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Bangkok

Set astride the majestic Chao Phraya River, Bangkok was named the capital of Thailand in 1782 and today represents everything both good and bad in a thriving Asian metropolis. Krungthep or City of Angels as it is known to the locals, harbours enough sights and experiences to keep travellers occupied for months, with one of the best ways to grasp its splendour to simply wander through its streets.

In Bangkok, 24-hours a day, the pedestrian takes second place to the thousands of taxis, buses, motorbikes, tuk tuks, bicycles and private cars clogging the streets, as a heavy haze rises from the tar like steam from boiling water. Many find it exhilarating, for rare are the quiet moments and rarer still are the moments when you fail to feel utterly alive. Prepare to be accosted by the marvellous aromas drifting from food stalls interspersed with wafts of stinking canals and belching car exhausts.

Bangkok also has an excellent range of hotels and guesthouses.

Home to two of the best hotels in the world, the Oriental Hotel and the Peninsula Hotel, the Bangkok's riverside is lined with many five star luxury spots while the backpacker's quarter of Khao San Road is overflowing with budget guesthouses and hostels. There's a place to stay for every budget - from two dollar a night Khao San Road hostels to four hundred dollar a night riverside pampered luxury.

Do give Bangkok a chance. Don't let the smog and crowds distract you from what can be a charming and invigorating city.

Activities

Cinema

Throughout the city

Bangkok cinemas are a bargain when compared to what you probably pay for a cinema seat at home. They're generally very comfortable, mostly with reclining chairs. Probably take something warm with you as the air-conditioning tends to be set on deep freeze. Also, if you have one, consider a mobile-phone jammer, as Thais are notorious for chatting away without leaving the flick.

Prices vary depending on the release and the time/day of week, but are generally around the 100B mark.
Cost:80-14

Sathorn

Sathorn Road and its immediate surrounds are home to a number of Bangkok's embassies, top hotels, restaurants and minor sights. A small selection of backpacker places are clustered in the Soi Ngam Dupli area.

Most travellers find themselves down this way for a visit to the immigration office on Soi Suan Phlu or to get a cheap bed along Soi Ngam Dupli.

The western end of Sathorn is served by BTS stops Surasak and Saphan Taksin.

Vital Information

Thai Farmers Bank - Yannawa Branch
1668/26-28 Charoen Krung Road
Tel: (02) 212 3280 Fax: (02) 212 3281

Thai Farmers Bank - Sathorn Branch
16/4 Sathorn Neua Road
Tel: (02) 236 7639 Fax: (02) 633 8018

Suan Phlu Post Office

Soi Suan Phlu

About 800m down Soi Suan Phlu, just past the immigration office on the left, when coming from Sathorn.

Bangkok Immigration Office

Soi Suan Phlu

Tel: (02) 287 1774

The immigration office is about 400m down Soi Suan Phlu from Sathorn Tai Road, just past the police station, but before the post office on the left.

Australian Embassy

37 Sathorn Tai Road

Tel: (02) 287 2680 Fax: (02) 287 2029

The Australian Embassy is the mustard yellow, four-storey tiled building just before Soi Suan Phlu.

Accommodation

Banyan Tree Bangkok -- Our rating: 8/10

21/100 Sathorn Tai Rd

Tel: (02) 679 1200 Fax: (02) 679 1199

Certainly one of the most spectacular buildings in the city, the Banyan tree boasts a stunning roof-top bar that has easily the best views in Bangkok and great cocktails. The rooms are among the loveliest in Bangkok, boasting a very tasteful contemporary Thai style. The pool is very small but again offers incredible views. The staff are professional. Be sure to shop around for an internet rate as the rack-rates are super inflated.

bangkok@banyantree.com

<http://www.banyantree.com>

Price range: over 8,000B

Sala Thai Daily Mansion -- Our rating: 8/10

Soi Saphan Khu 15 (off Soi Sri Bampphen)

Telephone ahead to reserve your spot at this very popular long-termers' choice. Rooms are large and quiet while the staff are helpful. A rooftop garden provides a pleasant spot to relax during cooler afternoons.

Price range: Under 600B

The Sukhothai -- Our rating: 8/10

13/3 Sathorn Tai Road

Tel: (02) 287 0222 Fax: (02) 287 4980

One of Bangkok's flashiest hotels, this sumptuous retreat has a gorgeous low-rise setting with a lovely pool and spacious, impeccable rooms tasteful enough for an Australian prime minister. At these rates you'd expect nothing less. For tourists it's not a fabulous location, but with the recent subway opening a five-minute walk away, the rest of Bangkok is now well within reach. Be sure to check for internet rates. The weekend chocolate buffet is fabulous and you need not be a guest to lash out.

info@sukhothai.com

<http://www.sukhothai.com/>

Price range: over 8,000B

Honey House -- Our rating: 7/10

35/1-4 Soi Ngam Dupli

Tel: (02) 679 8112-3 Fax: (02) 287 2035

Set above a supermarket, this quiet, friendly place has reasonable rooms and mid-range prices for the area. The cheaper rooms are often full. Better rates are available for long-term stays.

Price range: Under 600B

Malaysia Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

54 Soi Ngam Dupli

Tel: (02) 286 3582 Fax: (02) 287 1457

While the Malaysia Hotel has certainly passed its glory days, you could do a lot worse than here in this part of town. The rooms are clean and well-sized. Rates include breakfast.

malaysia@ksc15.th.com

<http://kscmail.th.com/malaysia/>

Price range: Under 600B

Penguin House -- Our rating: 7/10

44/6 Sri Bampphen Road

Look for the sign 'Penguin Internet'. Penguin offers clean and reasonably sized rooms with discount rates for long-term stays.

<http://www.geocities.com/penguinhouses/>

Price range: Under 600B

Pinnacle Lumpinee Hotel & Spa -- Our rating: 7/10

17 Soi Ngam Dupli

Tel: (02) 287 0111-31 Fax: (02) 287 3420

This hotel is very conveniently located near lush Lumpini Park and the subway. Rooms are reasonable for the price, but ask for one on an upper floor to enjoy the view the name of this hotel hints at. It's about a 15-minute walk to the bustle of Silom Road.

pinhl@loxinfo.co.th

<http://www.pinnaclehotels.com>

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Skyland Tours and Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

Soi Ngam Dupli

In the same building as Honey, this guesthouse has rooms with fans rather than aircon, making it a good choice for the budget conscious.

Price range: Under 600B

Madam Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

11 Soi Saphan Khu, Off Soi Sri Bampphen

Tel: (02) 286 9289 Fax: (02) 213 2087

Madam's is a presentable wooden house with a half-dozen reasonable rooms to choose from, making it a step up from most of the soulless places in the Ngam Dupli area.

Price range: Under 600B

Moon House -- Our rating: 6/10

2/10-11 Soi Sri Bampphen

All rooms here have air-con and are well-sized. Discount rates for long-term stays are available.

Price range: Under 600B

ETC Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
5/3 Soi Ngam Dupli
Tel: (02) 286 9424 Fax: (02) 287 1478
Connected to the Educational Travel Centre downstairs, this noisy guesthouse is popular and often full.
Price range: Under 600B

Lee 3 Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
Soi Saphan Khu (off Soi Sri Bamphen)
Standard-size rooms and prices for the area but wooden building adds a little atmosphere.
Price range: Under 600B

Lee 4 Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
Soi Saphan Khu (off Soi Sri Bamphen)
Lee 4 offers clean rooms and represents fair value for the area.
Price range: Under 600B

Budget Hilton -- Our rating: 4/10
Soi Sri Bamphen
Located just past Moon House on Soi Sri Bamphen, the Budget Hilton is rundown and ageing gracefully. If you don't mind the dust and grime, the large rooms are quite good value.
Price range: Under 600B

Freddy's Guest House -- Our rating: 4/10
Soi Ngam Dupli
Freddy's rooms are a fair size but they could do with investing in some new mattresses.
Price range: Under 600B

Tukh Guest House -- Our rating: 4/10
34/3 Soi Sri Bamphen
Tel: (02) 286 4228 Fax: (02) 287 1669
Turkh's rooms are well-sized and reasonably clean, making it a good choice for the price.
Price range: Under 600B

Home Sweet Home Guest House -- Our rating: 3/10
Popular with those who like to rent hotel rooms by the hour, Home Sweet Home nevertheless plays host to backpackers seeking a cheap deal. Less sleazy choices pepper the area.
Price range: Under 600B

Kenny Guest House -- Our rating: 3/10
Soi Sri Bamphen
Like Home Sweet Home, the rooms at Kenny are often full -- for a short time. Better choices are in the area.
Price range: Under 600B

Lee 1 Guest House -- Our rating: 3/10
23/13 Soi Sri Bamphen
Price range: Under 600B

Eat and Meet

15th Street
Corner of Narathiwat Soi 15 and Narathiwat Road

Tel: (06) 993 7867
This lively place has regular live Thai pop and rock bands. The well-priced menu features standard bar and restaurant fare. The place tends to be later in the evenings.

Absolut
Narathiwat Soi 15
Tel: (02) 286 0228
A popular student bar, Absolut has a pool table in its bustling downstairs area, while upstairs features a trendy bar and dining area.

Just One
55 Sathorn Tai Soi 1
Tel: (02) 679 7932 Fax: (02) 679 8033
Well-known for its seafood, Just One is a particular pleasure on balmy evenings in the outdoor courtyard. Keep an eye out for the range of unusual dishes featuring soft drinks.

Le Cafe Siam
4 Soi Sri Akson, Chua Ploeng
Tel: (02) 671 0030/1 Fax: (02) 671 0030
Set in a stunningly renovated 1920s house, Le Cafe Siam wins top points for atmosphere and excellent service. The food gets varying reviews but for the most part they're positive. Best to book ahead. Great creme brulee.
lecafesiam@gymmi.com
http://www.lecafesiam.com

Monkey Shock 3
1116 Narathiwat Road (between sois 15 and 17)
Tel: (02) 287 2957
This is the ugly sister of the otherwise great Monkey Shock restaurant gang. Although the menu is the same as the others, the ambience and atmosphere is awful. But despite the noise and exhaust fumes from busy Narathiwat Road, Monkey Shock 3 remains popular. Service is prompt but with so many great spots within walking distance, it's difficult to imagine why you'd hang around here. Another minus is the chunky teak furniture.
http://www.monkeyshock.org/

Sensual Suanplu Blvd
70 Narathiwat Soi 15
Tel: (02) 676 1653 Fax: (02) 676 1653
More of a restaurant than a bar, this funky place features more innovative cuisine than most other eating spots in this area. Choose between outdoor seating or an air-con interior. Service is prompt and friendly. The soft-shelled crab with black pepper, peppermint or garlic is delicious but be warned: they come whole.
sensualsuanplu@excite.com

Three Mangoes
428 Narathiwat Soi 15
Tel: (02) 676 1995
The food shines at this bar and restaurant at the end of a sub-soi off Soi 15. The atmosphere is pleasant but the decor a little casual, with the outdoor eating area under the mango tree

the better choice. The food is very reasonably priced, with the Army Salad, a mix of prawns squid and clams in a green chilli sauce and the Three Mangoes Special Dish, a fried mix of peanuts, prawns and Thai herbs, great grazing food. Make this a stop on an all-night crawl of this trendy bar area.

Wong's
Soi Sri Bamphen
Long a Bangkok institution, Wong's has for years served up cheap beer and an unrivalled array of rock videos to expatriates and tourists alike.

The original owner Wong died in late 2003 and is sorely missed but the bar lives on. It's been cleaned up a little, though the bathroom is still spectacularly vile.

Wong's is worth popping into for a drink if you're in the area.

Sights and Attractions

Mr Kukrit's House
19 Soi Phra Pint, Sathorn Tai Road (off Soi Suan Phlu)
Thailand's prime minister in 1974-75, Kukrit was one of the kingdom's few truly intellectual leaders and this stunning wooden house bears witness to a life lived simply but smartly. Brim-full of fine art treasures, the house features an interesting library and bonsai trees in the well-tended garden.

If you are heading down to the immigration office, you don't have to head far out of your way to make a stop here.
Hours: Sat-Sun and official holidays 10:00-17:00
Cost: 50B

Activities

Muay Thai
Lumpini Boxing Stadium, Rama IV Road
Muay Thai or kick-boxing is the world-renowned national sport of Thailand. Spend an evening here to witness several rounds of competitors thwacking each other in a colourful display of testosterone.

While many kick boxers train by kicking truck tyres or heavy boxing mats, the Thais train by kicking bamboo, killing all nerve endings in their shins and so making them formidable fighting machines. Thai boxing matches also tend to push beyond human limits with bouts continuing well after the towel would have been thrown in during Western boxing matches.

Lumpini Boxing Stadium holds matches every Tuesday and Friday at 7.00 pm to 11.00 pm, and on Saturdays from 5.00 pm to 8.00 pm, then 8.30 pm to 12.00 pm. The cost is 230B, 460B and 920B for ringside seats. There are heaps of food stalls and a couple of Thai restaurants out the front to sustain you through the spectacle.
Cost: 230B-

Pratunam and Phayathai

Pratunam is one of Bangkok's major shopping areas, with a bustling cloth market based around the Indra Regent Hotel and the nearby software heaven Panthip Plaza. From pirated software and fake Gucci handbags to \$5,000 Prada suits and \$1,000 La Perla bras, there's something for everyone in this shopping mecca.

Phayathai is a public transportation hub centered around the landmark Victory Monument, which was built to honour the Thai soldiers who have died defending their homeland. Although a popular shopping area for students, Phayathai has little of interest to the overseas visitor.

Characterised by heavy traffic, congested pavements and mid-range hotels, both these areas are permanently teeming with people.

Eat and Meet

Once Upon a Time
32 Soi 17 Phetburi Rd
Tel: (02) 252-8629 Fax: (02) 251-5975
This charming Thai restaurant is set a way down soi 17 on the right in a pleasant garden, with seating indoors or outside. The classic Thai cuisine is excellent and the service friendly. Some may find the light by oil lamps a little too low.
onceupon@loxinfo.co.th
http://www.onceuponatimeinthailand.com

Pickle Factory
55 Soi Ratchawithi 2, Ratchawithi Road
Tel: (02) 246 3036 Fax: (02) 640 9633
The Pickle Factory is well known for its extremely good pizzas, laid-back atmosphere and appalling service. You can wait up to four hours for a pizza here -- we have, twice! At least they have a pool where you can cool your temper while you wait. And their desserts are very good.

Seafood market
Corner of Phetburi and Ratchadamri
This open-air seafood place is squashed between the khlong and Phetburi and Ratchadamri Roads, creating a rather unhygienic and unatmospheric location for a seafood meal.

Prices are inflated due to the high tourist traffic in the area, but the food isn't too bad. Do be sure to agree on a price before ordering.

Sights and Attractions

Suan Pakkard Palace

Sri Ayutthaya Road

Suan Pakkard Palace is comprised of fine traditional wooden Thai houses, bristling with antiques, traditional furnishings, artworks and an intriguing collection of khon masks.

Although set on busy Sri Ayutthaya Road, the gardens offer a fairly tranquil retreat from the Bangkok streets. It's just a short taxi ride from Jim Thompson's house and makes a good stop after a visit to his house.

Hours: Daily 09:00-16:00

Cost: 100B

Activities

Panhip Plaza

Phetburi Road

Long the most obvious monument to piracy in Thailand, this multi-storey software and electronics emporium is finally feeling the heat from crackdowns on pirates flogging CDs packed with thousands of dollars worth of software for tiny prices.

But the crackdowns do wax and wane, and as soon as the police turn a blind eye, more pirates than in the Straits of Malacca rapidly reemerge.

Aside from software, Panhip also has a massive range of computer hardware, laptops and other electronic equipment. Quality varies and inevitably, you get what you pay for.

Cost:Free

Bangrak

Bang Rak, or "Town of Love", is home to some of Bangkok's most expensive hotels and condominiums. It also houses a thriving antiques trade, numerous riverside restaurants and other tourist attractions. Weekdays the streets are clogged with traffic and street fare, while weekends are reasonably peaceful.

Bang Rak also encompasses Silom Road, the heart of Bangkok's business centre, and a popular entertainment area. Soi Thaniya, Patpong, Silom Soi 4 and Convent Road are all packed with bars, restaurants and clubs.

Vital Information

Bank of Asia

296 Si Phraya Road

Tel: (02) 235 2884-7 Fax: (02) 235 2882

Bangkok Bank Head Office

333 Silom Road

Tel: (02) 231 4333

Kasikorn Bank

142 Silom Road

Tel: (02) 234 7050 Fax: (02) 235 2055

Bangkok Christian Hospital

124 Silom Road

Tel: (02) 235 1000-7 Fax: (02) 236 2911

Thai Airways

485 Silom Road

Tel: (02) 232-8000 Fax: (02) 233-1465

This is the main reservation office in central Bangkok.

General

Internet cafes are located along Silom Road and its sois. Si Phraya, Surawong and Charoen Krung Roads however have very few.

Accommodation

Silom Village -- Our rating: 9/10

286 Silom Road

For the location in the heart of the bustling Silom area, Silom Village is outstanding value. Rooms are plain but very clean and the staff are very helpful. A few internet terminals and a travel agent are located on the ground floor. Not nearly as noisy as you would expect. Good discounts available.

silomvillage@hotmail.com

http://www.silomvillage.co.th

Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

The Swiss Lodge -- Our rating: 9/10

3 Convent Road

Tel: (02) 233 5345 Fax: (02) 236 9425

This boutique hotel is a good location on stylish Convent Road, making it a great choice for those wanting to check out the array of bars and restaurants nearby. It's just a 5-minute walk to Sala Daeng BTS, too. The Swiss Lodge has some of the friendliest and helpful staff in town. The rooms are nothing too fancy, but clean and quiet, though the beds are a bit on the soft side. This is a very popular choice with business travellers so reservations are a good idea. Note the standard rooms are only available as singles.

info@swisslodge.com

http://www.swisslodge.com

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Hostel Thailand -- Our rating: 8/10

395/4 Silom Road

This is one of the most sparkingly clean hostels we have ever seen, boasting luminous white interiors. The dorm is overpriced if you're travelling in a group, but for a single traveller wanting to stay in this area of town, it's not bad. Friendly management says the larger private rooms are almost always full, so book those well in advance. A small internet cafe is located on the first floor.

hostelthailand@yahoo.com

Price range: Under 600B

Shangri-La -- Our rating: 8/10

89 Wat Suan Plu New Road

Tel: (02) 236 7777 Fax: (02) 236 8579

One of the best hotels on the river, the Shangri-La has two wings, both of which offer great water views. Rooms are five-star standard: tastefully designed and immaculate. The pool is spacious and excellently located on the banks of the Chao Phraya, but as with all riverside locations, the noise from the boat traffic can be a bit tedious. The service is impeccable and the hotel is home to a range of excellent restaurants. If this is your budget range, Shangri-La is a fine choice and is also walking distance to BTS Saphan Taksin, making it easy to zip around the rest of the city.

slbk@shangri-la.com

http://www.shangri-la.com

Price range: over 8,000B

The Dusit Thani -- Our rating: 8/10

946 Rama IV Rd

Tel: (02) 236 9999 Fax: (02) 236 6400

This landmark building on the corner of Sukhumvit and Rama IV Roads, is an ideally located luxury hotel with a long history as well - it was once the tallest building in Bangkok. Both the BTS and subway are within easy walking distance, as is green haven Lumpini Park and the general shopping mecca of Silom Road. The immaculate rooms are very tasteful, designed in a contemporary Thai fashion, and have good views over the park. Particularly competitive internet rates seem to be on offer. Great choice for the price and area.

dusitbk@dusit.com

http://www.dusit.com/hotel/dtb/index.html

Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Holiday Inn Bangkok -- Our rating: 7/10

981 Silom Road

Tel: (02) 238 4300 Fax: (02) 238 5289

A favourite among tour groups and Australians, the Holiday Inn is... well, it's a Holiday Inn. Rooms are spacious, clean and comfortable and the spacious restaurants mean it never feels quite as crowded as it generally gets. All rooms are decked out in a typical Thai style. The hotel is located a 15-minute walk away from Silom's street markets, towards the river.

reservations@holidayinnsilom.com

http://www.bangkok-silom.holiday-inn.com

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotels and Tower -- Our rating: 7/10

2 Captain Bush Lane, New Road

Tel: (02) 266 0123 Fax: 236 8320

The Sheraton is the least well-located of the luxury riverside hotels, being a long hike away from the BTS along congested Charoen Krung Road. You can however hop on the Chao Phraya River Express and get whisked down to the BTS at Saphan Taksin, plus antique hunters not fussed about paying too much for looted regional antiquities should love its proximity to the River City shopping complex. Chinatown is

about a 30-minute walk away. The hotel is five-star standard, boasting very comfortable rooms with spectacular river views. One gripe here is the number of touts that hang out in front of the hotel whom the hotel staff don't mind calling in to pick up guests. If you're able to beat off the touts then this isn't a bad choice.

