

bangkok 101

july 2017
100 baht

Weekend Escapes

Leave the bright lights and big city behind,
and explore Thailand's endless opportunities
for spontaneous getaways

BEST OF BKK

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PHOTO FEATURE

Thailand from above
by Richard Barrow

MY BANGKOK

Chatting with legendary author Jerry Hopkins

TRAVEL FÉATURE

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Publisher's Letter

Much as we all love Bangkok, a definite need exists to “get outta town” every so often. And with so much diversity to explore across this amazing Kingdom, it’s surprising more of us don’t spend literally every weekend hitting the road for a quick trip to the countryside, or hopping on a quick flight to the nation’s farthest flung corners. To make the decision of where to explore just a tiny bit easier, our Weekend Escapes cover feature (starting on pg. 14) offers a short list of tempting locales that are both easy to get to and rewarding to explore. Of course, if just thinking about dealing with traffic jams, delayed trains, and airport check-ins gives you second thoughts, we’ve also include a list of several “staycation” spots all well within city limits (see pg. 34).

In addition to all this talk of weekend wanderings, our regular travel feature this month focuses on Pattaya, Bangkok’s saucy sister-city (starting on pg. 50). As of late the town has been cleaning up its act a bit—the government is even introducing a family-friendly ‘Happy Zone’ along a portion of the notoriously naughty Walking Street—but the truth of the matter is there’s room for everybody in Pattaya; from the scantily clad ladyboys on Soi 6, to the fresh-faced families checked in at any of the numerous beachfront resorts.

Finally, our regular columns and features will keep you up-to-date on what’s new and notable in Bangkok. From art exhibitions, to film screenings, to new restaurants and bars worth checking out, there’s more than enough to keep you in town this month should you decide to just stay put each and every weekend.

All this and more—including our 101 archive and extras—can be found online at www.bangkok101.com. A couple of clicks are all it takes to keep in touch with what’s happening in Bangkok and beyond. And if you as a reader feel there’s something we’re not covering, but should be, please drop us a line at info@talisman.asia.



Enjoy.

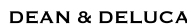
Mason Florence
Publisher



What is Bangkok 101

Independent and unbiased, Bangkok 101 caters to savvy travellers who yearn for more than what they find in guidebooks. It brings together an authoritative who’s who of city residents, writers, photographers and cultural commentators. The result is a compact and intelligent hybrid of monthly travel guide and city magazine that takes you on and off the well-worn tourist track. Bangkok 101 employs the highest editorial standards, with no fluff, and no smut. Our editorial content cannot be bought. We rigorously maintain the focus on our readers, and our ongoing mission is to ensure they enjoy this great city as much as we love living in it.

BANGKOK 101 PARTNERS



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On the cover

The island of Koh Samui, with its idyllic tropical atmosphere, is perfect for weekend (or anytime) getaways. But Thailand has many other easy to reach destinations to explore, so get inspired by our special cover feature, starting on page 14, and hit the road! Photo courtesy of the Santiburi Beach Resort & Spa, Koh Samui www.santiburisamui.com



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bangkok 101

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PUBLISHED BY

Talisman Media Group Co., Ltd.

54 Naradhiwas Rajanagarinda

Soi 4, Sathorn Tai Rd, Yannawa,

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Tel: 02 286 7821

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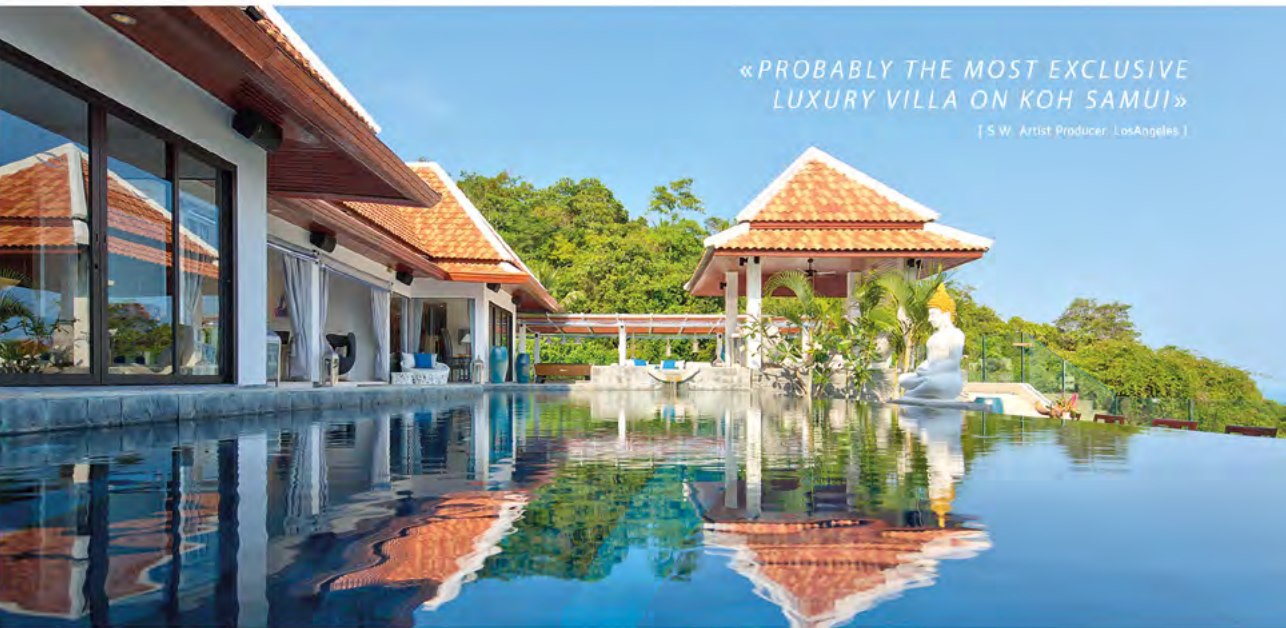


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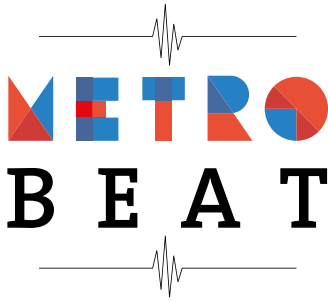
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METRO BEAT

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

July 10 & 28

The first holiday is **Asanha Bucha**, which is a Buddhist holiday. The second holiday commemorates the birthday of the new king, **His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn** (also known as Rama X). Previously this holiday was observed on December 5th, the birthday of the late **King Bhumibol Adulyadej**, and that date will remain a public holiday as well.

CLASSICAL MUSIC



July 7-8, 14-15

The **Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra** 2017 season features four concerts this month, all taking place at the **Prince Mahidol Hall**, Mahidol University, Salaya. The July series begins with 'From Russia with Love', and features conductor **Alfonso Scarano** tackling the *Romeo and Juliet* Suite by composer Sergei Prokofiev. The second weekend's performance will be Mahler's Symphony No. 3, also featuring conductor Alfonso Scarano, along with Mezzo-Soprano **Krysty Swann** (pictured). On both occasions the Friday shows begin at 7pm and the Saturday shows start at 4pm. Tickets range in price from B300 to B500. www.thaiticketmajor.com

JULY'S HOTTEST TICKETS



July 31-August 1

The London-based, alt-pop pair **Oh Wonder** are coming to Bangkok for two shows at the **DND Club** (217/8, Sukhumvit Soi 63, Soi Ekkamai 5/1). The band has enjoyed international success with their quirky singles but, surprisingly, they formed by accident not design and never intended to play live—let alone tour the world. The duo consists of classically-trained pianist and violinist **Josephine Vander Gucht** and producer **Anthony West**, and their sound mixes hypnotic dual

vocals, emotional lyrics, and bewitching, ethereal beauty. Tickets are B2,000 and showtime both evenings is 8pm.

www.thaiticketmajor.com

COMEDY NIGHTS

July 2

Fans of the hilarious HBO sitcom *Silicon Valley* and the 2016 blockbuster movie *Deadpool* will no doubt be familiar with the comedy talents of **T.J. Miller**. The curly-haired comedian will be in Bangkok this month for two back-to-back performances at **The Comedy Club Bangkok** (above The Royal Oak Pub, Sukhumvit Soi 33/1). The club's capacity is just 120 seats, so get set for an intimate, super intense, crazy night! Doors open for the shows at 7:30pm and 9:30pm respectively, with Miller taking the stage shortly thereafter. Tickets are B1,000 in advance, but act fast—these shows will definitely sell out. www.comedyclubbangkok.com



July 19

Having performed almost all over the world, **The Funny Fellas** come to Bangkok for a night of laughter at the **Live Lounge BKK** (Trendy Condo, Sukhumvit Soi 13). The trio includes **Captain Khalid**, from Tanzania, and

Liliana Velàsques and **Rachman Blake** from the USA, who join forces to bring audiences a show that has been described as "effortlessly funny" and "raw and honest". Tickets are B500 and showtime is 8:30pm. www.eventbrite.com

WORD GAMES

July 7-9

This month the prestigious **Brand's Thailand International Crossword Game Championship 2017** will be held at **Central Plaza West Gate** (near the MRT station Talad Bang Yai). This is the 32nd edition of the popular annual competition, and the 11th year for the **Brand's Sudoku Thailand International Open** which runs in tandem. The entry fee for 'Scrabblers' is a stiff US\$220 (US\$180 for early birds) but the prize money at stake is a hefty US\$10,000 (plus other prizes) for the first place finisher. For information call: 02 295 0861-5



INDEPENDENCE DAY PICNIC

July 1

Although the US Independence Day celebration is officially held on July 4th, the **American Chamber of Commerce in Thailand** (AmCham), will be celebrating three days early—at the **Bangkok Patana School** (643 La Salle Rd, Sukhumvit

Soi 105) starting at noon and continuing till 7:30pm. The event will feature vendors selling burgers, hot dogs, ribs, chicken wings, and pie, as well as drinks both hard and soft. Live bands



performing include Ample Soul, Matthew Fischer and the Fishes, Southern Cross, and Sticky Fingers, while children will be entertained by games and races. The highlight of the event is the raffle featuring prizes such as airline tickets hotel stays, meal vouchers, and more. And don't forget to visit the *Bangkok 101* booth and say "hello". Advance tickets are B200 (B300 at the door), but children under 12 are free.

www.amchamthailand.com/iday2017

ITALIAN FESTIVAL IN THAILAND

July 6

Enjoy an evening of Beethoven when pianist **Christian Leotta** joins the **Royal Bangkok Symphony Orchestra** to perform at the Small Hall of **Thailand Cultural Centre** (14 Thanon Walthana Tham), under conductor **Marco Boemi**. Admission is free and showtime is 7:30pm.



