



Tarmac Nomads' Guides to Places Series

Welcome to Bangkok: Get Ready for Awesome!

Bangkok is the second closest place to a second home for us. Hong Kong rules supreme but BKK - as people in the know call it - is a very close second. Our first trip to Bangkok was chaotic, hot and humid and sprinkled with stray cats and water monitors. And we absolutely loved it! We've returned 3 times since and we're planning on moving there for a few months sometime in 2026.

Anyway - here's our lukewarm take on one of the best cities in the world! **Buckle up, buttercup!** You're about to dive headfirst into Bangkok, a city that's less a destination and more a full-body experience. Imagine a place where ancient temples shimmer next to futuristic skyscrapers, where the scent of street food makes your stomach rumble louder than a tuk-tuk, and where every corner promises a new adventure. Bangkok is a glorious, chaotic, and utterly captivating blend of tradition and modernity, and trust us, you're going to love it. This guide is your personal sidekick, packed with tips, tricks, and a sprinkle of humor to help you navigate the madness and make the most of every single moment. **Let's get this party started!**



Before You Go: Adulting for Adventurers

Before you land in the Land of Smiles, let's get some grown-up stuff out of the way. Don't worry, we'll make it quick and painless, so you can get back to dreaming about Pad Thai.



Visa & Entry: Don't Get Stuck at the Border!

For many nationalities (like our friends from the EU, UK, Australia and the US), you can usually waltz into Thailand visa-free for a short visit, often up to 30 or even 45 days (check the latest updates, because rules love to change!). Just make sure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your intended stay, and it's always smart to have proof of your onward journey. Nobody wants to be that person explaining to immigration that their "plan" is to just live happily ever after in Bangkok. While there are many, MANY outlets who'll help you (for a fee) to get your visas straight - we recommend you go the official route and check out <https://www.thaievisa.go.th/> - this is the Thai Government E-Visa Website and it's the only venue we recommend to first time travellers wanting to sort out their Visas.



Currency (Thai Baht ฿): Become a Baht-illionaire!

The local currency is the glorious Thai Baht (THB). You'll feel like a high roller when you exchange your cash, as the numbers get delightfully big! A hot tip: skip the airport currency exchange booths unless you're desperate for a few baht for a taxi. You'll get much better rates at ATMs or exchange counters in the city. Just remember to tell your bank you're traveling, or they might think your card has been kidnapped.

Pro Tip: When paying with your card, always, *always* choose to be charged in Thai Baht (THB). If they ask if you want to pay in your home currency, politely decline. Otherwise, you'll get hit with sneaky "Dynamic Currency Conversion" fees, and nobody likes sneaky fees.

Pro Tip 2: We really like Revolut and each time we travel to a foreign country, we issue digital cards (think Visa, Mastercard) to our Apple Wallets. Helpful if you want to avoid credit card scams - you simply delete the cards once you return home.



Flight Booking Tips: Outsmarting the Algorithms (Maybe)

Thinking about when to book your flight to Bangkok? Forget those old myths about Tuesdays being the magic day to book. Airlines use super-smart algorithms that change prices faster than you can say "Pad See Ew."

- **Book Early, Fly Midweek:** Your best bet for international flights is to book 3-6 months in advance. And when it comes to *flying*, Tuesdays and Wednesdays are often your cheapest days. Weekends? Prepare to pay a premium.
- **Price Alerts are Your Friend:** Set up flight alerts for your desired dates. Let the internet do the hard work of tracking price drops for you.
- **Flexibility is Key:** If you can be flexible with your travel dates by a day or two, you could save a significant chunk of change.

Awards and magic points: Here's a tip - check out Flying Blue's awards to S-E Asia from Europe! During the past 3-4 years, we've consistently found award tix in Business, 70-80K FB Miles + taxes with China Eastern and / or Shanghai Airlines. That's a steal!

Best Time to Visit Bangkok: Pick Your Perfect Vibe

Bangkok is hot year-round, but you've got options!