00172.info@sheraton.com

http://www.sheraton.com/bangkok

Price range: over 8,000B

Tarntawan Place Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

119/5-10 Surawong Road

Tel: (02) 238 2620 Fax: (02) 238 3228

This conveniently located hotel is a very comfortable mid-range spot. The hallways are a little stale, but the rooms are very clean and the bathrooms spotless and well designed. If you want to stay near Silom without paying 4-5 star prices, this is an excellent choice. The staff are friendly and there is a small restaurant on the ground floor. The hotel is two minutes from Patpong and about a five-minute walk to Silom.

tarntawan@tarntawan.com

http://www.tarntawan.com

Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Tawana Ramada Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10

80 Suriwong Rd

Tel: (02) 236 0361 Fax: (02) 236 3738

Within spitting distance of Silom Road, the Tawana Ramada is a bit quieter though still on a busy road. Almost fronting onto the northern end of Patpong, touts can also be a very big pain around here. The rooms are passable and clean and staff efficiently brusque.

info@tawanahotel.com

http://www.tawanahotel.com

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Narai Hotel -- Our rating: 4/10

222 Silom Road

Tel: (02) 237 0100 Fax: (02) 236 7161

A package tour favourite, the Narai gets a huge thumbs down for letting annoying touts clog the front area with their clapped-out Datsuns. For this reason alone we'd advocate a boycott. They must be offering tour groups fantastic rates as occupancy levels tend to be very high. The rooms are standard size, comfortable and clean. It's just a shame they can't clean up the pavement as well so people staying here aren't continually hassled.

narai@narai.com

http://www.narai.com

Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Silom Plaza Hotel -- Our rating: 4/10

320 Silom Road

Tel: (02) 236 8441 Fax: (02) 237 2717

Considering the age and rundown state of this hotel, rooms are way overpriced, even for its fine location. Rooms are musty though sleepable, but seeing this place demolished would be no great tragedy. Better options litter this area. At least the staff are friendly in the face of their adversity.

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Eat and Meet

Anna's Cafe
118 Soi Saladaeng
Tel: (02) 632 0620
The original Anna's Cafe, which spawned a sprinkling throughout the capital, is set in a lovely spacious house-restaurant and is most popular for lunch. Prompt service and professional management delivers a nice mix of Thai and western dishes at great prices. Their desserts are exceptional. Highly recommended.
Info@annascafe.com
<http://www.annascafes.com/>

Balcony Bar
Silom Soi 4
The long-running Balcony Bar has some of the cheapest drinks on the soi, served by chatty staff. There's an upstairs area if the crowds bother you but it's a great people watching spot, attracting a mix of regulars and tourists. The food is passable.

Barbican
9/4-5 Soi Thaniya
Tel: (02) 234 3590
Very popular city-style bar with some of the most professional and welcoming staff in Bangkok. It has a reasonable international menu and separate upstairs dining area. Great salads but their pastas tend to be overcooked.

Bobby's Arms
Silom Soi 4
This place's biggest advantage is that you can use it as a back way through to Patpong. That aside, there's little to distinguish Bobby's from the other western pubs in the area, save a lack of crowds.

Eat Me Art Restaurant
Soi Pipat off Convent Road
Tel: (02) 238 0931
Eat Me works as both a gallery and a restaurant, with great food served up in an intimate atmosphere. Occasional openings push back the restaurant kick-off time so do ring ahead. The sticky date pudding comes highly recommended.
eatmeconvent@hotmail.com

Hamilton's
Dusit Thani Hotel, Rama IV Road
Tel: (02) 236 0450
This small 1920s-themed steakhouse offers a fine-dining alternative to the more raucous pubs and their red-meat offerings. The service is impeccable but the steaks aren't as great as the prices suggest they should be. Lovely mashed potato.
Michel@dusit.com
<http://www.dusit.com/hotel/dtb/restaurant/res0082/index.html>

Harmonique

22 Charoenkrung Road soi 34
Tel: (02) 630 6270
Harmonique is very popular with travellers due to its proximity to big hotels, charming setting and reasonable prices. The service, alas is dreadful. If you're in the area, it's well worth a try. The seafood dishes are great.
harmoniquebkk@yahoo.com
<http://www.dininginthailand.com/harmonique.asp>

Indigo
6 Convent Road
Tel: (02) 235 3268 Fax: (02) 234 5107
Tucked away on a small soi off Convent, Indigo is a charming bar and French restaurant laid out in a renovated old-style house with a leafy garden and dining area. A nice spot for a drink but the food gets mixed reviews and is a little overpriced.
indigo@loxinfo.co.th

Irish Exchange
Convent Road
Tel: (02) 266 7160 Fax: (02) 631 1013
Once Delaneys, then Shenanigans and now the Irish Exchange: this ever name-changing pub still attracts a loyal following swapping baht for overpriced pints. The Friday buffet lunch, however, is a good deal. Very popular with office workers and resident money-making expats.
John@shenanigans.comware.net

Jantane restaurant
Corner of Saladaeng Soi 2
This white-washed restaurant does an interesting take on Thai food. Fast and friendly service makes this a good lunchtime spot.

Jim Thompson's Farmers Market
Saladaeng Soi 2
This small, leafy house-restaurant does very good international and Thai food but the kitchen can't handle the lunch-time rush. If you're not in a hurry this is a fine choice, with good desserts and coffee worth lingering over.

Momotarou
9/19-21 Soi Thaniya
Tel: (02) 235 0108
This ramen noodle shop does massive bowls of noodles for under 100B, but if you can't handle MSG make sure you tell them. Friendly service, boisterous atmosphere. Great place to fill up and move on.

Noriega's Bar
106/108 Soi 4
Tel: (02) 233 2813 Fax: (02) 233 2815
A mixed crowd are attracted here by the promise of good live music, though that's only delivered some of the time. Generally dead till about 10pm. Worth a swing by if the music's good.

North East Thai Esan
1010/12-15 Rama IV Road
Tel: (02) 633 8947

Get your hot and spicy fix here with delicious and extremely well-priced dishes from Isaan, Thailand's northeastern region served by friendly staff. Meat-heavy menu as with most northeastern places. The atmosphere is bright and cheerful but not a spot to linger.

O'Reillys Irish Pub
62/1-4 Silom Road
Tel: (02) 632 7515 Fax: (02) 235 1572
Big and boisterous, O'Reillys serves up reasonable pub grub. A mixed Thai and western crowd keeps things lively but the restaurant upstairs offers a quieter retreat.
irish@loxinfo.co.th

Som Tam Convent
Opposite Starbucks/The Irish Exchange, Convent Rd
This bustling, no-frills place on Soi Convent just opposite Starbucks is famous for its delicious barbecued chicken with som tam and sticky rice, accompanied by several tasty sauces. Not much English spoken as it mainly caters for Thais who really love good food. Service is attentive and prompt. Their great standard meal (just point) will set you back 86 baht, including water.

Tapas
Silom Soi 4
Tapas attracts a loyal crowd of repeat Thai and international custom. Good tunes and funky interior downstairs, though occasional fee for upstairs is a gouge. Good place throughout the evening but gets a bit too packed later on.

The Good View
2525 Charoen Krung Road
Tel: (02) 689 1393-6 Fax: (02) 689 1397
The sprawling riverside Good View at the very end of Charoen Krung Road -- a 15-20 minute cab drive from Silom Road -- has a festive atmosphere with live Thai bands churning out the usual covers. It's a great spot to meet up with a crowd of people but be sure to book in advance if you want a table near the water. Often packed, the friendly staff still manage to provide great service. Excellent selection of Thai food, though be sure to check the bill as mistakes occasionally happen here.
<http://www.goodview.co.th/>

The Pappaya
Saladaeng Soi 2
This very popular Thai restaurant recently changed its name to The Pappaya but still does Thai standards. Very popular, especially during lunch -- look out for the spinning chickens out front.

Toby Jug
near Central Department Store
This hole-in-the-wall pub does standard pub grub and drinks. Attracts a loyal custom of regulars, but very few others. It's nevertheless a convenient spot to meet up before heading elsewhere.

V9

59th floor, Sofitel Hotel, 188 Silom Road
Tel: (02) 238 1991 Fax: (02) 238 1999
V9 is one of Bangkok's few wine bars -- although it's a restaurant as well -- and offers some of the best views of the city. The selection of wines is excellent: taste their special "flights" or choose a bottle from the bins at the entrance. Prices have risen somewhat recently so it's not the bargain it used to be, but still represents a decent deal.

Zanotti
21/2 Soi Saladaeng
Tel: (02) 636 0002 Fax: (02) 636 0221
Zanotti is one of Bangkok's finest Italian restaurants. Their comprehensive menu includes some excellent pasta and meat dishes and wonderful desserts. It's not cheap, but try their lunch set menu for a bargain. Service is top-notch. If making a reservation, be sure to ask for a window spot. Recommended.
zanotti@loxinfo.co.th

Sights and Attractions

Christian Cemetery
Silom Soi 9
This historic cemetery spanning Silom Soi 9 is now in a pretty poor state, with the remains of those buried here slowly being relocated following the introduction of laws forbidding burials within city limits. Many of the graves are open or have been smashed, though some such as the Xavier Crypt are still intact.

Given the value of the land, it's not difficult to imagine there being ulterior motives for the change in regulations, particularly as dead continue to be buried in other parts of town.
Cost: Free

Neilson Hays Library
195 Surawong Rd
This charming building was built to honour the memory of Jennie Neilson Hays. Ms Hays was a Protestant missionary first sent to Phetburi in 1881, who was President of the Library Association from 1914 until 1920 when she died suddenly of suspected cholera.

Today you enter the library through its back door -- the front entrance, which opens into the rotunda, is no longer in use as the space is used as an art gallery with regularly changing exhibitions.

Although the days of no bookstores in Bangkok have passed, the library still offers an excellent range of books and is staffed by volunteers.
Cost: Free

Si Maha Mariamman Temple
Intersection of Silom and Pan Roads
This Hindu temple features intricately decorated roofs and loads of colourful statues of Hindu deities and idols. The main

temple which opens to three decorated shrines has a stark white entrance with pillars made of mythical creatures and lotus leaves.

Hours: Daily
Cost: Free

Soi Pradit
Silom Soi Pradit (Soi 20)

A busy market strip, Soi Pradit is packed with a wide variety of food and general produce stalls along with a few streetside eateries and flower stalls at the Silom end.

Also on the soi is Mirasuddeen Mosque, a small building dating from the early 1990s, and a wet market, smaller than Bangrak Market on Charoen Krung, but very accessible.
Cost: Free

Activities

Patpong Market
Patpong, Silom Road

Wedged into the centre of Bangkok's most infamous redlight district, Patpong market sells fake versions of just about everything. Watches, T-shirts, CDs, DVDs and designer handbags are all unashamed rip-offs, with prices starting high, so wear your bargaining boots. A wide range of homewares are also on sale.

Besides the main strip running between Silom and Surawongse Roads, the market has also spilt over onto Silom for a few hundred metres in either direction.

Be wary of pickpockets and other cons in the area -- the market has a jovial atmosphere but a dark underbelly.
Cost: Free

Ruen-Nuad Massage
42 Convent Rd, Silom

This charming house-turned massage spot is a step up from the everyday street-level ones. Atmosphere is great, and the foot massage is among the best we have had in Bangkok (even though they use the dreaded stick). Their Thai massage gets excellent reviews, with the masseuses more interested in really fixing any problems you might have rather than just giving a rub down. Next door get your facial.

Ko Rattanakosin

Ko Rattanakosin, or the old quarter, is an artificial island created by Khlong Ong Ang and Khlong Banglamphu. Most of Bangkok's major historical sites of interest are located here, including Wat Phra Kaew, the Grand Palace and Wat Pho, making it a fascinating area to just wander around.

Khao San road is actually a part of the island, but is dealt with

separately by Travelfish.

Sights and Attractions

Lak Muang (City Pillar)
Sanam Luang

Considered to be Bangkok's foundation stone and the home of the city spirit, this pillar's origins stretch back to 1782 when King Rama I erected a small wooden post. Since then the post has been replaced with sturdier material, and has become a focal point for considerable festivities and offerings by those who want to keep the city's guardian spirit well pleased.

Hours: Daily 24/7
Cost: Free

National Museum
4 Na Phra That Road

Thailand's first museum was established during the reign of King Rama IV when he used two of the buildings within the Grand Palace to showcase his personal collection. The first public museum was opened in 1874 and was relocated to the current site in 1887. It is now the largest of its kind in Southeast Asia, featuring fine examples of art from throughout the region, some dating back to Neolithic times. A must-see if you're travelling throughout north and central Thailand.

Highlights include Room 15, which has a large collection of musical instruments and recorded music. Room 17 contains the ornate Royal Funeral Chariots, while room 13 displays some impressive wood carvings including an incredible set of 15 cm-thick teak doors carved in the 19th century and partially damaged by fire in 1959. Rooms 1 and 2 display some items more than 5,000 years old, which are well displayed to explain Thailand's heritage. A good collection of Thai art from the Sukhothai period graces the museum, while a gallery dedicated to the Dvaravati and Khmer periods is also comprehensive.

Exhibits carry English information and free tours are available. English tours are Wednesdays and Thursdays departing from the ticket kiosk at 09:30. Wednesdays focus on Buddhism while Thursdays cover Thai culture and art. English literature is also available for 70B though it is organised in a bit of a random fashion. A restaurant on the grounds makes the museum a rather civilised spot to spend a morning or afternoon browsing through the different pavilions.

Hours: Wed-Sun 09:00-16:00
Cost: 40B

Sanam Luang

Hemmed in by Ratchadamnoen Nai, Na Phra That and Na Phra Lan Roads

This park to the north of Wat Phra Kaew is traditionally used on royal occasions such as the ploughing ceremony, when the king officially signals the commencement of the rice growing seasons. In early March 1996, the Queen Mother was cremated here after lying in state at the Royal Palace for eight months.

In times long past, particularly nasty criminals were lined up and shot here, and the Chatuchak Weekend Market was later originally held on these grounds. Nowadays kite flying is about the most exciting pastime going on.

Cost: Free

The Giant Swing
In front of Wat Suthat, Bamrung Muang Road

The Giant Swing is... precisely that. It was once used as part of a religious festival, during which swingers would soar to huge heights trying to capture a bag of gold suspended in the air. The king eventually banned it being used when he decided too many fatalities had occurred.

Hours: Daily 24/7
Cost: Free

The Grand Palace
Na Phra Lan Road

The Grand Palace was constructed in 1782 to commemorate and house the current dynasty of Thai royals. Most of the walled-in palace compound is still used by the royal family and therefore closed to the public.

The magnificent buildings within the compound were built over the reigns of several kings and as such show a variety of Thai architectural styles. Just taking a walk through the grounds alone is enough to soak up some of the regal extravagance.

Before the Dusit Hall is Chakri Mahaprasat, designed by English architects. You are not allowed in, but the gardens are picturesque. Before Chakri Mahaprasat is Amarinda Hall, used for coronation ceremonies. The Pavilion for Holy Water is a traditional hall where priests used to attend a ceremony to swear allegiance to the king. The Royal Thai Decoration and Coin Museum is open to the public and contains displays of Thai currency dating back as far as the 11th century as well as a variety of royal paraphernalia.

Admission also gives you access to Wat Phra Kaew, Vimanmek Mansion and the Dusit Throne Hall.

Hours: Daily 8:30-11:30, 13:00-15:30
Cost: 100B

Wat Mahathat
Na Phra That Road

The wat itself is fairly unremarkable but it is home to Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, one of the most highly esteemed sites of Buddhist learning in the country. During Buddhist holy days a busy market is held on the premises where, among other things, traditional medicines are sold. Opposite the entrance, along Mahathat Road, is a sizeable amulet market which is worth a peek. Vipassana meditation courses are run here.

Hours: Daily 09:00-17:00
Cost: Free

Wat Pho
South of the Grand Palace

This immense complex is the largest temple in Bangkok and is reputed to be Thailand's oldest learning centre. Quite fittingly, it also contains the oldest and largest reclining Buddha in Thailand. The feet of the Buddha, which are over 3m long, have been inlaid with mother-of-pearl displaying 108 different characteristics of the Buddha. The gold-plated statue is 46m long and 15m high and represents the ascension of Buddha to Nirvana.

The wall facing the Buddha is lined with collection cups into each of which you can drop a coin. Small change is available at the desk. You can also purchase temple rubbings made from cement casts of marble reliefs removed from ruins at Ayutthaya.

One of the galleries in the northeastern corner of the compound houses 394 Buddha images. The building itself is a three-tiered temple, with Chinese rock sculptures at its entrance. The walls of another sanctuary are adorned with relief plaques that delicately retell stories from the Ramakien. You will also notice four chedis that were built to represent the first four kings who ruled during the current Chakri dynasty.

The original temple dates from the 16th century, although the complex was entirely rebuilt in the late 18th century. Wat Pho is also home to a Traditional Medicine School and in the afternoons your ailments can be treated by traditional methods. Traditional massage is also available -- try one with a herbal poultice -- and classes are held for foreigners.
Hours: Daily 08:00-17:00

Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha)
Na Phra Lan Road

Adjacent to the Grand Palace and built in 1782 by King Rama I, Wat Phra Kaew, or Temple of the Emerald Buddha, is home to the most sacred image in Thailand, the Emerald Buddha -- actually made of jade. It was moved from Chiang Mai, where it was found in 1464, to its current resting place, but its origins are unknown.

When not being used by the royal family, the temple is open to the public. The temple and chapel contain architectural features from both the Ayutthaya and Rattanakosin periods and detailed murals featuring the life of Buddha and the Ramakien.

Entry will be refused if you are not dressed appropriately, and photography, filming and recording is strictly banned indoors. Remember to remove your shoes upon entering and if seated, turn the soles of your feet away so they are not facing the Buddha.
Hours: Daily 08:00-16:00

Wat Ratchanatdaram and the Amulet Market
Mahachai Road

Built in 1846 during the reign of King Rama III, Wat Ratchanatdaram's main attraction is the Loha Prasat which stands 36m high and has 37 spires surrounding it.

The wat is also known for the large amulet market around its

entrance. The variety of amulets, available to protect one in almost any situation, is incredible. Designs of images with a number of eyes will keep you safe from accidents, while a Buddha covering his eyes will bring you luck. There's plenty more: well worth a browse.

Hours: Daily 08:00-17:00

Cost: Free

Wat Suthat

146 Bamrung Muang Road

Wat Suthat is best known for its fine murals dating from the 19th century and collection of Buddha images. Construction of the wat began in 1807 during the reign of King Rama I and once completed, he requested that an important Buddha image, the Phra Sisakayamunee from Wat Mahathat in Sukhothai, be displayed here. The image is Thailand's largest cast bronze image and is believed to have been cast in 1361.

Plenty of shops stocking religious paraphernalia dot the surrounding neighbourhood.

Hours: Daily

Cost: 20B

Banglamphu and Dusit

Most travellers spend their first night in Bangkok in the busy budget area of Khao San Road. Situated in the heart of the city on the northern edge of Rattanakosin Island, Khao San is a hub of activity, home to guesthouses and hostels suiting all budgets and travel agencies to accommodate any imaginable travel need.

Due to the incredible demand for rooms in this area, Khao San Road has split at the seams and guesthouses have sprung up within a radius of a kilometre. The further you move from the road the better, cheaper and quieter your room is more likely to be. For those who want to be within easy walking distance of Khao San Road, west Banglamphu is your best bet, though for those who do not mind a bit of walking, the National Library area is superior in terms of tranquility and room quality.