July 13

The Music Hall at **Chulalongkorn University** (254 Phaya Thai Rd) welcomes **Silvia Bellani** and **David Peroni** for an evening of virtuoso piano performance. Silvia Bellani started to play piano when she was five, and has won many international piano competitions. She plays in a duo with pianist David

Peroni, performing with both two pianos, and on one piano with four hands. Admission is free and showtime is 7pm.

July 21-23, 28-30

Italian mime artist **Matteo Cionini** (right) will be taking the stage twice in Bangkok this month. His first appearance is at the 2017 **KonRak Mime Festival** taking place in the Small Hall of **Thailand Cultural Centre** (14 Thanon Walthana Tham). After the success of the 2016 edition, this year's KonRak Mime Festival is bringing an even greater number of mime artists—from different countries—to perform in Thailand. It will be Matteo's first time in Bangkok, and he'll be presenting 'Senza Parole!', his latest show. The following weekend he'll be at the **Sodsai Pantomkomol Centre of Dramatic Arts**, at Chulalongkorn University. Contact the venues for specific showtimes.



For more information about upcoming **Italian Festival in Thailand 2017** events, visit the official Facebook page. www.facebook.com/italianfestivalthailand



RUNNING EVENTS

July 9

Get set for the **Bike Zone Tri Dash Bangkok**, organized by **Go Adventure Asia**. The race consists of a 400 metre swim, a 20 km bike race, and a 5 km run. There are prizes for winners, and the event takes place at the **Bangpoo Golf and Sport Club** in Samut Prakan (just outside of Bangkok) starting at 7am. Register for the *Individual Dash* (B1,100), or the *Team Relay* (B2,000). www.gotorace.com

July 23

The 2017 **BDMS Micro Bangkok Marathon** is described as a 6 km "Fun Fun Run"—beginning at 5:30am at **Lan Khon Meaung** in front of Bangkok City Hall—and is a precursor to the 30th annual **BDMS Bangkok Marathon** (the biggest international marathon race in Thailand) on November 19th, 2017. www.bkkmarathon.com

BEER & WINE FESTS

July 2

Wine lovers take note: **Riedel Wine Bar & Cellar**, at **Gaysorn Plaza**, will host a **Wine Fair** featuring 40 boutique wines from around the world, all selected by Thailand's leading importers. Tickets are B1,500 each and the event runs from 2pm till 6pm. www.riedelwinebarbkk.com

July 7

Attention beer lovers, **Quaint** restaurant (23, Sukhumvit Soi 61) will hold a **Thailand Brew Fest** with more than 50 American craft beers on tap. The event is co-presented by the fine folks at **Smiling Mad Dog**, and the fun gets underway at 5pm (continuing till late), with live music and DJ performances. www.facebook.com/quaintbangkok



Jerry Hopkins

Rolling Stone magazine staffer, Jim Morrison biographer, prolific writer, travel journalist, farm owner, maven of the Big Mango... all of this and more describe the legendary Jerry Hopkins

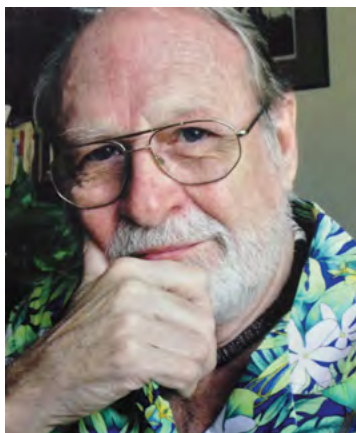
Sitting down for a chat with writer **Jerry Hopkins** is a golden opportunity for any writer, but this particular interview almost never came to fruition. Only a few short months ago this long-term Bangkok resident and man about town found himself in the cardiac care unit of Bumrungrad International Hospital, after collapsing at his Sukhumvit Soi 8 home. Luckily his Thai wife was with him and was able to quickly get him to the emergency room to deal with his heart problems. After a three-week stay the indomitable Jerry recovered, and my interview with him could go ahead.

When you first came to Bangkok, what was it about the city that made you want to stay—the people or the place itself?

Both. I arrived here from Hawaii, a place that many consider a paradise. But after many years I had become bored with it. Nothing surprised me anymore. Every day seemed to be the same. However, when I started to walk out onto the streets of Bangkok I was surprised by the sight of the world's worst traffic jams but with no sounds of horns, as well as the smells of streetfood cooking on every corner. And after travelling around Southeast Asia extensively in the late 80s I found the expat community in Bangkok to be the most intriguing, and easy to hang out with. There were, and still are, so many interesting people to meet here. For me Bangkok won hands down, so here I stayed.

How did you occupy yourself after you arrived?

When I came here I had pretty much decided to give up writing about rock n' roll and I thought that travel



and food could take over, so I had to find somewhere to pitch my ideas. I thought that as there were about 40 airlines serving Bangkok at that time I would try airline magazines. My evenings, quite honestly, were spent in the bars. I was a bit of a barfly, and I admit it. My favourite hangout bar was Lucky Luke's, at the entrance to Nana Plaza. It's still there today, although it's now been renamed.

When you are able to get out nowadays, where do you like to go?

Due to my failing health issues my go-go bar days are to a large extent behind me. I get tired easily and rely on my "team" to wheel me around in my chair. In Hawaii I had lived with a ladyboy and I still retain an interest in transsexualism. In my 25 years here I have frequently gone to ladyboy bars, and the one I still occasionally get out to is the Check In Bar on Soi 10. It's a bit like Cheers... everybody knows your name. It also has a slightly different clientele to Cheers, but with added extras.

What is your advice for someone coming to live in Bangkok for the first time?

Leave all your preconceptions, that is to say "misconceptions", at the airport. Come in with an open mind. You're gonna encounter belief systems that are totally alien to you. Make room for them and enjoy the journey!

Living in Bangkok is great, but is it important to get out of the city once in a while too?

The quotation I like best—not sure who said it—is: "The best thing about Bangkok is that it's so close to Thailand". I'm lucky in that I can experience the upcountry life myself while I'm on my monthly trip to Surin, where my wife Lamyai looks after our farm.

And what about for those who don't have a place in the country?

If you don't want to go on a long trip outside the city to travel upcountry, my suggestion is to head for the river. You can sit down at a funky little noodle stall, and eat for 40 to 50 baht while watching the boats go by. Or, take a tour along one of the many khlongs off the river, in Nonthaburi for example, where you are almost immediately transported back in time by 50 or 60 years. Life goes on there as it always has.

Are you still writing?

Well, at 81 years of age my prolific writing days are pretty much behind me, I guess. But I do write at least 1,000 words per day in my journal, and have done so for the last 25 years. Do the math and that's about 8 million words. The things I have forgotten are all there. It's my memory bank; my record for when I start to write my memoirs.

INTERVIEW BY ROBIN W. MARTIN

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Get Outta Town!

By plane, train, or automobile... sometimes you just need to make a break and explore life outside the manic metropolis

Weekends, even long weekends, are never long enough, but they still provide ample time for organized folk to escape the urban jungle and explore (possibly) the real jungle. And since it only takes a few hours to fly from one end of this country to the other, virtually any spot within the Kingdom of Thailand could be considered a **Weekend Escape**. That being said, we've come up with something of a short list of easy access locales that should satisfy the cravings of the average weekend wanderer.

For most Bangkok city slickers, the idea of a quick and easy weekend getaway brings to mind two default destinations: **Pattaya** and **Hua Hin**. While both are great—and we cover both in this issue—they are simply the tip of the fast melting iceberg. **Koh Samui** (see pg. 18) is also a great little getaway, and it's one of only two islands in Thailand with its own commercial airport, making the journey there effortless and quick. The other island, of course, is **Phuket**, and the number of scheduled flights there from Bangkok each day makes zipping back and forth like hopping a commuter train.

the main thing is you've escaped the big city and are experiencing that other side of Thailand—where the pace quiets down and the “slow life” attitude takes hold. And, if truth be told, while many of these locales are endlessly charming, for most of them a weekend visit is fine (any longer and you may be actually pining for the big city again).



Drone photo of Pattaya by Richard Barrow

However, there is also a vast underpublicized region within driving distance of Bangkok that begs for exploration. These pastoral provinces offer amazing getaway opportunities and their proximity to the city means you can drive to some of them in just a few hours. You can also make use of Thailand's network of trains to travel within these regions, or investigate the possibility of getting there by van or coach bus. Whichever way,

Unfortunately, there are many popular nearby destinations we don't mention in this special feature—including **Kanchanaburi**, **Ayutthaya**, **Sukhothai**, **Chantaburi**, **Koh Chang**, **Koh Kood**, and more—but rest assured they will be covered in depth in upcoming issues of *Bangkok 101*. And, if the thought of leaving town is too arduous, we've also included some 'Staycation' suggestions within Bangkok that just “feel” like you've escaped to somewhere new.

