

TimeOut

amazing
THAILAND

Insider's guide to

Bangkok & Phuket





Welcome

One of the most-visited destinations in the world, Thailand is an explosion of scents, flavours and experiences, bursting with places to see, things to do and food to eat.

The Thai capital, Bangkok, is a cosmopolitan metropolis that boasts a fascinating juxtaposition of ancient spired temples sitting alongside glittering high-rise structures; buzzing night markets set amid modern malls; and shophouse eateries coexisting with swanky restaurants.

Bangkok serves as a gateway to many other parts of Thailand, including Phuket, the country's biggest and busiest island. An irresistible draw for beach lovers for its azure-blue waters and powdery stretches of sand, Phuket



is also home to luxurious resorts, world-class spa retreats, an incredible food scene and a vibrant nightlife.

This handy guide to Bangkok and Phuket fleshes out popular places of interest as well as off-the-beaten-track gems, and rounds up where to eat, what to do, where to get your massage fix, and how to make the most of your visit.

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TimeOut



Bangkok



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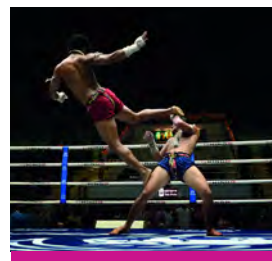
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Events calendar 2019

When should you time your trip to Thailand's capital? We've compiled a list of some of the important festivals and events to help you make the most of your visit

Amazing Thailand Marathon Feb 3

This famous endurance race ends at the Democracy Monument, where runners can enjoy Thai food and entertainment.

Chinese New Year Feb 5

Ring in the Year of the Pig in Yaowaraj, Bangkok's Chinatown. Expect fireworks, acrobatic dancers and dragon parades in the street, and wear red and eat dumplings and noodles for prosperity and good health in the new year.



BDMS Bangkok Marathon

Vertical Marathon Mar 10

Runners race vertically up the 1,093 steps (61 storeys) of the Banyan Tree Bangkok Hotel. This will be the 20th year the race has been held.

Songkran Festival Apr 13-15

Celebrate the Thai New Year with an epic street water fight the entire length of Silom Road or Khao San Road. Vendors along the way will sell you water pistols and balloons, as well as plenty of food and drink, to take part in the festivities.



New Year's Eve

Amazing Thai Taste Festival Jun 7-9

This festival in Siam Square promotes Thailand's diverse gastronomy with more than 100 food stalls as well as live music performances and famous chefs giving cooking demonstrations.

Vegetarian Festival Sep 28-Oct 7

Participating businesses hang yellow flags and serve a dazzling array of vegetarian dishes. By night, Chinese opera is performed in the streets of Chinatown.

BDMS Bangkok Marathon Nov 17

Bangkok's famous annual marathon involves a course that traverses historical monuments of the city, starting and finishing in front of the Royal Grand Palace.

Loy Krathong Nov 13

One of the most beautiful festivals in Bangkok is Loy Krathong, when people release lotus-shaped rafts decorated with candles, incense and flowers onto rivers,



Songkran Festival

lakes and small canals as a symbol of letting go of bad luck and honouring the Goddess of Water.

New Year's Eve Dec 31

Hundreds of thousands of people gather everywhere from bars to plazas to party and ring in the new year.



Chinese New Year

Things to Do

Bangkok assaults the senses with majestic sights. We've homed in on the most memorable experiences this exuberant city has to offer



Wat Suthat and the Giant Swing

Wat Suthat and the Giant Swing

Standing in City Hall square, the Giant Swing (Sao Ching Cha) was originally erected in 1784 as part of the adjacent Devasathan, a Brahmin compound of shrines to Shiva, Ganesh and Vishnu. In the past a ceremony celebrating the god Shiva would require four brave men to swing from this lofty red frame to grab at pouches of coins (the ritual ceased in the 1930s due to fatalities). The poles were erected in 1919 to honour the son of Anna Leonowens, the contentious

governess immortalised in *The King and I* and a teacher in the Siamese court of King Rama IV. In 2006, the rickety timbers were replaced by the structure you see today. Looming behind the Giant Swing, the temple of Wat Suthat houses the awe-inducing, eight-metre, 800-year-old Phra Sri Sakyamuni Buddha. One of the largest surviving Sukhothai-era bronzes, this statue contains the ashes of King Rama VIII at its base. Begun by Rama I in 1807, the temple took three reigns to complete. → 268 Dinso Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 222 6951.

The Grand Palace & The Temple of the Emerald Buddha

This complex of buildings in the heart of Bangkok is the city's architectural and spiritual treasure. Nearly two kilometres of walls with lotus-shaped crenellations enclose what was once a self-contained city of throne halls, royal chambers, servants' quarters, ministries and a prison. Allow at least a two-hour visit; sandals, shorts and bare shoulders are forbidden. The Temple of the Emerald Buddha (Wat Phra Kaew) is the country's most important Buddhist temple and houses Phra Kaew Morakot, a Buddha that has been carved from a single block of jade. → www.royalgrandpalace.th/en/home.

Wat Pho

This vast temple houses the magnificent golden Reclining Buddha. Made from brick and gilded plaster, it measures 46 by 15 metres and depicts the posture of the Buddha while entering nirvana. Wat Pho also has 99 stupas, two of which hold



Wat Pho

the remains of kings Rama II and III. The temple remains a repository of traditional medicine and nuad paen boran (ancient massage), and you can book a massage for during your visit. → 2 Sanamchai Rd, Pra Nakhon, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 226 0335.

Wat Arun

Seen on 10-baht coin, this five-spired landmark of around 80 metres in height has been known as the 'Temple of Dawn' ever since the soon-to-be King Taksin landed by the then Wat Magog at sunrise in October 1767. Wat Arun features a pair of yaksa (giant) statues, ceramic gables and 120 Buddha images. Don't rush a visit on a canal tour: instead, access the temple via the public ferry from Tha Tien and wander the temple grounds for as long as you wish. → 34 Arun Amarin Rd, Thonburi, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 891 1149.



Wat Arun

Wat Benchamabophit

Clad in Italian Carrara marble, Wat Benchamabophit is a well proportioned meld of East and West designed by



Chatuchak Weekend Market

Italian architect Hercules Manfredi. Commissioned in 1899 by Rama V (one room contains his ashes), the temple features stained-glass windows depicting scenes from Thai mythology and a replica of Thailand's much-venerated Buddha image. → Cnr Si Ayutthaya & Nakhon Pathom Rds, Dusit, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 281 2501. www.watbencha.com.

Erawan Shrine

Thais are able to seamlessly fuse modernity with spiritual beliefs. This ability is encapsulated at the frenetic Hindu shrine to Brahma, erected in 1956 to appease displaced spirits who were blamed for mishaps in the building of the old Erawan Hotel. Pilgrims gather here to make wishes. → Ratchaprasong Intersection, Ratchadamri Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 254 1234.

Chatuchak Weekend Market

This 14-hectare market hosts an astonishing 8,000 stalls every Friday night and all day Saturday and Sunday. You can find everything from a pair of



Wat Benchamabophit

jeans to a kitten, as well as clothing, ceramics, furniture, food and drink, gardening accessories, books and antiques. → Kamphaeng Phet 2 Rd, Chatuchak, Bangkok.

Night markets

A key part of any trip to Bangkok is a visit to the night markets. Sift through piles of pre-loved goods and vintage collectibles at one of the **Rod Fai** markets (a large market is on Srinakarin Soi 51, while a smaller, more accessible market is on Ratchada Road). You can also make the trek to **Chang Chui**, which features trendy stalls and artisanal products.

Bang Kra Jao

This protected wooded peninsula seems like the countryside, yet it's just 15 minutes by road and ferry from the Klong Toey MRT. Explore Bangkok's 'green lung' by bicycle. Frequent boats from Wat Klong Toey Nok Pier stop at a pierside shop that rents them out for B100/hr. → Kasemrat Rd, Klong Toey, Bangkok.

Jim Thompson's House

Jim Thompson was a US architect who settled in Thailand at the end of World War II and started a company selling luxurious fabrics. In 1959, he adapted six teak houses into a modern living compound.

Now a museum, it exhibits Thompson's Asian artefacts and looks much like it did when he mysteriously disappeared into Malaysia's Cameron Highlands in 1967. → 6/1 Kasemsan Soi 2, Rama I Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 216 7368. www.jimthompsonhouse.com.

Lhong 1919

Lhong 1919 is a sprawling space preserving and promoting ancient Sino-Siamese architecture and culture. Restaurants retain the crumbling walls and murals of the original structures, and craft shops and galleries are also appealing draws. → 248 Chiang Mai Rd, Klong San, Bangkok. +66 (0)9 1187 1919. www.lhong1919.com.

King Power Mahanakhon Skywalk

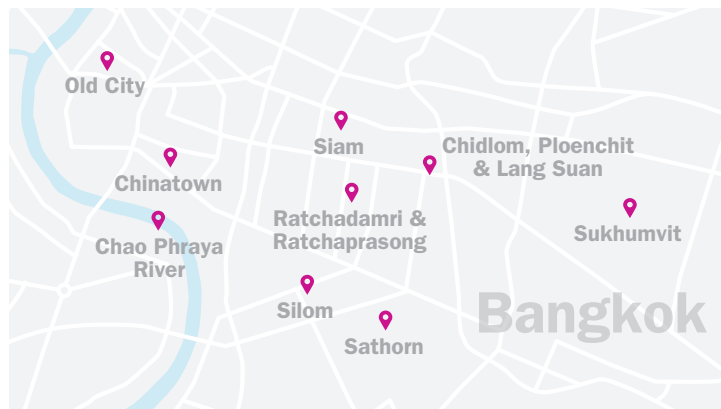
Set atop Thailand's tallest building, the Skywalk comprises an observation deck and a rooftop bar that offer 360-degree views of the City of Angels. Put your courage to the test by walking out to a glass floor that looks down over 300 metres. → 74/F-78/F, King Power Mahanakhon, 114 Narathiw Rd, Silom, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 677 8721. kingpowermahanakhon.co.th/skywalk/.