Not long ago budget guesthouses and hostels were the only option on Khao San, but there is now a reasonable supply of mid-range "flash-packing" hotels both on Khao San Road and in the surrounding area. These hotels offer many of the creature comforts missing in the budget guesthouses at a fraction of the cost of comparable options elsewhere in town.

On Travelfish, Banglamphu is considered to stretch from Ratchadamnoen Road north to Krung Kasem Road and is bordered to the west by the Chao Phraya River and to the east by Ratchadamnoen Nok Road.

Vital Information

Krung Thai Exchange
Khao San Road
Tel: (02) 282 8507-8

ATM General

Ratchadamnoen Post Office

Soi Post Office

This is one of the two closest post offices to Khao San, located towards the end of Soi Post Office.

Banglamphu Post Office

Soi Rambutri

Located behind Khao San, near the intersection with Phra Sumen Road

Banglamphu Tourist Police Office

Chakraphong Road

This is located on the corner of Chakraphong Road and Khao San Road.

General

There are stacks of internet cafes along Khao San Road - impossible to miss.

Accommodation

Shambara Boutique Hostel and Restaurant -- Our rating: 9/10
138 Khaosan Road

This new addition (2004) to Khao San Road is a refreshing breeze of friendly hospitality and pleasant surrounds. Hidden down a sub-soi towards the eastern end of Khao San, the location is reasonably quiet and although some of the rooms are on the small side, they are spotlessly clean and tasteful. Out the front there is a small terrace area where food and drink is available. An excellent addition to the options on Khao San Road.

Recommended.

info@shambarabangkok.com

http://www.shambarabangkok.com/

Price range: Under 600B

Buddy Lodge -- Our rating: 8/10

265 Khao San Road

Tel: (02) 629 4477 Fax: (02) 629 4744

Easily the flashiest, most expensive place on Khao San Road, Buddy Lodge has fantastic rooms and a beautiful pool on the roof with an attached bar. There are also two bars downstairs, a tailor, bookshop, a Coffee World and a shopping arcade. A McDonald's restaurant lurks in the basement.

Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Four Sons Inn -- Our rating: 8/10

327/2-3-4 Rambutri Road

Tel: (02) 629 5812 Fax: (02) 629 2739

This popular place, featuring a bar and restaurant, is located at the bend in the soi. The rooms are hotel-style and on offer is DVD rental: 50B a night buys you the movie of your choice to watch in your room.

info@foursinsonn.com

http://www.foursinsonn.com/

Price range: Under 600B

Live Good Guest House -- Our rating: 8/10

81/2 Tanao Road

Live Good is a trendy value-for-money guesthouse that has recently opened with clean and large rooms. Internet facilities are downstairs.

Price range: Under 600B

Mango Lagoon Place -- Our rating: 8/10

30 Soi Rambutri

Mango Lagoon opened in early 2004 and represents great value for the area. The five-storey building is more of a hotel than a guesthouse and has spotlessly clean rooms, some of which have good views of the surrounds. It's a friendly and professionally run spot. If this is within your budget, it's a fine choice.

Price range: Under 600B

New Siam II Guest House -- Our rating: 8/10

50 Soi Rongmai, Phra Athit Road

Tel: (02) 282 2795 Fax: (02) 629 0303

Hotel-like accommodation at guesthouse prices makes New Siam II a fine choice. The swimming pool, with a 60B per day charge for non-guests, is a treat while all rooms have electronic key cards and security boxes.

reception@newsiam.net

http://www.newsiam.net/

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Rambutri Village Inn -- Our rating: 8/10

95 Soi Rambutri

This mid-sized hotel has very clean and well-maintained rooms, making it a good choice for its price range in the area. Rambutri Village also has a very pleasant garden terrace and they plan to have a pool by mid-2004.

Price range: Under 600B

Royal Hotel -- Our rating: 8/10

Ratchadamnoen Avenue

Tel: (02) 222 9111 Fax: (02) 224 2083

The mid-range Royal on the corner of Ratchadamnoen Avenue and opposite Sanam Luang is in a top location for tourists. The hotel features two wings, varying only in age. The newer wing is slightly more expensive but includes ABF. The rooms have full amenities and are worth their price.

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Sawasdee Khaosan Inn -- Our rating: 8/10

18 Chakraphong Road

Tel: (02) 256 0890-2 ext 30 Fax: (02) 256 0890-2 ext 302

This sparkling new guesthouse has a trendy restaurant and

great large rooms. Staff are very friendly and accommodating. A top choice for the price, plus the airport bus stops right out front.

info@sawasdee-hotels.com

http://www.sawasdee-hotels.com

Price range: Under 600B

Shanti Lodge -- Our rating: 8/10

37 Sri Ayuthaya Road Soi 16

This very popular place has grown from small to massive over the years. A large bar and restaurant takes up the ground floor, while the upper floors contain a mix of very good and very poor rooms.

Price range: Under 600B

Wild Orchid Villa -- Our rating: 8/10

8 Soi Chana Songkhram

This new guesthouse has great air-con doubles worth the slightly higher price. The terrace restaurant is also quite good value.

wild_orchid_villa@hotmail.com

Price range: Under 600B

Au-Thong Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

78 Rambutri Road

Tel: (02) 629 2172 Fax: (02) 629 2579

Rooms here are clean and well-kept while the staff are friendly and the attached restaurant is reasonable. Not a bad choice.

au_thong@hotmail.com

Price range: Under 600B

Baan Athit -- Our rating: 7/10

25 Soi Chana Songkhram

This 10-room guesthouse has character, friendly staff and a small restaurant.

baanathit@hotmail.com

http://www.sir-walter.de/baan.html

Price range: Under 600B

Back-packers Lodge -- Our rating: 7/10

85 Sri Ayutthay Road

This small, family-run guesthouse is located past Tavee Guesthouse at the end of the soi. Rooms are clean and well-kept, with discount rates for longer stays.

Price range: Under 600B

Bamboo Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

67 Samsen Soi 1

Bamboo bills itself as being a traditional Thai wooden house that's clean, comfortable and convenient. This is mostly accurate but the house is rather basic. Nevertheless it represents great value for money with pleasantly large rooms.

Price range: Under 600B

Banglumpoo Place -- Our rating: 7/10

84-86 Phra Sumen Road

Tel: (02) 282 9632-3 Fax: (02) 629 3268

The motel-style Banglumpoo has large, clean rooms, all with TV and aircon.

Price range: Under 600B

Chai's House -- Our rating: 7/10
49/4-8 Soi Rongmai

Tel: (02) 281 4901 Fax: (02) 281 8686

This clean and quiet family-run guesthouse features a small and relaxing outdoor sitting area. Reasonable room prices stay the same year-round. Features a cheap laundry service.

Price range: Under 600B

Chart Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10
62 Khao San Road

The clean Chart is well set-up with trendy, newly-renovated rooms and a popular restaurant.

chartguesthouse@hotmail.com

Price range: over 8,000B

D&D Inn -- Our rating: 7/10
68-70 Khao San Road

Tel: (02) 629 0526-8 Fax: (02) 629 0529

D & D is reasonable value on Khao San Road with good, clean rooms and friendly, professional staff. Facilities and services include a swimming pool, shopping arcade and room service. Though it is a very popular choice, we're receiving increasing reports of mixed service and difficulty in making a reservation.

ddinn@khaosanby.com

http://www.khaosanby.com

Price range: Under 600B

First Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

149-151 Tanao Road

Not much to look at from the outside, First nevertheless harbours spotless rooms, all with air-con.

Price range: Under 600B

Four Sons House -- Our rating: 7/10
100-100/1 Phra Athit Rd

Tel: (02) 280 5910 Fax: (02) 280 5918

This is another new entry for 2004. Four Sons has a choice of rooms, some with windows, some without. The rooms are clean and well-kept, though overall the place is low on atmosphere. Be sure to keep you door locked too. We asked to see a room and they showed us one where the bemused occupant was getting dressed.

info@foursonshouse.com

http://www.foursonshouse.com/

Price range: Under 600B

Harn Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10
140/1 Tanao Road

Tel: (02) 281 9702 Fax: (02) 280 2129

Located down the last soi off Khao San Road at the Tanao Road end, Harn features recently refurbished rooms which are clean and quiet.

Price range: Under 600B

J & Joe Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10
1 Trokmayom Chakraphong Road

Tel: (02) 281 2949 Fax: (02) 281 5547

This charming old wooden house has clean rooms in a quiet setting and features a pleasant common room. It's a good spot to escape from the madness of Khao San Road.

kurt@mozart.inet.co.th

http://www.newjoe.de

Price range: Under 600B

K.C. Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

58 Trok Kai Chae, Phra Sumen Road

K.C. has good clean rooms that are quite peaceful. Long term rentals are available for 6,000B per month.

Price range: Under 600B

Khaosan Palace Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

139 Khao San Road

Tel: (02) 282 0578 Fax: (02) 281 3272

Located down a short driveway opposite Khao San Centre and behind the pharmacy, the rooms here are reasonably priced and clean and the staff are friendly.

Price range: Under 600B

Nakorn Pink Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

9/1 Samsen Road Soi 6

Tel: (02) 281 6574 Fax: (02) 282 3727

This Chinese-style hotel is located about 100m down the left side of Samsen Soi 6. It has large clean rooms with TV and fridge. The rooms are good value and inside a 10-minute walk to Khao San Road.

It's a great choice for families or for people looking to put some distance between themselves and Khao San Road. It is also suitable for those on a longer term stay.

Price range: Under 600B

Nat II Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

91-95 Soi Post Office

Located past the post office and CHII Guesthouse when coming from Tanao Road, Nat II has clean well-sized rooms representing a decent deal.

Price range: Under 600B

New My House Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

Soi Rambutri

This place has clean rooms at reasonable prices and is centrally located on Rambutri Road. Features a great sitting area downstairs with Thai cushions and a large TV screen for their popular nightly movies.

Price range: Under 600B

New Siam Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

21 Soi Chanasongkhram

Tel: (02) 282 4554 Fax: (02) 281 7461

This place is reasonably priced and has good, clean rooms with friendly staff. Same owner as the New Siam II.

reception@newsiam.net

http://www.newsiam.net/

Price range: Under 600B

New World Lodge Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

Samsen Road Soi 2

Tel: (02) 281 5596 Fax: (02) 282 5614

To reach this friendly hotel, walk down Samsen Soi 2 all the way to the end and turn right. The rooms are clean but otherwise quite standard, with minibar, cable TV and balconies. The hotel has a fitness centre.

hotel@newworldlodge.com

http://www.newworldlodge.com/

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Peachy Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

10 Phra Athit Road

Peachy is a good budget choice and is well-located near Khao San Road and the Chao Phraya River Express ferries. A pleasant outdoor restaurant and sitting area takes up the downstairs area.

Price range: Under 600B

Prakorb's House -- Our rating: 7/10

52 Khao San Road

Tel: (02) 281 1345 Fax: (02) 629 0714

This clean and quiet guesthouse has reasonably-priced large rooms, though it is more popular for the cafe downstairs than its rooms.

Price range: Under 600B

Sawasdee Bangkok Inn -- Our rating: 7/10

126/2 Khao San Road

Tel: (02) 801 251 Fax: (02) 281 7818

This professionally-run place is well-located just off the main Khao San strip and has good, clean rooms. For the standard the prices are not unreasonable, though the dorm is a bit pricey.

info@sawasdee-hotels.com

http://www.sawasdee-hotels.com

Price range: Under 600B

Sawasdee House -- Our rating: 7/10

147 Soi Rambutri, Chakraphong Road

Tel: (02) 281 8138 Fax: (02) 629 0994

Sawasdee House features nondescript smallish rooms and is better known for its bar and restaurant downstairs, which is popular with both Thais and westerners. It is also one of the rare places in town to serve alcohol after 2am, although this does depend on the occasional police crackdown.

Sawasdee_House@hotmail.com

Price range: Under 600B

Sawasdee Krungthep Inn -- Our rating: 7/10

30 Soi Rongmai off Soi Rambutri

Tel: (02) 629 0072 Fax: (02) 629 0079

One of the more upmarket of the Sawasdee chain of hotels and guesthouses, all the rooms here have private bathroom and cable TV. The staff are friendly.

info@sawasdee-hotels.com

http://www.sawasdee-hotels.com/new/hotel/sawasdee_krungthep.html

Price range: Under 600B

Siam Oriental -- Our rating: 7/10

190 Khao San Road

This place has good rooms and friendly staff.

siam_oriental@hotmail.com

Price range: Under 600B

Sri-Ayutaya Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

23/11 Sri-Ayuthaya Road Soi 14

Tel: (02) 282 5942 Fax: (02) 281 6829

This popular and friendly place has good, clean rooms.

Price range: Under 600B

Sweety's Guesthouse -- Our rating: 7/10

Soi Post Office

Good, clean rooms but a little expensive. Worth bargaining if business is slow.

Price range: Under 600B

Tavee Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

83 Sri-Ayuthaya Road Soi 14

Tel: (02) 280 1447 Fax: (02) 282 5983

The excellent Tavee is located down the soi behind Sri Ayutaya Guest House. The decent-sized rooms make this a good choice but avoid those close to the share bathrooms as they get noisy early in the morning. The entire guesthouse burnt to the ground a few years ago, meaning a strict no-smoking rule is now enforced.

Price range: Under 600B

Thai Cozy House -- Our rating: 7/10

111/1-3 Tanee Road

Tel: (02) 629 5870-4 Fax: (02) 629 5875

Two streets parallel to Khao San Road, the newly-opened and clean Thai Cozy House is in an area that has a more local market feel than its famous neighbour. Two room sizes are on offer - standard and deluxe, all with fan and aircon, TV, fridge and bathroom with hot shower. Deluxe size rooms include a balcony. Breakfast at the vegetarian cafe downstairs is included in the room price, and they also hold cooking classes there.

Kathy@thaicozyhouse.com

http://www.khaosanroad/thaicozyhouse

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Top Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

126/1 Khao San Road

All of Top's rooms are clean and reasonably quiet and feature bathrooms and balconies.

Price range: Under 600B

Tub Tim Bed and Breakfast -- Our rating: 7/10

82 Soi Rambutri Road

Tel: (02) 629 1535 Fax: (02) 629 1540

At these prices Tub Tim is certainly overpriced, but if that doesn't bother you, the rooms are clean and well-looked after, even if some are very small.

info@tuptimb-b.com

http://www.tuptimb-b.com/

Price range: Under 600B

Vieng Tai Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

42 Rambutri Road

This large hotel is popular with many of the tour groups taking in the Khao San Road sights. The rooms are reasonable, although some are rather musty. If you ask nicely, you may get a discount, though they're definitely on offer for long-term stays. The swimming pool comes in very handy during the hot season.

info@viengtai.co.th
http://www.viengtai.co.th/
Price range: Under 600B

Wally House and Restaurant -- Our rating: 7/10
189/1-2

Wally is a wooden house set back off Khao San Road, making it a quieter choice than many others in the area.
Price range: Under 600B

Woraburi Khaosan Inn -- Our rating: 7/10
162 Khao San Road

Tel: (02) 282 6655 Fax: (02) 282 6655
All rooms here have air-con, hot water and cable TV. The Woraburi Khaosan is at the end of the soi opposite the Austin Bar, about a two-minute walk from Khao San Road.
info@woraburi.com
http://www.sawasdee-hotels.com
Price range: Under 600B

A Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10
102/7-8 Tanao Road

Tel: (02) 280 8334 Fax: (02) 280 8337
Located down the last soi on Khao San Road at the Tanao Road end, "A" has a professional travel agency downstairs and separate dormitories upstairs for men and women.
Price range: Under 600B

Apple Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

At the end of Soi Trok Kai Chae off Phra Sumen Road
This tucked away spot has reasonable rooms for their price, though some may find it a little too far from Khao San Road. Staff are helpful.
Price range: Under 600B

B.C. Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

166-168 Phra Sumen Road
The B.C. has pleasant and clean rooms but the thin walls spell trouble for light sleepers.
Price range: Under 600B

Baan Sabai -- Our rating: 6/10

12 Soi Rongmai
Tel: (02) 629 1599 Fax: (02) 629 1595
Baan Sabai features a good restaurant and bar area. The rooms are plain with no furnishings other than beds in most rooms. The shared bathroom and toilet facilities are very clean. It's reasonably priced for the area, but not the best value.
baansabai@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

Bella Bella House -- Our rating: 6/10

74 Soi Chana Songkhram

Tel: (02) 629 3090 Fax: (02) 629 3091

Good location but a little bland compared to other guesthouses in the area.
Price range: Under 600B

Budget Guesthouse -- Our rating: 6/10

96 Khaosan Rd
Located just off Khao San Road, the Budget Guesthouse has clean, moderate sized rooms, all with shared facilities. As far as KSR goes this place is OK, though it's a little overpriced.
budget@khaosamroad.com
Price range: Under 600B

CH 1 Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

Khao San Road
CH1 has a newly-refurbished bar and restaurant downstairs as well as an internet cafe.
Price range: Under 600B

Chart Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

51/1 Soi Chanasangkhram
Chart has been recently renovated downstairs making it rather appealing to prospective guests. They have a bar and restaurant along with a pharmacy, hairdresser, massage and travel agent. The rooms are nothing special but are clean and secure, with each door deadlocked.
Price range: Under 600B

Chom Mai Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

Soi Buranasiri
This small guesthouse tucked way from the bustle of Khao San Road is a squeaky clean choice for the budget traveller. The downstairs rooms are larger and have a bathroom attached, while those upstairs have shared facilities. The rooms are a bit sparse, with only thick mattresses on the floor. It's a good choice for those wanting to hang out around Khao San Road and take in the Grand Palace and Wat Po.
Price range: Under 600B

Di-O Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

Soi Sawasdee, Khao San Road
The awfully thin bamboo walls guarantee sleepless nights at this lacklustre guesthouse.
Price range: Under 600B

Euro Inn Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

Khao San Road
The Euro Inn is nondescript but located in the middle of the Khao San Road bustle. Try it if your other options are full.
Price range: Under 600B

Grand Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

Khao San Road
The centrally-located Grand has a bar very popular with newcomers to Khao San. The basic rooms are definitely targeted towards the budget traveller.
Price range: Under 600B

Green Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

27 Soi Chana Songkhram

There is little to distinguish Green from its neighbours. The rooms are clean and well-kept and it attracts a loyal return custom.
Price range: Under 600B

Jungle News 1 and 2 -- Our rating: 6/10

18 Soi Watsungwet, Lumpoo Rd
Jungle News 1 is located very close to the river down a quiet soi away from Khao San but close to Phra Arthit. Jungle News 2 is located up the soi and around the corner. Rooms at 2 are newer, better and more expensive but do not have the river view.
oasis9995@yahoo.co.kr
http://www.junglenews.co.kr
Price range: Under 600B

K.S. House -- Our rating: 6/10

133 Phra Sumen Road
Tel: (02) 629 1763-4 Fax: (02) 629 1764
Simple rooms but a competitively priced choice for long-term stays.
ks_house@yahoo.com
Price range: Under 600B

Khao San Travellers' Lodge -- Our rating: 6/10

Soi off Chakraphong Road, just before Khao San
The Lodge, located just up the soi from Shoshana restaurant, is popular with Japanese and Korean travellers and features "luxury dormitory rooms". A wealth of traveller information is posted up on the walls around the entrance and restaurant downstairs.
They have a women-only dorm as well.
Price range: Under 600B

Lek Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

Down a dingy soi running off Khao San Road, Lek Guest House has small, clean rooms. The entrance is a doorway next to Silk Bar. A decent budget choice. Try to secure a room with a balcony overlooking the madness of Khao San Road.
Price range: Under 600B

Merry V Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

33 Chana Songkram
This very popular place represents quite good value, with basic but clean rooms and share bathrooms.
Price range: Under 600B

Nana Plaza inn -- Our rating: 6/10

202 Khao San Road
Tel: (02) 280 5663 Fax: (02) 281 6814
All rooms at the Nana are clean and aircon but are now a little frayed around the edges.
Price range: Under 600B

New Joe Guesthouse -- Our rating: 6/10

Trok Mayom, Chakraphong Road
Price range: Under 600B

New Merry V Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

18-20 Phra Athit Road
New Merry V is spotlessly clean, right down to its share bathrooms. It's also very conveniently located for the Chao Phraya River Express ferries.
Price range: Under 600B