P H U K E T
FOOD X WINE
 EXPO

NOTE: If you want to start planning a spectacular weekend escape well in advance, be reminded that the **Phuket Food & Wine Expo** will be taking

place at the **Royal Phuket Marina** from Friday March 9th to Sunday March 11th, 2018. It's a must-attend event for foodies, and will showcase the very best gourmet cuisine, as well as an array of fine wines and spirits and the latest innovations in luxury kitchen products and services. www.phuketfoodandwine.com

Dining Along the Beach

Hungry holidaymakers should head to Hua Hin

By **Bruce Scott**

The obvious attractions for weekend wanderers making a trip to **Hua Hin** are that this seaside resort town has great hotels, a beautiful beach, and it's a fairly painless drive to and from Bangkok. But over the years the dining, café, and nightlife scene in Hua Hin has grown considerably—meaning you can be wining and dining at the same time you're unwinding.

DINE ALONG THE BEACH



Spinach and lamb cannelloni

When five of Hua Hin's leading international resorts join forces to launch a special group dining experience together, you know they're cooking up something good, and the appropriately named **Dine Along the Beach** experience definitely delivers an evening that is as tasty as it is out of the ordinary.

Launched on the 1st of June 2017, this creative culinary journey along the coast features the combined kitchen talents from the **Hua Hin Marriott Resort & Spa**, the **Hyatt Regency Hua Hin**, the **InterContinental Hua Hin Resort**, the **Centara Grand Beach Resort & Villas Hua Hin**, and the **Hilton Hua Hin Resort & Spa**. The chefs and their teams have banded together to create a unique four-hour dining journey wherein guests pay one set price—B2,499 net per person, which includes wine pairings—but dine at

five different luxury hotel restaurants. And to add to the enjoyment, your between course time is spent strolling along the beach to the next property (where the next course awaits).

This group event takes advantage of Hua Hin's stunning beachfront location, with the tables and chairs at each station set up either right beside the beach, or right on the beach. The size of the group will be 50 persons maximum (approximately 10 guests per hotel), which makes it both manageable and great for mingling. The general camaraderie that develops over the course of the night means that by the end you should have 49 new best buddies.

The evening begins at 5pm at the Hyatt Regency with a starter of fresh Hua Hin scallops and smoked snapper,

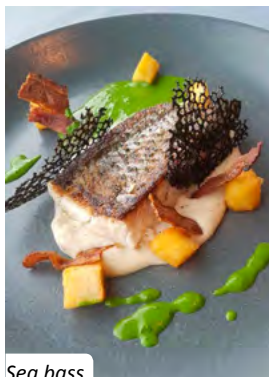


with beetroot salad tartare, horseradish crème fraîche, and egg roe. The hotel's Executive Chef **Christoph Trocker** (left) has a passion for creating dishes that enhance the natural flavours found in local foods, and he makes it a point to work with local farmers and fishermen. The first course wine pairing is a sparkling *Monsoon Valley Blanc de Blancs Brut* and, in fact, all wines served during the

course of the evening are from this renowned local Hua Hin winery.

At about 5:30pm diners rise from their tables and stroll together along the beach to the next stop on the journey, the InterContinental Hua Hin Resort where Italian Executive Chef **Riccardo Ioanna** greets diners with his tantalizing spinach cannelloni, stuffed with braised cinnamon lamb loin, madeira reduction, and crumbled goat cheese (all paired with a 2016 *Monsoon Valley White Shiraz*). This first beach jaunt is the longest of the four in-between course strolls, and it will definitely work up an appetite.

The next stop is the recently relaunched Hua Hin Marriott Resort & Spa, and here Executive Chef **Mario Hofmann** welcomes diners with a fantastically flavourful main course of perfectly prepared fillet of sea bass with crispy bacon, a divine truffle potato mousseline, parsley emulsion, and black tuille (paired with a 2016 *Monsoon Valley Colombard*). It's a magnificent meal!



Sea bass



Oceanside at the Centara Grand Beach Resort

The second main course is prepared and presented at the **Coast** restaurant at the stunning and historic Centara Grand Beach Resort & Villas Hua Hin. Here

Executive Chef **Steffan Hoffer** shares some of his German upbringing with a combination plate featuring slow-cooked beef short rib, German spätzle pasta, baby vegetables, and mushrooms—all paired with a deep red 2015



Delicious dessert

Monsoon Valley Shiraz (pork or chicken substitutions to the beef are available upon request).

At about 8:30pm diners move to the last remaining location—the very close at hand Hilton Hua Hin Resort & Spa—where dessert awaits at the hotel's beachfront **Chay Had** restaurant. Executive Chef **Phillip Maus** tops the evening off with a Bavarian style tap sakaie coconut parfait with raspberry, nicely paired with a 2016 *Monsoon Valley Chenin Blanc* dessert-style wine. In addition to dessert, diners are treated to an exciting beachfront fire juggling act.

Diners partaking in Dine Along the Beach will cover about 4 km on foot, and since walking barefoot on the beach is encouraged, bags are provided for carrying your shoes. The event itself is a wonderful way to meet new people, enjoy the evening ocean breezes, and test the talents of some of Hua Hin's best chefs.

NOTE: Dine Along the Beach will take place on the first Thursday of the month, until September 2017. For information, or to make reservations, call 03 252 1234 or email huahin.regency@hyatt.com.

FOODIE FOOD TOURS

If you want to “eat like a local” try one of the several innovative dine and discover tours operated by **Feast Thailand Food Tours**. The company, started by a husband and wife team from Melbourne, introduces guests to dishes they may not know, and educates them about Thai

food (even long term residents in Thailand have been surprised by some of the things they discovered while taking these tours).

The company offers a number of specialized excursions—information about each is available on the company's very informative website—but a good place to start is the 3.5 hour *Foodies Food Tour*, which is priced at a very reasonable B1,500 per person. The tour begins with a traditional Thai breakfast, before moving on to a guided tour through Hua Hin's famous 100-year-old **Chat Chai Wet Market**, and concludes with a stroll up **Naeb Kehardt Road**. Along the way, the informative English-speaking Thai tour guide answers any and all questions relating to the food being sampled.



Chat Chai Wet Market

“It's not only about finding restaurants or vendors that have great tasting food,” explains owner **Leigh Higgins**. “The food needs to be consistently good, and the standards have to be high when it comes to food preparation and hygiene. We tasted and visited every place several times, talked to the owners, and looked at how they operated. Our Thai staff were also crucial in this decision making process as well, as they also would only eat where its tasty and prepared fresh.”

For more information call 03 251 0207, or visit the website at www.feastthailand.com.

BE SEEN AT SEENSPACE

Opened last April, the ultra-hip **SeenSpace Hua Hin**—designed by the same team behind Thong Lor's perpetually popular SeenSpace—is a 7,200 sq.m beachside lifestyle mall, located on Hua Hin Soi 35 (Liebwang Nue Rd). It combines shopping and dining with plenty of niche market boutiques and a few names familiar Bangkok's food and drink connoisseurs (HOBs, Greyhound, Fin Seafood Bar, etc). There's also lots of outdoor lounge space—and cool beanbag chairs for lounging upon—as well as a large ocean-facing swimming pool surrounded by daybed loungers, deck chairs, and small tables. Apart from the huge array of restaurants, there's some cool stores worth checking out including a vintage vinyl shop. www.seenspace.com/huahin

HOTEL HIGHLIGHT: ANANDA HUA HIN RESORT AND SPA



The newest addition to Hua Hin's beachfront resort lineup is the luxurious **Ananda Hua Hin Resort & Spa**. The resort's name means "bliss" in Sanskrit, and the property is spread out over a blissful 30 rai of tropical greenery, stretching from Petchkasem Road all the way to its own private beach on the Gulf of Siam. The resort is also conveniently located—a mere 15 minutes from the town center and its popular night market, and just a short walk away from **The Venezia**, a popular Italian-styled shopping village.

Once checked in at the spacious airy reception area, the friendly and attentive staff are waiting to whisk you off in ever-ready electric carts, past the spa and state-of-the-art fitness studio, arriving finally at one of the 173 luxurious rooms and suites. However, if you're staying in one of the resort's unique collection of 23 *Lagoon Pool* and *Private Pool Villas*, hidden among palm trees and landscaped gardens, they'll ferry you to your own exclusive check-in area. The regular rooms and

suites range in size from the 33 sq.m *Superior*, to the 72 sq.m *One Bedroom Garden* and *Jacuzzi Premier Suites*, while the villas range in size from the grand 188 sq.m *Private Pool Villa*, to the ultra-spacious 268 sq.m *Two Bedroom Beach Front Villa*. Each villa boasts its own private entrance, and opens onto gardens as well as either a private lagoon- or plunge-pool.

All accommodations enjoy views over landscaped tropical gardens from the private balconies and terraces. Design-wise, the resort is decorated throughout in bright colours with artistic tiles, marble and wooden flooring, and Jackson Pollock-esque prints in many rooms. Delicate teals, blues, and greens ensure a soothing aquatic ambience that is pleasingly offset by the brighter primary reds, yellows, and oranges of the pool area's umbrellas.

Diners here are spoiled for choice. **Staa's**, the all-day dining area, offers à la carte menu and wide-ranging buffet selections that can be enjoyed both inside or outside, but that's just the beginning. Guests can enjoy poolside bites at **Aqua**—ideally situated in-between the two free-form tropical

pools—and casual drinks and snacks at both **Terrace Bar** and **Lite Bite**, or indulge in exquisite Mediterranean creations at **Brezza**, the Italian-style restaurant which has its own private garden with comfy seating, fully-stocked bar, and direct beach access. In the evenings, above **Staa's** and overlooking the swimming pools, the **Blue Biscuit** serves Creole-inspired bites, as well as a wide variety of drinks and imported specialty spirits from all over the world, while the live music makes it the resort's social hotspot.