- **Cool & Dry Season (November to February):** This is peak season for a reason! Think pleasant temperatures, low humidity, and clear skies. Perfect for exploring without melting.
- **Hot Season (March to May):** It gets *really* hot. If you love sweating and don't mind ducking into air-conditioned malls every five minutes, this is for you!
- **Rainy Season (June to October):** Don't let the "rainy" part scare you! Showers are often short, intense bursts, leaving plenty of time for sightseeing. Plus, fewer crowds and cheaper hotels! Embrace the tropical downpour – it's part of the adventure.

What's our favourite time to visit Bangkok? Yeah so basically it's any day of the year. We've visited during the hot and humid months of August and September and we've spent a couple weeks in December and January. Yes - it will rain. Yes - you are going to lounge through malls and shops to get that cool breeze of the ACs blowing 18 degrees air.

Do yourself a favor and DON'T overthink this "best time to visit" thing. The best time to visit is, usually, now.

Sim Card / WiFi: Stay Connected, Stay Sane

Do yourself another favor and grab a local SIM card as soon as you land. It's super cheap and essential for navigating with Google Maps, hailing rides with Grab, and making your friends jealous with instant photo uploads. You can find kiosks from major providers like AIS, DTAC, and TrueMove H right at the airport, or even cheaper at a 7-Eleven in the city. Some phones can even use an eSIM, so you can be connected

before you even touch down! We're big fans of [Holafly](#) (yay please sponsor our content or let's chat to set-up some other vlogger-y thing that vlogger and sponsors do) and we've used their eSIMs without any issues through the whole of Asia, including Thailand. Best thing ever - they offer unlimited daily data allowances.



Getting Around: Master Bangkok's Madness!

Bangkok's traffic is legendary, but its public transport system is surprisingly efficient and a blast to use. You'll be zipping around like a local in no time!

BTS Skytrain & MRT Subway: Soaring Above the Chaos

These are your best friends for beating the notorious Bangkok traffic. The BTS Skytrain glides above the streets, offering cool views (and even cooler air-conditioning!), while the MRT Subway dives underground, connecting key areas quickly and safely. They're clean, efficient, and will get you to most major shopping, dining, and cultural spots.

Basic European Entitlement - we were caught off-guard, on our first visit, by the fact that the BTS and MRT systems provide zero ticketing interoperability. Meaning - you'll need to buy separate ticket types for each! However, this is not as difficult as one might think:

You can buy BTS tickets from the stations - vending machines are there for single journey tickets or daily usage tickets and the manned booths will sell you Rabbit Cards - pay-as-you-go, rechargeable tokens. If you're spending the full 7 days in BKK you should get a Rabbit Card.



The MTR uses these tiny and cute plastic disks you can buy from vending machines and manned booths. You place it on the thingy on the turnstiles and you're good to go! **Cutest. Things. Ever.**

Tuk-tuks: The Iconic (and Wild) Ride

No trip to Bangkok is complete without a tuk-tuk ride! These open-air, three-wheeled chariots are a thrilling way to experience the city, especially at night when they light up like a disco ball. Just remember to **negotiate your fare before you hop in!** Otherwise, you might end up paying more than your flight to get across town. A good trick is to check the Grab app for the estimated cost and then offer the tuk-tuk driver a bit less – you'll usually meet somewhere in the middle. Hold on tight, it's a bumpy, exhilarating ride! For our first 3 visits to Bangkok, we stayed at this hotel in the Chit-Lom area, near Lumpini Park, but some 5-6 minutes walking distance from the BTS station. They cater a free tuk-tuk service to all patrons that takes you from the hotel's lobby to the BTS. It's convenient, it's fast and best of all – the tuk tuk is pink! Pink, people! Imagine that! Anyway – this is quite common and one should expect their hotel to provide tuk-tuks free of charge up to the closest BTS/MTR station.

Taxis & Grab: Meter, Please!

Taxis are plentiful and air-conditioned, a welcome relief from the heat. Always, *always* insist the driver uses the meter. If they refuse or try to quote you a "fixed price," just find another taxi. Or, even better, download the **Grab app** (Southeast Asia's Uber/Lyft equivalent). It's super convenient, gives you upfront pricing, and you can pay through the app, avoiding any cash haggling.

Chao Phraya Express Boat: The Scenic Route

For riverside temples and the old city, the Chao Phraya Express Boat is your go-to. It's cheap, avoids traffic, and offers fantastic views of the city from the water. Plus, it's a great way to feel like a local, zipping past temples and markets.