Experience local transport

Bangkok offers a plethora of choices for getting around. The iconic Tuk Tuk, a three-wheeled, motor-propelled conveyance, is the tourist's favourite way of travel, but there's also the elevated BTS rapid transit system and the underground MRT, both of which have stops at major points in the city. Bangkok also has a network of klongs (canals), which you can traverse aboard traditional long-tailed boats.

Food & Drink

In Bangkok, you can get Michelin-starred excellence and some of the best street food in the world – and sometimes, both at once



Sra Bua by Kiin Kiin

📍 Siam and Ratchadamri/Ratchaprasong

Find eats in retail surrounds and the classiest food courts you'll ever see

1 Jim Thompson Restaurant and Wine Bar

A slice of old Thailand right in the heart of the city, Jim Thompson has silk-upholstered chairs and greenery-decorated chandeliers in an old

teakwood-house setting. Look out for nicely balanced dishes such as Gaeng Mussaman Gai (chicken curry) and Seau Rong Hai (Thai-style grilled rib-eye steak). → 6/1 Soi Kasemsan 2, Rama I Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 612 3601. jimthompsonrestaurant.com.

2 Sra Bua by Kiin Kiin

An extraordinary experience for food lovers, this Michelin-starred restaurant in Siam Kempinski Hotel has a molecular approach to Thai food. Here, red curry is transformed into ice cream and Tom Yum (hot and sour soup) comes in jelly form. → Siam Kempinski Hotel, 991/9 Rama I Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 162 9000. www.srabuabykiinkiin.com/en.

3 Siam Square

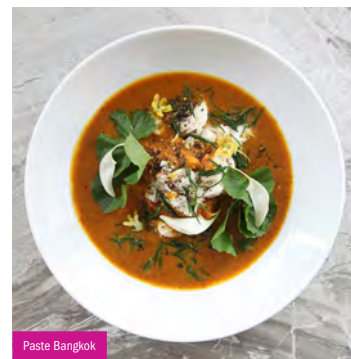
Located in Bangkok's most popular shopping district, the Siam Square complex is a central hub for teenagers. Simple eateries such as **Inter** and **Som Tam Nua** line the streets, peddling unpretentious, home-style Thai fare. → Rama I Rd, Bangkok. www.siam-square.com.

4 Siam Center

You'll find great food choices at this cutting-edge downtown mall such as Thai fusion food from renowned local restaurants like **Kang Ban Phe** and **Petite Audrey**. The bustling **Food Republic**, its fourth-floor food court, is an excellent spot to grab international bites. → 989 Rama I Rd, Bangkok. www.siamcenter.co.th.

5 Siam Paragon

While you're enjoying the opulence of this luxury mall, you can eat like a king at upscale venues like **Bankara Ramen**, **Bombyx Jim Thompson** and **Clinton**



Paste Bangkok

Street Baking Company, or go for more affordable options from the food stalls in the sprawling basement-situated food court. → 991/1 Rama I Rd, Bangkok. www.siamparagon.co.th.

6 CentralWorld

Run your errands at the shops, then chomp on goodies from renowned culinary names including **Din Tai Fung** and **Honmono Sushi**. Another highlight? Cocktails with stunning views at rooftop bar **Red Sky** in the adjoining Centara Grand at CentralWorld Hotel. → 999/9 Rama I Rd, Bangkok. www.centralworld.co.th.

7 Ginza Sushi Ichi

Sublime sushi awaits at this 14-seat Michelin-starred restaurant, where disciples from the original Tokyo outpost serve traditional cuts of mouth-watering toro nigiri and heavenly delicacies like venus clam and sea urchin. → Lower Ground Fl Erawan Bangkok, 494 Ploenchit Rd, Lumpini, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 250 0014. www.ginza-sushiichi.jp/english/shop/bangkok.html.

8 Paste Bangkok

This Michelin-starred restaurant delivers classic regional Thai food with twists. Top dishes include a lobster salad with fried fish skins and edible flowers, pork belly buns with chilli jam, and soft-shell crab with green apple and mango. → 3/F, Gaysorn Village, 999 Ploenchit Rd, Lumpini, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 656 1003. www.pastebangkok.com.

9 Chidlom, Ploenchit, Lang Suan & Sukhumvit

Expect Michelin-starred dining rooms and the city's trendiest eats

9 Spirit Jim Thompson

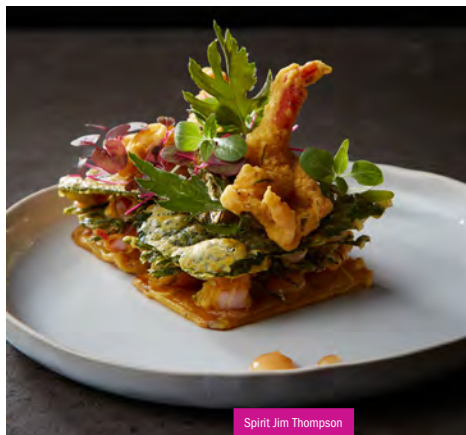
The menu offers innovative twists on traditional plates, such as duck confit with red curry sauce served with peaches and curried tomatoes. → 16 Soi Somkid, Lumpini, Bangkok. +66(0)2 017 7268. www.spiritjimthompson.com.

10 Saneh Jaan

Bearer of one Michelin star, Saneh Jaan unleashes a monsoon of flavours via dishes such as Gaeng Ranjuan (shrimp paste-based pork soup) and an aromatic Tom Kha Gai (chicken coconut soup). → 130 Wireless Rd, Lumpini, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 650 9880. www.glasshouseatsindhorn.com/restaurant/saneh-jaan.

11 Savelberg

Dutch chef Henk Savelberg matches premium ingredients with technical sleight of hand at his Michelin star-awarded, French-inspired restaurant. → Oriental Residence Bangkok, 110 Wireless Rd,



Lumpini, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 252 8001. www.restaurantsavelberg.com.

12 Gaggan

Gaggan Anand's two Michelin-starred restaurant highlights complex flavours in a tasting menu featuring molecular versions of familiar Indian recipes. → 68/1 Soi Langsuan, Ploenchit Rd, Lumpini, Bangkok. +66 2 652 1700. eatatgaggan.com.

13 Eathai

A grand hall brings together vendors from Bangkok's top street kiosks serving noodles, spicy northern salads, Pad Thai and vegetarian options. → Lower Ground Fl, Central Embassy, 1031 Ploenchit Rd, Bangkok. www.centralemembassy.com/store/eathai/.

14 Elements

This stylish venue lives up to its Michelin star with Japanese-influenced New French cuisine such as Hokkaido scallops

with foie gras and grilled cod with sake and soba risotto. → 25th Fl, Okura Prestige, 57 Wireless Rd, Ploenchit, Bangkok. +66 2 687 9000. www.okurabangkok.com/en/elements-book.html.

15 Gaa

At Michelin-starred Gaa, chef Garima Arora's tasting menus reveal a new-school take on Indo-Siamese cuisine. → 68/4 Soi Langsuan, Ploenchit Rd, Lumpini, Bangkok. +66 91 419 2424. www.gaabkk.com.

16 Sorn

Michelin-starred Sorn has a tasting menu highlighting refined versions of authentic recipes, such as sour yellow curry with young mangosteen and gu fish. → 56 Sukhumvit Soi 26, Klong Toey, Bangkok. +66 (0) 99 081 1119. www.sornfinesouthern.com.

17 Chim by Siam Wisdom

Iron Chef Thailand alum Thaninthon "Noom" Chantrawan runs this one Michelin-starred destination, notable for uncompromising curries. → 66 Soi Sukhumvit 31, Klong Toey, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 260 7811. www.siamwisdomcuisine.com.

18 Bo.lan

This Michelin-awarded restaurant offers modernised Royal Thai cuisine and draws from hyper-local sources including its own backyard garden. → 24 Sukhumvit Soi 53, Klong Tan Nuea, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 260 7811. www.bolan.co.th.

19 R-Haan

This Michelin-starred venue reinvents the traditional samrub (set of shared dishes), from the flavourful krueng jim options (dips with assorted vegetables) to the

zesty Gaeng (curry) renditions. → 131 Sukhumvit Soi 53, Klong Tan Nuea, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 059 0433. www.r-haan.com.

20 Canvas

At this Michelin-starred dining room attentive waiters describe the parade of fare made from local ingredients. → 113/9-10 Sukhumvit Soi 55, Klong Tan Nuea, Bangkok. +66 (0)99 614 1158. www.canvasbangkok.com.

21 Thonglor

Soi Thonglor is a stretch of boutiques and some of the city's most popular restaurants, brunch spots and cafés. When the sun sets, it's also the place to converge for bars, clubs and live music. → Sukhumvit Soi 55, Klong Tan Nuea, Bangkok.