The resort also boasts Hua Hin's largest conference centre and ballroom—a 900 sq.m flexible function space that can accommodate large scale corporate events, lavish weddings, or more intimate gatherings with equal facility. **BY GARY A. RUTLAND**

Ananda Hua Hin Resort and Spa

1499 Petchkasem Rd, Cha-Am
Tel: 03 289 8989
www.anandahuahin.com

Gulf Getaway

Koh Samui: an island oasis for Bangkok urbanites

By **Nadia Willan**



The gorgeous beaches at the Novotel Samui Resort

Bangkokians may bemoan the price of the short 45-minute return flights to **Koh Samui**, but the reality is that once you touch down in the ‘Fantasy Island’ style airport with its thatched salas, it feels worth every last baht; a priceless experience that can only be measured in terms of pure joy, relaxation, and the meaning of life!

There is no denying that Thailand’s second-largest island is a divine beauty of a weekend getaway destination; the allure of sparkling white-sand beaches, those exquisite, tropical island clear waters—this is what captures the hearts, dreams, and imagination of Thais, expats, and non-resident holidaymakers alike. There is something wonderfully special about Samui that epitomizes the castaway island escape.

This Chumphon Archipelago stunner, set amidst 80 islands in the Gulf of Thailand, exudes an innate natural charm and effortless charisma. There is a laid-back gorgeousness about Koh Samui that is endlessly seductive. Lounging on soft sands looking out over the azure waters of the Gulf of Thailand is just about as perfect as it gets. However, the island also offers some interesting mini-break things to see and do too.

SIGHTSEEING TOUR

Whilst there are plenty of great sightseeing spots on Samui, the fact is that none of them really warrant an extended stop off. The heat may slow down the speed, but a fairly fast-paced minivan tour with an experienced guide is the best way to go.

Samui’s famous **Hin Ta** and **Hin Yai**, commonly referred to as “grandfather and grandmother rocks”,

are visually interesting. Two separate formations that resemble, in an artistic sense, the private regions of a man and woman have been turned into a folklore tale involving a shipwreck, a marriage proposal, and a symbol of everlasting love.

Moving inland, the **Namuang Waterfalls** are pleasant enough for a mini photo-shoot and a cool dip with a two-minute stroll to the first fall, and just a little further to the second. Translated as “purple water”, the falls which are so named because of the colour of the rocks. Locals love to come here for swimming and picnicking.

Wat Khunaram, located in the Lamai Beach area, is famed for its ‘Mummified Monk’. Locally born **Luong Pho Daeng**, who passed away in his late 70s in the early ‘70s, is on show in a glass case at the temple’s Buddhist shrine. In a meditative pose, the monk is so well-preserved that he still has some hair nearly 45 years after his passing. There is something fascinatingly eerie yet spiritually uplifting about this enduring symbol of Buddhist culture, and his retro sunglasses add a Thai quirky touch.



Mummified monk

A real highlight is the **Secret Buddha Garden** which is more of a small beauty spot than a garden to stroll



Secret Buddha Garden

around. In this private sculpture park set atop Pom Mountain, one of the highest peaks on the island, sculptures of humans and deities in and around a stream and waterfall depict classic Thai stories and the effect is a magical, fairy-tale feel in a jungle setting found up an off-road drive with amazing views over the whole island along the way. The timeless tranquility of the garden, owned by a fruit-farming family, and animal stone carvings resonates with visitors on some deeper inner level.

SUGARCANE LUNCH & NIGHT MARKET

A few distillery type machines and buckets stand in what resembles a cow shed. Whilst there is little to really see at **Magic Alambic Rum Distillery** (44/5 Moo 3, Na Mueang), it is worthy of a stop off for lunch in a quiet rural setting with a bar serving drinks straight from the barn. The French owners rustle up a European menu of the day, and tapas with homemade sausages—plus a shot of sugarcane alcohol served with a lime, sugarcane, cinnamon, nutmeg, and vanilla juice to mix on the side. Tel: 091 816 7416 www.facebook.com/rumdistillery

Fisherman's Village (Bophut Beach) is one of Samui's most-talked about visitor hotspots, yet it is surprisingly cool and touristy in the best way possible. The shops, bars, and restaurants are open each night, whilst the night



Magic Alambic Rum Distillery

market adds to the vibrant atmosphere on Fridays. The drinking holes are trendy yet chilled out joints, and there is a surprisingly mellow vibe with a boho edge.



Emerald Lake

ANG THONG MARINE PARK

If you can ignore the *en masse* tourist vibe of speedboats setting out to the beautiful **Ang Thong National Marine Park**, then this really is a bit of a must-do trip. The islands of this archipelago dot the clear waters northwest of Koh Samui, and a snorkel stop at Koh Wao reveals coral reefs and colourful marine life. Once inside the park itself, a hot and sweaty trek upwards takes you to the ultimate reveal, the famed **Emerald Lake** at Koh Mae Koh (Mother Island). Surrounded by cliffs, and with a white sand sea bed, the saltwater lagoon shines a brilliant green, sparkling like the *Emerald City of Oz*, far, far from home.

There are 42 islands in this protected paradise, and heading past Monkey Island, and onwards to Wua Talap (Sleeping Cow Island), kayaking, swimming or trekking along a jungle trail are classic tourist pursuits. However, lying under the shade of a tree on the green grass and watching the spider monkeys at play is perhaps as active as some visitors want to get. ■

OPEN WATER ADVENTURE: SAMUI REGATTA



From flyboarding to kite surfing, jet-skiing to scuba diving, Samui is intrinsically all about the fun to be had on the water. Trips to the island in May also offer visitors the chance to catch sight of some simply stunning yachts at the annual five-day **Samui Regatta**; showcasing the *crème-de-la-crème* of Asian sailing beauties, from single hull day cruisers to immense multi-hulls.

At the 2017 event—which ran from May 19th to 28th—around 500 sailors descended on Samui, complete with a spectator catamaran reached a few nautical miles from shore, and beach parties and a gala dinner finale for yachties and those with a passion for sailing. Now in its 16th year, the regatta has turned into a competition of international repute and adds to the appeal of the island as a luxe destination for sports tourism. The climate and winds in this part of Thailand make sailing a pleasure and an exhilarating challenge for yachting aficionados and novice sailors alike.

www.samuiregatta.com

HOTEL HIGHLIGHT: NOVOTEL SAMUI RESORT



The Western Coast of Koh Samui may tempt with its promise of sunset views, but staying on the eastern shore of the island, on Chaweng Beach, is gloriously close to the airport. With a weekend escape, the ultimate aim is to land, check in, and be dipping your toes in a resort pool within an hour. Right by the beachfront, **Novotel Samui Resort Chaweng Beach Kandaburi** is a worthy 4-star stay exalted by its location which is the absolute pinnacle of luxury.

When it comes to beach stays it is all about location, location, location and as you walk into the foyer and spy the shimmer of the beach and blue sea beyond, you know you have “arrived”. The architectural design creates a stunning, uninterrupted vista through the middle of the resort which is impressively grand. Steps from the open reception lead down to a pretty walkway that runs past lotus flower ponds to a big swimming pool with cabanas, loungers, and water-jet beds.

The 54 sq.m *Deluxe Beach Side Rooms* are spacious, with baths, balconies, and the comfiest beds. The turn-down service with an

aromatherapy oil burner lit adds a nice touch after a long day in the sun, or coming back to your room after an evening out.

The 54 sq.m *Superior Hillside Rooms* and 74 sq.m *Family Hillside Rooms* with bunk beds are across the road in the hillside section of the property, where there is also breakfast and all-day dining available at **Palm Court**. Walking across to this non-beachside part of the hotel definitely feels a step down, but the rooms here are decidedly cheaper, and with the sands still so close it is an irk you could probably live with.

Breakfast is served *al fresco* at the **@Beach Restaurant**, with daytime snacks and evening BBQ buffets. The Friday-night seafood delights are tempting, and the beachside location is perfect. Across the road, **Tom Yum Thai** serves up a delicious family-style sukiyaki at the table. Admittedly, the food at Novotel is not going to blow you away, but it is decent enough, and with the spectacular beach setting it's more than you can expect for this level of stay.

Oil massages at the resort's **Kanda Spa** are soothing, with two spa treatment rooms boasting a sauna and bath, but an iced cloth, cold

water, and foot washing on arrival would add some finesse. Massages poolside are also offered.

Whilst there is a kids' pool, there is no children's club, but this enhances the peaceful seaside ambiance. Meanwhile, napkin folding, fruit carving, flower-garland making, and Thai massage and cookery classes may seem eye-rollingly clichéd for people who are no strangers to Thailand, but they are surprisingly absorbing, promising a sweet hour or so out of the sunshine.

With a few interesting beach bars and restaurants, and a 20-minute walk to Chaweng's main entertainment zone, Novotel has one of the best spots on the island for those who want a resort-style stay. Total luxury it is not, but what makes for a truly relaxing break is the superior service which is absolutely first-class.

BY NADIA WILLAN

Novotel Samui Resort Chaweng Beach Kandaburi
20, Moo 2 Chaweng Beach, Bophut
Tel: 07 742 8888
www.novotel-samui-resort-chaweng.com



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Roaming Rayong

There's more to this province than ferries to Koh Samet

By **Julia Offenberger**



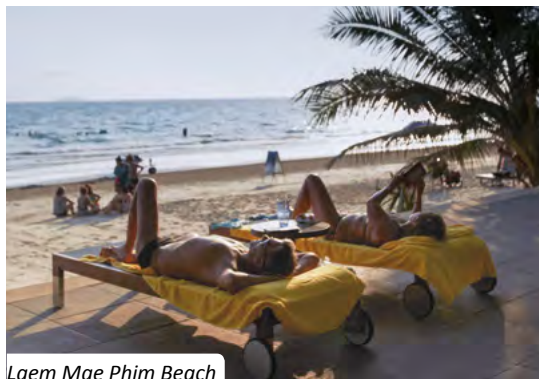
Centara Q Resort Rayong

For many tourists and Thai residents alike, **Rayong** is simply the jumping-off point when visiting the popular island of Koh Samet, as the ferries to the island depart from **Baan Phe Pier**. However, in recent years this laid-back province has begun attracting its own breed of travellers—those who would rather trade in their sandals and sun-downers for something a little more adventurous.