New Nith Charoen Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10

183 Khao San Road
All rooms at the New Nith Charoen have toilet and shower and some have TV, but the style here is still very much budget.
Price range: Under 600B

Orchid House -- Our rating: 6/10

323/2-3 Rambutri Road
Orchid House's rooms are clean and quiet, although the smaller rooms really are small. A low season discount of 10-20% applies. The management does not allow Thais to stay here.
Price range: Under 600B

Pra Athit Mansion -- Our rating: 6/10

22 Phra Arthit Road
Tel: (02) 280 0744 Fax: (02) 280 0742
Pra Athit offers somewhat rundown, hotel-like spacious rooms all with fridge, television, room service and a well-priced minibar. Some of the rooms have reasonable views over the river. The entrance is beside the Ricky Coffee Shop.
praarthit@hotmail.com
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Rainbow Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

41-43 Chakraphong Road
Tel: (02) 280 6648 Fax: (02) 280 6649
Rainbow is a popular choice probably due to the good atmosphere in the Indian restaurant downstairs. It's well-located near the airport bus stop and pick ups for the islands and Chiang Mai, though the heavy traffic on Chakraphong Road makes it quite noisy.
rainbowguesthouse@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

Ranee's Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

77 Trok Mayom Chakraphong Road
Tel: (02) 282 4072 Fax: (02) 281 6745
This small wooden guesthouse features an outdoor restaurant and is run by a lovely owner.
Price range: Under 600B

RS Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

Soi Trok Kai Chae off Phra Sumen Road
This old wooden house has clean rooms and is located on a quiet street. Above-board massage can be arranged upon request. No food available.
rs_guesthouse@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

Siri Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

206/1 Khao San Road
Tel: (02) 281 8033 Fax: (02) 281 8033

Located atop the Siri Travel & Tour Agency, Siri has clean rooms with shared facilities and friendly staff. For the area, the rates are quite good value.
Price range: Under 600B

Taewez Guesthouse -- Our rating: 6/10
23/12 Sri Ayuthaya Road
Tel: (02) 280 8856-8 Fax: (02) 280 8859
This recently-renovated place is about 30m down a small soi, signposted from the main road. While well-kept, it's a little on the clinical side. The double room with aircon and bathroom represents good value. Downstairs is a common area with internet access.
taewez@yahoo.com
<http://taewez.hypermart.net/>
Price range: Under 600B

Thai Thai Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10
5 Soi Rambutri
Thai Thai is the last place on Soi Rambutri before the bend down a small soi. Rooms are clean and quiet and go for a reasonable price.
thaithaihouse@yahoo.com
Price range: Under 600B

Twin Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10
20/2 Samsen Soi 1
Twin partly faces on to the Chao Phraya River and is located down a small but well sign-posted soi. The rooms upstairs on the river side have good views but are rather small and have thin walls.
twinguesthouse@thaimail.com
Price range: Under 600B

V.S. Guesthouse -- Our rating: 6/10
Small soi off Khao San Road at the Tanao Road end
This small, nondescript guesthouse is down a soi running parallel to Tanao Road. You can see the sign for the guesthouse from Khao San Road.
Price range: Under 600B

Vorapong Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10
39 Soi Samsen 6 (Soi Vorapong) Samsen Rd
This place on the left side of Samsen Soi 6 is frequented mainly by locals as a love hotel, but still attracts some backpackers. Rooms are all identical with a TV, video, double bed, bathroom and aircon.
Price range: Under 600B

Wandee Guesthouse -- Our rating: 6/10
68 Khao San Road
Friendly, laid-back staff make you feel welcome at Wandee while the rooms are clean and well-kept. A good choice.
bung62@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

7 Holder Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
216/2-3 Khao San Road
Holder might look more like a travel agency and internet cafe

than a guesthouse, but 30 rooms are hidden inside.
Price range: Under 600B

BP Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
Soi Worapong (Samsen Soi 6) 108/1 Samsen Road
BP is small and clean but beware the dreaded karaoke. The single rooms are small and occasionally a bit smelly. To find BP walk up Samsen Soi 6 from Samsen Road and 50m past the Nakorn Pink. It's on the left.
Price range: Under 600B

Central Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
Soi running off Tanao Road
Central's rooms are a step up from the nearby and similarly-priced PC but its location on what expats nickname 'crack alley' might make you think twice about this one.
Price range: Under 600B

DDM House -- Our rating: 5/10
1 Chao Fa Rd
Once an illegal nightclub, DDM House has been transformed into a legitimate restaurant, club and guesthouse. The owner used to own Dong Dae Moon Restaurant and Bar on Rambutri Road around the corner and this is his new venture. The guesthouse is actually only three 10-bed dorms and is pitched towards the Korean market. DDM remains famous for being a late-night club with a great upstairs set-up featuring a chill out area and dance floor.
Price range: Under 600B

Gecko House -- Our rating: 5/10
Soi Chana Songkhram
Gecko House has reasonably priced small rooms and is in a good location.
Price range: Under 600B

Hello Guesthouse -- Our rating: 5/10
Khao San Road
Better known for its good email and overseas telephone call services, Hello does offer cheap and small rooms upstairs. Head upstairs past the internet office to find reception.
Price range: Under 600B

Kawin Place -- Our rating: 5/10
86 Khao San Road
Tel: (02) 281 7512 Fax: (02) 281 4708
Set off Khao San Road behind the Khao San Central Restaurant and Bar, Kawin Place is reasonably quiet. Discounts are available for longer stays.
kawinplace@yahoo.com
Price range: Under 600B

Lucky Beer & Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
133 Khao San Road
The ageing rooms here are reasonably clean, but the plywood walls mean the rooms can be noisy and lacking in privacy. It nevertheless remains a very popular choice, with a pleasant bar and restaurant downstairs.
Price range: Under 600B

Marco Polo Hostel -- Our rating: 5/10
108/10 Soi Rambutri
The Marco Polo offers basic and cheap aircon accommodation, but the rooms are cramped. The management does not allow Thai guests.
Price range: Under 600B

Nat Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
217/219 Khao San Road
Nat Guest House and Restaurant has 12 rooms suitable for budget travellers.
Price range: Under 600B

P.S. Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
9 Phra Sumen Road
P.S.'s rooms are bland and ageing but for the price aren't too bad. A small common room and balcony for guests to relax on is a welcome feature. The guesthouse is located next to the PTT petrol station on Phra Sumen Road and the reception is upstairs on the right side of the building.
Price range: Under 600B

PC Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
Soi off Tanao Road
The rooms straight ahead as you walk down the driveway are only store rooms, so don't be scared off immediately. The guesthouse rooms are around the corner and do look better although they scream budget, with wooden floors and walls making it a little noisy. The louvred-window rooms vary in size so you may want to check out a few before deciding on one. A security officer is posted downstairs but use your own padlock if you can as the locks are getting on.
Price range: Under 600B

Sawasdee Smile Inn -- Our rating: 5/10
35 Soi Rong Mai
Yet another one of the Sawasdee Chain, Smile has clean but prison-like cells, er, rooms. The location towards the end of Soi Rong Mai is not particularly convenient, but it is quiet.
Price range: Under 600B

Smile Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
151-161 Trok Sa Ke, Tanao Road
Tel: (02) 622 1590-2 Fax: (02) 622 0731
Smile is handily located on the corner of Trok Sa Ke and Tanao Roads, within easy walking distance of Sanam Luang and the Grand Palace and not too far from Khao San Road either. The rooms are a little old, but are kept very clean and have sturdy locks. Smile is also very close to the excellent Phra Nakorn Bar, a great place to spend the late afternoon and sunset.
smileguesthouse@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

Sugar Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10
Chakraphong Road
Sugar's rooms are clean but unremarkable in keeping with their low price. Like Rainbow next door, traffic noise is a problem

here.
Price range: Under 600B

T.P. House -- Our rating: 5/10
17 Chanasongkhram Road
This quiet and clean little guesthouse is rather plain but cheap and very conveniently located.
Price range: Under 600B

Welcome Sawasdee Inn -- Our rating: 5/10
5-7 Soi Rongmai
Prices here are reasonable, but overall the Welcome lacks personality. On the upside, some rooms have TV and the soi is very quiet.
info@sawasdee-hotels.com
http://www.sawasdee-hotels.com/new/hotel/welcome_sawasdee.html
Price range: Under 600B

99 Guest House -- Our rating: 4/10
Stuck on a subsoi behind Khao San, 99 has rooms with shared facilities, but at these prices there are better options in the area.
Price range: Under 600B

Classic Inn -- Our rating: 4/10
259 Khao San Road
The staff at Classic, located in the large white building next to the Buddy Lodge, get mixed reviews but it's often full. The rooms are passable, but some are grotty. If the first is revolting, be sure to ask to see another.
Price range: Under 600B

Green House -- Our rating: 4/10
88/1 Rambutri Road
Green House is a travellers' pit stop, with most staying only a day or so before moving on. The 24-hour restaurant and internet centre downstairs lends a bustling atmosphere to the place, which is particularly popular with English and Israeli backpackers.
green_house@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

Mama II Guesthouse -- Our rating: 4/10
On the subsoi running between Soi Rambutri and Khao San Road
Mama II has a cheap dormitory and other rooms. More comfortable places are around.
Price range: Under 600B

Roof Garden (Sun) Guest House -- Our rating: 4/10
62 Soi Rambutri
Tel: (02) 629 0626 Fax: (02) 282 4724
The oldest guesthouse on Soi Rambutri, this family-run place is now a little long in the tooth but is a good example of the old-style backpacking places once common around Khao San Road.
roofgarden1@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

Sidtha Guest House -- Our rating: 4/10
Stuck around the back of west Banglamphu, Sidtha has basic rooms with shared facilities. It deals with overflow more than anything else.
Price range: Under 600B

Suneorn Guest House -- Our rating: 4/10
90/10 Rambutri Road
Tel: (02) 629 0270 Fax: (02) 629 0269
Suneorn has reasonable rates, but is quite bereft of character.
istravel@mweb.co.th
Price range: Under 600B

Yoon Guest House -- Our rating: 4/10
Almost opposite 99, Yoon tends to fill up late in the evening as new arrivals can't find anything else, then empties out at first light as they all leave to go find somewhere better.
Price range: Under 600B

Popiang House -- Our rating: 3/10
43 Soi Rambutri, Chakraphong Road
This small and friendly place is more popular for its drinks than rooms, which are overpriced, dingy and noisy.
Price range: Under 600B

Srinthip Guest House -- Our rating: 2/10
On the sub-soi parallel to Tanao Rd
Set behind a small restaurant, Srinthip is a bit of a dump but if you are having trouble finding accommodation, it's worth a peek.
Price range: Under 600B

Bangkok Guest House -- Our rating: 0/10
Khao San Road
Bangkok Guest House is no more and has apparently been turned into a gym. See the activities section for details.
Price range: Under 600B

Chasda Friendly Guest House
This cheap and clean guesthouse is targetted towards budget travellers and is nestled behind the Chasda restaurant.
Price range: Under 600B

Eat and Meet

Ad Here the 13th
13 Samsen Rd, Banglamphu
Tel: (09) 769 4613
This bizarrely-named blues and jazz bar has a great welcoming atmosphere that attracts Thais, tourists and expats in equal number. A resident blues band with a loyal following plays nightly from around 10pm. Occasional special events and frequent jams by other locals ensures a bit of variety for the regulars. Beers are reasonably priced at 60 to 70B. Definitely worth a look for blues fans. To find this bar, walk down Chakrapan Road from Khao San Road towards Samsen, go through the traffic lights, over the bridge and it's the first bar on the left.
Ad.here@hotmail.com

Austin Bar
164 Khao San Road, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 281 2366
Like Susie's, The Club and Tom Yum Gung, this bar/club has mostly Thai clientele and is a pretty good place for a night out. Early on it remains quiet but space on the ground floor quickly disappears and by midnight Austin is pumping.

Baghdad Café
Next door to Ad Here the 13th bar (13 Samsen Road), Banglamphu
Slip into this bar, close the door and leave Banglamphu behind. Surrounded by Middle Eastern ornaments and photographs and while listening to tunes from the region, suck back a Sheesha pipe and enjoy a Turkish coffee. A pipe costs 120B and gives an hour or two of enjoyment and conversation. No food.

Bangkok Bar
Soi Rambutri, Banglamphu
At last past, Bangkok Bar looked to have become a dive shop.

Barlamphu
Soi Rambutri, Banglamphu
Almost opposite the Vieng Tai Hotel on Soi Rambutri, Barlamphu does reasonable Thai food at good prices and the streetside seating is a pleasant place to watch the world go by. But be warned: the Eagles-crooning cover bands can be awful.

Dog Days
100/2-6 Phra Arthit Road, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 280 0647 Fax: (02) 281 4923
This small dog-themed restaurant serves a range of well-priced and tasty Thai food and is a pleasant spot for a cup of Illy coffee as well. It only has eight or nine tables inside, but if the weather is fine a few more dot the footpath outside. Dog Day's homely atmosphere and friendly staff attract a mix of younger Thais and travellers alike.

Dong Dae Moon Bar and Restaurant
Rambutri Road, Banglamphu
Tel: (01) 333 4280
Moon is comprised of a good Korean restaurant downstairs and pumping bar upstairs boasting a decent pool table and DJ along with an outdoor area where the drinks are poured and the view over Wat Chai Chana Songkram makes for great people watching. The music is a good mix and played at conversation-enabling volume. Staff are friendly and beer prices have dropped since a recent change of owners.

Gulliver's Travels
Corner of Khao San and Chakraphong Roads, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 629 1988-9 Fax: (02) 280 1424
Decent pub grub and cocktail choices as well as a handy location at the western end of Khao San Road have made Gulliver's an institution among backpackers, English teachers and locals alike. Be sure to check out the happy hour times. A new level upstairs with more pool tables and room for grooving opened recently. Be warned: it's sometimes difficult to

distinguish the freelance working girls (and katoeys) from friendly locals out for a good time. Speak politely to all and keep a smile on everyone's face.
Gulliver_st@hotmail.com

Hemlock
56 Phra Arthit Road, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 282 7507
This trendy hole-in-the-wall was one of the first fab places to spring up along lively Phra Arthit Road. Very popular with university students, airconditioned Hemlock offers an eclectic range of Thai food available at rock-bottom prices. Downstairs is better for people watching and the service upstairs can get a bit slow.

Lotash Seed
Soi Rambutri, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 282 7082
Great new bar restaurant, tasteful contemporary Thai style designed interior. This building previously was the Dali Bar. The new Lotash Seed is a great improvement.

A wide selection of Thai food including dishes that the average tourist will rarely see on a menu such as Mieng Kum - 100B, and Banana Flower Salad. There is a good vegetarian menu, shakes, cocktails and more.

Upstairs is a nice chill out room to hang out with Thai-style cushions and Kantok tables. Don't to forget to check out probably the nicest toilets around Khao San.

May Kaidee's Vegetarian Restaurant
117/1 Tanao Rd, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 629 4839, then 1 or 0
This tucked-away streetside place does very good, basic vegetarian fare. You can learn to whip up the dishes yourself if you really like them, with cooking classes available.
jsommay@hotmail.com
http://www.maykaidee.com/

Phra Nakorn Bar and Gallery
58/2 Soi Damnoen Klang Tai, Ratchadamnoen Klang Road, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 622 0282
This trendy bar and restaurant has four levels to wind through. The airy downstairs bar is a pleasant spot to begin with a drink, while the second floor art gallery allows a glimpse of some home-grown art. The third floor lounge area features a pool table but the prime location is the rooftop, where you can while away the night over a meal with friends overlooking the stunning Golden Mount. A bit tricky to find, but only a stone's throw from Khao San. It's on the opposite side of Rachadamnern. Head down Tanao Road and then take a right down Soi Damnoen Klang. Recommended.

Saewana
348/3 Soi 34 Ratchawithe Road, Dusit
Tel: (02) 668 0860
Saewana is a funky little student bar and restaurant in a

charming wooden house, drawing crowds who lap up the acoustic music and fabulous food. Lots of fun with a huge menu. Try the flaming hot plate. Highly recommended.

Shoshana Restaurant
86 Chakraphong subsoi, near Shell, Banglamphu
Shoshana is probably the most popular Israeli restaurant in the area for good reason: the food is fantastic and well-priced. A generous serving of schnitzel, chips and hummus is 60B. It's located on a subsoi next to the Shell. Enter the soi and walk up about 40m, and Shoshana is on the right.

Silk Bar & Restaurant
129-131 Khao San Rd, Banglamphu, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 281 9981
The recently-opened Silk is one of the more upmarket restaurants on Khao San Road, featuring contemporary decor and design without being pretentious. Popular with Thais and westerners alike, it offers great international and Thai food at good prices; the Silk Bar Salad, a tasty Thai take on a salad, is 90B. After 9pm the lights dim and the DJ starts spinning tunes. Bring on the cocktails -- a specialty here.
info@silkbar.com
http://www.silk-bar.com

The Silver Spoon
2/1 Krung Kasem Road, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 281 2900 Fax: (02) 628 9912
This very good Thai seafood restaurant set right on the Chao Phraya River is an excellent dinner choice. The place itself is a bit ramshackle and if the river is high, the lower floor can flood quickly -- but upstairs is always safe. Recommended.

Ton Pho Restaurant
43 Phra Athit Road, Banglamphu
Tel: (02) 280 0452 Fax: (02) 281 6899
This excellent seafood restaurant is an outstanding choice for a long afternoon on the river. The comprehensive menu is very reasonably priced. Try the stir-fried crab in yellow curry sauce (220B), which is suitably messy. Their wide range of dipping sauces are also worth experimenting with. Vegie dishes are a bit disappointing. Staff are friendly but a little over-eager. Call ahead to reserve a riverfront spot, although be warned: the express boats coming in at the pier next door can get a bit noisy. Recommended.

Yoongchang Lerdrol Bar and Restaurant
Chakraphong Road, Banglamphu
A wide selection of fresh Thai dishes sell for 25 to 30B at this great spot from lunchtime and into the evening. A large Chang beer goes for 39B. It's just around the corner from Khao San Road on Chakraphong Road, back towards Samsen and Phra Arthit Roads.

Sights and Attractions

Dusit Throne Hall
Just down the road from Vimanek Teak Mansion

This circa-1904 white hall built for King Rama V houses a mother-of-pearl throne topped by a regal umbrella. The umbrella may appear a bit tatty, but that's because it is only changed when a new king accedes to the throne, and the current King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the world's longest reigning monarch.

The hall is home to an interesting array of work crafted by members of the catchily-named Promotion of Supplementary Occupations and Related Techniques Foundation (SUPPORT), which is sponsored by the Queen. Handicrafts range from traditional clothes and baskets to silverwork and sculptures made from beetle wings.

Proper dress is necessary and be warned, clothes cannot be hired here. Bags, shoes and photographic and filming equipment must be left in lockers.

Hours: Daily 10:00-16:00

Cost: 50B

Dusit Zoo
Ratchawithi Road

Escape Bangkok for a few hours and see how Thais like their zoos: with festivity and fun spread between the cages. Housed here are a respectable number of mammals, reptiles and birds -- elephants, giraffes, a few tigers, bears, crocodiles, gibbons and other banana eaters, eagles and possums.

Living conditions are more miserable than those in many western zoos. The management has been trying to shift towards housing more smaller (cheaper) animals rather than the big (expensive) ones. But the biggies are the crowd-pullers, so the elephants and tigers are still there, doing their sad tricks to please the masses.

When you've seen the animals, take a river ride, jump on a merry-go-round or enjoy some live music. Weekends are usually very busy.

Hours: Daily 08:00-18:00

Cost: 30B

Phra Sumen Fort
At the corner of Phra Arthit and Phra Sumen Roads

This very pleasant park sits below the Phra Sumen Fort. Particularly popular with Thais during the weekends, the park is a great spot to relax by the banks of the Chao Phraya River while snacking on the plentiful supply of Thai snacks on sale in the area.

Hours: Daily

Cost: Free

The National Gallery
Chao Fa Road

The National Gallery, housing both contemporary and traditional Thai art, is home to the best public collection in the kingdom. The contemporary art section is on the ground floor in rooms to the left and right after the entrance. The artwork shows influences from cubism, impressionism and a touch of surrealism. The rooms upstairs are dedicated to traditional Thai

art, most being tempura paintings in the Bangkok style of the 19th century and the late Ayuthaya style of the 17th century.