City Map & Orientation: Getting Your Bearings

Bangkok is generally divided by the majestic Chao Phraya River. The historic old city (where most of the famous temples are) sits on the east side, while the modern, bustling commercial areas like Sukhumvit and Siam are further east. The BTS Skytrain and MRT subway connect these modern districts, and the express boat is your best

friend for exploring the riverside attractions. Don't worry, Google Maps will be your trusty co-pilot!

Basecamp: You'll probably stay in the Siam Area

We thought about recommending places to stay. We're not gonna do that. While we do have a favourite area in BKK to stay, we're very much aware that Bangkok is a HUGE city with millions of visitors each year travelling from all over the world.

Budgets will vary. Preferences are - well, you know - personal. We enjoy staying in serviced apartments but your mileage might vary, maybe you're the 5* hotel crew (yay you!) or you enjoy backpacking through Asia and *adventurously* (not sure this is an actual word in the english language?) stay in cheeky motels.

This is the reasoning for our decision to NOT recommend specific places to stay, in any of our travel guides.

However, statistically speaking, **you'll probably lodge in the Siam area** - a vibrant central area of BKK filled to the brim with malls, shops, restaurants, parks, and markets alongside one major road **that runs east to west through BKK**. Siam is well connected to, well, pretty much **everything there's to see and do in BKK**. The BTS runs along the Sukhumvit Road, there are MRT stops along the way, and even two (gasp!) beautiful parks with lots of cats and **water monitors**. It's all in the Itinerary section.



Your 7-Day Bangkok Adventure!

We've been to BKK a few times, and spent just shy of 30 days in this amazing city. Our 7-day itinerary builds upon some of the places we've visited and things we've experienced during our stay in Bangkok. Ready to explore Bangkok? This 7-day itinerary is your ultimate guide, blending iconic sights with local gems. We'll hit the must-sees, savor epic food, and maybe even get a little lost (in a good way!). Remember, it's *your* trip, so feel free to mix, match, and make it your own!

Day 1: Royal Grandeur & Riverside Charms

Kick off your Bangkok adventure with a deep dive into the city's most iconic temples and a serene river cruise.

- **Morning: Grand Palace & Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha):** Start early to beat the heat and crowds. This massive complex is awe-inspiring, but remember the dress code: shoulders and knees covered for both men and women. No sleeveless tops or short shorts, or you'll be renting some questionable sarongs!
- **Late Morning: Wat Pho (Temple of the Reclining Buddha):** Just a short walk from the Grand Palace, marvel at the colossal 46-meter-long Reclining Buddha.



A Longboi. It's so big, you'll wonder how they got it in there! This temple is also home to a famous traditional Thai massage school, so maybe a quick foot massage after all that walking?

- **Afternoon: Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn):** Take a short ferry across the Chao Phraya River to this stunning temple. Admire its

porcelain-decorated prangs (spires), which are especially beautiful at sunset.

- **Evening: Chao Phraya Express Boat & Riverside Dinner:** Use the public express boat to navigate between these riverside attractions – it's cheap, efficient, and offers great views! End your day with a delicious riverside dinner, watching Wat Arun light up at night. Pure magic!

Day 2: Shopping Spree & Sky-High Views

From mega-malls to glittering shrines and panoramic cityscapes, today is all about modern Bangkok.

- **Morning: Siam Area Malls (Siam Paragon, Siam Discovery, Siam Square):** Spend your morning exploring Bangkok's premier shopping hub. From luxury brands to quirky boutiques, there's something for everyone. It's also a fantastic place to escape the heat and enjoy some glorious air-conditioning!



- **Lunch: MBK Center:** Head to this legendary mall known for its bargain electronics, clothing, and souvenirs. It's a true local experience, a bit chaotic, but full of treasures if you're willing to hunt!