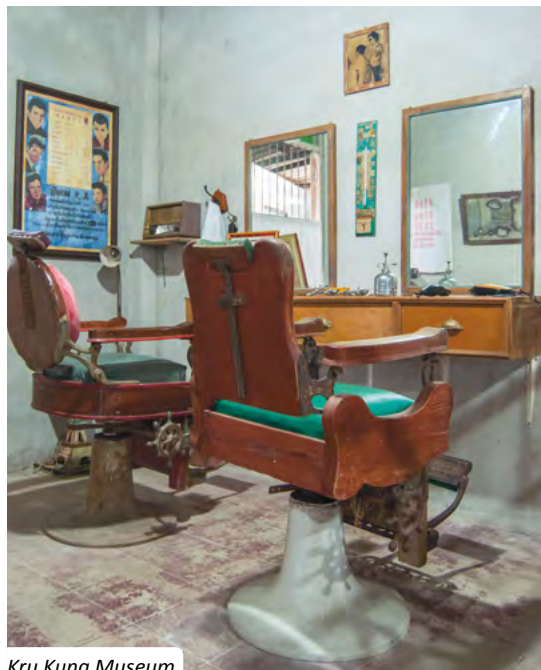
Rayong is the name of both the city and the province located on Thailand's eastern seaboard (just a three-hour drive from Bangkok). Boasting a beautiful coastline and a number of cultural and natural attractions, it's a little-known destination that's ideal for a quick weekend getaway.

Sitting on a hill above the secluded **Laem Mae Phim Beach**, the one-year-old **Centara Q Resort Rayong** is the perfect, intimate base for spending time in this uncharted region. Featuring 41 ocean-view rooms—which consist of 34 sq.m *Superior Rooms* and 58 sq.m *Deluxe Rooms*—the resort is set along the slope of a hill, with views of the sea and a path that leads to the beach below. The letter “Q” in the resort's name stands for cubic design,

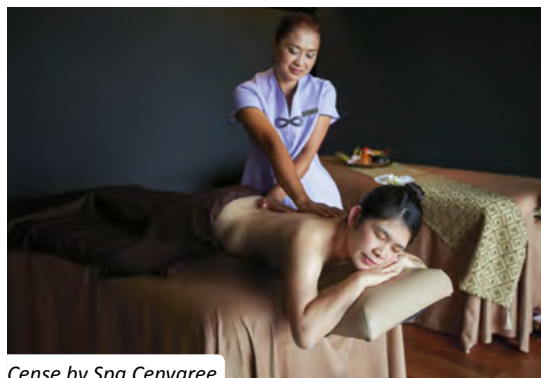
tranquility, and quality, all of which is not only reflected in the resort's modern architecture, but also in the clean and minimalistic interiors of the bright and spacious beachfront rooms. Carrying on with the “Q” theme, the hotel has three F&B outlets; **QZeen Restaurant**, **Qube Pool Bar**, and the popular **QuickSand Beach Terrace**. In



Laem Mae Phim Beach



Kru Kung Museum

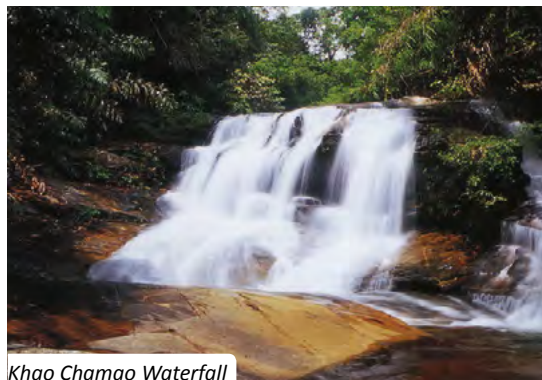


Cense by Spa Cenvaree

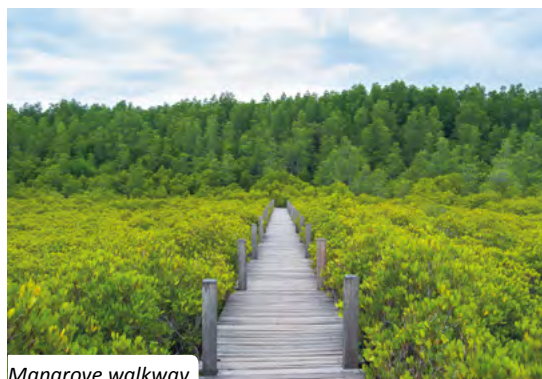
addition, the resort also offers guests a beachfront infinity swimming pool, 24-hr fitness centre, complimentary shuttle service to local markets, and the resort's very own spa—**Cense by Spa Cenvaree**.

Just five minutes' drive north of the resort, the **Sunthon Phu Memorial Park** is a great spot for culture lovers. Dedicated to one of Thailand's greatest poets, **Sunthon Phu**, the site features several ornate statues of characters from his masterpiece *Phra Abhai Mani*, including the eponymous hero playing the flute. A small museum within the grounds illustrates the life of Sunthon Phu and some of his most famous works—in both English and Thai. Many visitors come here to pray for good luck, and once a year a festival is held to celebrate the poet's life, featuring performances and puppet shows.

About 1.5 km further north from the park, the **Kru Kung Museum** showcases a large collection of vintage products and is attractively set in an old teak house, divided into different venues that mimic a traditional



Khao Chamao Waterfall



Mangrove walkway

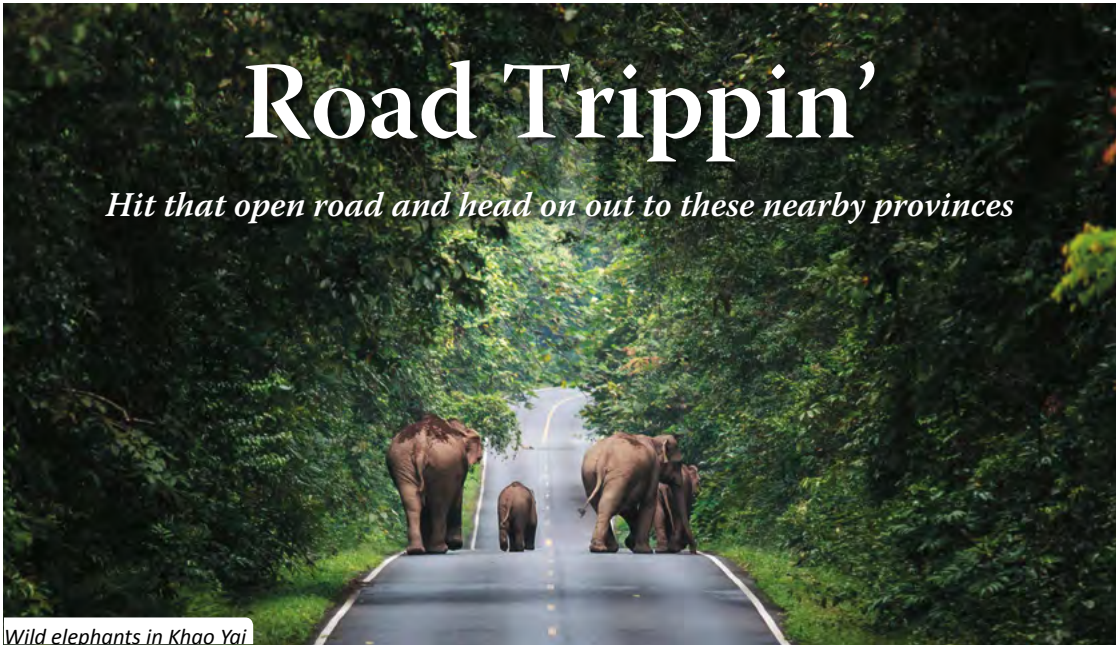
Thai town. Visitors can check out the vintage classroom, convenience store, barbershop, tailor store, and even an old cinema. Aiming to “collect, preserve, educate, and showcase”, the museum is a fun place to spend an afternoon while reminiscing about the “good ol’ days” (whenever they really were). Entrance fee is B80 for Thai visitors, and B150 for non-Thais—with a 30 percent discount if you book through Centara—and there's also a small café offering drinks and nibbles.

A little further afield, nature fans can head to Rayong's **Golden Mangrove Field**, known in Thai as **Tung Phrong Thong**. Located 15 km east of the Centara resort, in the town of **Pak Nam Prasae**, the plantation covers an area of 2,400 acres and is home to a rich collection of wildlife, including crabs, birds, and fish—which, in turn, provide a source of income to local villagers. A one-kilometre-long wooden walkway leads through the forest, passing by a variety of colourful mangrove species; yellow-greenish leaves that turn golden in the bright sunlight.

As well as good opportunities for kayaking, windsurfing and cycling, other nearby places that are worth a visit include **Farm Pu Nim**, a soft-shell crab farm, the **Koh Kloy** floating market, and the **Khao Chamao-Khao Wong** natural park, where the main attraction is the 8-tiered **Khao Chamao** waterfall (however only the first seven tiers are accessible to the public). **Klong Pla Kang**, located 5 km north from park headquarters, is another 7-tiered waterfall here worth visiting, while the **Khao Wong Caves**, nearly 20 km from park headquarters, are also great for exploring if you're up for the trek. ■

Road Trippin'

Hit that open road and head on out to these nearby provinces



Wild elephants in Khao Yai

By **Kelly Harvey**

There's nothing quite like hitting the open road and leaving the city behind. One of the many benefits of living in Thailand is the vast array of weekend escapes and road trip destinations available. Only hours away from the madness of Bangkok you'll find the likes of **Khao Yai**, **Lopburi**, and **Nakhon Pathom**, each offering unique attractions and proving you don't have to travel far from Bangkok to find something spectacular. Driving is the best option, but these destinations are also easily accessible by bus or train.