The rooms across the courtyard are used for temporary exhibitions of which there are usually one or two at any given time.

Hours: Wed-Sun 09:00-16:00

Cost: 30B

Vimanmek Teak Mansion
This incredible teak mansion is a must-see site. Originally constructed on Ko Si Chang in the mid-19th century, King Rama V decreed that it be moved to Dusit Gardens following a trip to Europe in 1897. Four years later the mansion was officially opened and the king adopted it as his permanent place of residence. He lived there for five years before moving to Amporn Satern residence until his death in 1910. During the reign of King Rama VI, Her Majesty Indhara Saksal lived there until her husband's death, after which it remained unoccupied until 1982. It then reopened as a museum featuring some work of King Rama V.

The mansion displays an undeniably Western influence, with much of the ornamentation originating from Europe and North America. In all there are 31 stunning rooms open to the public. The bathroom features Thailand's first shower.

The mansion is formed by two right-angled wings each of three storeys, and the octagonal residence of the king, which is four storeys. The mansion is said to be the largest of its kind in the world.

Hours: Daily 09:30-15:30

Cost: 50B

Wat Benchamabophit
Sri Ayuthaya Road
The white Italian-marble Wat Benchamabophit was restored and enlarged in 1899 by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) and according to his wishes, some of his ashes are now interred at the base of the central Buddha image. The wat has a huge collection of Buddha statues from different periods from all over the Buddhist world. Another attraction is the chanting hall, which is surrounded by a gallery of 52 Buddha images from various periods and regions.

Besides the stunning marble, another European touch is the wat's stained glass windows -- it is the only wat in Thailand featuring them. Within the grounds is a canal full of turtles given to the wat by those wishing to make merit.

Hours: Daily 08:00-17:30

Cost: 20B

Wat Bovornivet
Phra Sumen Road
Within the walls of Wat Bovorn is Mahamakut Buddhist University, the second in Bangkok. Since its foundation in 1826 -- when it was originally known as Wat Mai -- the wat has been home to a number of royals who entered the monkhood. Many foreign monks have also resided here and

continue to visit to attend religious ceremonies conducted in English.

The wat is worth a look for its beautiful buildings and large golden stupa. The compound also contains ponds where giant turtles and catfish happily swim about. Also within the compound is the Centre for Herbal Medicine, where herbs and special trees with therapeutic benefits are labelled.

Hours: Daily 08:00-17:00

Cost: Free

Wat Saket and the Golden Mount
Boriphat Road
An important wat restored during the reign of King Rama I, Wat Saket is now also home to the prominent Golden Mount, added to an artificial hill created during the rule of King Rama III. The original chedi built on the spot at this time collapsed, creating the hill, but it was left as a pile of rubble until King Rama IV built the golden chedi at its peak, reaching 100m high.

Additions were added by King Rama V, who also placed a Buddha relic within the chedi. Final restoration work was made during World War II when the white concrete walls were added, making a striking contrast to the golden chedi. It is possible to walk up the 318 stairs to the top, from where the view over the surrounding city is excellent.

The wat compound also houses some important Buddha statues. The main hall, built in King Rama I's time, holds a meditating Buddha image from the early Chakri dynasty. The Shrine Hall houses Phra Attharos, a 10.3m high image from Phitsanulok, and Luangphor Dusit, a Buddha statue from Dusit Palace. These are closed to the public except during Songkran.

Hours: Daily 08:00-17:30

Cost: 10B

Activities

Bangkok Gym & Fitness Centre, Khaosan Branch
Khaosan Branch

This new gym on Khao San Rd is small but has all the equipment required for a decent workout (even a smith machine! exciting if you are missing a good workout). It is great value for money at 125Baht for a casual visit, they give you a towel to use during your workout and there is clean new changerooms, shower facilities and lockers for use.

Daily Membership 125B
Weekly Membership 700B
1-month Membership 1,800B
3-month Membership 4,500B
6-month Membership 7,000B
Yearly Membership 12,000B

Special Grand Opening Promotion - August 6th to September 6th 2004 only 6000B for yearly membership!

Pathumwan to Phloenchit

Pathumwan is an entertainment, shopping and educational area centred around Siam Square, a district packed with bars, restaurants, cinemas and hundreds of shops extraordinarily popular with students. Shopping malls in the area include the World Trade Centre, Siam Centre and Siam Discovery.

The Phloenchit area is home to some excellent restaurants, while Soi Lang Suan and Soi Sarasin are famous for their food and entertainment spots. The area is also a leafy reminder of what Bangkok could have been.

Vital Information

General Banks

Tourist Police kiosk

Siam Square Soi 5

A small Tourist Police kiosk at the rear of Siam Square near soi 5 can offer assistance, but it is not always attended.

Accommodation

Pathumwan Princess MBK Centre Bangkok -- Our rating: 9/10
444 Phayathai Rd

Tel: (02) 216 3700-29 Fax: (02) 216 3730-3

For hotels of its standard and price range, the Pathumwan Princess is the best hotel in the area. Although a short walk from Siam Square, it's connected straight into the shop-crazy zone of MBK and then the BTS. The hotel has very spacious, typically decorated rooms with stunning views over the city. Staff are very helpful and courteous, making it a welcoming choice that gets a lot of repeat custom. It's popular with individuals, families and tour groups. Watch out however for dodgy taxi and tuk tuk drivers along with other dubious characters who hang around outside.

Recommended.

ppb@dusit.com

<http://www.royalprincess.com>

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

A-One Inn -- Our rating: 8/10
25/13-15 Soi Kasem San 1, Rama 1 Road
Tel: (02) 215 3029 Fax: (02) 216 4771

A-One gets lots of return custom and with good reason. The very friendly staff create a homely and welcoming atmosphere while the rooms are clean, although some are quite pokey. All have aircon and hot water. Downstairs a dozen computers are available for internet use. Check out the small but pleasant garden area out the front. A-One is a good quiet option.

aoneinn@thaimail.com
http://www.aoneinn.com/
Price range: Under 600B

VIP Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10
1025/5-9 Phloenchit Rd
Tel: (02) 252 9535-8 Fax: (02) 252 9538
This smallish boutique hotel has 27 well-sized rooms set a mere 50m from Chidlom BTS. Although they claim four-star status, this is more of a three-star place and will be due for a makeover in the next couple of years.

The hotel has a very homely atmosphere helped on by very helpful staff and supported by considerable return custom.

A good, well located choice.
ghouse_g@hotmail.com
http://www.goldenhouses.net
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Muangphol Mansion -- Our rating: 6/10
931/9 Soi Kasem San 1, Rama 1 Road
Tel: (02) 279 4445-8 Fax: (02) 216 8053
Located on the corner of Soi Kasem San 1 and Rama 1, the Muangphol Mansion was once a bright shining example of a decrepit looking firetrap, but its amazing the difference a coat of paint makes.

Aside from painting the outside, the rooms also got a bit of a spruce up, and although still pretty noisy, its better value than it used to be. All rooms have a/c and hot water.
Price range: Under 600B

Novotel Siam Square -- Our rating: 6/10
Siam Square Soi 6
Tel: (02) 255 6888 Fax: (02) 255 1824
Located in the centre of Bangkok's shopping mecca, the Novotel is a top hotel and home to a popular nightclub. It's within easy walking distance of the BTS, cinemas and enough shops to keep you busy for a year. The rooms are standard Novotel fare, lacking creativity but being comfortable and clean. Our only complaint is that the front desk staff can be unnecessarily surly. Overall the nearby Pathumwan Princess is a better deal, being cheaper and having amicable staff are far better, though the rooms themselves are rather indistinguishable.
hotel@novotelbkk.com
http://www.accorhotels.com/asia
Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Reno Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
40 Soi Kasem San 1, Rama 1 Road
Tel: (02) 215 0026-7 Fax: (02) 215 3430
Don't be fooled by the well-decorated, almost funky lobby. The rooms are blandly standard and have seen better days. All feature aircon and hot water and some have TV. A smallish pool is on the ground floor.
renohotel@clickta.com
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

The Bed and Breakfast -- Our rating: 6/10
36/42-43 Soi Kasem Soi 1
Tel: (02) 215 3004 Fax: (02) 215 2493
The Bed and Breakfast is the last stop on Soi Kasem Soi 1. This place has a small, spotless restaurant on the ground floor and there is also a really tiny front porch where you can watch the occasional passing taxi or fruit cart. The staff here are cheery and helpful and the rooms bright and clean, although some are cramped.
Price range: Under 600B

White Lodge -- Our rating: 6/10
36/8 Soi Kasem San 1, Rama 4 Road
Tel: (02) 216 8867 Fax: (02) 216 8228
The small, cramped lobby nicely mimics the small, cramped rooms. The staff are friendly and approachable, but there is little to recommend this place over any of the others on the soi, although the rooms are well kept and spotlessly clean.
Price range: Under 600B

Pranee Building -- Our rating: 5/10
931/12 Soi Kasem San 1
Tel: (02) 216 3181 Fax: (02) 215 0364
This Thai-Chinese style hotel faces onto Rama 1 Road but the main reception entrance is via Soi Kasem San 1. You can also get to reception via Rama 1. Walk through the restaurant to find the reception behind to the left. Pranee has standard basic rooms with aircon and private bathroom with hot water.
praneebuilding@hotmail.com
Price range: Under 600B

Wendy House -- Our rating: 5/10
36/2 Soi Kasem San 1, Rama 1 Road
Tel: (02) 214 1149 Fax: (02) 612 3487
Wendy House has reasonable rooms with aircon and hot water, though the staff can be indifferent verging on downright rude. Downstairs a half dozen internet terminals offer email service. Either the A-One Inn or White Lodge are better choices.
wendyweb@cscoms.com
Price range: Under 600B

Eat and Meet

A Matter of Taste
548/7 Embassy Park, Phloenchit Road
Tel: (02) 252 2002
This restaurant has a range of Thai and western food, but the Thai food isn't really Thai and the western food isn't truly western - they call it fusion, we call it food with an identity crisis.

Prices are a little steep for the quality, but the lunchtime deals are good.

Ad Makers
51-51/1 Soi Lang Suan
Tel: (02) 652 0168-9 Fax: (02) 251 2892
Ad Makers is one of the longest running and most popular

restaurants on Soi Lang Suan. The food is very good though the bands can on occasion be awful. The menu caters towards empty stomachs as well as those seeking a beer-accompanying munch. Recommended.

Airplane Italian Restaurant
63/10 Soi Lang Suan
Tel: (02) 252 4630
Un-Italian in name, but certainly not in taste, when this place first opened in the late 1990s it was hit among the hi-so set, but those days are gone. Airplane does reasonable Italian standards, but is in need of a revamp in decor and character.

Ban Khun Mae Thai Cuisine
458/7-9 Siam Square Soi 8
Tel: (02) 658 4112-3 Fax: (02) 251 5657
This two-storey Thai restauranr is hugely popular with Thais and tourists alike. Famous for its very good home-style food, be sure to ask for it spicy if you like it that way. Upstairs can get pretty raucous and the live music can be a bit so-so, but it's a fun spot. Fans of Thai cowboys will feel right at home.

Biscotti
The Regent Hotel Bangkok, 155 Rathadamri Road
Tel: 02 255 5443 Fax: 02 2554 6858
Biscotti is one of Bangkok's best Italian restaurants. Bustling and lively, the service is if anything a little too fast, but that isn't too big a deal -- just tell the waiters to go away. The food is innovative and reasonably priced given the top-notch setting, while the wine list is extensive, but on the expensive side. The restaurant is consistently busy, so a reservation is a good idea.

Cafe De Laos
Siam Square Soi 2
Tel: 02 658 3897
This Italian restaurant just around the corner from Siam Square Soi 2 is a storey above street level, making it a great spot for afternoon people-watching. In the evenings the atmosphere is bland but the food, standard Isaan and Lao dishes, are very good.

Calderazzo
59 Soi Lang Suan
Tel: (02) 252 8108-9 Fax: (02) 252 8110
Created by joining two adjacent houses, Calderazzo does solid Italian food in an intimate yet bustling atmosphere. Downstairs is popular with Thai hi-so types while upstairs is more intimate and features a pleasant cocktail lounge. Recommended.

Charcoal Grey
888/23-24 Phloenchit Road
There's a bar like this in every town in Thailand. The three-storey Charcoal Grey has nightly live music, pool tables and darts. The food and beer is decent and reasonably priced.

Diplomat Bar
Conrad Hotel, All Seasons Place Wireless Road
Tel: (02) 690 9999
A snazzy hotel bar with fantastic seating, a glamorous

clientele, and pricey full bar. Great singers usually croon to the early hours.

Fou Bar
264/4-6 2nd floor Siam Square Soi 3, Rama 1 Road
Tel: 02 658 4040
Like WOC a floor above, this smallish bar and cafe moonlights as a modelling agency and is suffering from an identity crisis. The ambience is akin to a university cafe, with the window seats offering great people-watching opportunities, although you could probably pass on the drunken To-Sit patrons staggering outside to throw up.

The house cocktail is a small beer with a shot of sambucca.
http://www.foubar.com/

Le Moulin De Sommai
93/3A Langsuan Road
Tel: (02) 652 2513 Fax: (02) 251 3058
Some francophones reckon this comfortable, unpretentious place offers some of the best hearty French food in town. Staff are friendly and the service is great. It's easy to miss on Lang Suan as it's tucked back a little off the footpath.

Outback Steakhouse
2nd Floor Siam Discovery Centre, Rama 1 Road
Tel: (02) 658 0202 Fax: (02) 658 0204
This is the first Thai franchise of the US-based Australian Outback chain. The food is hearty steakhouse fare and should be avidly avoided by both vegetarians and dieters. Massive steaks, mushrooms drowned in butter and supe-size sundaes are the typical dishes here.

It's a hit among Thais and not a bad choice to satisfy a western food craving.

Pan Pan
45 Soi Lang Suan
Tel: (02) 252 7104
The two Pan Pan restaurants are among Bangkok's most overrated Italian places. This one is only marginally better than its brother on Sukhumvit Soi 33, and the staff are certainly less grumpy.

The food is variable, but the gelato is consistently good. How about just stopping by for dessert?

Papparazzi
Chateau de Bangkok, 29 Soi Ruam Rudee
Tel: 02 651 4400 Fax: 02 651 4500
Located inside the exclusive Chateau de Bangkok, Papparazzi has is known for its pizzas and pasta, although the decor is a bit glitzy. The crab with squid ink linguini is a favourite.

Pisces Bar and Restaurant
Soi Kasem San 1 Rama 1 Road
This place mainly caters to people staying in the nearby guesthouses and hotels. It has a standard backpacker-style menu and the breakfasts in particular are generously

proportioned and reasonably priced. The service can be appalling.

Soras Restaurant and Cafe Soi Kasem San 1, Rama 1 Road

This popular restaurant and cafe has a leafy outdoor area where you could easily waste a few hours with a book and a few coffees. Like the nearby Pisces, Soras mainly caters to people staying at the nearby guesthouses and hotels.

To Sit Siam Square Soi 3 Tel: 02 658 4001

This hugely popular student bar and restaurant is an excellent choice for a lively night out with a bunch of friends. The first floor has a band, so you may want to continue to the second floor if conversation is on your to-do list. The Thai standards are great and very well-priced.

Even when run off their feet the staff are friendly and very helpful.
<http://www.tosit.com>

WOC 264/4-6 Siam Square Soi 3, Rama 1 Road Tel: 02 652 4593-4 Fax: 02 658 4593

Like Fou Bar downstairs, WOC suffers from an identity crisis, with a hodge podge of furnishings and decor, too-bright lights, big TVs playing different shows and a DJ in a corner -- a sports bar, club, cafe and trendy restaurant all hopelessly rolled into one.

The fragmented characters is mirrored in their cocktail list where the house WOC cocktail is a shot of whatever you want!
wocmodels@hotmail.com
<http://www.wocmodels.com/>

Sights and Attractions

Chao Mae Tuptim (Phallic Shrine)
Behind Nai Lert Park Hotel, Wireless Road
Surrounded by enough sculpted penises to make a sex shop envious, this shrine is tucked under a huge tree. Offerings, including penises as well as jasmine and lotus, are left to placate the spirit living there by women hoping to conceive.
Hours: Daily
Cost: Free

Jim Thompson's House
Soi Kasem San 2, Rama 1 Road
Tel: (02) 216 7368 Fax: (02) 612 3744
This site is often overlooked by travellers passing through Bangkok but is definitely worth a visit. Jim Thompson is widely recognised as the man responsible for the revitalisation of a waning Thai silk industry. Born in the United States in 1906, he first visited Thailand while working for the US Overseas Secret Service -- the predecessor of the CIA -- towards the end of World War II. His operation was curtailed

by the end of the war, so Thompson moved back to the US but was soon drawn back here. He began working tirelessly to promote Thai silk overseas and eventually his efforts paid off as the ailing industry sprang back into life.

In 1959, Jim Thompson's unique house was completed. It is constructed from six different traditional teak houses appropriated from as far away as Ayutthaya. Interestingly, the walls have been installed in reverse.

The house is decorated with ancient relics from throughout Thailand and works of art from Burma, China and Cambodia. It also boasts exquisite paintings and intricately carved furniture. Keep an eye out for the cat-shaped urinal and a mouse house.

Jim Thompson disappeared in Malaysia's Cameron Highlands in 1967 under mysterious circumstances and his body has never been found. His sister was murdered in the US the same year. Various theories have been suggested about Thompson's death, including a CIA plot, kidnapping by guerrillas, being run down by a truck or mauled by tigers.

A shop in the grounds sells a huge array of Jim Thompson souvenirs including some picturesque maps and postcards.
Hours: Daily 09:00-16:00
Cost: 100B, 50B for students

Lumpini Park
Hemmed in by Rama 4, Ratchadamri, Sarasin and Witthayu Roads
This large park, complete with a criss-cross of canals and a lake, is a perfect escape from the hectic Bangkok streets, with the traffic reduced to only a quiet roar. It is a must for anyone seeking some solace and quiet time, and a welcome alternative to locking yourself in your hotel room. A few vendors sell snacks and meals around the park.

In the mornings, thousands of Thais flock here for everything from ballroom dancing to yoga, while the afternoons see mostly joggers clogging the internal roads.
Hours: Daily 05:00-20:00
Cost: Free

Snake Farm (Pasteur Institute)
Next to Chulalongkorn Hospital Rama IV Road
Get your reptilian fix here: glass-encased displays of live and deadly snakes, a small museum with the skins of enormous carcasses and an amphitheatre where visitors -- frequently tour groups -- can view snake handlers tease the snakes and audience. Snake venoms are collected here for anti-venom, vaccines and for scientific work. In Southeast Asia alone, over 2,500 people die from snake bites every year.
Hours: Mon-Fri 08:30-16:00; Sat,Sun and public holidays 08:30-12:00
Cost: 70B

Wat Pathum Wannaram
Rama 1 Road

This pleasant forest wat offers respite from the smog, noise and chaos of the city. Despite its close proximity to Rama I, the temple has a reputation as a meditation centre.

Construction of the temple was ordered in 1857 and once it was completed some monks from Wat Bowonniwet were invited to take up residence. The temple's two principle Buddha images date back to the Rama III period and were imported from Vientiane.

To get to the forested part, enter via the Rama 1 entrance and make your way towards the rear right hand-corner of the complex. From there the path leads around to the meditation area and greenery. Unfortunately, the detailed signage around the complex is only in Thai. No photography is allowed once you are in the forest enclosure.
Hours: Daily, dawn to dusk
Cost: Free

Activities

Central Chidlom
Phloenchit Road
This branch of the Central chain of department stores has a particularly good homeware section and the top floor boasts Loft, an excellent food hall with a massive selection of Thai and international food. Prices are slightly higher than other food halls, but the breezy atmosphere makes it worth it.
Cost:Free

Gaysorn Plaza
Phloenchit Road
Refurbished in 2003, sparkingly bright Gaysorn is a great spot for window shopping, but decidedly painful to your pocket for anything beyond. La Perla bikinis on the ground floor start at 12,000B. The restaurants are not as expensive as you might think however, so consider consoling yourself with a coffee instead of splashing out. A good array of Thai homeware shops are a few floors up.
Cost:Free

Mah Boon Krong (MBK)
Corner of Phayathai and Rama 1 Roads
This mega-mall is hugely popular with young Thais. The higher you go, the madder it gets -- one whole floor is dedicated solely to mobile phone accessories. The very top floor has a cinema complex.