- **Afternoon: Erawan Shrine:** A vibrant and sacred Hindu shrine right in the heart of the city, often bustling with devotees and traditional dancers. It's a fascinating contrast to the modern malls surrounding it.
- **Late Afternoon: Mahanakhon SkyWalk:** Head to Thailand's highest observation deck for incredible 360-degree city views. If you're brave enough, step out onto the glass tray for an unforgettable (and slightly terrifying) photo op!
- **Evening: Rooftop Bar Experience:** Cap off the day with cocktails at one of Bangkok's famous rooftop bars (like Sky Bar at Lebua or Vertigo at Banyan Tree) for dazzling night views. Just remember to dress smart – no flip-flops here!

Day 3: Day Trip: Ancient Capital OR Floating Markets

Today, you get to choose your own adventure: step back in time to ancient Siam or dive into the bustling world of Thai markets.

- **Option 1: Ayutthaya Historical Park:** Take a train or minivan for a day trip to the ancient capital of Siam. Explore the magnificent ruins of temples and palaces. Rent a bike or a tuk-tuk there to explore the sprawling park. It's like stepping into an Indiana Jones movie, but with fewer booby traps.



- **Option 2: Damnoen Saduak Floating Market & Maeklong Railway Market:** This requires an early start! Experience the lively (and very touristy, but still iconic!) floating market, where vendors sell goods from their boats. Then, head to the unique Maeklong Railway Market, where vendors pack up their stalls in seconds for an approaching train. It's a spectacle!

Day 4: Green Oasis & Nightlife Buzz

Balance urban serenity with the vibrant energy of Bangkok's modern districts and nightlife.

- **Morning: Lumpini Park:** Enjoy a peaceful morning stroll in Bangkok's green lung. Rent a paddle boat, watch locals doing tai chi, and keep an eye out for the giant monitor lizards sunbathing by the ponds. They're harmless, but they look like mini-dinosaurs!



- **Afternoon: Street Art & Cafe Hopping (Charoenkrung Road):** Explore the artsy side of Bangkok along Charoenkrung Road. This area is known for its cool cafes, independent galleries, and vibrant street art scene. Perfect for a relaxed afternoon and some Instagram-worthy shots.
- **Evening: Sukhumvit Exploration (Soi 11, Thonglor, Ekkamai):** Discover the trendy areas of Sukhumvit. Soi 11 is famous for its lively bars and international restaurants, while Thonglor and Ekkamai offer a more local, chic vibe with hidden gems and fantastic eateries.
- **Night: Dinner & Live Music:** Find a great local restaurant in one of these trendy areas, followed by drinks and live music at a bar.

Day 5: Arts, Culture & Local Life

Uncover Bangkok's artistic side, delve into its textile history, and experience everyday local charm.

- **Morning: Jim Thompson House:** Explore the beautiful traditional Thai house of the American silk entrepreneur who mysteriously disappeared. It's a fascinating insight into Thai architecture, art, and a captivating story.



- **Late Morning: Bangkok Art and Culture Centre (BACC):** Check out contemporary Thai and international art exhibitions in this cool, modern space. It's a great way to see a different side of Thai creativity.
- **Afternoon: Khlong Saen Saep Express Boat:** Take a ride on this canal boat. It's less touristy than the Chao Phraya, a bit rough around the edges, but offers a unique, authentic perspective of the city's back canals and local life. Just try not to splash too much!
- **Evening: Local Market Immersion (e.g., Or Tor Kor Market):** Explore a high-quality fresh market known for its incredible produce, seafood, and prepared foods. It's a feast for the senses and a great spot for a local dinner experience.

Day 6: Temple Serenity & Chinatown Chaos

Experience spiritual tranquility followed by the exhilarating energy of Bangkok's historic Chinatown.

- **Morning: Wat Saket (The Golden Mount):** Climb over 300 steps to the top of this temple on a man-made hill for stunning 360-degree views of old Bangkok. It's a bit of a workout, but the views are worth every drop of sweat.
- **Late Morning: Loha Prasat (Metal Castle) at Wat Ratchanatdaram:** A truly unique multi-tiered Buddhist temple with 37 spires, representing the 37 virtues toward enlightenment. It's a hidden gem and a photographer's dream.
- **Evening: Explore Chinatown (Yaowarat Road):** As evening falls, immerse yourself in the vibrant chaos of Bangkok's Chinatown. This is a must-do for street food lovers and photographers. The neon lights, the smells, the sounds – it's an overload in the best possible way!