KHAO YAI

Spanning over 2,000 sq.km and stretching over four provinces—Nakhon Ratchasima, Saraburi, Prachin Buri, and Nakhon Nayok—**Khao Yai National Park** is the centrepiece of what most people refer to as 'Khao Yai'. It is also Thailand's oldest and most visited nature reserve, and the park's splendid scenery includes both tropical seasonal forests, mountainous areas, and sprawling grasslands. It's also home to raging waterfalls, thousands of species of plants, and hundreds of species of animals (including wild elephants).

There are over 50 km of hiking trails, of varying degrees of difficulty, and information and maps pertaining to the trails are available at the visitors' centre. Guides are also on hand to lead you along the trails if you're not an experienced trekker.

But there's more to Khao Yai than just wilderness hiking. The area surrounding the national park has undergone extensive development over the past few decades and has increasingly become a go-to weekend getaway for urbanized city dwellers. It's just a two to three-hour drive from Bangkok, and it boasts the 7th best



Lala Mukha Tented Resort

WHERE DO YOU GO?

Laurel Tuohy

Editor, Bangkok Coconuts



If you've had the kind of week that you need to escape from, **Koh Samet** is the closest island to Bangkok. In just a few hours, you can be watching the sunset while eating fresh seafood on the beach. Many of the restaurants put their tables and chairs out in the sand so you can eat whole fresh fish, clams, or lobster while the waves wash over your feet. Once the sun goes down, **Naga Bar**, on **Sai Kaeow Beach**, is the top destination. Join the throngs and have your face painted with the fluorescent body paint the place is famous for, and dance till the sun comes up.

ozone level in the world—providing folks with a breath of fresh air (literally). Meanwhile, many resorts, villas, vacation houses, and camping and glamping spots are now located throughout the greater Khao Yai region, and the choices are vast. For a glorious upscale stay at a faux French chateau check in at the beautiful **U Khao Yai** resort. Or, if you want to “sort of” rough it, try the air-conditioned luxury glamping tents at the **Lala Mukha Tented Resort**.

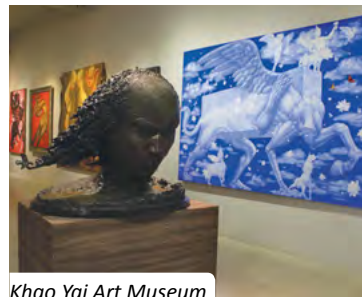
The Khao Yai region has also become recognized lately for producing some of the best quality wines in the country, and several wineries in the area offer tours, tastings, restaurants, and even luxurious overnight stays. A weekend wine tour should definitely include

stops at **GranMonte Vineyard & Winery**, **PB Valley Estate**, **Aldicini**, and **Village Farm**.

There are lots of other attractions here too—some less deserving of attention than others—but a culturally uplifting visit to the **Khao Yai Art Museum**, an afternoon of sweet indulgence at **The Chocolate Factory**, and a glorious dinner at the **Midwinter Green** restaurant are all worthy diversions—once you’ve finished your mountain treks and forest walks.

LOPBURI

Situated 150 km north of Bangkok, the city of Lopburi is the capital of Lopburi province and one of the oldest cities in the Kingdom. With a history dating back to the Dvaravati period (6th to



Khao Yai Art Museum

10th century), and its prominent role the Khmer and Ayutthya empires, it’s no surprise that remnants from throughout Thai history can still be found in this city. Today Lopburi is divided into two main areas: **New Town** and **Old Town**. Along with the train station, most of the tourist sites are located in the Old Town, while majority of the hotels, and the bus station, can be found in the New Town.

Often referred to as ‘Monkey City’, Lopburi is famous, or infamous, for the hundreds of crab-eating macaques that overrun the Old Town, most of which you will find around the Khmer-style temple **Phra Prang Sam Yot** and the **Phra Kaan Shrine** (in what looks like a scene out of *The Jungle Book*). Nuts and fruit are on sale throughout the year to feed the monkeys, while on the last weekend of November the annual **Lopburi Monkey Festival** is held and a buffet of fruit is offered to the monkeys to thank them for bringing prosperity to the town. The monkeys provide many great photo opportunities but do be careful of your belongings—these avaricious apes have gotten rather greedy over the years.



Lopburi Monkey Festival

WHERE DO YOU GO?

Will C. Corbin

Musician: Jenny & The Scallywags, Lips Manly



I think **Pranburi** is great. It’s still is my favourite place. I wrote a song about it called “Down in Old Pranburi” where I mention **Dolphin Bay**. I love the national park there with the shrine in the hollow cave (Praya Nakorn), and there are really nice boutique hotels there as well. It’s simple, reasonably priced, close to BKK, and has that sleepy fishing town charm. Driving inland on a motorbike is also cool as you go through all these marine agriculture farms and past big cliffs, sand dune trails, etc. About three years ago I was there and we rented a longtail boat with driver for the day (just B1,200), and he dropped us briefly at Koh Kho Ram, the “monkey island”, which is an intense experience—the small monkeys climb all over you to get food, and they pinch on your ears with their fingers, but they don’t have nasty nails or anything. Meanwhile the boat guy fished for clams while we were hiking.



Sunflowers

Another must-see is the annual **Lopburi Sunflower Blooming Festival**. From November through January thousands of sunflowers come into full bloom at **Khao Jean Lae**, located approximately 45 km

outside of the city. Spanning a total area of 1,400 rai, it is the largest sunflower field in Thailand.

Moving further away from the city, **Wat Khao Wongkhot**, also known as the ‘Bat Cave’, is located roughly 4 km from Ban Mi District and covers an area of 30 rai. The temple itself is situated in the middle of three mountains with a reclining buddha enshrined at the foot of **Sanam Daeng Mountain**. Also within the temple’s compound is Lopburi’s biggest bat cave. Each day at 6pm millions of bats take flight and leave the cave—sometimes taking up to two hours to empty—in search of food.



Wat Phra Pathom Chedi

NAKHON PATHOM

Lying only 57 km west of Bangkok, this neighbouring province takes less than an hour to get to. Although it lies in

close proximity to the overdeveloped Thai capital, lush green trees and shrubbery run throughout this region, making for stunning views and picture-

perfect landscapes, particularly alongside the **Tha Chin River**—also known as the **Nakhon Chai Si River**—that runs throughout Nakhom Pathom.

One of the most famous temples in the region is **Wat Phra Pathom Chedi**, located in the city of Nakhom Pathom, which houses the tallest stupa in the world (measuring 120.5 metres high). To pay homage to the temple, each November the **Phra Pathom Chedi Festival** is held for nine consecutive days, during which you’ll find local products on display, and entertainment for all ages.

Throughout the year, the **Night Market**—situated on the west side of the temple—is open daily from 6pm till midnight. You’ll find an array of food vendors selling Thai favourites, as well as some of the dishes that Nakhom Pathom is famed for. Known for having the best *Khao Lam*—sticky rice and coconut milk cooked in bamboo—in all of Thailand, as well as sweet pomelo, this market is a must-visit to pick up some of the kingdom’s best produce.

WHERE DO YOU GO?

Richard Barrow

Thailand Travel Blogger

There are very few “unseen” attractions left around Bangkok, however **Ban Khun Samut Chin**, in **Samut Prakan** province, is still largely unknown by foreigners (and Thais). This is mainly due to its isolation. There are no roads in this area, so to reach this community, tourists have to hail a taxi boat and then walk a further 30 minutes. But, the effort is rewarding. Due to land

erosion and the advancing sea, many families in the community have moved their houses inland half a dozen times. The only people that refused to move are the monks whose temple complex is now surrounded by the sea. To reach this islet, you have to walk along a raised concrete platform. If you need more time to explore the area, there is a homestay on stilts behind the village chief’s house. Call 086 567 5296 to reserve a room. Prices start at B600 per person which includes three meals.



Drone photo by Richard Barrow



Don Wai Floating Market

The **Don Wai Floating Market**—situated next to **Wat Don Mai** on the Nakhon Chai Si River in the southern

district of Sam Phran—also makes a good stop for foodies. Although it is referred to a ‘floating market’, most of the vendors and restaurants are set up on land with boat trips on offer to visitors. It’s open daily from 7am to 6pm.



Wat Samphran

Also located in the district of Sam Phran is **Wat Samphran**, better known as the ‘Dragon Temple’. This bright pink 17-storey tower is encircled by a giant green dragon climbing towards the top. Inside the dragon is a staircase, which unfortunately has deteriorated in some places. At the foot of the temple you will also find an array of interesting sculptures of beasts as well as a giant bronze Buddha. This gigantic temple is currently closed to the public, but it is, arguably, best seen from a distance anyway.



Wai Kruu Festival

Finally, **Wat Bang Phra**, a Buddhist monastery in Nakhon Chaisi district, is home to the *sak yant* mystical tattoo cult. The temple became famous in the 20th century thanks to **Luang Phor Phern**, the late abbot known for his mastery in both the technical and magical sides of *sak yant*. Each year in March, thousands of curious

revellers and believers attend the **Wai Kruu Festival** in which they undergo a ceremonious “re-charge” of their tattoos. This offbeat event is memorable for the many people who apparently become possessed by spirits that cause them to dash wildly through the crowds while screaming and gesticulating wildly. ■



Wat Bang Phra

WHERE DO YOU GO?

Joe Cummings

Author, journalist, and musician



If Hua Hin is too full of tourists for you, head for sleepy, overlooked **Prachuap Khiri Khan** only 80 km to the south. Eight trains a day make the trip from Bangkok to Prachuap’s quaint, 1914-vintage teak-plank railway station. From the station, stroll straight down Kong Kiat Road—a charming street flanked by pre-1970s two-story shophouses—to the **Yuttichai Hotel**, one of the last old-school wooden hotels found anywhere in the province (tel: 032 611 055). Here a clean, fan-cooled room with king-sized bed and private bathroom costs just B350 a night, and there’s a cozy coffee corner downstairs serving espresso drinks and economical meals.