MBK is linked to the Pathumwan Princess Hotel and Tokyu Department Store.

Watch out for dodgy comen and tuk tuk drivers in this area, particularly around the ground entrance from Phayathai Road.
Cost:Free

Narayana Phand Pavilion
Ratchadamri Road
A one-stop-shop for handicrafts from around the country, the

quality of goods here is quite good, but fixed prices mean some things are a little expensive. You will pay more here than buying outside the capital -- but you'll save yourself the trip.
Cost:Free

Siam Discovery Centre
Rama 1 Road
This large, modern mall has a range of upmarket shops, attracting Bangkok's hi-so crowd. One bonus is the EGV Grand cinema on the top floor, which has a decadent deluxe mini-cinema worth splashing out on if a new blockbuster has just hit the screens. Reservations recommended.
Cost:Free

Suanlum Night Bazaar
Corner of Rama IV and Wireless
These former military college grounds should have been turned into an extension of Lumpini Park but instead has been transformed into just what Bangkok needs: another shopping area.

That aside, the market is quite well done, although many of the stalls remain empty and those that are open are selling the same old stuff. If you've got perseverance you'll hunt out some interesting pieces at prices similar to Chatuchak Market.

In the evenings the food and beer gardens are packed with mostly locals taking advantage of the cheap and tasty food, free musical entertainment and cooler evening air.
Cost:Free

World Trade Centre
Ratchadamri Road
This huge mall never seems to attract the crowds of other swish developments. Perhaps most shoppers here tire of the tedious layout of the stores -- it's impossible not to get lost. The top floor features a food hall and cinema complex. The courtyard outside turns into a beer garden during the dry season, which can be a really festive night out.

The air in the carpark of this place is so polluted that a guard died on duty a year or so ago, so spend as little time in the carpark as you can manage.

Be wary of touts and comen as you arrive and leave, and don't get in a stationary taxi or tuk tuk -- you'll be ripped off.
Cost:Free

Sukhumvit Soi 1 to Asok

The beginning of Thailand's longest road -- it runs all the way to the Cambodian border -- is home to sois packed with street markets, bars, restaurants, hotels and condominiums.

Characterised by appalling traffic and home to the red light area of Nana Plaza on Soi 4, this part of Sukhumvit is

enchancing to some and repulsive to others. Visitors should beware of pickpockets and con artists operating in the area.

The most convenient BTS stop is Nana, although Ploenchit and Asok mark either end.

Vital Information

General banks

Nana Post Office
Near the corner of Soi 4.

Police Box
Corner of Soi 4

Accommodation

suk 11 -- Our rating: 9/10

1/33 Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: (02) 253 5927 Fax: (02) 253 5929

Comprised of a rambling collection of wooden and concrete buildings hidden down a Sukhumvit Soi 11 subsoi, suk 11 is one of Bangkok's top backpacker guesthouses.

Friendly English-speaking staff and comfortable, reasonably quiet rooms make this an ideal spot to relax in one of Bangkok's most vibrant areas. The rooms are clean, though basic. Reservations are usually required. Recommended.

<http://www.suk11.com>

Price range: Under 600B

Bel-Aire Princess -- Our rating: 8/10

16 Sukhumvit Soi 5

Tel: (02) 253 4300 Fax: (02) 255 8850

Located towards the end of Soi 5, the Bel-Aire is a top choice for its price range. Immaculate, comfortable rooms and a stylish foyer are matched by professional and very courteous staff, making it a hit with both business travellers and families. The pool isn't huge but it's located away from the traffic madness.

beladusit.com

<http://www.dusit.com/hotel/pbb/index.html>

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

JW Marriott Bangkok -- Our rating: 8/10

4 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 656 7700 Fax: (02) 656 7711

The Marriott is located at the very beginning of Sukhumvit Road, about halfway between Nana and Phloenchit BTSs. The hotel has beautifully designed rooms done out in a contemporary Thai style and the staff are professional, though they can be very short on the phone. It's more popular with business travellers than tourists and tour groups. Boasts all the mod-cons its supposed to have with a price tag to match.

jwmarri1@ksc.th.com

<http://www.marriott.com>

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

The Atlanta -- Our rating: 8/10

78 Sukhumvit Soi 2

Tel: (02) 252 6069 Fax: (02) 656 8123

This institution opened in 1952, and not a skerrick appears to have changed since then. It's still a bit of a shame as the foyer promises mystery and charm but the rooms themselves are dreary. As it is, the Atlanta is often full, with people seduced by the foyer, quirky pool and eclectic notices around the place posted by founder Dr Max Henn. The rooms are rundown and every mattress in the place should be burned, but still, the crowds come. The food in the restaurant is outstanding, with the de'cor 50s style and some of the 60s grime still around. Nevertheless we like it a lot - just don't expect too much. Not a bad family option if you're not panicked by a bit of dirt. The Atlanta is located at the very end of the soi. When you reach the church it's the abandoned-looking building on your right. Price range: Under 600B

The Westin Grande Sukhumvit -- Our rating: 8/10

259 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 651 1000 Fax: (02) 255 2441

The business-oriented Westin has almost completed a long-running refurbishment and the results are very impressive. Beautiful rooms, a few very good restaurants and an excellent location within easy walking distance of both the BTS and subway make this a top choice for its price range. The only strange thing here is the foyer, which is located on the 7th floor, meaning guests are always two lift trips away from their room. Service is superb.

bangkok@westin.com

<http://www.westin.com/bangkok>

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Top Inn -- Our rating: 8/10

128 Sukhumvit Rd

Tel: (02) 656 8290-2 Fax: (02) 253 6077

This small hotel atop a travel agent of the same name has a dozen clean and well-looked after mid-sized rooms. The location is excellent - directly on Sukhumvit Road and a five-minute walk from Nana BTS. Be sure to get a room at the rear to escape the traffic noise. The top floor's rear rooms look straight over Nana Plaza making for an ideal spot to watch the circus down there unfold. A small internet cafe is on the ground floor. The Top Inn is popular with business travellers but is too small and poky to be a family option. Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Amari Boulevard Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

2 Soi 5 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 255 2930 Fax: (02) 255 2940

Very well-located nearby Nana BTS, the Amari has rather staid rooms and a dim, cave-like foyer. It's not one of our favourite hotels in town, but the rooms are immaculate and the service is up to standard. The building though is a real eyesore and its popularity with both tourists and business travellers is solely

thanks to its location. Be sure to check internet rates.

boulevard@amari.com

<http://www.amari.com>

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

PS Guest House -- Our rating: 7/10

26/1 Sukhumvit 8

Tel: (02) 255 2309 Fax: (02) 653 3424

PS's new wing has lovely spacious rooms with wooden floors and large bathrooms, while the old wing features carpeted rooms with small kitchens, making them perfect for self-catering travellers. Both styles are value for money. Wise to book in advance.

psguesthouse@hotmail.com

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Ruamchitt Travelodge -- Our rating: 7/10

114 Sukhumvit Road (Soi 10)

Tel: (02) 653 1314-7 Fax: (02) 653 1318

Located a few hundred metres down Soi 10 on the left, Ruamchitt has clean but basic rooms with no carpet -- which means no smells. Wide windows let in lots of light. Prices are competitive and include ABF. All rooms have TV, fridge and air-con. A business centre and coffee shop are near the lobby. Room and laundry service is available.

rcbangkok@hotmail.com

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

The Ambassador Bangkok -- Our rating: 7/10

171 Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: (02) 254 7516 Fax: (02) 253 4123

The two-winged Ambassador is well past its heyday and has been due for a thorough refurbishment for at least five years. Rooms in the main wing are very average although the tower rooms are slightly better. If you're on a budget, want to stay in a hotel and don't mind a rundown room, then the Ambassador is quite a good option as the location smack in the middle of Sukhumvit's tourist ghetto is excellent. Thanks to that and its low prices, it's very popular both with individual tourists and package groups, filling up quickly in season.

amt@loxinfo.co.th

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

Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

The Hotel Manhattan Bangkok -- Our rating: 7/10

13 Soi 15 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 255 0166 Fax: (02) 255 3481

A good mid-range hotel, Manhattan offers amenities business travellers and mid-range tourists expect, including a swimming pool and fitness centre. Rooms are better than what you'd expect for the price. Room service is available 24 hours.

hotelmanhattan@bigfoot.com

<http://www.hotelmanhattan.com>

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

City Lodge -- Our rating: 6/10

Sukhumvit Soi 9

Tel: (02) 253 7705 Fax: (02) 255 4667

For its location right beside Nana BTS on Sukhumvit Road,

this City Lodge represents very good value, though it's more a business traveller's haunt than a family spot. Service is prompt and helpful. Often full in season.

citylodge9@amari.com

<http://www.amari.com>

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Honey Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10

31 Sukhumvit Rd 19

Tel: (02) 253 0646-9, 02 2557172, (02) 255 6795-6 Fax: (02) 254 4716

The superior rooms are nothing special but the prices are right on the mark. The hotel is showing its age but at least it has a pool.

honeyho@ksc.th.com

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Miami Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10

2 Sukhumvit Rd, Soi 13

Tel: (02) 253 0369, (02) 253 5611-3 Fax: (02) 253 1266

This old hotel features aging rooms with prices typical of the area for the quality. The Miami is a similar spot to the Atlanta Hotel, rundown but friendly. In its favour it boasts a particularly deep swimming pool, providing welcome relief for tourists unused to Bangkok's steamy heat -- where you can jump from the first floor veranda safely, but we didn't try. All rooms have hot water, air-con and TV and are very well sized. Nearby construction however is a problem as is the heavy Sukhumvit traffic and skytrain. If you stay here be sure to get a room towards the rear to escape some of the traffic noise.

miamihotel@thaimail.com

Price range: Under 600B

Nana City Inn -- Our rating: 6/10

23/164 Sukhumvit Soi 4

Tel: (02) 253 4468-9 Fax: (02) 255 2449

This is one of the better options for the area, though it still isn't great, mainly catering to those who plan on spending a lot of time in the Nana area. The rooms are clean but cave-like with bad lighting, and the bathrooms are cramped and a bit musty. Staff are friendly and can arrange transport to Pattaya, Hua Hin and other destinations. Gets lots of repeat custom, though watch out for crusty westerners sleeping in the stairwell -- enough said.

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Premier Travelodge -- Our rating: 6/10

170-170/1 Sukhumvit Soi 8 (Soi Preeda)

Tel: (02) 251 3031 Fax: (02) 253 3195

Well-located on the corner of Sukhumvit Soi 8, Premier offers reasonable value for money. The smallish wall-to-wall carpeted rooms are a tad musty but the staff are pleasant.

premierlodge@yahoo.com

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Royal Benja Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10

39 Sukhumvit Soi 5

Tel: (02) 655 2920-54 Fax: (02) 655 2958-59

A tour group favourite, this buzzing hotel is a bit worn but has some of the cheeriest staff in town. The rooms are a little on the small side and certainly not extravagantly designed or decorated, but ones of the higher floors have great views. The pool is passable but not well shaded. Make sure you check internet rates as its popularity with tour groups suggests you should be able to get an excellent deal.

reserve@royalbenja.th.com
http://www.royalbenja.th.com/
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Stable Lodge -- Our rating: 6/10
39 Sukhumvit Rd, Soi 8

Tel: (02) 653 0017 Fax: (02) 253 5125
Stable Lodge has large and tasteful rooms with wooden floors and large balconies. All rooms have cable TV, air-con and hot water. The Stable also has a swimming pool.
hotel@stabelodge.com
http://www.stabelodge.com
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Sukhumvit Crown Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
7 Sukhumvit Soi 6

Tel: (02) 253 5672-4 Fax: (02) 253 5675
Crown's rooms are large and clean, but have a bit of an 80s feel to them. Looks to be used largely as a short-time hotel but is nevertheless decent compared to other choices in the area, with air-con rooms including TV and hot water. Rates include ABF.
sukhumvitcrown@yahoo.com
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Swiss Park Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
155/23 Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: (02) 254 0228-9 Fax: (02) 254 0378
The Swiss Park is conveniently located in the centre of the Sukhumvit area, and its motel-like rooms represent reasonable value, being spotless though rather small. Be warned that the immediate surrounds of the hotel are crammed with tailor shops and the touts can become incredibly tiresome.
swissshot@asiaaccess.net.th
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

The Park Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
6 Sukhumvit Soi 7

Tel: (02) 255 4300 Fax: (02) 255 4309
The Park is located a little way down Sukhumvit Soi 7 and is a pretty reasonable deal for the area. Rooms are well-sized and it's a quiet location as it's quite a distance from the bustle of Sukhumvit, while the staff are cheery. The mouth area of the soi is home to some pretty dubious bars and in the evening can get busy with crusty westerners trying to have a good time.
parkbkk@parkhotelbkk.com
http://www.parkhotelbkk.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Maxim's Inn -- Our rating: 5/10
131/22-23 Sukhumvit Soi 7/1

Tel: (02) 252 9911-2 Fax: (02) 253 5329
Maxim's is the last place at the end of Soi 7/1 on the left. The

soi is best known for its brothels and other bars of dubious character -- certainly not a great spot for the family. Two room sizes are available, with the larger also including a sofa and bigger bathroom. All rooms include ABF, TV and hot water.
maximinn@loxinfo.co.th
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Star Inn Hotel -- Our rating: 5/10
131/40-41 Soi Sukhumvit 7/1

Tel: (02) 651 0760-61 Fax: (02) 651 0762
The newly-opened Star is a flashy hotel with some decent rooms but is mostly used as a love hotel. The cigar bar downstairs stays open until the wee hours. All rooms have air-con, TV and hot water, but inexplicably some have no toilets.
Price range: Under 600B

The Somerset Hotel -- Our rating: 5/10
10 Sukhumvit Soi 15

Tel: (02) 254 8500 Fax: (02) 254 8534
This place should be promptly demolished. It looks awful from the street and the rooms, while clean, are dank and damp with threadbare carpeting and little to recommend them. Despite this, the Somerset is often full, a reflection of the very good internet rates it offers rather than the quality of the establishment.
somerinn@asianet.co.th
http://www.somersethotel.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Bangkok Inn -- Our rating: 4/10
155/12-13 Sukhumvit Soi 11/1
Tel: (02) 254 4834 Fax: (02) 254 3545

This German-managed guesthouse has professional, helpful staff, but the rooms are average. First floor rooms are 100B cheaper due to their lack of view and a noisy generator outside. This is a pretty sleazy area of Sukhumvit.
bangkokinn@mail.com
http://www.bankok-inn.com
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

City Lodge -- Our rating: 4/10
Sukhumvit Soi 19

Tel: (02) 254 4783 Fax: (02) 255 7340
City Lodge is in a great location, just a one-minute walk from Asok BTS and five-minutes to the subway, but the rooms are average here and the staff decidedly thick-headed. Going by our observations, a straightforward check-out can take 15 minutes -- not impressive. It's not a great location for families, but if location is key for you, this is a fraction of the price of the nearby Sheraton or Westin.
citylodge19@amari.com
http://www.amari.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Comfort Lodge -- Our rating: 4/10
153/11-14 Sukhumvit Soi 11 (soi Chaiyod)

Tel: (02) 251 9250, (02) 251 0745 Fax: (02) 254 3562
Comfort does not live up to its name, with average rooms that

are slightly smelly from damp carpet. It's similar to other hotels in the area, with all rooms having air-con, TV and fridge.
comfort@ksc.th.com
Price range: Under 600B

Pinnacle Sukhumvit Inn -- Our rating: 4/10
6/13-16 Sukhumvit Soi 3/1

Tel: (02) 253 6284-7 Fax: (02) 255 7815
Located down the end of Sukhumvit Soi 3/1 on the right among Middle Eastern and Indian restaurants, Pinnacle offers average rooms that are overpriced.
pinhr@loxinfo.co.th
http://www.pinnaclehotels.com
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Ra-Jah Hotel -- Our rating: 3/10
Sukhumvit Soi 4

Tel: (02) 255 0040 Fax: (02) 255 7160
The Ra-Jah feels like it closed for business a decade ago and has been managed by imposters ever since. The rooms are of a passable, reasonable size, but have very soft squeaky beds, clapped out TVs, dodgy plumbing and faded carpet - all-in-all, a rather short-time feel to it, but at least there are no mirrors or carpet on the walls. It's time for refurbishment or at worst, demolition.
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

World Inn -- Our rating: 3/10
131/5-7 Sukhumvit 7/1

Tel: (02) 253 5391-2 Fax: (02) 253 7728
The World Inn spans two sides of the soi, with the ageing, characterless rooms all rented for the same price. The bathtubs are cute and good for washing clothes. Most but not all guests here seem to be short stay. A 1000B upfront deposit is required. All rooms have air-con, cable TV, fridge and hot water.
worldinn@mail.com
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Eat and Meet

Al-Hussain
75/7 Sukhumvit Soi 3/1

Tel: (02) 252 0240 Fax: (02) 251 7295
This popular place has a huge menu covering Bangladeshi, Indian, Pakistani, Arabic and Thai food. A small dining area is outside but most seats are inside in a hall of mirrors-type aircon setup. Service is prompt and friendly and the food is generally good but some portions are a little small. The hummus is great. Prices are around 120-150B a plate while an entire lamb is available for 3,000B. There are a few vegetarian options.

Anna's Cafe
Two Pacific Place, Lobby 142 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 653 2395-8 Fax: (02) 653 2399
This is one branch of the small and highly popular chain of Anna's restaurants. As with then all, the service is prompt and the food great and quick, making it a perfect lunchtime choice. Their desserts are excellent.

henri@annascafe.com
http://www.annascafes.com/

Bamboo Bar Beer Garden
Sukhumvit Soi 3 (Nana Nua)

The long-running Bamboo run by Maltese John has a long list of regulars who enjoy the welcoming atmosphere for both males and females, a rare commodity along this road. There are plenty of pool tables, a large bar and a big screen for special sports events. Often boasts a free buffet and cheap beer on Friday nights.

Bed Supper Club
26 Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: (02) 651 3537
Set in large elevated tin tube, entering this all-white, cutting-edge place is like wandering onto a Jetsons set. Frequent mostly by beautiful people who enjoy being served by beautiful people and watching beautiful art shows, this is a great people watching restaurants. Grab either an upstairs bed or a bed in the corner and watch the night unfold. The restaurant and adjoining club are popular for random drug busts by Bangkok's finest, so keep that in mind. The food is actually excellent, a surprise for such a gimmicky place. Reservations recommended.

Beirut Restaurant
Basement level, Phloenchit Centre by Sukhumvit Soi 2

Tel: (02) 656 7377
Set in front of the Villa Supermarket on the basement floor of the Phloenchit Centre, Beirut does very good Lebanese dishes and their set menus are great value. The location isn't great, but particularly as a lunchtime stop this is a good choice.

Cabbages and Condom's
10 Sukhumvit Soi 12

Tel: (02) 229 4610
Begun by Thailand's very own condom king, this is the original restaurant that created a chain of stores and put contraception into the Thai public eye. The food is standard Thai fare made with a tourist palate in mind, so if you like it spicy, be sure to say so. Free condoms replace after dinner mints. Recommended for newcomers to the kingdom.

Cheap Charlies
Soi Chai Yot, Sukhumvit Soi 11

Cheap Charlies is a long-running hang-out for expats, some who have perhaps stayed a little too long. An outdoor bar wedged on the corner of a Soi 11 sub-soi, it has some of the cheapest beers in Bangkok. Basic facilities (the toilet sign reads Pissing only, no shitting), it's not a bad place for a couple of quick drinks.

Classics Movie Lounge
Paradise Nightclub Raja Hotel Sukhumvit Soi 4
Classics Movie Lounge is a cross between a girlie bar and a personal movie theatre. Manager Rodney has a large collection of DVDs you can choose from to screen on the 10-foot screen or you can bring your own.

Free popcorn and other food and drink is available. The only cinema in Bangkok you can smoke in.

Crepes & Co

18 Sukhumvit Soi 12

Tel: (02) 251 2895 Fax: (02) 252 8462

If you are after crepes in Bangkok, go no further than Crepes and Co. An outstanding range of crepes accompanied by a reasonable selection of Moroccan dishes. Food is innovative, service is superb and the atmosphere coolly French. Highly recommended, especially for brunches.