22 Upstairs at Mikkeller

Chef/owner Dan Bark shows his chops with progressive American plates at this Michelin-starred dining room. → 26 Ekkamai Soi 10, Ln 2, Phra Khanong Nuea, Bangkok. +66 (0) 91 713 9034. www.upstairs-restaurant.com.



9 Silom & Sathorn

These upscale dining rooms will require a bit of your time and a bit more from your pocket



23 Le Du

A seamless, Michelin-approved succession of innovative dishes includes Wagyu beef with pickled cabbage, prawns cooked on a hot stone and pork tongue and pork blood pudding. → 399/3 Silom Soi 7, Bangrak, Bangkok. +66 (0)92 919 9969. www.ledubkk.com.

24 Mezzaluna

Soy-glazed snapper with foie gras or grilled Nagasaki Wagyu beef rib-eye with Perigord truffle, plus views of the Chao Phraya River, add up to an exquisite two-Michelin-starred experience. → 65th Fl, Tower Club at Le Bua, Silom Rd, Bangrak, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 624 9555. www.lebua.com.

25 Nahm

The dishes that earned Nahm its Michelin star include smoky prawn salad with tea tree leaves and star fruit, and

Wagyu beef Panang curry with peanuts, shallots and Thai basil. → Metropolitan Bangkok, 27 South Sathorn Rd, Sathorn, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 625 3333. www.comohotels.com/en/metropolitanbangkok/dining/nahm.

26 Saawaan

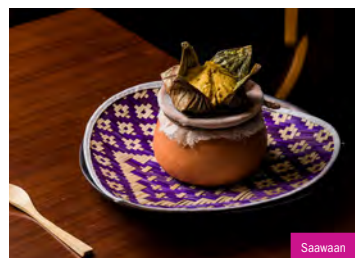
Saawaan translates to 'heaven' in Thai and, true to its name, the menu at this Michelin-awarded dining room is out of this world, offering deconstructed versions of ubiquitous Thai favourites. → 39/19 Soi Suanplu, Sathorn, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 679 3775. www.saawaan.com.

27 Sühring

There's a tangible air of expectation (the restaurant has two Michelin stars, after all) for a tasting menu that blends elaborate plates with rustic German cooking. → 10 Yen Akat Soi 3, Chong Nonsi, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 287 1799. restaurantsuhring.com.

28 J'aime by Jean-Michel Lorain

This upscale restaurant, recognised by Michelin with one star, combines French cuisine with the shared dining concept typical of Asian meals. → U Sathorn Bangkok, 105/1 Soi Ngam Duphli, Sathorn, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 119 4899. www.jaime-bangkok.com.



9 Chao Phraya Riverside

Head to the market – and a stop at legendary dining institution

29 Wang Lang Market

Come with an empty stomach during the day and feast on delicious northeastern food at **Som Tam Jae Yupin**, Thai-style folded pancakes at **Pa Tim's Tank Taek Pancake**, grilled pork skewers from every other stall, tropical fruits and sweet Thai desserts. → Soi Wang Lang, Siriraj, Bangkok Noi.

30 Asiatique

This tourist-friendly riverside night market has brewpubs, steakhouses and seafood restaurants, as well as a clean, well-lit food court hawking favourite Thai street eats. → 2194 Charoenkrung Rd, Wat Phraya Krai, Bangkok. www.asiatiquethailand.com.

31 Iconsiam

This newly opened riverside shopping complex has seven dining zones and more than 100 restaurants. **SookSiam**, located in the lower ground level, is a



fair-themed food hall hosting 77 stalls that represent every region of Thailand. → 299 Charoen Nakhon Soi 5, Charoen Nakhon Rd, Klong San, Bangkok. www.iconsiam.com.

32 Sala Rattanakosin Eatery and Bar

Dining options at the lavish Sala Rattanakosin hotel are split between the swish Eatery and Bar, which serves east-meets-west plates, and the Roof, a more laidback rooftop hangout that offers cocktails with Thai flavour profiles. Both enjoy panoramic views. → Sala Rattanakosin, 39 Maharat Rd, Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 622 1388. www.salahospitality.com/rattanakosin/en/dine/eatery-and-bar/.

33 Le Normandie

At this legendary two Michelin-starred dining room, dishes such as Oscietra caviar with sea urchin and potato, and lamb Allaiton with eggplant and black garlic are a perfect match for the full-bodied Rhône reds on the wine list. → Mandarin Oriental Bangkok, 48 Oriental Ave, Bangrak, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 659 9000. www.mandarinoriental.com.



Jay Fai

stir-fries and sugary Thai desserts.
→ Klang Mueang Rd, Khon Kaen, Bangkok.

37 Khaosan

Khaosan Road and its adjacent alleys are a thrilling exhibition of Thai street food. Neon signs promise jok (rice porridge), Khao Ka Moo (pork leg braised in sweet soy and spices), fruit shakes, banana pancakes and Pad Thai.

→ Khaosan Rd, Talat Yot, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok.

9 Old City

Go here for street food

34 Phraeng Phuthorn

This long, narrow street is densely packed with cheap food stalls. Those in the know make a beeline for the Cantonese-style egg noodles at **Phraeng Phuthorn Noodle**, while the more daring seek out the Tom Samong Moo (pig's brain soup) at **Samong Moo Thai Tham**. → Phraeng Phuthorn Rd, Rattanakosin Island, Bangkok.

35 Dinso Road

At this throbbing street food centre, sidewalk vendors and shophouse eateries vie for attention. Follow the smells, the smoke and the locals towards **Krua Aporn** for its fluffy crab meat omelette, and **Nai Ouan Yentafo**, proud purveyor of Ba Teng (braised pork belly). → Dinso Rd, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok.

36 Bang Lampu Market

All the classic Thai street food dishes are represented at this market. Get your fill of steaming Tom Yum (aromatic clear soup),

38 Jay Fai

Customers queue for Michelin-starred street food: a bursting-at-the-seams crab omelette and mouth-watering Poo Phad Pong Kari (crab curry with scrambled eggs). The owner/chef wok-fries orders, her head wrapped in protective goggles and a ski cap. → 327 Mahachai Rd, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok. +66 (0)92 724 9633.

39 Methavalai Sorndaeng

It opened more than 50 years ago, was recently awarded one Michelin star and retains the iconic waiters in stuffy white jackets and 1950s soundtrack. → 78/2 Ratchadamnoen, Bowonniwet, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 224 3088.



Khaosan Road



El Chiringuito

9 Chinatown

Come with an open mind for some of the best food in the city

40 Yaowarat Road

Vendors line Chinatown's main drag, all in the shadow of dilapidated shophouse structures. Diners take their seats on plastic stools at makeshift tables and tuck into fried rice, stir-fried noodles, grilled fish, sweetened offals and glutinous desserts. → Yaowarat Rd, Samphanthawong, Bangkok.

41 T & K Seafood

What's probably the most famous seafood joint in Chinatown has generous portions, fresh ingredients, and brisk service. Try the boiled cockles and mussels or the grilled fish that's cooked right on the street. → 49-51 Phadung Dao Rd, Samphanthawong, Bangkok.

42 Nai Mong Hoy Tod

This storefront provides some of the best Hoy Tod (oyster omelette) in the city. Here, the springy dish is made with tapioca

flour, eggs and fresh, plump oysters.
→ 539 Phlap Phla Chai Rd, Samphanthawong, Bangkok. +66 (0)89 773 3133.

43 Jek Pui Curry

Look beyond the plastic stools and the rickety cart and you'll find reliable, tasty fare. All the curry staples and stir-fries the stall specialises in are likely to sell out.
→ 427 Mangkon Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 222 5229.

44 Guay Jub Ouan Pochana

This street-food stall is famous for its Chinese-style Guay Jub (rolled rice noodles), the epitome of rainy-day comfort food with silky rice noodles and pork belly steeped in piping hot, peppery broth.
→ 408 Yaowarat Rd, Samphanthawong, Bangkok. +66 (0)86 508 9979.

45 Soi Nana

A lively Chinatown area (not to be confused with the one along Sukhumvit Road), Soi Nana has eateries, bars and cafés. A cool atmosphere pervades Thai-influenced speakeasy **Tep Bar**, gin haunt **Teens of Thailand**, postmodern lounge **Asia Today**, and tapas spot **El Chiringuito**. → Soi Nana, Pom Prap Sattru Phai, Bangkok.

Art & Culture

Immerse yourself in Thailand's unique culture via these creative things to see and do in the capital

Bangkok Art & Culture Center (BACC)

Bangkok's burgeoning contemporary art scene has the home it deserves in BACC, a multi-storey, modernist structure that hosts perspective-shifting exhibitions, shows and performances by local talents alongside works by international artists. → 939 Rama I Rd, Pathumwan, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 214 6630. en.bacc.or.th.

The Artist's House (Baan Silapin)

Situated on the Thonburi side of the river, within a maze of canals, this restored canal house is dedicated to the art of puppet performance, with shows at 2pm Thursday to Tuesday. Apart from quirky, hand-controlled dolls, the teakwood house also features gorgeous handicrafts and interesting sculptures. → www.facebook.com/Baansilapin/.

Silom Thai Cooking School

This experience takes you to a traditional market to shop for ingredients before whisking you back to a classroom for an immersive lesson that will impart the how-tos of making curry pastes, Tom Yum soup, Thai fried rice and Pad Thai. → 68 Silom Soi 13, Silom Rd, Bangrak, Bangkok. +66 (0)8 4726 5669. www.bangkokthaicooking.com.