- **Night: Chinatown Street Food Tour:** Indulge in an epic street food feast. Try fresh seafood, dim sum, oyster omelets, and the famous (and infamous) durian desserts. Just be warned, durian smells like gym socks mixed with heaven, depending on who you ask!

Day 7: Relax, Revisit or Hidden Gems

On your last day, tailor your experience: revisit a favorite spot, discover something new, or simply relax and soak it all in.

- **Option 1: Thai Cooking Class:** Learn to cook your favorite Thai dishes! Many half-day classes are available, often including a market visit. It's a delicious souvenir to take home, and you'll finally learn the secret to perfect Pad Thai.
- **Option 2: Ultimate Thai Massage & Spa:** Indulge in a relaxing traditional Thai massage or a full spa treatment. After a week of exploring, your feet will thank you. Just be prepared for some serious stretching – it's not always gentle! Alexandra has some *fun* stories she'll probably tell you about, over gin & tonics.
- **Option 3: Art Galleries & Cafes (Ari District):** Explore the charming Ari neighborhood, known for its trendy cafes, independent boutiques, and laid-back vibe. A great spot for a relaxed morning or afternoon, away from the main tourist hustle.
- **Last-Minute Souvenir Shopping:** Revisit a market or mall to pick up any last-minute gifts or keepsakes. Don't forget to haggle at the markets – it's part of the fun!



A Foodie's Paradise: Bangkok Edition!

We're not foodies. We're so far removed from culinary culture and world cuisine as one can be. We're at times, shy to try new foods and new flavours. But Bangkok had us sold from the first taste. BKK is, in fact, the city in SE Asia where we ate *real* Thai food for the first time and actually enjoyed it. We're compiled a list of must-try foods but - full disclosure - we've only tried some of these plates only once:

Must-Try Traditional Thai Foods: Your Culinary Checklist

- **Pad Thai:** The iconic stir-fried noodle dish. If you leave Thailand without trying this, did you even go?
- **Green Curry (Gaeng Keow Wan):** A rich, creamy, and spicy coconut milk-based curry. It's like a warm hug with a kick.
- **Mango Sticky Rice (Khao Niao Mamuang):** A seasonal dessert sensation! Sweet glutinous rice with fresh mango and a drizzle of coconut milk. Pure bliss.
- **Tom Yum Goong:** The famous hot and sour shrimp soup, packed with aromatic herbs. It'll clear your sinuses and warm your soul.
- **Som Tum (Green Papaya Salad):** A refreshing and spicy salad. Be warned, "spicy" in Thailand means *spicy*. You might cry, but it'll be worth it.
- **Boat Noodles (Kuay Teow Reua):** Small bowls of flavorful noodle soup, traditionally served from boats. You'll probably eat about five of these.
- **Kai Jeow (Thai-style Omelette):** Simple yet incredibly satisfying, a crispy Thai omelette often served with jasmine rice and a dash of Sriracha.
- **Moo Ping (Grilled Pork Skewers):** Marinated pork skewers grilled over charcoal until tender and slightly charred. Perfect for a quick snack.
- **Kanom Krok (Coconut Rice Pancakes):** Small, round coconut rice pancakes, crispy on the outside and soft on the inside. A sweet, comforting bite.

Street Food Hotspots: Where the Magic Happens

- **Yaowarat (Chinatown):** If you've got just one evening for street food, make it here. The neon-lit main drag and backstreets are bursting with incredible Sino-Thai eats.
- **Victory Monument:** A transport hub that's also a street food paradise. Look for the famous boat noodle alley!
- **Nang Loeng Market:** A bit off the beaten path for tourists, but a true gem for traditional Thai dishes and desserts.

Culture, Etiquette & Staying Safe

Thailand is known as the Land of Smiles, and a little cultural know-how goes a long way. This section covers essential etiquette, a few basic Thai phrases, and crucial safety tips to help you blend in and have a worry-free trip. Be respectful, be smart, and you'll have an amazing time!

Language Basics: Don't Worry, Be Happy (and Polite)!