La Piola

32 Sukhumvit Soi 13

Tel: (02) 253 8295 Fax: (02) 651 2649

La Piola is a small hole-in-the-wall with fantastic home-style Italian cooking. There's no menu, and the staff can do a bit of a hard sell that can lead to some surprises on the bill, so be sure you know what you're paying for things before merrily agreeing to their suggestions. For the most part the food is well-priced but the alcohol is way too expensive.

Moghul Room Indian Restaurant

1/16 Soi Chaiyot Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: (02) 253 4465

The Moghul is just across from Cheap Charlies and does all the Indian standards including an array of vegetarian options. The atmosphere and decor is homely Indian while the service is almost over attentive. Try to be seated upstairs where the atmosphere is more intimate. Prices are reasonable and the portions are a decent size.

Moody's Place Lebanese Restaurant

4/2 Sukhumvit Soi 5

Tel: (02) 655 7910 Fax: (02) 253 4603

One of the few dedicated Lebanese restaurants in Bangkok, Moody's has a upstairs veranda which is more pleasant than inside. The great food is reasonably priced, wit the falafel particularly good.

Mrs Balbir's Northern Indian Food

Sukhumvit Soi 11

A long-time expat favourite, Mrs Balbir's does good vegetarian and non-vegetarian Indian food in a pleasant little two-storey restaurant. Upstairs is definitely the better choice. Servings are on the small size and prices are not cheap.

Nasir Al-Masir

4/6 Sukhumvit Soi 3/1

Tel: (02) 253 5582 Fax: (02) 655 5299

This very popular Egyptian restaurant does good Arabic, Indian and Thai food, and though the menu is huge, only a fraction of it is in English, so take along an Arabic reader if you can. The tabouli -- called Lebanese salad on the menu -- is very good, as is the Egyptian falafel. There's also a selection of fresh lamb dishes. Eating is indoor or out, with outside more pleasant. Prices are very reasonable. Recommended.

Pomodoro

Ground floor of Nailert Building near Sukhumvit Soi 5

Tel: (02) 254 5282 Fax: (02) 253 4515

In a city with many much better Italian restaurants, Pomodoro is a common tourist choice thanks to its convenient location on Sukhumvit rather than the food, which can be very ordinary. It's a small chain, with two branches on Sukhumvit Road about 100m apart and another on the food court level at Emporium.

Q Bar Bangkok

34 Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: (02) 252 3274

This very popular New York-style club has a loyal following. The upstairs veranda is a welcome escape from the heaving crowds downing the strong cocktails on offer from the huge bar. The hordes of freelance sex workers are not deterred by the cover charge, unfortunately.

No shorts, sleeveless shirts or sandals for men.

Rossini's

Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit, Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02)653 0333

This extremely comfortable and intimate restaurant offers outstanding value, although the wines are pricey. Chef Marco has long served up imaginative, delicious dishes here with a regularly changing specials list. Prompt and professional service. Recommended.

Shalimar Sharma's Indian Restaurant

1/17 Soi Chaiyat, Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: (02) 255 7950

The big TV blaring at this place ruins the atmosphere, but the food is decent enough. Most in the know prefer the excellent Moghul Room next door for their Indian food fix.

Suda

Sukhumvit Soi 14

This open-air Sukhumvit institution serves up great cheap Thai standards. It's hugely popular with Euro tour groups, most likely due to the super-cold beer, the very good food and unbeatable prices. Sometimes falling off your chair can help you get some service.

The Brunswick

Sukhumvit Soi 4 (Soi Nana)

This spacious pool bar is a favourite with local Thais and expats and boasts new pool tables.

A good meeting spot for the area.

The Bus Stop

Sukhumvit Soi 4

This semi-sleazy outdoor sports bar does reasonable food and is a popular spot for watching sporting events on big screen TV. It's a popular expat hang-out. The staff can be identified by outfits remarkably similar to old Singapore Airlines uniforms.

Woodstock

Level Soi Nana Plaza Sukhumvit Soi 4

Cold beer, a range of old and new music played at a level that allows conversation, decent food, comfy seating, no sex workers, and a Gary Larson Far Side tribute at the men's urinals, make this the best choice if you're stuck in this sleazy part of town.

Sights and Attractions

Kamthieng House

131 Soi 21 Sukhumvit Road

This charming 120-year-old house was originally built in Chiang Mai but was disassembled, shipped to Bangkok and carefully pieced together again in 1964. Now it houses a museum aimed at preserving and displaying elements of northern Thai culture such as folk arts, costumes and tools.

Hours: Tue-Sat 09:00-17:00

Cost: 100B

Sukhumvit Asok to Ekamai

The stretch of Sukhumvit from its intersection with Asok Road to Ekamai bus station is the heart of the western and Japanese communities in Bangkok. The skyline is dotted with condominiums and the streets with western grocery stores and some great but generally pricey restaurants and bars.

The traffic is quite appalling round-the-clock, making the BTS the best way to get around here, with stops at Asok, Phrom Phong, Thong Lo and Ekamai.

Vital Information

General banks

Bangkok Bank

Ground floor Emporium Suites

Kasikorn Bank

Corner of Sukhumvit 33

Prasammit Post Office

Sukhumvit Soi 23

Accommodation

Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit -- Our rating: 9/10

250 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 649 8888 Fax: (02) 649 8000

This hotel is home to one of our favourite pools in Bangkok. Rooms have very tasteful decor and great city views, plus all

the amenities they should. It's also within easy walking distance of both the BTS and subway. If it's within your budget and you want to stay in the Sukhumvit area, look no further. The pool area is small but lush and lovely. The spa here is also excellent. e sure to check for an internet rate here.

grande.sukhumvit@luxurycollection.com

http://www.starwood.com/bangkok

Price range: over 8,000B

The Landmark Bangkok -- Our rating: 8/10

138 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 254 0404 Fax: (02) 253 4529

This very popular hotel is well located in the middle of Sukhumvit Road, a short walk from Nana BTS. The rooms are contemporary Thai in style with some boasting fantastic views. Staff are very helpful and courteous. The pool area is quite nice, making this an excellent spot if in your budget. Very popular with tourists, tour groups and business travellers alike. The steakhouse near the top has great views and is kind of charming in a 1970s kind of way.

email@landmarkbangkok.com

http://www.landmarkbangkok.com

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Windsor Suites Hotel Bangkok -- Our rating: 8/10

8 Sukhumvit Soi 18-20

Tel: (02) 262 1234 Fax: (02) 262 1212

Every room in this popular hotel is actually a suite, with many of the rooms boasting excellent views over the city. The suites, while a little cheesy, are all very spacious, comfortable and well-maintained. The hotel has a bright and airy foyer and the staff are very chatty. The pool features piped underwater music -- we're not sure what style the tunes are though. Discounts of up to 50% during off-season make this an excellent choice.

rsvn@windsorsuiteshotel.com

http://www.windsorsuiteshotel.com

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Novotel Lotus, Bangkok -- Our rating: 7/10

1 Soi Daeng Udom Sukhumvit 33

Tel: (02) 261 0111 Fax: (02) 262 1700

This very comfortable business hotel is placed within easy walking of Phrom Phong BTS, restaurants and bars, Emporium department store and a pleasant park. Staff are friendly and professional and though the rooms are fine the carpets are showing their age and the hotel will be ready for a refurbishment in a year or so. Rooms have the standard facilities and while functional are not imaginatively decorated. The pool is unphotogenic as well. The deluxe rooms are much more spacious than the superiors.

res@novotelotus.com

http://www.accorhotel.com

Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Rembrandt Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10

19 Sukhumvit Soi 18

Tel: (02) 261 7100 Fax: (02) 261 7017

This hotel has spacious, well-designed rooms in a comfortable and professional setting, making it a good business and family

option. A great range of eating options are spread within the hotel -- drawing expats in the know -- and some rooms have excellent views. The pool area is a little exposed and can get a tad windy. Next door, the Rembrandt Serviced Apartments cater to longer term stays.
reservations@rembrandtbkk.com
http://www.rembrandtbkk.com
Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

The Imperial Queen's Park Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10
199 Sukhumvit Soi 22
Tel: (02) 261 9000 Fax: (02) 261 9530-34

This massive 37-storey, two-tower hotel overlooks Benjasiri Park and Emporium. It's in an ideal location for both business travellers and shoppers, as it's near the BTS and Sukhumvit and Rama IV Roads. Arguably too big for many people's taste, the hotel is certainly rather maze-like. The views however are the best in the area, overlooking a large spread of the city. The Imperial Queen's has two pools, both of which are very chilly. The area is touristy, so if you stay here be wary of the dodgy taxi and tuk tuk drivers preying on guests. The rooms are standard five-star fare and nothing special.
reservation@imperialhotels.com
http://www.imperialhotels.com/queenspark/index.html
Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Big John's Guesthouse -- Our rating: 6/10

159/12 Sukhumvit Soi 55 (Thonglo) between sois 7 & 9
Big John's has a small internet cafe and restaurant downstairs that specialises in pies and other western food, and though it was too early to taste one when we visited, the pies do smell great. The rooms, all with bunk-bed set-ups, while reasonably sized could do with a coat of paint, but owner Big John says he'll be opening new premises just around the corner in October and though we haven't seen the rooms yet, it sounds like it will be a big improvement on the current offerings. This is a good area to stay if you want to stay away from the backpacker hordes on KSR and there are some very good bars and restaurants in this area. Big John's is also very convenient to Ekamai bus station.
bigjohn@bigjohnsworld.com
http://www.bigjohnsworld.com
Price range: Under 600B

Four Wings Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
40 Sukhumvit Soi 26
Tel: (02) 260 2100 Fax: (02) 260 2300

Popular with Japanese, the Four Wings is a fine choice with spotless rooms, particularly friendly staff and some of the brightest elevators in Thailand. The rooms are pretty standard fare, though they're very clean and some on the higher floors have reasonable views. The hotel is a good 15-minute walk from Sukhumvit Road, which is a bit of a pain, but given the poor standard of other hotels in the area, this is the best deal. Be sure to check for internet rates.
reservation@fourwingshotel.com
http://www.fourwingshotel.com
Price range: 4,000B to 8,000B

Royal Parkview Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
19/9 Sukhumvit Soi 20

Tel: (02) 261 8999 Fax: (02) 259 9257
Located towards the end of Soi 20, the Royal Parkview is a popular spot, mostly due to very competitive rates for its reasonable but fading rooms. The location however is a bit of a long way from Sukhumvit Road. The whole place could do with a makeover, but for the money it isn't a bad option. Staff are not very helpful.
reservation@royal-parkview.com
http://www.royal-parkview.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Windsor Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
8-10 Sukhumvit Soi 18-20

Tel: (02) 258 0160-6 Fax: (02) 258 1491
This smallish hotel is beside the Windsor Suites Hotel and guests are allowed to use its neighbour's facilities - including the pool with underwater music. The moderately-sized rooms are plain but reasonably well-looked after, though as the hotel is only five storeys high, views are non-existent. The rates are fair, particularly given you can use the facilities nearby. Good discounts in off-season.
info@windsorbkk.com
http://www.windsorbkk.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Regency Park Hotel -- Our rating: 5/10

12/3 Soi Sainamthip Sukhumvit Soi 22
Tel: (02) 259 7420 Fax: (02) 258 2862
It looks like an absolute dump from the outside, but the interior of Regency Park features a rather attractive atrium and layout with pleasant gardens and plentiful plants. Despite the greenery, the rooms are plain and some quite rundown, many with perfect views of the massive construction site next door. For the area the prices are reasonable. If you land a room near the construction be sure to ask for a substantial discount. The frontdesk staff are either deliberately obstinate or a bit dimwitted.
http://www.accorhotels.com
res@regencypark.net
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Imperial Tara Hotel -- Our rating: 4/10

18/1 Sukhumvit Soi 26
Tel: (02) 259 2900-19 Fax: (02) 259 2896-7

As with sister property Imperial Impala, the staff here are inept to an incredible degree. They are welcoming, but when asking to see a room requires four different staff and 15-minutes of waiting who knows how long room service might take. The rooms are clean and passable but are starting to fray at the edges. Overall, as with its sister property, the Four Wings may be the better choice.
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

The Imperial Impala Hotel Bangkok -- Our rating: 4/10
9 Sukhumvit Soi 24

Tel: (02) 259 0053 Fax: (02) 258 8747

It may appear at first that the clueless staff here must be the

ones who missed the cut at the larger Imperial Tara nearby, but there they are actually worse. But anyway, if we had to pick a hotel to avoid purely because of its inept staff, this would be it (well, along with the Tara). The rooms are nothing flash but passable and the location is decent, being a 10-minute walk to BTS and Emporium shopping centre but Four Wings nearby is much better in terms of service.
reservations@imperialhotels.com
http://www.imperialhotels.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

Eat and Meet

Aioli

18/5 Sukhumvit Soi 23

Tel: (02) 258 4237 Fax: (02) 258 4237

Aioli is an excellent little French Mediteranean restaurant tucked away 200m down Soi 23 on the right if coming from Sukhumvit. Matching the intimate atmosphere is a short menu that changes quite frequently. The food is top notch and the staff are friendly. Women will want to avoid sitting at the tables set on kegs as you can't comfortably sit with your knees together. The wine list is a little pricey, though you can BYO. Highly recommended.

Baan Khanitha

36/1 Sukhumvit Soi 23

Tel: (02) 258 4181 Fax: (02) 260 9601

Baan Khanitha is a Bangkok institution and has recently opened a new branch on Soi Ruam Rudee. The Soi 23 branch is a Thai-style house set in a lovely garden. The food is very good although, like Lemongrass, the prices are a bit too high. It's nevertheless a decent choice for good Thai food in an atmospheric setting.

Bane Lao

49 Sukhumvit Soi 36

Tel: (02) 258 6096

This excellent open-air Lao restaurant is hidden away down a sub-soi running off Sukhumvit Soi 36. Not as well known as Vientiane Kitchen, which sits nearer the mouth of the soi, Bane Lao is more intimate and the food is outstanding. Prices are great and the staff are lovely. Recommended.
info@bane-lao.com
http://www.bane-lao.com/

Best Kashmir Restaurant

Sukhumvit Road between Soi 21 and 23

Tel: (02) 258 3759 Fax: (02) 261 1757

Best Kashmir probably isn't the best Kashmiri restaurant in town, but it is nevertheless reasonable and the staff are lovely. The atmosphere is unremarkable, but the generous servings and tasty food draw a regular crowd. It's open quite late. Prices can add up quickly if you have more than a few dishes.

Bourbon Street

29/4-6 Behind Washington Square Sukhumvit Soi 22

Tel: (02) 259 0328 Fax: (02) 259 4318

Bourbon Street claims to be the only American-owned and

managed American restaurant in the city and serves up genuine Southern specialities such as Louisiana cajun and creole dishes. The decor is outdated and vaguely depressing but the food is quite good.
bourbon@inet.co.th
http://www.bourbonstbkk.com

Cafe 50

24 Soi 21, Ekamai

Tel: (02) 711 5629

This popular bar and restaurant is part eatery and part importer of funky 70s furniture. The furniture is priced for wealthy Thais, but the food is highly affordable. Try the Yam Tua Poo that comes with a couple of monster prawns washed down by a beer from their full bar. A few pool tables as well make this a great choice for a low-key evening out.
y50shop@hotmail.com

Chesa Swiss Cuisine

5 Sukhumvit Soi 20

Tel: (02) 261 6650 Fax: (02) 663 4376

Chesa is one of three Swiss restaurants within close proximity and probably the best. Like all things Swiss, the food is not cheap, but then also like most things Swiss, it's pretty perfect. The cheese fondue is superb. If cheese isn't your thing, there are loads of other Swiss treats to choose from.
chesa@loxinfo.co.th

Faith Club

96/4-5 Sukhumvit Soi 23

Tel: (02) 261 3007-8 Fax: (02) 264 4446

Faith Club was named "Metro's best club" in 2002. Although it deserved it at the time, the prices have now been jacked up way too high for a place that is a decided rip-off of Q Bar. It attracts a mixed crowd of Thais and westerners, and has a tribe of roving DJs coming through the doors.
faithclub@clubbers.net

Khingklao

61/1 Sukhumvit Soi 22

Tel: (02) 259 5623

This small restaurant is a good choice for northern Thai food and can fill up quickly. Their khao soi is particularly good and their menu is comprehensive.

Kuppa

39 Sukhumvit Soi 16

Tel: (02) 663 0495 Fax: (02) 258 1782; (02) 258 1786

Kuppa is one of Bangkok's flasher cafes and a fine place for a lazy Sunday brunch. The coffee prices will break a backpacking budget, but the place is difficult to fault. Among the international fare on offer, their roast beef sandwiches are notable, as is their seafood pasta. The dinner menu is a bit pricier again. Great desserts. Recommended.

L'Opera

53 Soi 39 Sukhumvit Road

Tel: (02) 258 5606 Fax: (02) 258 5599

This venerable and long-running Italian restaurant is a great

choice for reasonably-priced and solid, if unimaginative, Italian fare. The decor is a little suburban but it's a decent option for the area. The lunch time buffets are a good deal.
opera@loxinfo.co.th

Larry's Dive
8/3 Sukhumvit Soi 22
Tel: (02) 663 4563 Fax: (02) 663 4561

This slightly tacky but popular bar and restaurant on Soi 22 has lasted a long time, perhaps due to Larry's bringing a beachy feel to Sukhumvit, with sand, fake palm trees and a beach bar. The western bar food, burgers, sandwiches and so on get mixed reviews. There's a pool table and this is a hassle-free place for a drink and snack amid what's becoming an increasingly sleazy area.

larrybkk@larrysdive.com
http://www.larrysdive.com

Le Dalat Indochine
14 Sukhumvit Soi 23
Tel: (02) 661 7967-8 Fax: (02) 661 7967-8

Le Dalat Indochine is a great place to sample some authentic Vietnamese cuisine, although the atmosphere is an intriguing blend of formal and kitsch. The prices are reasonable and the service attentive.

Lemongrass
5/1 Sukhumvit Soi 24
Tel: (02) 258 8637 Fax: (02) 258 3888

Lemongrass is set in a lovely house a stone's throw from Emporium. The food is great but spiced down for foreigners' palates and the servings are very small, making the steep prices a bit of a sting. Service is prompt and professional. Imaginative flower arrangements are a nice touch.

Mahanaga
2 Sukhumvit Soi 29
Tel: (02) 662 3060 Fax: (02) 662 3022

This new Thai fusion restaurant is set within a fantastically restored house and a few new wings. Drinks are good but the food is average and the kitchen isn't quite used to large crowds yet. The live western classical music is too much.
contact@mahanaga.com
http://www.mahanaga.com

Mes Amis
102/3 Thong Lo Soi 5
Tel: (02) 260 6445-6 Fax: (02) 258 6879

This outstanding restaurant is well worth hunting out. The superb French food is served in an intimate atmosphere. The wine list is reasonable value and the desserts are to die for. Recommended for a splash out.

Old Siam
4/6 Sukhumvit Soi 23
Tel: (02) 259 5673 Fax: (02) 261 4037

The long-running Old Siam is known for its northern Thai food, though in recent times the quality has slipped a little. The decor is Thai-style, with lots of wood and historic pictures and

traditional fruit carvings at the front of the restaurant. Prices are very reasonable. The red duck curry is especially good. Be sure to say if you like your food spicy as it otherwise seems to get toned down for foreigners.

Opera Riserva 1983 winetheque
53/3 Sukhumvit Soi 39
Tel: (02) 258 5601

You'll find in-the-know expats rather than tourists in this great tucked-away wine bar, that has knowledgeable staff, excellent wine and a convivial atmosphere. The cheese plate is fabulous and the pizzas look good.

Pan Pan
6-6/1 Sukhumvit Soi 33
Tel: (02) 258 9304

This Italian place has a second branch on Soi Lang Suan that is equally bad. The dishes are passable but the service is miserable and the prices way too high. Bangkok offers plenty of great Italian joints much more worthy of attention.

Ristorante Fino
8 Sukhumvit Soi 33
Tel: (02) 662 2323 Fax: (02) 258 0668

Ristorante Fino has competent Italian food but the prices are high and Bangkok offers better -- although this is definitely far better than Pan Pan down the road. The service is prompt and professional.