Rent a bicycle or scooter to make the quick 6 km hike to **Ao Manao**, an island-dotted bay, rimmed by a long white-sand beach and lofty sea pines, found inside the Wing 5 air force base. In exchange for registering at the gate, you can enjoy a pristine beach experience free from beach hawkers and tacky resorts. Just north of town, a rocky limestone crag known as **Khao Chong Krajok** is topped by **Wat Thammikaram**, a monastery established by King Rama VI with sweeping views of **Ao Prachuap**, the town’s main bay. A sizeable tribe of mischievous longtail macaques make the hill their home.

Finally, Thai foodies say Prachuap offers the best-priced fresh seafood anywhere along the gulf. We can vouch for **Rap Lom**, a semi-outdoor place a couple of kilometers north of Khao Chong Krajok.

Neglected Neighbour

Chachoengsao province may only be two hours from Bangkok, but the old-school attractions and serene vibe make it seem a world away

Words and photos by **Jim Algie**



Wat Hong

Christian saints do not have a monopoly on miracles. The legend-spawning Buddha image known as **Luang Poh Sathon** is revered for everything from curing terminal illnesses to helping couples have children, and the statue's miraculous powers are attributed to its incredible origins. Legend, or tall tale, has it that locals found it floating down the **Bang Pakong River** and installed the image at a temple called **Wat Hong**, some time in the 18th century.

Nowadays, the statue, housed in **Chachoengao** province's oldest temple, attracts a series of supplicants in search of good luck and better karma. For favours that have been fulfilled by the deities the faithful will pay Thai classical dancers to perform in their honour, which is the temple's pinnacle of performance art. Even atheists and materialists will find the renovated Wat Hong a worthy stopover for its sweeping lines, subtle shades of gold and grey, and the marble floor inside the main shrine, inscribed with sea creatures and the mythical "dragon fish."

Besides this venerable temple, the main attractants in the town that is the eponymous capital of Chachoengao province are decidedly old-school, like the rustic houses clinging to the edges of the canals, the century-old **Klong Suan Market** with its vintage shops and local delicacies in the old part of town, and the **City Hall** itself—a handsome

wooden structure with a statue of King Rama V out in front surrounded by areca palm trees.

One of the best parts of visiting such a province as Chachoengsao, which is off the average traveler's GPS, is that the locals, unused to mass tourism, give you such warmhearted welcomes. So as I walked up to take a photo of City Hall, a security guard at the front of the building, called out, "Hello!" as he beamed a high-wattage smile. In the more mainstream destinations—Phuket, Koh Samui, Bangkok, and Chiang Mai—which are overrun by tourists, Thailand's 'Land of Smiles' nickname is outdated. These places are just not as friendly as they used to be. But out in the Thai heartland, the country's old image still shines through in living colours.



St. Paul's Church cemetery

Another point of interest and antiquity in town is **St. Paul's Church** at the tail end of a serpentine road that wends its way around orchards, banana trees, and wooden houses. The original church was built back in the 18th century, and down the road from the church is a Christian cemetery where the cultural merger has spawned Chinese-style tombs with crosses and Chinese lions.

The lifeblood of this river-straddling province is the aforementioned Bang Pakong River, which stretches from the Korat plateau (the hilly gateway to Northeastern Thailand), through the provinces of Prachinburi and

Chachoengsao, to finally spill into the Gulf of Thailand. Near the gulf is one of the few parts of Thailand where you can still spot the endangered Irawaddy dolphin, a shy creature with a humped head that feasts on eel catfish from November to February (which is when the dolphin-spotting tours run). The waterway is also renowned for harbouring one of the biggest river-dwelling creatures on earth: the giant freshwater stingray. In 2008, *National Geographic* chronicled the capturing of a 4.3-metre-long specimen. Regular tours of the river depart from Wat Hong or at some of the restaurants along the river.

One of the best restaurants in the town is the **Eakanake Restaurant & Jetski Club**. The menu boasts an extensive selection of all the most popular Thai dishes, but what really makes this place special is the riverside ambience and all the atmospheric touches, like the mural of Marilyn Monroe, reimagined as a housewife with a seriously snarled perm, near a statue of the Incredible Hulk and a metal sculpture of the monster from *Predator* riding a jet-ski.



Smiling Fishmonger

Chances are whatever fish you ordered came from the **Central Freshwater Fish Center** for the Eastern Region (the sign is all in Thai), a few kilometres down the road. In all my years in Thailand I've never seen such a bazaar, teeming with thousands and thousands of fish: plastic buckets stuffed with still-gasping dory, the beds of pickup trucks overflowing with fish, the concrete floor of the market a sea of dead and half-dead creatures being scooped into more buckets. Think your air-conditioned office job is hard? Try kneeling for 10 hours at a stretch in searing heat amid the nose-piercing stench of rotting fish and still many of the fishmongers, mostly immigrants from Myanmar, were still smiling.

Small towns breed some delightful eccentrics and Chachoengsao is no exception. On our way to the last stop of the day, we drove past a motorcycle with a buffalo skull on the front that was parked by a roadside stall. Stretching out behind the motorcycle was what looked like a sedan chair, inscribed with the letters VIP, to carry the aristocracy in bygone days.

What sort of witty wacko had designed this contraption? We did not have to wait long to find out. From the shop emerged an older man giving us a smile that showed all his missing teeth. He was the embodiment of the Thai hippie-cowboy personae, with the long hair, moustache, faded denim, a bandana and sunglasses, so beloved of the musicians in the folk rock genre of *phleng peau cheewit* ("songs for life").



Mystic traditions at Wat Saman Rattanam

He turned out to be another congenial local, happily posing on his mutant motorcycle so me and a buddy could snap photos. The surrealism of this roadside stall and buffalo-headed motorcycle was a good preparation for **Wat Saman Rattanam**: a spiritual Disneyland replete with an enormous pink Ganesha, many more Hollywood-sized deities in-between statues of the *Transformers*, as well as Batman and Superman, an Amazon coffee shop, a food court, many mannequins of meditating monks, and a floating shrine in candy colours.

For you Alices who just drove into this rabbit hole and are in search of a Cheshire cat, have a gander at all the multi-hued statues of mice in front of the giant Ganesha. They are supposed to be the heavenly vehicles for this deity, but I've never seen a temple where the devout whisper their wishes into the ears of the human-sized mice.

It's a shame that this province isn't promoted more by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), which got me thinking of a potential slogan on the drive home: "A hospitable heartland only two hours, but a million miles, from Bangkok."

NOTE: Navigating the environs of such a tourist-unfriendly province is not easy unless you are fluent in spoken and written Thai. If you happen to stay at the **Kameo Hotel Amata** at Bangpakong, then ask the hotel to hire you a car and driver for the day. Easier still, choose one of the daytrips from Bangkok that many tour agencies offer. www.kameocollection.com/kameo-bangpakong

Down By the Riverside

Samut Songkhram is home to an array of iconic tourist attractions

By **Bruce Scott**

Even if you've never made a stop in the Thai province of **Samut Songkhram**—you'll pass through it on the drive to Hua Hin—you've probably heard about several of the attractions that consistently lure tourists to this laid-back district just west of Bangkok. And even after you've checked these must-see items off your tourism to-do list, it's still worthwhile and rewarding to take in the rest of what the province has to offer.



in the evening the smell is tantalizing, but the crowds in these narrow spaces can, for some, be daunting.

The floating market is a lively and colourful sight to see, but there's other sights along these canals as well, and the numerous touts will dutifully try to get you to take one of their longtail boat tours (about B50 if you join a group trip). The highlight of the

cruise is a visit to **Wat Bang Kung**, a temple entangled in the roots of an immense tree—very Angkor Wat style—with a golden Buddha seated inside.

The main waterway of the province, along which all these attractions are found, is the **Mae Klong River**. This serpentine stream is also home to an amazingly large population of fireflies that live in the trees along the canal banks. In the evenings, hopping aboard a small boat and heading out onto the river to see them is a huge tourist draw. On a good night you can see hordes of these incandescent insects lighting up the night sky like twinkling Christmas lights.



Drone photo by Richard Barrow

Probably the most visited attraction, and for some the most overrated, is the infamous **Amphawa Floating Market**. There are countless tours that go here directly from Bangkok, as the journey is just a little over two hours by car, but be aware that it is only open Friday to Sunday (from around noon to 8pm). It's the 2nd biggest floating market in Thailand, surpassed only by the Damnoen Saduak Floating Market, which is located in the neighbouring province of Ratchaburi.

The market is located near **Wat Amphawan Chetiyaram** and is centred around a small canal, where boats laden with goods and boats laden with camera-toting tourists vie for space. This is, literally, the extent of the "floating" part. But as the market has become such a magnet for Thai weekenders and other tourists alike, over the years the food and souvenir stalls have spread out far and wide from the riverbanks, and deep into the surrounding streets—making the whole area one big weekend jamboree.

The main draw, overall, is eating the seafood which is grilled and prepared right on wooden boats moored around the famous central bridge. Diners sit at bench tables that line the upper edge of the sloped sides that hem the narrow canal, happily chomping on an appetizing array of huge prawns, shellfish, and squid, which are brought up the steps from the boats by servers. From noon until late



Samut Songkhram is also home to the oft-videotaped **Maeklong Railway Market**. The market is unique in that it has a train running through the middle of it several times a day. The stalls sell a variety of fruits, veggies, meats, seafood, as well as sweet snacks, clothing, and flowers, but when the little warning bell goes off, vendors know to quickly pull back their specially designed awnings to make

HOTEL HIGHLIGHT: THE LEGEND MAEKLONG



The best way to explore Samut Songkhram is at a leisurely pace, and booking a room for an overnight stay at **The Legend Maeklong** definitely fits in with this laid back ideal. This tranquil riverside boutique hotel offers guests 14 different accommodation options, as well as an open-air restaurant, and plenty of peace and quiet. The hotel's convenient location also makes it a great base from which to explore the many attractions the province has to offer (the Amphawa Floating Market is just a short drive away).