SookSiam at Iconsiam

Styled like an 'indoor floating market', the 15,000m² space features a warren of street food stalls and boutiques that highlight the cultural specialties of a different regions. It's truly impossible to leave empty-handed or with an empty stomach. → G/F Iconsiam, 299 Charoennakhon Soi 5, Klong San, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 495 7000. www.iconsiam.com.



Museum Siam

Learn how Siam became Thailand, and more. The museum uses interactive exercises and tech-driven methods. → 4 Sanam Chai Rd, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 225 2777. www.museumsiam.org.

The Loom Weaving Workshop

A boutique that doubles as a DIY workshop offers the chance to learn how to make those intricately woven Thai silk bags and scarves. → 3rd Fl, Gateway Ekamai, 982/22, Sukhumvit Rd, Phra Khanong, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 001 5715. www.silkweavinghobby.com.

MOCA Bangkok

More than 800 works of art call the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) home. The museum displays paintings and installations by local artists depicting mostly mythological or religious Buddhist themes. The museum itself is an architectural delight, its grounds snaking through glass and sliding doors to a manicured garden out back. → 499 Kamphaengphet 6 Rd, Ladyao, Chatuchak, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 016 5666. www.mocabangkok.com.

Thailand Creative and Design Center (TCDC)

A dedicated entity for art, design and the creative process, the five-storey TCDC has a wealth of resources within its walls, including a library that houses about 50,000 design-related books, an innovation centre that affords accessibility to a range of Thai-made materials, and an exhibition hall. → The Grand Postal Building, 1160 Charoenkrung Rd, Bangrak, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 105 7400. web.tcdc.or.th/en/.

Action & Adventure

Skip the spas for an adrenaline rush in Thailand's bustling capital

Discover the excitement of Muay Thai

Thailand's national sport should be the first thing on the list for adrenaline junkies in Bangkok. Muay Thai fighters use their elbows, knees, feet and shins in addition to their fists. If watching a match is enough thrill for you then head to either Rajadamnern or Lumpinee stadiums. There are also plenty of gyms offering Thai boxing training. → Rajadamnern Stadium, Rajadamnern Nok Rd, Pomphab Satroo pai, Bangkok. rajadamnern.com. → Lumpinee Stadium, 6 Ramintra Rd, Anusawaree, Bang Khen, Bangkok. www.lumpineemuaythai.com.

Go wakeboarding

Taco Lake is Bangkok's oldest cable wakeboarding centre and welcomes anyone with the urge to skate over the surf. No matter your age or skill level, Taco Lake will get you out on the water and having a blast. Expect to get wet. → Taco Lake, 175/1 KM 13, Bangna-Trad Rd, Bangphli Yai, Bangphli, Samutprakarn. +66 (0)2 316 7809. www.tacolake.com.

Try indoor surfing

Bangkok's on-water action continues at Flow House. The main attraction here is the FlowRider – a water ride that runs a thin sheet of water quickly over a slope.



Indoor rockclimbing at Urban Playground

The result is an artificial wave that riders can surf on. Wiping out is just as much fun as riding. → Flow House, A-Square 120/1 Sukhumvit 26, Klong Tan, Klong Toey, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 108 5210. flowhousebangkok.com.

Drive a Formula One car

Dream of zooming around the track like Daniel Ricciardo or Lewis Hamilton? The city's Taki Racing track lets people aged 16 and over get behind the wheel of a Formula One race car. They offer



FlowRider

one- or two-day courses that will give you confidence in the cars and some serious bragging rights on your return home. → www.takiracing.com.

Dive with sharks

Come face to face with the toothy grin of a shark in the middle of Bangkok. Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World is the largest aquarium in South East Asia. They offer

hands-on experiences, including a glass-bottomed boat, underwater tunnel and shark diving. No experience is necessary to go scuba diving with the sharks, though if you're a regular diver you will get a sweet discount. → Sea Life Bangkok Ocean World, B1-B2 Fl, Siam Paragon, 991 Rama I Rd, Pathumwan, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 687 2000. www.sealifebangkok.com/en.

Go indoor rockclimbing

For the days when Bangkok's heat and humidity become too much you can always head inside for a thrill. Urban Playground has lots of climbing walls, a bouldering cave and a 12-metre top rope and lead climbing course. There are more than 10,000 handholds in the gym and routes for climbers of all levels. → Urban Playground, 8 Soi Sukhumvit 49, Klong Toey, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 119 7200. urbanplaygroundclimbing.com.



Muay Thai

Relax

Rejuvenation is one of Thailand's hallmarks as a destination. Enter the Zen zone at Bangkok's temples to health and wellbeing



Thai massage meets Japanese onsen

Some Bangkok spas offer Japanese onsen facilities. The plush **Panpuri Wellness** offers pampering massages and wellness programs as well as segregated onsen baths. **Let's Relax Spa & Onsen** features mineral bath tubs, sauna, steam, warm and cold room, and an extended menu of massage and spa treatments. → Panpuri Wellness, 12th Fl, Gaysorn Village, 999 Ploenchit Rd, Lumpini, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 253 8899. www.panpuriwellness.com. → Let's Relax Spa & Onsen, 5th Fl, Grande Center Point Hotel, 300 Sukhumvit

Soi 55, Klong Tan Nua, Wattana, Bangkok. +66 (0)2042 8045. letsrelaxspa.com/bangkok/.

Wat Po Traditional Thai Massage School

It doesn't get much more authentic than a massage at the Wat Po Traditional Thai Massage School. The venerable temple is also the headquarters for the teaching and preservation of traditional Thai medicine. Treatments here are performed in a large communal space lined with mattresses on the floor (no partitions). You forget the lack of privacy once the trained masseurs start working

on your knots and stretching your limbs. → 2 Sanamchai Rd, Phra Nakhon, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 226 0335.

Rasayana Retreat

If you're looking to combine a detox holiday with an introduction to raw food beyond piles of salad leaves, consider going to Rasayana Retreat, a wellness centre that advocates natural detox by combining colon hydrotherapy treatments and herbal massages with organic, uncooked food. At this retreat, you're encouraged to discover true health with food that makes you feel energised and alive. The centre also has a raw food café where you can order fresh juices, soups and vegetarian dishes. → 57 Soi Prom-mitr, Sukhumvit Soi 39, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 662 4803. www.rasayanaretreat.com.

Bangkok Float Center

Float tanks are nothing new, but they're probably the best way to claim much-needed peace and quiet after days spent

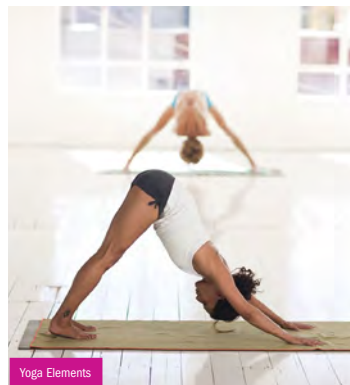
in riotous markets and crowded malls. At Bangkok Float Center, you can find your Zen in a tank pod filled with a high concentration of salt that causes you to float weightlessly. Studies show that hour-long floats lower stress-causing cortisol levels and elevate happiness-inducing dopamine and endorphins. → Show DC Entertainment Mall, 99/6-9 Rama IX Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)98 628 9599. www.bangkokfloatcenter.com.

Wat Mahathat

One of Bangkok's oldest temples is also the centre for Vipassana meditation in the city. Traditional silent, seated sessions are practiced, with a focus on breathing and the realisation that all beings are ephemeral. The daily one-hour guided meditation sessions are a perfect place for beginners to start, although longer periods of study, which include accommodation and food, can also be arranged by the centre. → 3 Maharat Rd, Phra Borom Maha Ratchawang, Bangkok.

Yoga Elements

Though it's located slap bang in the middle of the capital, Yoga Elements is the ideal space for clearing your over-stimulated mind and sweating and stretching it out for at least an hour. At this studio, hailed as one of the best yoga studios in the world, there's a class for every level of flexibility or focus. Beginners can start with the Elements class, which focuses on the fundamentals, while advanced students can join the Flow and Bliss Vinyasa classes. → 7th Fl, 185 Dhammalert Building, Sukhumvit Rd, Bangkok. +66 (0)2 255 9552. www.yogaelements.com.



Phuket



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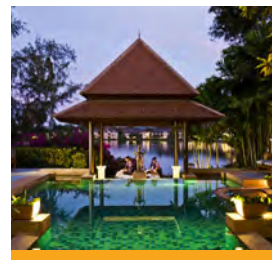
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Events calendar 2019

Time your trip to Thailand's beach paradise for thrilling festivals and events and make the most of your visit



Wat Chalong Fair Feb 4-10

This seven-day festival celebrates Wat Chalong, Phuket's largest and most visited temple. There are performances and games in the streets, singers and puppeteers, and plenty of food.

Chinese New Year and Phuket Old Town Festival Feb 10-12

About a third of Phuket's population has Chinese roots, so Chinese New Year celebrations are very special here. Festivities include dragon processions and fireworks, and make sure you wear red for luck in the new year.

The Bay Regatta Feb 13-17

About 50 yachts sail around Koh Yao and down the Krabi coastline to Laem Nang, then to Chalong Bay for a huge party.

Thao Thepkasattri-Thao Sri Sunton Festival Mar 13-15

This festival commemorates the victory of the people of Phuket, led by two local women, over the Burmese army. The highlight is a big open-air re-enactment.