The Bull's Head
595/10-11 Sukumvit Soi 33/1
Tel: (02) 259 4444 Fax: (02) 266 7747

This old-style, split-level British pub serves up standard pub fare and has a loyal, generally older-expat following, although it also attracts a younger sports set as well. Good staff. Their chips in gravy is pure comfort food and their Sunday roasts are very good.

joy.menzies@greatbritishpub.com
http://www.greatbritishpub.com/bullshhead/

The Dubliner Irish Pub
440 Sukhumvit Road between sois 22 and 24
Tel: (02) 204 1841-2 Fax: (02) 204 1843

The Dubliner is one of the newer Irish pubs to hit Bangkok and claims to be the only one Irish owned and managed. The crowd is almost uniformly western tourists and expats, and Metro Magazine has twice named the Dubliner Bangkok's best pub.

The three-storey joint boasts an open bar on the ground floor, a dining area up a level and a sports bar style area with TV and pool table on the top floor.

The staff are friendly and the food is a step up on the usual pub grub, but the steepish prices reflect this. Good home fries.
http://www.dublinerasia.com/

The Old Dutch
9/3-4 Sukhumvit Soi 23
Tel: (02) 258 9234 Fax: (02) 261 4037

The Old Dutch sits on the corner of Sukhumvit Soi 23 and Soi Cowboy, and although open all day and well into the evening, the greasy breakfasts are its highlight.

Surprisingly for the area, it's not sleazy and the primarily western food is not bad. The prices are reasonable, the staff friendly and the free newspapers a bonus.

Tidbit Treasure
593/19 Sukhumvit Soi 33/1
Tel: (02) 258 5056
Almost opposite the Bull's Head, Tidbits does great Yum Cha from 11:30am onwards on a Sunday or general Chinese meals weekdays. The Peking duck here is to die for. The only downside is the decor. Upstairs is particularly grubby and watch your head on the stairs.

Vientiane Kitchen
8 Sukhumvit Soi 36
Tel: (02) 258 6171 Fax: (02) 661 2311
This outstanding Lao and Isaan restaurant is one of Bangkok's highlights, both for locals and tourists. Set in a massive wooden house and courtyard around a large tree, the atmosphere is enlivened by performances of northeastern and Lao music that isn't as tacky as it might sound. The food is great -- it comes very spicy -- and reasonably priced. Highly recommended.

Sights and Attractions

Benchasiri Park
Sukhumvit Road between sois 22 and 24
This veritable oasis in the midst of Sukhumvit's relentless noise and pollution was originally the site of the Meteorology Department but was converted to a park to commemorate the 60th birthday of Queen Sirikit in 1992. Unfortunately an array of huge old trees were cut down as they didn't fit with the landscapers plans. Today the park is quite lush in a landscaped kind of way and is popular with office workers on lunch breaks and the masses of aerobics fans who stream in for the free early morning and afternoon classes.

Although only a fraction of Lumpini Park's size, it's still a welcome relief to have a green spot in this grey part of the city. Benchasiri's not worth a trip across the city to visit, but if you're in the area, it's worth taking a stroll around. Or bop along to an aerobics class and work off some of that kaeng khiao warn kai.
Hours: Daily 05:00-20:00
Cost: Free

Activities

Emporium
Sukhumvit Road, soi 24
This very popular mall houses the Emporium department store as well as a range of luxury shops. A reasonable food hall is

located on the fifth floor while an SFX cinema complex -- one of the best in town -- takes up the top floor.
Cost:Free

Thonburi

The other side of the Chao Phraya River is out of sight and out of mind for many visitors to Bangkok, barring the usual cursory stop at Wat Arun. Admittedly, Thonburi is not overflowing with sights and things to do, but it does boast a selection of tucked away and unusual attractions as well as some fine riverside bars and restaurants.

The BTS does not stretch over to this side of the city yet, but plans are afoot to extend it here.

Eat and Meet

Juon Thong Garden Restaurant
Just outside the southern bus station
Juon Thong Garden Restaurant is a huge multi-level Thai seafood restaurant with a menu featuring hundreds of items to choose from.

Service is prompt, the food is delicious and some English is spoken. If you have more than an hour to wait for a bus, it's worth trying a meal here.

Sights and Attractions

Kuan Oo Shrine
This small Chinese temple on the Thonburi side of the Chao Phraya River is unremarkable but warrants a quick stop if you're visiting the Princess Mother Memorial Park just behind it.

According to legend, King Taksin would visit this shrine to worship before he embarked on his war campaigns. He's also said to have kept stables nearby.
Hours: Daily
Cost: Free

Museum of the Department of Forensic Medicine
Siriraj Hospital
Ghouls and doctors, this is your thing: a room stuffed with all sorts of body parts and gruesome medical curiosities. The main attractions are the mummified bodies of infamous Thai murderers, but the shelves are also chock full of skulls marred by bullets, aborted foetuses and an array of limbs and parts that are quite unidentifiable.
Cost: Free

Princess Mother Memorial Park

Soi 3 Somdet Chao Phraya Road, Khlong San

This lovely little park, standing on land donated by a local couple in Thonburi, is located near the community where the Princess Mother resided as a child. The house she lived in was demolished long ago but a replica is there. The cool park also features an eight-metre long sculpture to mark the good works undertaken by the Princess Mother.

Hours: Garden Daily 06:00-18:00; Museum Daily 09:00-16:00
Cost: Free

Royal Barges National Museum
Khlong Bangkok Noi

The royal barges are used only rarely, when the royal family takes part in stunning processions down the Chao Phraya River. Although the procession consists of 26 boats, only a handful of these are designated as royal with the others performing the roles of escorts.

Each royal barge is intricately decorated with coloured paint and metallic and reflective inlays, sporting a different mythological figure or decoration at its head. The barges stretch for up to 50m in length, requiring over 60 crew per boat. The largest barge, Suphannahong, is used by the King himself. The sheds which contain the barges also hold somewhat shabby displays of other items such as the Royal Lean Pillow and Royal Footrest.

Hours: Daily 09:00-17:00
Cost: 30B

Wat Arun

When King Taksin planned to move the capital from Ayutthaya to Thonburi in 1768, he travelled down the Chao Phraya River by boat, arriving at dawn at an old wat where he paid his respects. He later named the temple Wat Jang, meaning the Temple of Dawn. It was later renovated by King Rama I and then King Rama III and became known as Wat Arun when Thonburi was the capital. Wat Arun was temporarily home to the Emerald Buddha, after which it was moved to Wat Phra Kaew where it remains today.

The courtyard of the wat contains five Khmer-style prangs, with the most impressive and largest in the centre representing Mount Meru, home of the gods in Buddhist belief. The middle prang was originally 16m tall but was stretched to reach over 82m by King Rama III in 1842. This elongation has given the prang a particular style all of its own. The prangs are decorated with Chinese porcelain and the apex of the central prang is covered by a crown originally constructed for a different wat.

It is possible to climb about halfway up the prang from where fine views of Thonburi and the Chao Phraya River can be enjoyed. The prang has four mondops around it, each of which contains a Buddha image striking a different pose.

Back at ground level, the bot contains a seated Buddha image, the face of which was designed by King Rama II. At particular times of the year a light and sound show is held on the grounds in the early evening, spectacularly lighting up the main prang.
Hours: Daily 08:30-17:30

Cost: 10B

Wat Prayoon
Prachatipok Road

Wat Prayoon lies within a compound surrounded by lush trees on the Thonburi side of the Chao Phraya River. It is a little out of the way, but if you are in the area you may want to poke your head in. The most interesting feature of this place is the hill located within the grounds.

The temple is a result of King Rama III becoming awestruck by a particularly interesting mould left by the dripping of a candle. He was so inspired that he ordered an exact replica be built -- the kind of thing you can get away with if you are a king.

Reaching a height of over 10m, the hill is surrounded by a moat containing turtles and pocketed with small vaults which contain the cremated remains of wealthy families.

Hours: Daily 08:00-17:30
Cost: Free

Chinatown and Pahurat

'Created' in 1782 when a large Chinese population was moved here from Ko Rattanakosin to make way for the seat of government, Bangkok's Chinatown is today chaotic and clogged with pedestrians, shoppers and vendors exchanging gold, textiles, car parts, coffins, electronics, nuts and bolts, shark fins, traditional medicine, tea and a huge variety of food. Those averse to large crowds and congested alleys may want to give Chinatown a miss as the area can quickly become exhausting to navigate with few spots to rest.

The most promoted section of Chinatown is Samphaeng Lane, but many other sections, such as the sois leading to the land and also a few stretches north of Yaowarat Road, not to mention Yawarat Road itself, are equally enticing to some. At the end of Samphaeng Lane lies Pahurat, or Little India, with a great array of Indian fabrics and foods.

Avoid traipsing around in the middle of the day, when the crowds are thickest and the traffic dreadful. Before 9am is the best time for seeing the wet markets and shopping possibilities while after 7pm Yaowarat explodes with cheap street-side eateries, including excellent seafood stalls.

During the vegetarian festival, Chinatown is particularly lively and of course a great source of vegetarian food. But during the rest of the year, vegetarians can find it a challenge unless they are happy to eat by the side of the road.

Vital Information

Chinatown banking

Pom Prab Post Office
Suapa Road

This branch is just off Yaowarat Road on Sua Pa Road, nearly opposite the Grand China Princess Hotel.

Chakkrawat Police Station
Chakrawat Road

This large station is about a 10-minute walk from Yaowarat Road. There are also police throughout the area directing traffic. They may be able to help in an emergency.

Accommodation

Grand China Princess Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10
215 Yaowarat Road

Tel: (02) 224 9977 Fax: (02) 224 7999

This 25-storey hotel is located in the heart of Chinatown and offers the best value for money in its price range. The 155 rooms are well-sized and some have very good views of the surrounding area. Rooms have standard facilities including TV, minibar, aircon and full bathroom. The pool on the 23rd floor is not the biggest around but after a few hours of stamping around Chinatown provides welcome relief. Staff and service are friendly and professional. This hotel is also popular with tour groups, so at times can be very busy. Substantial discounts are available.

gcp@grandchina.com
http://www.grandchina.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

White Orchid Hotel -- Our rating: 7/10
409-421 Yaowarat Road

Tel: (02) 226 0026 Fax: (02) 225 6403

This mid-range choice is in the middle of the action on Yaowarat Road. Rooms are clean and well-kept and rather quiet given their location. Prices are a little higher than at the Chinatown, but with its better location and cleaner rooms it's worth the extra baht.

Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Chinatown Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
526 Yaowarat Road

Tel: (02) 225 0204-26 Fax: (02) 226 1295

The 70-year-old Chinatown has reasonable rooms with standard mid-range facilities: TV, hot water, aircon and minibar. Some of the rooms are a bit damp so don't hesitate to ask to see more rooms if the first does not appeal. The hotel is located at the eastern end of Yaowarat and is not as central as some of the other choices.

info@chinatownhotel.co.th
http://www.chinatownhotel.co.th/
Price range: 600B to 1,500B

Golden Chain Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
231 Yaowarat Road

Tel: (02) 221 0384 Fax: (02) 221 9745

This budget hotel is located in the heart of Chinatown on Yaowarat Road. The rooms are a little musty, but are otherwise clean and well-sized. All have TV and fridge and many have balconies overlooking Yaowarat Road, which is great for the view, but not so hot for the noise. Probably the cheapest reasonable choice in the area.

Price range: Under 600B

Grande Ville Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10
903 Mahachai Road

Tel: (02) 225 0050 Fax: (02) 225 7593

This large hotel at the western end of Chinatown is pitched towards the business traveller and tour groups. Rooms are on the bland side, but have standard features expected for this price: TV, aircon, minibar and full bathroom. The location isn't as central as the Grand China Princess, which is in the same price range. Be sure to ask for a discount when making a reservation as you're likely to get one.

info@grandvillehotel.com
http://www.grandvillehotel.com
Price range: 1,500B to 4,000B

River View Guest House -- Our rating: 6/10

768 Soi Panurangri, Songvad Road

Tel: (02) 234 5429 Fax: (02) 237 5428

This eight-storey guesthouse wins the prize for being Bangkok's trickiest place to find despite being easy to see from the river. The views from the restaurant are superb although the food is so-so and the rooms, though clean, are overpriced. River View is in a good location if you plan spending a lot of time in Chinatown or if you're keen on a river view without paying five-star prices but is otherwise not recommended.

To get there, hop off at River City ferry pier, turn left and follow the small soi that runs off through markets. Keep going till you enter an area full of used car parts, take the third little soi on your left which has a sign pointing to the guesthouse. Follow this, take a turn to the right and you're there.

benjapak@ksc.th.com
Price range: Under 600B

Station Hotel -- Our rating: 6/10

518 Opposite Hualamphong Station

Tel: (02) 214 2794 Fax: (02) 613 9411

This hotel is probably the best of the couple clustered near the station. Located down a food stall soi to the left of the station when exiting (look for the sign up high reading Station Hotel), the Station has very clean though basic rooms. The beds are prison cell-style but they're functional and the rooms are reasonably quiet. Staff are very friendly and English is spoken. On the soi there are stacks of food stalls and little curry shops to munch at.

Price range: Under 600B

MY Guest House -- Our rating: 5/10

Corner of Songsawat Road and Phat Sai Road

This basic guesthouse is the cheapest in the area, but for a couple of hundred baht more you get a much better room at the

Golden Chain. The share bathroom rooms are grungy, but the ones on the roof are decent. The staff are very friendly and English is spoken. The corner opposite is a popular spot for old men to sit around sipping coffee and chatting.
Price range: Under 600B

Sri Hualamphong Hotel -- Our rating: 4/10
Rong Muang Road

This old-style Chinese hotel is the other budget option near the station. Rooms are very big, but it gets a fair bit of short-term trade and the Station Hotel offers better value. To get there, exit the station, turn left and walk down the soi that runs beside the station. The hotel is before the bunch of dodgy travel agents and has a small English sign.
Price range: Under 600B

Eat and Meet

Laem Thong Restaurant
38 Bamrungrat Road

This small Thai restaurant does reasonable standard Thai and Chinese dishes. Downstairs is open-air, upstairs aircon.

Lek & Rut Seafood

Corner of Phadung Dao and Yaowarat Roads

Opposite the famous T & K, Lek & Rut do the same kind of food at the same prices and with the same atmosphere. While there is little to differentiate the two -- down to the Mercedes pulling up for takeaway -- T & K is the original. Both are recommended.

No name place
Off Bamrungrat Road

This large open-air restaurant is a great place to rest your aching feet while sipping a few cold drinks and devouring huge plates of fried rice. Friendly staff put together very good and cheap food in this traditional Chinese place harking back to yesteryear (some items don't look as if they've been cleaned since then). English menu is available but no English is spoken.

Shangarila restaurant
306 Yaowarat Road
Tel: (02) 224 5807 Fax: (02) 224 5933

This well-known Chinese place is disappointing. Their dim sum are very average, do not include anything vegetarian, and everything else on the menu is overpriced. Atmosphere gets a 0/10 but the staff at least are friendly. You're better off eating on the street.

T & K Sea Food
49-51 Phadung Dao Road
Tel: (02) 223 4519

This outstanding seafood BBQ stall is the one place you should try to eat at while in Chinatown. The succulent seafood is reasonably priced and the atmosphere great. It gets very crowded, but don't wimp out and go for aircon -- sit on the pavement for the full experience. Recommended along with it's neighbour, Lek & Rut's.

Sights and Attractions

Boonsamakan Vegetarian Hall
Off Anuwong Road

This small, tricky-to-find hall is worth a look both during the vegetarian festival when it is a highlight and the rest of the year as well. The hall features some intriguing wood carvings, particularly some three-dimensional work on the upstairs front area along with the usual dragons and phoenixes. Inside there is more ornate carving and some strikingly altars. Opposite the hall is a stage area used for performances during the vegetarian festival.
Cost: Free

Pahurat Cloth Market

Between Chakraphet and Triphet Roads

This large covered market sells a wide range of clothing and fabrics. Prices are very reasonable. A large selection of Indian goods is also available in the area.
Cost: Free

Sampaeng Lane
Sampaeng Lane

This narrow alley is almost always packed with eager shoppers avidly searching for bargain hairbands, ghost masks, sandals, toys, sewing kits and other paraphernalia. Towards Pahurat the goods tend towards items you may actually use, such as clothing and lots of fabric -- but by the time most get this far into the market, their eyes have glazed over and their sole goal is to escape. The crowds are made worse by the occasional irritating motorcyclist and the odd porter delivering bolts of fabric.

More interesting shopping and wandering can be done along Soi Itsaranuphap, where it remains possible to breath.
Cost: Free

Sikh Temple
Off Chakraphet Road

This temple just south of Pahurat Cloth Market is the second largest Sikh one outside India and is an exact copy of the six-storey Golden Temple in Amritsar. Visitors are welcome to enter, but as with a Thai wat, shoes should be removed.

Cost: Free

Talaat Kao
Itsaranuphap Road

This 200-year-old wet market is the oldest in Chinatown and is worth an early morning visit. Browse the colourful fresh produce, squirming seafood and freshly-culled meats. Watch out for the porters wheeling massive bags of intestines and fish guts between stalls.

Cost: Free

Talaat Mai
Between Plaeng Nam and Itsaranuphap Roads

The only way to distinguish this from its older relative Talaat Kao is probably its size -- bigger -- and the layer of slime on

the ground -- thinner. It's another photogenic wet market that's particularly captivating in the early morning.

Cost: Free

Wat Chai Chana Songkhram
Mahachak Road

Chao Phraya Bodindecha, a very religious chief commander during the reign of King Rama III, decided to build this mid-sized wat after returning from victorious campaigns against the Vietnamese and Khmers in 1848. Its name means War Victory but locals prefer to call it Wat Teuk, after the concrete building (teuk in Thai) he built for himself and the monks.

There's not too much to see here, save a couple of chedis out back and the automatic bell ringer at your top left as you enter.

Cost: Free

Wat Chakrawat
Chakrawat Road

Wat Chakrawat -- or the crocodile wat, as it should be known -- boasts three live crocodiles along with a stuffed specimen. Supposedly brought here as strays, the three live beasts sit in two separate ponds to the left as you enter the main temple. The croc in the left pond is at least three metres long while the two in the right are each around two metres long. The stuffed croc who sits between the two ponds is an original member of the gang.

Cost: Free

Wat Leng Noi Yi
Charoen Krung Road

Wat Leng Noi Yi, or the Dragon Flower Temple, dates back to 1871 and is one of the most important sites for the Chinese in Thailand. The original temple was built using donations scraped together from the residents along Sampaeng Lane.

Entering from Charoen Krung Road, note the nine-storey gateway at the entrance, built in 1973 to honour King Rama IX's 6th-cycle birthday.

The interior of the temple is divided into several separate sections, all of which the visitor is allowed to wander through, although no photography is allowed.

A variety of activities take place here, including fortune telling, merit-making and regular services, along with worshipping at the Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian altars.

Keep an eye out for Chinese Thais making funeral offerings of burning paper cut-outs of houses, cars, refrigerators and other symbols of financial success. By burning these, the deceased are ensured of having their creature comforts in the afterlife.

Cost: Free

Wat Traimit
Traimit Road

The incredible five-metre high Buddha image here is solid gold and weighs around five tonnes. It is the largest solid gold Buddha in the world and is one of Thailand's (and Buddhism's)

greatest treasures.

The Buddha is over 700 years old but it was not until 1955 that it was discovered to be solid gold. It was encased in plaster at some stage -- probably to hide it from marauding Burmese -- and it was not until it was chipped while being moved that its hidden splendour was uncovered. Some of the plaster is on display in a side cabinet.

Hours: Daily 08:00-17:00

Cost: 20B

Activities

Bangkok Poetry
402-408 Maitri Chit Road

Bangkok Poetry is a fun and unusual event, drawing an eclectic crowd who are as interested in linguistic acrobatics as downing a few friendly drinks. Managed by a couple of American expats, all are welcome to read, listen or perform. The poetry ranges from the truly appalling to excellent. Recommended.

Cost: Free

Dr Reflexology
51/1-2 Phadung Dao Road

After walking up and down Yaowarat and through the madness of Sampaeng Lane, your feet will likely be throbbing in agony. This is the place for a soothing foot massage. An hour-long treatment will set you back 300B.
Cost: Free