



nileGUIDE

ALL YOU NEED TO PLAN YOUR PERFECT TRIP



Top Kid-Friendly Attractions in Bangkok

Bangkok, 5 Days

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Guide Description



AUTHOR NOTE: Bangkok, Thailand might seem exotic and full of many new things for the whole family to explore.

Traveling with kids to this destination might seem overwhelming to parents. But don't worry, Bangkok is family-friendly if you know what attractions to do with your kiddo.

You can spend more time in Bangkok but 5 days will give you a good start to know major family-friendly attractions around town.

This guide is created by Amy @ The Q Family.

TheQFamilyAdventures.com is a family-friendly travel blog that helps to inspire family to travel one adventure at a time.

Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Bangkok

DAY NOTE: It's going without say that Grand Palace in Bangkok is one of the top attraction on any visitor must-do. And there is a good reason. It will give kids and parents a great idea of Thai culture and history.

Grand Palace - Walking around Grand Palace can be brutal to visitors or even locals so prepare your family for a hot and exhausting day. Bring hats, drink and even stroller. Make sure to dress appropriately. (No short or sandals allowed) To take a full advantage, plan to arrive early for cooler weather.

Dusit Zoo - After a lunch break, visit a Dusit Zoo will help satisfy little travelers.



Grand Palace

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



Dusit Zoo (Khao Din)

Animal Feedings, Elephant Rides, Paddle Boats

Day 2 - Bangkok

DAY NOTE: Get up early and enjoy a day in the heart of Bangkok.

Lumphini Park - Arrive early to catch a group of locals exercise in this popular park. Kids can feed the duck, walk around the park or even rent a paddle boat.

Snake Farm - After a fun exercise, walk a block to the Snake Farm which is a research institute of poisonous snakes. There will be tour guide with both Thai & English for visitors.

Siam Ocean World - Take a tuk tuk for a short trip to Siam Ocean World only a couple blocks away or walk along the Henri Dunant street. This aquarium will provide kids with a way to escape the heat during the mid day.



Lumphini Park

Paddleboats, Paths, Aerobics in the Park



Queen Saovabha Memorial Institute and Snake Farm

Demos and lectures on snakes



Siam Ocean World Bangkok

One of southeast Asia's largest aquariums

Day 3 - Bangkok

DAY NOTE: A popular weekend activity for family in Bangkok. Dream World in Bangkok most popular theme park. It's outside the city so you will need to either hire a taxi or mini-van for a visit.

After a short nap, get out at night to check out Suan Lum Night Bazaar. This open air street market is an better alternative than Jatujak Market for family with kids because the market is smaller and night time allows for more tolerable weather to enjoy shopping.



Dream World

More Than An Entertainment Complex



Suan Lum Night Bazaar

Legendary market and beer garden

Day 4 - Bangkok



Safari World

Go on safari in a 440-acre land and marine park

Day 5 - Bangkok



Bangkok Children's Discovery Museum

Total Discovery Fun for Kids of All Ages

Day 1 - Bangkok

QUICK NOTE

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Dusit Zoo - After a lunch break, visit a Dusit Zoo will help satisfy little travelers.

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

1 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



contact:

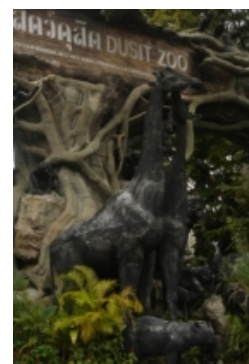
tel: +66 2 281 2000
fax: +66 2 282 9245
<http://www.zoothailand.org>

location:

No 71, Rama Road 5
Bangkok Bangkok 10300

2 Dusit Zoo (Khao Din)

DESCRIPTION: This popular, government-owned zoo opened in 1954. Considered both a public park and a place for recreation, it occupies a land area of 35-acres and a water area of 12-acres. Apart from the animals there is plenty of scope for other activities, or just relaxation. As with most zoos, the fun is watching the smiles on the faces of the children, as they see the giraffes amble along with their awkward gait and the monkeys showing off their dexterous acrobatics. It also houses a 70-year-old crocodile, chimpanzees, Asian elephants, birds and fish. © wcities.com



wcities

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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

1 Lumphini Park

DESCRIPTION: Smack in the heart of the city lies Lumphini Park, an oasis of nature within bustling Bangkok. The first of its kind in Bangkok, plans for the public park began in 1925. Lumphini 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. Lumphini Park is a great place to take a timeout during a long day of sightseeing. © NileGuide



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

location:

1871 Rama IV Street
Bangkok Bangkok 10330

2 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 0 2 687-2000

fax: 66 0 2 687-2001

<http://www.siamoceanworld.co.th>

location:

B1-B2 Floor, Siam Paragon,
991 Rama I Road
Bangkok 10330

3 Siam Ocean World Bangkok

OUR LOCAL EXPERT SAYS:

Be sure to catch one of the scheduled feedings.