Phuket Bike Week Apr 12-20

More than 50,000 visitors and 10,000 motorbikes descend on Phuket during

this week. The motorcycle exhibition and custom bike show attract big crowds.

Songkran Festival Apr 13-15

Ring in Thai New Year with an epic street water fight, particularly in Bangla Road.

Phuket Pride Festival Apr 27-29

One of the best queer festivals in Asia has floats, outrageous outfits and plenty of out-and-proud queer people and allies.

Laguna Phuket Marathon Jun 8-9

Fitness enthusiasts can sign up to run the marathon, half marathon, 10k or 5k. There is also a relay version of the marathon, so you don't have to run the whole thing yourself.

Cape Panwa Hotel Phuket Raceweek Jul 17-21

There are four days of world-class yacht racing – and four nights of beachside parties at Cape Panwa Hotel.

Kathu Cultural Street Festival Jul 19-21

Celebrate traditional Chinese culture with Chinese-influenced food, lion dances, martial arts, street stalls and parades.

Vegetarian Festival Sep 29-Oct 7

Over the nine days, ethnic Chinese people abstain from meat, alcohol and other things in order to purify themselves. On the last day men carry altars of the Nine Gods in a procession, accompanied by fireworks.

Patong Carnival Nov 1-3

This three-day festival celebrates the beginning of the high tourist season, and 20,000 visitors flock to Patong to enjoy entertainment and sporting events.

Loy Krathong Nov 11

Lotus-shaped rafts decorated with candles, incense and flowers are released onto rivers and lakes.

Laguna Phuket Triathlon Nov 23-24

Asia's longest running triathlon event brings hardy competitors to the Laguna Phuket resort each year.

Phuket King's Cup Regatta Dec

Asia's biggest sailing race includes more than 90 boats and 2,000 sailors.

New Year's Eve Dec 31

Revellers gather everywhere from bars to plazas to party and ring in the new year.



Things to Do

Make the most of your time on Thailand's largest island with our guide to the best things to see and do in this slice of heaven

Phuket Elephant Sanctuary

At this safe haven and "retirement home" for elephants, they believe that people are not meant to work the gentle giants nearly to death, parade them in city streets or even ride on their backs. Visitors to the sanctuary are instead invited to feed, scrub down and bathe or just generally chill with a handful of injured, aged and traumatised elephants rescued from logging camps and circus-like attractions. This is one of the most ethical ways to see elephants up close in Phuket. No trick shows, no tourist rides – just elephants being elephants. You can book for a morning, afternoon or full-day experience. → www.phuketelephantsanctuary.org.



Islands of Phang Nga Bay

Jump aboard a speed boat and take a day trip (or two) out to explore some of the hundreds of tiny paradise islands. Dozens of tour operators offer many different day trips out from Phuket. If you've only got one day, head out on a Phang Nga Bay/James Bond Island trip, which takes you to the jaw-dropping limestone cliffs jutting out of the sea that were made famous by the 007 movie *The Man with the Golden Gun*, plus a few other small islands.

Bangtao Beach

There are dozens of beautiful beaches on Phuket – Mai Khao, Kata and Karon



all deserve a mention – but Bangtao Beach is the pick for many in the know. An 8km-long stretch of soft white sand lapped by crystal clear water, Bangtao Beach is home to some of Phuket's best-regarded restaurants and resorts.

Bangla Road

Running from the beach to the centre of Patong is Bangla Road, the notorious 400-metre strip that's the beating heart of Phuket nightlife. You'll pass everything from beer bars and live music spots (Red Hot, Rock City) to enormous nightclubs (Illuzion, Tiger Disco). You probably won't have a civilised night out here; but come with the right attitude and you'll definitely have a great time.

Big Buddha

You can't go to Phuket and miss the Big Buddha. Quite literally, as the 45-metre

high marble Buddha statue can be seen from just about anywhere in the south of the island. But climb up the hill in Karon and you'll be treated not only to an impressive close-up of the colossal religious icon but also stunning views of the mountains and Andaman sea. → Karon, Amphoe Mueang Phuket, Phuket. +66 (0)81 891 3827. www.phuket-big-buddha.com.

Wat Chalong

The most important and largest Buddhist temple on Phuket is a grand pagoda housing a splinter of bone from Lord Buddha himself. The beautiful buildings and grounds of Wat Chalong are the perfect place to take a break from the beach. It's always bristling with local worshippers and curious tourists and it can get really crowded here, so make an effort to time your visit for as early in the day as you can if you want time and

space to take it all in – or get that perfect photo for the 'gram. Remember: this is a sacred site, so make sure you cover up. → Chao Fah Tawan Tok Rd, Chalong, Amphoe Mueang Phuket, Phuket. +66 (0)76 381 226. www.wat-chalong-phuket.co.

Monkey Hill

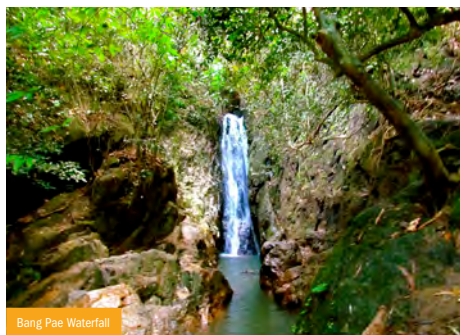
Forget the tourist-packed, more famous Monkey Beach and take a walk from Phuket Town up Toh Sae Hill for a close encounter with our furry cousins. Head up the hill and you'll soon meet macaques looking for food. Bring some nuts or fruit along and you'll make plenty of friends. But remember, these aren't tame monkeys, so don't get too intimate. And if it's raining, don't bother – monkeys dislike the rain just as much as we do. A viewing platform near the top of the hill affords good views of Phuket Town. → Soi Muensri, Ratsada, Amphoe Mueang Phuket, Phuket.

Bang Pae Waterfall, Khao Phra Thaeo National Park

Phuket's largest waterfall attracts plenty of locals and tourists alike throughout the year. This small but beautiful and tranquil waterfall is surrounded by dense tropical jungle in Khao Phra Thaeo National Park on Phuket's sparsely populated eastern side. It's best visited in the wet season, when the rock pools are full enough to take a dip in and the lush jungle is at its verdant best. There's a couple of good local restaurants nearby for when you get hungry, but make sure you bring decent shoes and plenty of mozzie spray – and the 200 baht entrance fee to the park. → Thep Krasatti, Thalang, Phuket.



Wat Chalong



Bang Pae Waterfall



White-handed gibbon

Promthep Cape

You can't really visit Phuket and not make your way up the viewpoint on Promthep Cape for at least one sunset. The most southerly point of Phuket is where you can breathe in the most awe-inspiring views on the island. It can get incredibly busy, but the views more than make up for the constant stream of camera-clicking tourists that arrive in the adjacent car park every evening. At nightfall, grab a table at the nearby Promthep Cape restaurant for a serene sundowner meal. → Rawai, Amphoe Mueang Phuket, Phuket.

Phuket Old Town

The picturesque historical quarter of Phuket Town is where you'll find beautiful old buildings, museums, boutique shops and a thriving night market. A world away from the tourist-packed beaches and night-time hedonism elsewhere in Phuket, this antiquated area of town is steeped in heritage and small enough to explore on foot. There's a strong old colonial Chinese and Portuguese influence here, especially along the particularly charming Soi Rommannee.

Gibbon Rehabilitation Project

Set within the the island's Khao Phra Thaeo National Park, this project rescues and rehabilitates white-handed gibbons, slow lorises and dusky langurs that have been illegally kept as pets or traumatised by the photo-prop tourist trade. As much as possible, the animals are reintroduced back into their natural habitat after a long healing process.

→ 104/3 Moo 3 Paklock, Thalang, Bangkok. +66 (0)7 626 0492. www.gibbonproject.org.

Food & Drink

Savour the extra-hot curries and chilli-inflected dishes of Southern Thai cuisine in between sunbathing sessions and pool time



📍 Phuket Old Town

Work up an appetite by walking the historic streets and lively alleys

① Blue Elephant Phuket

Housed in a historic Chinese colonial-style mansion, this restaurant offers oriental spice and bold sophistication. Try next-level dishes like the massaman lamb curry and lime sea bass topped with lemongrass and chilli. Recreate them in your own kitchen by enrolling in a class at the restaurant's very own cooking school. → 96 Krabi Rd, Phuket Town. +66 (0)76 354 355. www.blueelephant.com/phuket/.

② Raya

This family-run restaurant has been popular with locals and visitors for nearly 20 years. Properly honest home cooking served in generous portions dominates, and a successful formula of seafood, curries and spiced meats presented in a fuss-free manner has held its appeal over the years. Dishes like crab meat with curry and coconut milk and stewed pork belly hit the spot. → 48 Dibuk Rd, Phuket Town. +66 (0)76 218 155.

③ Tu Kab Khao

Tu Kab Kao is packed most evenings thanks to its local reputation for serving cocktails made with the freshest local fruits and nearly 100 menu items of authentic Phuket fare. Interesting options include a zingy crab curry, a spiced pork belly stew and a fragrant shrimp paste with fresh vegetables.

→ 8 Phang Nga Rd, Phuket Town. +66 (0)76 608 888. www.facebook.com/tukabkhaio/.

④ Ko Benz

This is a modest local joint with a limited menu (only seven dishes) and looks that you can't fawn over. However, the food is fresh, the cooking is honest and the prices are keen. A battalion of customers drops in each night for signature dishes Khao Lao Lued Moo (pork intestines and pork blood soup) and Khao Tom Haeng (brothless porridge with crispy pork bits and pork entrails), both cooked according to old family recipes. → 163 Patiphat Rd, Phuket Town.

