok



**T**oast the capital city at The Speakeasy, a rooftop bar at the Hotel Muse, where the **WASABI MARTINI** (a mix of green tea-infused gin, wasabi, elderflower, and lime juice) comes accompanied by a small plate of wasabi and grilled salmon. At the Thai shophouse Smalls, you may fall for **LOVE IS IN THE AIR**, a frothy, hard-shaken blend of strawberry-infused vodka, sauvignon blanc, lemon, elderflower, bitters, and an egg

white. This three-story spot has an around-the-world menu of boutique spirits, a penchant for absinthe, and a menagerie of French antiques on display. Quince is a warm and casual space full of brick, dark wood, candlelight, and opportunities to try the locally produced Iron Balls gin. It's the perfect ingredient to the **SPITCOCK** cocktail, which mixes gin with coconut palm sugar, lime, celery leaves, and fresh mint.