DESCRIPTION: Travel through seven zones of the underwater world at an aquarium facility larger than two football fields. Check their website for schedules of daily feedings for the sharks, eagle rays, penguins and other creatures. Divers enter the tanks on an hourly schedule as well and communicate with visitors adding another aspect of learning to this fascinating educational experience. The location at Siam Paragon at the center of the SkyTrain system makes visiting a snap. © NileGuide



Kevin Revolinski

Day 3 - Bangkok

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contact:

tel: +66 2 533 1152

fax: +66 2 533 1899

<http://www.dreamworld-th.com>

location:

62 Moo 1 Rangsit-Nakornnayok Road
Pathumthani 12130

1 Dream World

DESCRIPTION: Dream World provides family fun in its 70-acre park just outside Bangkok. The park is divided into four parts: Dream World Plaza, Dream Garden, Fantasy Land and Adventure Land. On offer are rides, games, go-carting, and a variety of entertaining shows. Children shorter than 90 centimeters enter for free.

© NileGuide



Dream World

contact:

tel: 66 0 2 252 4776

<http://www.suanlum-nightbazaar.com/EN/index.php>

location:

1875 Rama IV Road, Lumpini,
Pathumwan
Bangkok 10330

2 Suan Lum Night Bazaar

DESCRIPTION: The Suan Lum Night Bazaar is a regular Bangkok institution. Unlike the Chatuchak Market, it is open daily, starting in the afternoon sometime after 4 until midnight. Visitors to the Night Bazaar will find plenty of bargain prices for souvenirs, and if they are not bargains, plenty of room for haggling. After shopping, the open-air restaurants feed the hungry and the beer garden serves the thirsty. Suan Lum is in a convenient location where Witthayu (Wireless) Road meets Rama IV Road and right at the exit from the Lumpini MRT Station. © NileGuide



Lerdsuwa

Day 4 - Bangkok

QUICK NOTE

contact:

tel: +66 2 914 4100 / +66 2 518 1000

fax: +66 2 518 1022 / +66 2 518 1033

<http://www.safariworld.com>

location:

99 Panyaintra Road
Bangkok Bangkok 10510

1 Safari World

DESCRIPTION: Located on 440 acres of land, this park is indeed a fantastic haven for children and adults alike. It comprises the Safari Park, where wild animals like zebras, deer, giraffes, tigers, lions and bears prowl freely in commune with nature and the Marine Park, where marine animals dip, dive and explore their watery habitat. Daily Shows include the Orang Utan Boxing Show, Sea Lion Show, Bird Show, White Tiger Show, Stuntman Show, Dolphin Show. Children below 140 centimeters free. © wcities.com

contact:

tel: +66 2 615 7333
fax: +66 2 615 7847
<http://www.bkkchildrenmuseum.com/>

location:

Queen Sirikit Park,
Kamphaengphet 4 Road,
Bangkok Bangkok 10900

1 Bangkok Children's Discovery Museum

DESCRIPTION: This kid's paradise is all about having fun while they learn. The intention is to let kids discover for themselves how the world works rather than making them party to boring displays. There are several apparatus, games and galleries to foster learning through experimentation. At the Bangkok Children's Discovery Museum, children can create gigantic bubbles, learn about illusion through mirrors and listen to the recordings of languages all over the world. They can even learn Thai cooking, host their own radio show and read a book in the reading zone. There are music rooms, folk art rooms and auto engines. Truly a place for kids to let their hair down and acquire some knowledge in the process. © wcities.com



Photo courtesy of Bangkok Children's Discovery Museum

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.

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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

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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/>)

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

Bangkok Private Tours(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/>)

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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. 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) 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), a five-star hotel. For more detailed information on Suvarnabhumi, see 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) 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.

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

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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.
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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.
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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

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