⑤ The Charm

The Charm's culinary underpinning is Thai-Peranakan cuisine, a mix of Chinese, Malay and local flavours. The Penang-style fish curry is a bowl of spicy



Blue Elephant Phuket



Raya

goodness. Equally impressive is the Tumis curry, a traditional, rarely found Peranakan curry made with fresh okra. → 93 Dibuk Rd, Phuket Town. +66 (0)76 530 199.

⑥ Thalang Road

Come for the shopping, stay for the food – and the ambience. Hip shops and batik boutiques line Phuket Town's vibrant main avenue, alongside cosy cafés, small restaurants and casual bars. For a quick snack, try the roti with curry at **Abdul's Roti** or sample traditional Nyonya fare at **Kopitiam by Wilai**. Further down the stretch, you have cake shops and the renowned café that's called **Since 1892**. → Thalang Rd, Phuket Town.

⑦ Lock Tien

On the corner of Yaowarat and Dibuk Roads, right in the centre of Phuket Town's dazzling Sino-Portuguese architecture, you will find Lock Tien, an open-air courtyard market packed with local food vendors. Whooshing woks and bubbling pots dole out Phuket street food staples such as Hokkien-style fried noodles garnished with a fried egg, and spicy noodle soup with shrimp. → Cnr Yaowarat Rd & Dibuk Rd, Phuket Town.

9 Patong

Sumptuous meals are accompanied by amazing bay views and the hypnotic lull of the rolling waves

8 Acqua

This flashy dining room showcases chef Alessandro Frau's vision of elevated Italian fare, with confident staples such as woodfired pizza and yellow fin tuna carpaccio. → 324/15 Prabaramee Rd, Kalim Bay, Patong. +66 (0)76 618 127. www.acquarestaurantphuket.com.

9 Baan Rim Pa Patong

Expertly prepared renditions of Royal Thai cuisine is one reason to visit; magnificent views overlooking Patong Bay is another. → 223 Prabaramee Rd, Patong. +66 (0)93 584 5563. www.baanrimpa.com.

10 Joe's Downstairs

Located right underneath Baan Rim Pa, Joe's Downstairs appeals to lethargic holiday makers with all-white tropical furniture, views, small tapas-style plates and modern continental fare. → 223/3



Baan Rim Pa Patong



Acqua

Prabaramee Rd, Patong. +66 (0)63 078 5887. www.baanrimpa.com/seaside-restaurant.

11 Kaab Gluay

This affordable eatery offers a heartfelt welcome. Staples such as Pad Thai, Tom Yum Goong (spicy soup with shrimp), stir fries and curries are lightly spiced to appease western palates. → 58/3 Prabaramee Rd, Patong. +66 (0)81 787 7830.

12 Pan Yaah Thai

Beautiful views of Patong Bay are the backdrop to niftily executed Thai-influenced seafood dishes such as Hor Mok Kanom Kro (fish baked in clay pot) and Goong Ob Woonsen (rice vermicelli and prawn casserole). → 249 Prabaramee Rd, Patong. +66 (0)76 290 450.

13 Banzaan Fresh Market

The main floor of this two-storey market is dedicated to fresh meats and seafood (lobsters are the cheapest in town), flowers and fresh produce. Choose your preferred lunch, and it will be weighed, wrapped and packed for you to take to the upstairs restaurant for cooking. → 181 Rat-U-Thit 200 Pee Rd, Patong.



Mom's Tri Kitchen

9 Kata & Karon

Find upscale beachside dining and unusual interiors

14 Kata Rocks

This striking waterfront restaurant is set within the ultra-luxe Kata Rocks resort. Fuss-free seafood fare like steamed sea bass and grilled lobster are highlights and there are hearty dishes of lamb and Wagyu steak. → 186/22 Kok Tanode Rd, Kata Beach. +66 (0)76 370 777. www.katarocks.com.

15 Red Duck

The food here is more cafeteria than cuisine, but this cosy eatery has carved out a niche of its own for Thai classics cooked to perfection from the freshest locally sourced ingredients. → 88/3 Khoktanod Rd, Kata Beach. +66 (0)84 850 2929. www.facebook.com/redduckrestaurant.

16 The Boathouse

A large open-air restaurant on the edge of Kata Beach, the Boathouse features modern Pan-Asian dishes with a strong Southern Thai inflection, including

beetroot-cured salmon and lamb shank massaman. → 182 Koktanode Rd, Kata Beach. +66 (0)76 330 015. www.boathouse-phuket.com.

17 Mom Tri's Kitchen

Part gallery, part diner, Mom Tri's Kitchen has a menu taking inspiration from both European and Southern Thai cuisine. Ravioli with Phuket lobster is a highlight. → Villa Royale Phuket Resort and Spa, 12 Kata Noi Rd, Kata Noi Beach. +66 (0)76 333 568. momtriphuket.com/momtris-kitchen.

18 Kampong Kata Hill

Decked out with dragons, sea serpents, religious icons and red Chinese lanterns, this restaurant is impressive to look at, and the menu covers the gamut of Thai staples. → 4 Karon Rd, Kata Beach. +66 (0)7 633 0103. www.facebook.com/kampongkatahill.

19 Sabai Corner

The food is as authentic as the smiles of the waitstaff at this secluded spot bounded by the jungle and the sea. Enjoy flavour-rich curries, smoky rice and noodle dishes and woodfired pizza. → Soi Laem Mum Nai 2, Kata Noi Beach. +66 (0)89 875 5525.



Kata Rocks

📍 Rawai & Chalong

Eat seafood straight from the source, or in striking settings bordered on all sides by nature



20 Rawai Seafood Market

Seafood can be pricey in Phuket, but not at this locals' haunt at the fishermen's village of Rawai, also known as the Sea Gypsies Fish Market. Choose what you want from tropical fish, giant prawns, lobsters and live crabs, and then head to one of the restaurants across the street to have it cooked. → Wiset Rd, Rawai Beach.

21 Baan Noy

Thai classics and a smattering of European staples are cooked to perfection at this little tucked-away restaurant. The owners, a Thai woman and a German gent, are lovely, and Baan Noy is an experience that leaves you with a belly bursting with food and a heart full of warmth. → 58/12, Moo 10, Patak Rd, Chalong. +66 82 802 0162. www.baannoyrestaurant.com.

22 Kan Eang@Pier

This spacious waterfront restaurant has friendly service and seafood pulled straight off the boat. It draws diners with pocket-friendly prices and seafood grilled using coconut husks instead of the usual charcoal. → 44/1 Moo 5, Wiset Rd, Chalong. +66 (0)83 173 1187. www.kaneang-pier.com.

23 Mor Mu Dong

This rustic, out-of-the-way restaurant serves Thai food that is made with care but no affectation, and seasoned for those who love their chillies and spices. Dishes include sea bass in plum sauce or stir-fried prawns in lime. → 9/4 Thanon Chao Fah Tawan Tok, Chalong. +66 (0)88 766 1634.

24 Rock Salt

In a stunning beachside setting in the Nai Harn resort, Rock Salt has a menu created by chef de cuisine David Attwater combining Southern Thai dishes with contemporary European cuisine. Expect to find daily-caught fish and Fine de Claire oysters freshly delivered from France. → The Nai Harn, 23/3 Moo 1, Viset Rd, Nai Harn, Rawai. +66 (0)7 638 0200. www.thenaiharn.com/dining/rock-salt.



📍 Laem Hin

Let the seafood marathon begin

25 Laem Hin Seafood Restaurant

Cheap, spunkily fresh under water bounty earns raves at this simple seaside eatery. Have your fill of Southern Thai seafood fare like Koong Pad Ped Sator (stir-fried red curry with prawns and stink beans) and Pla Pad Cha (spicy fish in thai herbs). → 90/11 Moo 7, Soi Baan Laem Hin, Thepkasattri Rd, Koh Kaew. +66 (0)76 373 349.

26 Floating restaurants

The effort needed to get to these seafood restaurants is well repaid by



scrumptious fare amid an expanse of tropical sea. Four moored restaurants – Kruvit Raft, Bang Mud, Kru Suwit and Black Crab – float side-by-side on the water, a five-minute longtail boat ride from Laem Hin Beach. As expected seafood features strongly, and each restaurant touts its own signature dishes: Yum Goong Siap, a salad made with smoked, dried shrimp, is a must at **Kruvit Raft**; steamed mantis shrimps and horseshoe crab eggs are delicacies served at **Kru Suwit**; steamed squid with lemon keep diners coming back for more at **Bang Mud**, not to mention a Halal Thai accreditation; and soft-shell crab served with Chilean chardonnay are the more elevated options at **Black Crab**. All this, plus a breezy, atmospheric setting and warm service, make for a dining experience that's hard to forget. → Take the boat from Laem Hin Pier.

27 Koko

A fresh take on Japanese cuisine, this progressive spot impresses gastrophiles with exciting regional cooking served with a flourish. Dishes like Akami tuna tartare with feta cheese, capers and mint and Victoria lamb tenderloin with Saikyo miso and gorgonzola take honest pleasure in what a handful of premium ingredients can accomplish, and don't take for granted time-honoured cooking techniques. → The Village Coconut Island (a free water taxi leaves from Laem Hin Pier in Phuket to the Village Coconut Island every 30 minutes). +66 (0)81 326 2703. thevillage-coconutisland.com/dining/#koko.