The official language is Thai, a tonal language (meaning the same word can have different meanings depending on your tone – good luck with that!). English is widely understood in tourist areas, but learning a few phrases will earn you major brownie points:

- **Hello:** *Sawadee krap* (if you're male) / *Sawadee ka* (if you're female)
- **Thank you:** *Kop kun krap* (male) / *Kop kun ka* (female)
- **Delicious!:** *Aroy!* (Use this often, they love it!)

The Wai (Greeting): A Little Bow Goes a Long Way

The "Wai" (palms together, fingertips near chin/nose) is the traditional Thai greeting. As a tourist, you're not expected to initiate it, but returning a wai shows respect. **Just don't wai to children, street vendors, or monks (they don't wai back!).**

Respect the Monarchy: Seriously, It's a Big Deal

The Thai monarchy is deeply revered. Always show respect to the King, Queen, and Royal Family. **Don't step on currency (which bears the King's image) or make critical remarks about the monarchy. This is crucial and legally enforced. You don't want to end up in a Thai jail for a bad joke.**

Head & Feet Rules: Don't Play Soccer with Buddha!

- The head is considered the most sacred part of the body, so never touch anyone's head.
- The feet are the lowest and considered unclean. Avoid pointing your feet at people, religious images, or the King's portrait. Take off your shoes before entering temples, private homes, and some shops.

Temple Etiquette & Dress Code: Look Like a Respectful Ninja

When visiting temples, dress respectfully. Shoulders and knees must be covered for both men and women. No sleeveless tops, shorts, or short skirts. You'll also need to remove your shoes before entering temple buildings. Think modest and comfortable. Some temples might lend you a sarong if you forget, but it's better to be prepared!

Staying Safe: Common Sense is Your Best Friend

Bangkok is generally safe, but like any big city, be aware of your surroundings.

- **Petty Crime:** Pickpocketing can happen in crowded areas (markets, Khao San Road). Keep an eye on your belongings and consider wearing your backpack on your front in very crowded spots.
- **Drink Spiking:** Be alert to risks around drink spiking. Don't leave food or drinks unattended, and avoid accepting anything from strangers. Stick with people you trust at bars and nightclubs.
- **Protests:** Avoid demonstrations, processions, and large public gatherings. They can turn violent unexpectedly and disrupt transport.

Scams to Watch Out For: Don't Get Fooled!

Bangkok has a few classic scams. Knowing them is half the battle (and might give you a good laugh later):

- **"Temple Closed" Scam:** Someone approaches you near a temple, tells you it's closed for a holiday (it's not!), and offers to take you on a "special" tuk-tuk tour to other places (usually gem shops or tailor shops). Just smile, say "no thank you," and walk away.
- **Tuk-tuk/Taxi Fixed Price:** As mentioned, always insist on the meter for taxis. For tuk-tuks, negotiate the price *before* you get in.
- **Gem Scams/Tailor Tricks:** Be wary of anyone trying to take you to a "special" gem or tailor shop. You'll likely end up with overpriced, low-quality goods.
- **Bird Food Seed:** Someone might try to get you to feed pigeons, then demand money. Just keep walking!

Farewell Bangkok: Until Next Time!

That's it! Our 7-day Bangkok adventure wraps up, you'll undoubtedly be leaving with a head full of incredible memories, a camera roll full of amazing photos, and probably a stomach full of delicious Thai food. From the glittering temples to the bustling markets, the serene parks to the wild nightlife, Bangkok is a city that truly gets under your skin. We hope this guide helped you navigate the beautiful chaos and discover the magic. Safe travels, and *khop kun krap/ka* (thank you!) for visiting! We know you'll be back for more. We did!

About us

We are Alexandra and Ioan, part-time travelers exploring the world's largest cities.

Our goal is to travel as far and as often as possible. We've fallen in love with the world's big cities since our first trip abroad, in Hong Kong, some 10 years back, and we've been exploring new destinations ever since.

Our journeys take us through the world's mega cities. From the vibrant streets of Hong Kong to the historical landmarks of Rome. We try to capture the pulse of each city as we explore local cultures, meet the people, and share our unique experiences.

We're first time vloggers and we're creating content for fellow travellers. We hope our content will inspire you to book *that* flight and plan your next adventure!

We really really really reaaaaaaally appreciate your business so a "subscribe, follow, join" to our socials would be much appreciated!

Our links:



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