



# Bustling Bangkok

Bangkok is not only a thriving economic centre, but a vibrant cultural hub too. **Emily Handford** highlights what to do and where to stay in the Southeast Asian city that never stands still

**B**angkok offers an exciting whirl of exotic cuisines, ancient temples and panoramic cityscapes. Home to an estimated 9 million people, the metropolis is at the heart of the country's investment and development, with the headquarters of all of Thailand's, as well as multinational, commercial banks and financial institutions choosing to set up base here. A potpourri of business opportunities, unusual eating spots, as well as endless shopping and cultural landmarks, makes a trip to this bustling megacity an adventure every time.

## WHERE TO STAY

Sathorn Road, Bangkok's 21st-century business district is home to some of the city's smartest hotels, one being the Banyan Tree. Situated

amongst high-rise buildings and gleaming corporate head offices the hotel offers guests a sanctuary within the bustling city. Famed for its luxurious spa, business travellers can unwind in one of the 16 spa treatment suites, taking their pick from treatments originating from the Royal Thai palaces, or alternatively enjoy a private in-suite Thai massage in one of the spa suites. For those who cannot escape their pressing schedules, the hotel has a state-of-the-art business centre, equipped with 12 business rooms for meetings and functions.

The Okura Prestige is another hotel that offers a great location for business travellers. With direct access via a covered walkway to the sky train at Ploenchit, it is convenient for both the Sathorn business district and Siam –

Bangkok's shopping neighbourhood. One of the most impressive features of the hotel has to be the cantilevered swimming pool on the 25th floor, while the three fine-dining restaurants and French style café are sure to satisfy any discerning foodie.

Meanwhile, if a riverside view is what you are looking for head to the Shangri La hotel for stunning views and unbeatable Thai hospitality. Guests can enjoy

a traditional Thai meal in the teak pavilion, or alternatively a buffet on the hotel's private riverboat. Surrounded by lush tropical greenery and a free-form outdoor pool guests will feel as though they have been transported outside the city – yet in reality are only a short journey away from the bustling markets and malls via skytrain or riverboat. ➤

### **Banyan Tree**

[www.banyantree.com/en/ap-thailand-bangkok](http://www.banyantree.com/en/ap-thailand-bangkok)

### **Okura Prestige**

[www.okurabangkok.com](http://www.okurabangkok.com)

### **Shangri-La**

[www.shangri-la.com/bangkok](http://www.shangri-la.com/bangkok)

**Pictured: The city offers both pleasure and business pursuits (above). Take a breather at the Banyan Tree hotel (inset)**





**DINNER AND DRINKS**

With so many food establishments to choose from, ranging from local restaurants and street markets to fine dining venues, it can be tricky to navigate the maze of dining options.

Rock Restaurant and Bar, located off the main strip of touristy venues is one restaurant to write home about. Fusing old school Thai recipes with contemporary flavours from across Asia, it offers unique food in a unique setting. Locally handcrafted lights hang from the ceiling, while beautiful hand-carved rocks serve as bases to the glass tabletops, creating a cavern-esque feel to the restaurant. Canapés of syrup pork buns, followed by crab curry with rice noodles complete the authentic affair.

Head to Nang Gin Kui for a dining option with a difference. Situated within an architect's apartment inside Chinatown's oldest residential building, it offers its guests a one-off private dining experience. Sitting on traditional low Thai tables, diners can enjoy a 15-course set menu prepared before their eyes in the open kitchen, while watching the world go by via floor-to-ceiling windows.

And when the sun goes down Banyan Tree's rooftop Vertigo and Moon bar is a great place to grab a cocktail or two. Located 61 floors

above the city it offers glittering views of the city and premium drinks such as the classic Vertigo Sunset, a melody of pineapple, cranberry and lime juices blended with Malibu.

**Rock Restaurant and Bar**

[www.facebook.com/rockrestaurantandbar](http://www.facebook.com/rockrestaurantandbar)

**Nang Gin Kui**

[www.nangginkui.com](http://www.nangginkui.com)

**Vertigo and Moon Bar**

[www.banyantree.com/en/ap-thailand-bangkok/vertigo-and-moon-bar](http://www.banyantree.com/en/ap-thailand-bangkok/vertigo-and-moon-bar)

**EXPLORE**

Use your morning off for a spot of cultural sightseeing – Bangkok is famous for its spectacular temples and where better to start than the Grand Palace. Undoubtedly one of the city's most famous landmarks, it continues to enthrall visitors with its beautiful architecture and intricate details. Walk ten minutes and you'll find yourself at Wat Pho, the temple of the reclining Buddha, and opposite Wat Arun – one of the most striking temples in Thailand. Standing majestically over the water, it truly is a sight to behold.

Mid-morning head to one of the city's floating markets. Take in the bustling atmosphere by haggling for tropical fruit and vegetables, ready-to-drink coconut juice and



**Clockwise from top left: Haggle for goods at a floating market; unwind after a day's sightseeing at Lumpini Park; grab a cocktail at Vertigo and Moon rooftop bar**

local food cooked from floating kitchens on the boats.

Try a guided tour for a more relaxed way of exploring the markets, Damnoen Saduak market being the most popular.

Alternatively, if high-end fashion is more your thing, Siam Paragon mall offers a selection of more than 250 international designer brands to choose from. A wealth of food

outlets, 16- screen cinema, as well as South Asia's largest aquarium is guaranteed to keep you occupied.

And after a tiring day of sightseeing and shopping end the day at Lumpini Park. An inner-city haven for tranquillity, the park provides city-dwellers with some much-needed open space and is a great place to unwind come sunset. ■

**Grand Palace Thailand**

[www.grandpalacethailand.com](http://www.grandpalacethailand.com)

**Damnoen Saduak**

[www.bangkok.com/beyond-the-city/damnoensaduak.htm](http://www.bangkok.com/beyond-the-city/damnoensaduak.htm)

**Siam Paragon**

[www.siamparagon.co.th/](http://www.siamparagon.co.th/)