Bangkok

This is a city that welcomes visitors but is complex in both history and layout. There’s a reason that people come back time and time again: this is not a place you can fully comprehend with just one trip. The Thai capital is both socially tolerant and deeply conservative; its businesses are often friendly but difficult to find. It’s a city where both an old monarchy and a young creative class find common ground.

Need to know
Get to grips with the basics

01 Say hello: You may want to take Thailand’s traditional sun gesture back home with you. The pressed palms and slight bow that will greet you when meeting people is both charming and efficient.
02 Finding your way: Bangkok’s system of streets and addresses doesn’t conform to anything found elsewhere in the world. Thankfully, GPS works pretty well here.
03 Tread carefully: Pavements (where they exist) have a tendency to disappear, motorcyclists often ride against the direction they’re going, and pedestrian crossings are nonexistent. Don’t be afraid to ask for directions.
04 Keen and serene: Thai people are famous for their hospitality and smiles. Confrontation is not something that the people of Bangkok are comfortable with; raising your voice is unlikely to get you anything but ignored.
05 Ride on time: There’s no way around it: traffic in Bangkok can be unbearable. Make sure your schedule allows for some flexibility.

Hotels
Rest easy

1 Cabochon, Wattana
Shanghai-style bolthole
If you want to be within walking distance of the buzzing bars and restaurants around Sukhumvit Road but also need somewhere peaceful to retreat to, the vintage-flavoured Cabochon is ideally located.
14/29 Sukhumvit 45 Road, Klongton Nua, 10110
+66 (0) 2 255 2871
cabochonhotel.com

2 Villa Chakrabongse, Tiatien
Regal surroundings
Guests have access to a beautiful pool area and dining pavilion with lovely views over the river and various landmark temples. The majority of rooms have private terraces or balconies.
39/6 Maharat Road, 10200
+66 (0) 2 522 1900
thareillas.com

3 Soulfood Mahanakorn, Thonglor
Vital visit
Step into Soulfood Mahanakorn for a menu that draws together dishes from all over Thailand; the yam mak prao yao salad of smoky and sour aubergine, soft-cooked duck eggs, coriander and mint is a typical Bangkok dish.
36/10 Sukhumvit Soi 55, 10110
+66 (0) 2 744 7708
soulfoodmahanakorn.com

4 BoLan, Thonglor
Thai twists
This intimate restaurant takes traditional Thai food up a notch. Located over a series of rooms across the ground floor of a beautifully converted house, BoLan is best appreciated at dinner when you can choose from one of two set menus.
24 Sukhumvit Soi 55, 10110
+66 (0) 2 260 2962

5 Bamee Gua, Pathumwan
Ticked-away treasure
Bamee Gua is everything most street-food spots aren’t: bright and clean, with dishes made almost completely from scratch. The egg noodles and deep-fried wontons come with a sweet plum sauce based on the family patriarch’s recipe.
Plenchit, 82 Soi Langsuan
+66 (0) 2 531 9448

6 Eathai, Central Embassy, Pathumwan
Pick and choose
This comfortable and well-designed space is found on the basement floor of Central Embassy and serves food from nearly every region of the country.
Lower Ground at Central Embassy, 1031 Phloenchit Road, 10300
+66 (0) 2 179 7777
centraleambassy.com

7 WTF Café & Gallery, Thonglor
Swear by it
WTF is a destination for Bangkok’s creative community. The casual bar sits below a gallery curated by Somrak Sila, who runs the place with photographer Christopher Wise.
7 Sukhumvit Soi 51, 10110
+66 (0) 2 565 6246
wtfbangkok.com

Food and drink
Palate of plenty

1 The Peninsula Bangkok, Khlongsan
Five-star treatment
Masseurs from around the world are trained in the Peninsula Spa, located next to the main hotel. There is no better place to revive.
333 Charoennakorn Road, 10600
+66 (0) 2 861 2885
peninsula.com

3 MoWaan, Phranakhon
Medicinal purposes
Herbal cosmetics and remedies are presented here for both healing and collecting purposes. MoWaan’s products are perfect for gifts.
41/4 Charoenakorn Road, 10600
+66 (0) 2 861 0955
mowaan.com

Vocabulary
Local lingo

01 Farang: Westerner
02 Khob khun kaa: Thank you (if you’re a man)
03 Khob khun kup: Thank you (if you’re a woman)
04 Leow Kwaa: Turn right
05 Leow Saai: Turn left
06 Food Thai mai dai: I don’t speak Thai

Retail
Celebrating Thai talent

1 Woodensubmarine, Wattana
Born in the USA
Founder Sikkawat Jirawith is a pioneer of the city’s American-vintage trend and his shop is one of Southeast Asia’s best spots for vintage menswear. Hawaiian shirts from the 1940s to 1960s sit alongside loafers and brogues.
Homeplace Building, 231 Soi Thonglor 13, 10122
+66 (0) 2 255 2866

3 Beams, Wattana
Tokyo casual
Japanese brand Beams has transported its taste for everyday clothes for men and women south to the EmQuartier complex in Bangkok, its first outpost in Southeast Asia. Shop here for the label’s casual clothing, accessories and footwear.
1F Helix Quarter, EmQuartier, Sukhumvit Road, 10110
+66 (0) 2 003 6067
beams.co.th

4 Anyroom, Khlongsan
Select line-up
Here you’ll be drawn to wooden desks, tables and chairs built for durability, while easy-to-pack pieces such as ceramics, clocks and candles are perfect for gifts.
41/4 Charoenakorn Road, 10600
+66 (0) 2 861 0955

5 MoWaan, Phranakhon
Medicinal purposes
Herbal cosmetics and remedies are presented in glass bottles; the staff help to heal everything from hangovers to more long-term ailments.
Thanom Banrang Muang, 10200
+66 (0) 2 221 8070
mowaan.com

6 Shop here for the label’s casual clothing, accessories and footwear.

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