9 Nai Yang & Mai Khao

Here's where every meal comes with a gorgeous view

28 Black Ginger

The restaurant stands on stilts in the middle of a lagoon, accessible only by water raft. It's a romantic setting for Panang curry and Pak Miang (stir-fried miang leaves) paired with a chilled white or a full-bodied red from the restaurant's sizeable wine selection. → The Slate Phuket, 116 Moo 1, Nai Yang. +66 (0)76 327 006. www.theslatephuket.com/en/black-ginger.

29 La Sala

Few places in Mai Khao do breakfast, lunch and dinner, but this all-day restaurant at Anantara Mai Khao Phuket does. Breakfast is a serene affair with international buffet choices. At night, dim lights cast a romantic glow on delicately handled Italian and Thai fare. → Anantara Mai Khao Phuket Villas, 888 Moo 3, Mai Khao, Thalung. +66 (0)76 336 100. www.anantara.com/en/mai-khao-phuket/restaurants/la-sala.

30 Sea Almond Chilled Restaurant and Bar

Sea Almond is right on Nai Yang Beach, where the water almost laps at the tables. The menu ranges from fish grilled in the traditional southern Thai way to sweet steamed crustaceans swimming in tasty curry. → 90/10 Moo 5, Nai Yang Beach Rd, Nai Yang, Sakhu, Thalung. +66 (0)86 398 2005.

31 Kin Dee

Nestled in a magical setting atop mangrove swamps, this is one of the island's destination eateries. The menu is a love letter to Southern Thai cuisine, prepared by a former five-star-hotel chef. → Hin Look Diew Village, Mai Khao. +66 76 328 293. www.kindeerestaurant.com.

32 Sala Phuket

This open-air restaurant by the beach and under the shade of the casuarina trees offers magnificent views of Mai Khao Beach and the sunset. Produce is sourced every morning from the fishermen to create pan-Asian dishes. → Sala Phuket Resort and Spa, 333 Moo 3, Mai Khao. +66 (0)76 338 888. www.salahospitality.com/phuket/en/phuket-wine-and-dine.

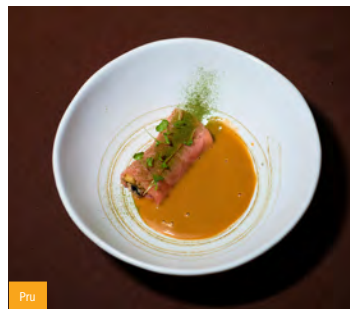


9 Bang Tao & Naithon

Get mind-blowing cuisine in the most prestigious part of the island

35 Pru

Prepare to dine on an elevated plane at this one Michelin-starred destination (the only restaurant in Phuket to receive such an accolade). Chef Jim Ophorst's dishes rely on premium local produce. Thai crabmeat omelette is made with eggs from chickens that cluck about the resort grounds, and vegetables, herbs, and edible flowers are picked from their in-house farm. → Trisara, 60/1 Moo 6, Srisoonthorn Rd, Chergntalay. +66 (0)76 310 100. prurestaurant.com.



36 Nama

In a secluded cove of Pansea Beach, Japanese chefs assiduously slice, plate and create as if the fate of the island depended on the freshness of their nigiri and the grilled perfection of their Wagyu sirloin served with moshio (seaweed salt). → Amanpuri, Pansea Beach, Chergntalay.



+66 (0)76 324 333. www.aman.com/resorts/amanpuri/nama-restaurant.

36 Siam Supper Club

Simple yet appetising classic American fare, including exquisitely tender steaks and a highly praised cheesecake, makes this busy spot on a Lagoon Road a local treasure. → 36-40 Lagoon Rd, Chergntalay. +66 (0)76 270 936. www.siamsupperclub.com.

36 Ruen Thai

The full spectrum of Royal Thai cuisine, including spicy salads, satays and grilled meats, is judiciously served at Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket's jewel restaurant. → Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket, 390 Srisoonthorn, Chergntalay. +66 (0)80 385 9062. www.dusit.com/dusitthani/lagunaphuket/dining/ruen-thai/.

37 Suay Chergntalay

Expect inventive dishes for seafood lovers at this respected restaurant. Main courses such as tandoori chicken are expertly cooked, and a side of luxurious Thai-style foie gras bites with tamarind dip is ridiculously good. → Baan Wana Park, 177/99 Moo 4, Srisunthorn. www.suayrestaurant.com/chergntalay-branch.

Art & Culture

Gain insights into the Phuket way of life at some of the island's cultural attractions

Phuket Art Village

Home to a collection of quirky art studios set around a massive banyan tree, the Phuket Art Village welcomes visitors who want to immerse in local art amid hippie island vibes. It's a place where both adults and kids are entertained with Thai shadow puppetry, where plastic is upcycled into art installations, and where the sound of a chisel whittling away at wood is part of the background noise. → 26/68 Soi Naya 2, Rawai. +66 (0)84 946 2171.

Peranakan Phuket Museum

This compact museum introduces visitors to the island's unique Peranakan (Malay-Chinese) heritage. Engaging exhibitions include a recreation of a typical affluent Peranakan household, vibrant costumes worn by the Phuketians of old, and a virtual bicycle tour through Phuket Town as it was in late 1800s. Boutiques and a café painted in Peranakan day-glo colours offer souvenir items and refreshments. → 124/1 Moo 1 Thep Kasattri Rd, Thalang. +66 76 313 556. peranakanphuketmuseum.com.

Chalong Bay Rum Distillery

When a young French couple discovered that Thailand is the fourth-biggest producer of sugarcane they decided to start producing their own rum.



Chalong Bay Distillery



Phuket Old Town



Street art around Old Phuket Town

The Chalong Bay Rum Distillery eschews the use of molasses in making the spirit, instead employing the traditional French-Caribbean method of using sugarcane juice. The distillery buys its sugarcane from sustainable local farms. → 14/2 Moo 2, Palai Soi 2, Chalong. +66 (0)93 575 1119. www.chalongbayrum.com.

Pop-up street markets

There are markets all over Phuket selling local art, traditional tidbits and handicrafts worth a visit to get an insight into the local Phuketian culture. The **Indy Market** on Dibuk Road (Thursday and Friday) is a great way to imbibe the Thai hipster scene and browse through handmade jewellery, vintage clothes and crafts. Yaowarat Road's funky **Chillva Market** (Thursday to Saturday) is a bit more organised, featuring eateries and bars in revamped shipping containers, and a flea market on weekends. For the real deal, visit **Talaad Yai** (Phuket Walking Street), a weekend market on Thalang Road where you can shop for artsy knick-knacks, vintage collectibles, and local snacks.

Phuket Old Town street art

The closest thing Phuket would have to a contemporary art museum is the Old Town and its streets. The area's Sino-Portuguese rowhouses serve as a canvas for some of Thailand's best urban artists, including Alex Face, Mue Bon and Rukkit. The cheery murals feature a central focus on food – most of them were created as part of an initiative that celebrated Phuket's status as a UNESCO City of Gastronomy in 2016.

Action & Adventure

Adventure seekers take note: there's plenty of fun to be had outdoors in Phuket



Kayaking around Phang Nga Bay

Go deep

The submerged reefs of East Asia are among the prettiest in the world and teeming with life. There's no better way to see them than a close-up dive. Even if you've never dived before, you'll have a blast exploring small caves, reefs, wrecks and coral gardens. Phuket has numerous diving instructors on hand at hotels, hostels and beach resorts ready to take groups and private tours out. November to April is the best time for diving in Phuket. If snorkelling's more your thing, head to **Nai Harn** beach.



Rainforest ziplining



Cycling on Mai Khao Beach

Zipline around a rainforest

Adventure lovers can climb, swing, fly, soar and walk through beautiful natural rainforest at zipline adventure parks around the island including **Jungle Xtrem Adventures Park**, **Hanuman World** and **Flying Hanuman**. Punters can traverse from tree to tree via suspended bridges, walkways, nets and other fun challenges. Each person is provided a harness, a double lanyard, two carabiners, one sling and a pulley as well as proper training to keep them safe. Expect glimpses of spectacular scenery as you go.

Watch (or perform) some authentic Muay Thai

At Patong Boxing Stadium the fights are very real and hugely exciting, and the seats are packed with locals cheering their favourite fighters to victory. This is the place to go for the real deal. If you are game to get in the ring yourself there are several places you can get an introductory lesson, such as **Tiger Muay Thai Training Camp**, **Sinbi Muay Thai** and **Sumalee Boxing Gym**. Boxers of all levels of ability

can be catered for and you can buy all of the equipment you need on site. → **Patong Boxing Stadium**, 2/59 Sai Nam Yen Rd, Patong Beach, Kathu, Phuket. +66 (0)81 737 7193. www.boxingstadiumpatong.com.

Get on your bike

There are plenty of bike tours to be done along sandy Mai Khao Beach, down quiet country roads or past huge coconut and pineapple plantations. Whether you're up for a full- or half-day tour, it's a great way to see the island and skip the crowds. Don't worry if your legs aren't up to scratch – these tours take things pretty easy. → www.phuket.com/tours/biking-tours/.

Kayak around Phang Nga Bay

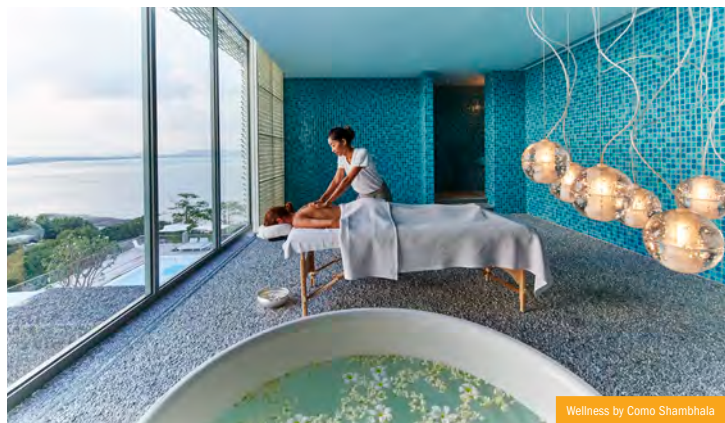
On this kayaking tour you'll get to weave around giant stalactites, caves and limestone cliffs. The inflatable kayaks can also venture into tidal lagoons or what the locals call 'hong', which are only accessible at certain tides when the vessels can enter through cave openings that are otherwise underwater. An experienced guide does the paddling for you, so your hands are free to snap pictures of the dramatic scenery. → www.phuket.com/island/seacanoes.htm.

Sail away into the sunset

A host of yacht and sailboat operators will let you rent a crewed, barefoot, motor yacht or sailboat to suit your needs. Many locations around the coast have seasonal anchorages but at Ao Po Grand Marina in north Phuket, there's 24-hour access and zero tide restrictions. It's also the gateway to the gorgeous Phang Nga Bay. → www.phuket.com/sailing/around-phuket.htm.

Relax

Close your eyes, open your mind and find your 'om' away from home in one of the best islands in the world



Wellness by Como Shambhala

Banyan Tree Phuket Spa

The treatments are as stylish as the beautifully designed spa, where regaining your emotional balance involves therapies that emphasise a 'high-touch, low-tech' approach and the use of natural herbs and spices. You can choose to just go for one of their holistic packages or, for a fully immersive experience, stay in a Banyan Tree Spa Sanctuary Villa and indulge in nutritious fare and unlimited spa treatments. → **Banyan Tree Spa Phuket**, 33 Moo 4, Srisoonthorn Rd, Chermgtalay, +66 (0)76 372 400. www.banyantree.com/en/thailand/spa-sanctuary-phuket.

Wellness by Como Shambhala at Como Point Yamu

This transformative holistic spa, backed by one of the most renowned wellness centres in the world, offers a calming and cocooning atmosphere, exquisite plant-based meals and seriously gifted healers that can guide you to your journey to physical well-being and mental quietude. Balance body and emotions by combining meditative yoga and Pilates sessions with relaxing treatments, and early-morning biking or walking tours. → **Como Point Yamu**, 225 Moo 7, Paklok, Talang. +66 (0)76 360 133. www.comohotels.com/en/pointyamu/wellness.

Phuket Cleanse

Come here for a cleansing program surrounded by tropical greenery. A physiotherapist and fitness trainer will tailor a program to suit your needs, and a nutritionist will design a customised cleansing meal plan. → **49/105 Moo 1, Soi Nanachat, Rawai**. +66 (0)82 424 4976. phuketcleanse.com.

Dharana Phuket Meditation Center

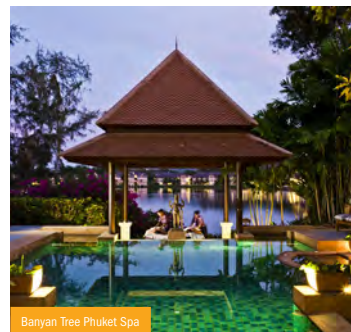
Those who are looking for more than a standard meditation class may want to consider taking on the four-day program at this wellness retreat. Life enhancement mentors can teach you how to manage stress, deal with anxiety and grief, and cultivate happiness. → **69/509, Chaofah Soi 5, Chalong**. +66 (0)87 279 7655. phuket-meditation.com.

Island Yoga

Yoga workshops suitable for every level are available year-round at this retreat on the magical island of Koh Yao Noi. Enjoy daily yoga classes, guided meditation sessions and the company of like-minded individuals in idyllic surrounds. → **4/10 Moo 4 Baan Tha, Koh Yao Noi**. +66 (0)6 5771 2550. thailandyogaretreats.com.

Amatara Wellness Spa

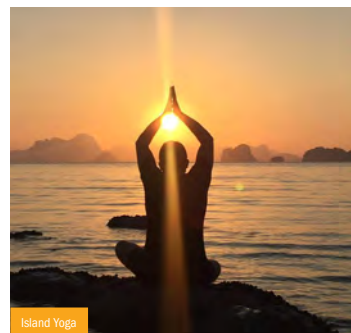
Amatara has holistic programs combining gorgeous accommodation and nutritious food with muscle-melting massages that assist the natural healing power of the body. Programs include the spa's signature Thai Hammam Experience. → **84 Moo 8 Sakdidej Rd, Vichit, Cape Panwa, Phuket**. +66 (0)7 631 8888. www.amataraphuket.com/wellness-programs/.



Banyan Tree Phuket Spa



Dharana Phuket Meditation Center



Island Yoga

Travel essentials



When to go

The best time to visit Thailand is between November and February, when the climate is relatively cool and dry (25-32°C). Some of the most colourful festivals fall in December. The drawback for arriving during this period is that popular destinations are crowded, and hotel rooms are in short supply. Arriving between March and May will put you right through Thailand's summer, when temperatures can climb above 40°C. The monsoon season (June-September) is usually very wet and humid, and national parks and waterfalls are at their best.

Tourist visas

Tourists from many countries, including Australia, New Zealand, the US, UK, Germany, France and Singapore, do not require a visa when entering Thailand and can stay for 30 days. Thai authority requires at least six months validity remaining on the passport. Check canberra.thaiembassy.org.

Getting into Thailand

Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok is the main air gateway into Thailand. Thai Airways, Qantas and Emirates (till the end of May 2019)

operate direct flights from Australia to Bangkok; Jetstar flies to Bangkok from Melbourne and to Phuket from Sydney. Other carriers that provide connections from Australia include Singapore Airlines, Malaysian Airlines, Scoot and AirAsia.

Getting around Thailand

By Air: With more than 20 domestic airports in major cities, Thailand is well connected by air. Thai Airways (www.thaiairways.com), Bangkok Airways (www.bangkokair.com) and budget airlines Nok Air (www.nokair.com), Air Asia (www.airasia.com) and Orient Thai Airlines (www.flyorientthai.com) all run services between Bangkok and Phuket.

By Train: All major rail lines originate in Bangkok, at Hua Lamphong, and cover the four regions of Thailand. When travelling during major festivals and holidays, always purchase your tickets well in advance. In Bangkok, the MRT is the city's rapid

transit system, serving 35 stations. Trains arrive every 5-7 minutes, and connect to the BTS Skytrain. There are two elevated BTS Skytrain lines: the Silom Line running west to south, and the Sukhumvit Line running north to east. A train arrives every 3-6 minutes. Tickets for the MRT and BTS Skytrain are available from machines at stations. www.transitbangkok.com.

By Bus: Long-distance buses reach where trains don't. The ordinary buses are suitable for short trips, as they have no air-conditioning and make virtually every stop along the way. Superior buses range from a simple air-conditioned type to comfortable tour buses with reclining seats and hostesses serving drinks. Always reserve your tickets in advance when travelling during major holidays.

By Car: Major international brands provide rental services in popular tourist cities. Local rental brands are often less expensive and have more flexible rental policies. Be warned, though, that driving in Bangkok is not for the faint hearted.

Electricity and plugs

Voltage is 220 Volts with either two flat blades (NEMA 1-15 or JIS C 8303) or round two-pin plugs (Europlug CEE 7/16). You can buy an adapter at most department stores.

Time zone

UTC/GMT +7 hours.

Telephone services

The international dialing code for Thailand is 66 and you must drop the 0 from the



area code. For directory assistance in the greater Bangkok Metropolitan area, dial 13. For directory assistance in the provincial areas, dial 183. For operator-assisted long distance calls, dial 101 for domestic calls, 100 for international calls.

Mobile phones

Using your mobile phone in Thailand shouldn't be a problem if you arrange for international roaming in your home country. If you will be staying in Thailand for a while, it is worth considering purchasing a SIM card with a prepaid option. Cards to upload credit are available from convenience stores.

Business hours

Shopping malls usually open around 10am and close between 8pm and 10pm. Banks open from 9am-3.30pm (Mon-Fri), except those located inside shopping malls, which open and close a bit later.

Pubs and bars open at different times but close at 1am, except those located in the designated entertainment zones.

Language

Thai is the official language. English is widely understood and spoken in most tourist areas. Both Thai and English are found on all road signs, BTS Skytrain and MRT Subway stations and some buses.

Emergency Phone Numbers

Police: 191

Fire: 199

Ambulance: 1554

Bumrungrad International Bangkok

(emergency): +66 (0)2 667 2999

Samitivej Sukhumvit Bangkok Ambulance

Hotline: +66 (0)2 712 7007

Bangkok Hospital emergency room:

+66 (0)2 310 3102

Bangkok Hospital Phuket:

+66 (0)7 625 4425



From the buzzing capital Bangkok,
a city of food, festivals, temples and
palaces, to the island paradise that
is Phuket, Thailand is one of the most
dazzling holiday destinations in the world.
Discover its secrets with Time Out's
Insider's Guide.

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