The double-storey main house, built during the reign of King Rama VI, is something of a spooky museum piece itself, with a lobby full of antiques, hunting trophies, colonial era furniture, and plenty of sepia-toned framed photos. There are several rooms here, but the ones on the upper floor overlooking the river are exceptional both for the view and for the beautiful polished wood flooring and walls that have been exquisitely preserved over time.

If it weren't for the air conditioner, refrigerator, and cable TV, you'd feel like you'd been transported back in time a hundred years.

By contrast, the two rooms that straddle the small garden and pond are perfect for couples on a romantic retreat. Room 8 is bathed in white, with a four-poster double bed dominating the interior, while the neighbouring room 9 is dark and mysterious, with a large bed set upon a black lacquered wooden base, and black walls with red Chinese lamps adding a sexy touch.

However, for a real Thai experience the rooms in the resort's Amphawa House and Bangkhon House really fit the bill. These wooden structures, built in the Rattanakosin period, are visually delightful outside and in. Sitting on raised wooden platforms, these traditional houses—with Thai-style peaked roofs and lots of intricate wood carving on the façade—offer multiple rooms as well as a shared terrace (each is perfect for a large group to rent out as a whole).

Even if you don't book into the hotel itself, a visit to the excellent

on-site **Baan Khun Tawee** restaurant is highly recommended. The extensive menu offers plenty of Thai dishes to choose from—at very reasonable prices—including a few not so commonly found items. The pork with yellow curry paste (also available with chicken) was a delicious and fiery main course, while the fried coconut milk and chili paste with seafood (we opted for fresh squid) was equally scorching and satisfying. But the real treat was a kilo of fresh *kung menam* (giant river prawn) which the kitchen staff special ordered for us from the local seafood market that afternoon. Expertly BBQ'd, and served with spicy lime dipping sauce, these oversized crustaceans were more like lobsters and rounded out an excellent evening meal spent lazily feasting by the still waters of the Maeklong River.

The Legend Maeklong
1285 Pathummalai Rd, Tambon Mae Klong
Tel: 034 701 121
www.thelegendmaeklong.com

way for the train—which announces its actual arrival with a very loud fog horn blast. The train passes by with about a foot to spare, both beneath and to the sides of the carts, and both visitors and vendors stand daringly close. Once the train has passed, the vendors nonchalantly put everything back into place and continue hawking their wares.

Finally, no visit to the province would be complete without a trip to **The Chang-Eng Siamese Twins Memorial** (on Ekkachai Rd, around 4 km from City Hall). The twins,

named Chang and Eng, were born in Samut Songkhram in 1811 but found international fame in 1829 when an American trader brought them on a sailing voyage to the United States, where they were met by a fascinated public. They died at 63 years of age, having made their nationality, Siamese, synonymous with their condition. In addition to the memorial there is also a museum which is open weekdays from 8am to 4pm, and on weekends from 8am till noon. For information call 03 471 1333. ■

Isaan Heartland

Although the town is tiny, Roi Et is home to some titanic temples

Words by **Gary Anthony Rutland** Photos by **Bruce Scott**

Whether for a long weekend, or a brief contemplative retreat, **Roi Et**—a sleepy little city in the dead centre of Isaan—is rural Thailand at its best. Cheap accommodation, a number of good, reasonably priced restaurants, a selection of silk-weaving enterprises, and enough titanic temples and ancient temple ruins to interest the spiritually minded and armchair archaeologist alike.

Previously known as Saket Nakhon, the settlement was established around the end of the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767) when a Laotian prince from Champasak settled in the area known today as Suwannaphum. He eventually succumbed to King Boromrachathirat XI of Ayutthaya, and then during the Thon Buri period (1767-82) the city was moved to its current location by King Taksin. Roi Et is named after its eleven ancient city gates, built for the eleven vassal states it encompassed when it was still known as Saket. Confusingly, however, the term *roi et* properly translates to “one hundred and one”, but in those days of yore the number “eleven” was written in Thai script as 1-0-1, and thus the city has been *incorrectly* called Roi Et ever since. As a result, “101” references are still found all over the city—for obvious reasons—and, understandably, the publishers of this magazine have a definite soft spot for the place.

Roi Et’s culture is, to this day, heavily influenced by its Laotian roots, as shown in its cuisine, dress, temple architecture, festivals, and arts. The **National Museum** on Phloen Chit Road showcases local historical artifacts over three floors. Isaan is a centre for the production of Thai silk—the best-known type being *mut-mee*, which is tie-dyed to produce geometric patterns on the thread—and the entire 3rd floor of the museum is given over to the story of this important local tradition that continues to play an integral role in everyday life.

Another notable city landmark is **Bueng Phalan Chai**, the picturesque lake in the middle of town which covers an area of 200,000 sq.m, and is home to the locally revered city pillar shrine. The island in the middle of the lake is accessed by a pedestrian bridge, and includes



a large walking Buddha image, a pedestal in the form of a long-legged bowl which contains a constitution book and floral clock, and a flower garden from which one can watch the daily water fountain and light shows. It's an attractive and popular focal point for activities and events, and one that the locals are justifiably proud of.

For merit makers, one local Buddhist landmark to visit in town is **Wat Buraphaphiram**, east of Phadung Phanich Road. It's home to Thailand's tallest standing Buddha—an almost 60-metre high gleaming golden Buddha image in the blessing pose known as *Phra Phuttha Ratana Mongkhon Maha Muni*. Visitors are able to walk



around the statue's huge, over-sized feet, as the top of the base pedestal is easily accessible via a short flight of steep steps. Here one gains a whole new appreciation for the enormity of the entire construction. Meanwhile, an ancient hollowed out tree in an area opposite the statue houses hundreds of religious artifacts, and shows all the signs of being a hermit's retreat in bygone days.

For an eye-popping temple day trip, make your way to **Phra Maha Chedi Chai Mongkol**, located a little over

80 km northeast of Roi Et city. Spectacular in size, it's visible from miles away as it sits in all its over-the-top extravagant splendour atop a large hill, serenely surveying the surrounding countryside. Occupying a plot of 101 rai, the highlight of the temple complex is the dazzling white and gold central chedi (facing page), which is 101 metres high and surrounded by eight smaller pagodas. The *finial* at the chedi's top is made of 60 kg of pure gold, and it is estimated that when finished the cost of the entire temple will be a staggering 83,000 million baht!

The chedi is comprised of five floors in total, the first three of which attempt to outdo each other in the opulence stakes (above right), while the fourth offers a panoramic view of the surrounding countryside. The large spiral staircase leading to the tiny uppermost floor—where the Buddha relics reside—is quite narrow and steep, and ascending it is no stroll in the park. But elderly Thais make the effort to climb all the way up, so you may find yourself embarrassed if you don't attempt to follow in their footsteps.

The grounds that surround the main temple, home to the aforementioned eight pagodas, are also a study in profusion and abundance, as fountains, flowerbeds, and topiary combine to dazzling effect. An interesting if slightly incongruous feature is the Great Wall of China replica, which allows visitors a 3 km perimeter walk and a view of the nearby village and school.



The sheer magnitude of this opulent temple and its grandiose grounds will leave you reaching for superlatives to describe it. However, it may also lead you to search out more humble and ancient examples of Buddhist beliefs, such as **Wat Ku Ka Sing**, a wonderful example of Khmer style architecture said to date from 1017-1087. It's believed to be a shrine dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva, and is worth the drive of 70 km due south from Roi Et city. It's a typical example of some of the more ancient, yet under-advertised temple ruins that more than reward the effort it takes to find them. ■

WHERE TO EAT

ENJOY RESTAURANT: This modern-looking restaurant, with plenty of indoor and outdoor seating, is helmed by **Joy Chaiyasing**, the welcoming and knowledgeable English-speaking owner with a passion for her profession. Her large menu features Thai delicacies such as a green chicken curry, chicken satay, deep-fried fish, and a delicious duck *laab* (spicy minced salad). In addition, a nice selection of wines—including a *Rucahue Cabernet Sauvignon* from Chile—and some imported European beers by the bottle, make a lovely added bonus. *Tel: 043 515 044*



JORKOR FARM: This large restaurant, which doubles as a convention centre, offers indoor dining as well as an array of outdoor seating options

that include regular wooden tables and chairs on the terrace, or Thai-style thatch roof huts on raised platforms where diners sit cross-legged around low tables. The specialty here is farmed prawns—the size of small lobsters—which are best served flame-grilled. Other menu highlights include red curry shrimp served in a coconut, deep-fried *tuptim* fish (Tilapia, also farmed), and a selection of amazing ice creams for dessert. *Tel: 04 352 7774*

City “Staycations”

With so many cool accommodations gracing Bangkok these days, you don't even have to leave town to have a unique getaway or hideaway for a weekend retreat. If you're looking for an in-town “staycation”, check out some of these novel properties.

By **Dave Stamboulis**



Bangkok Treehouse

BANGKOK TREEHOUSE: Bicyclists, nature lovers, and anyone craving a real urban escape will absolutely love it here. Take a quick boat trip across the Chao Phraya and you are in **Bang Krachao**, also known as the “green lungs of Bangkok”, and the city’s largest green space, where development has been kept next to nil. You can either boat in to the hotel pier, or else come to the other public ferry piers, rent a bike (or bring your own), and ride the rest of the way in. Bangkok Treehouse is a one-of-a-kind resort. Built from bamboo and recycled metal, this eco-friendly boutique hotel has plenty of bicycle parking, and a restaurant by the river that serves organic produce and sustainable seafood. And then there are the completely

novel rooms! Try the *View With a Room* which features a bed with mosquito netting out on an open bamboo deck, or the “nest” rooms, which give access to several rooftops, great for taking in the jungle views. In addition, vegans are catered to, and smoking isn’t allowed on the premises. Needless to say, this is as green an escape as you will find in town, and it feels more like something that should be on Koh Lanta as opposed to just a short trip from the BTS Bang Na station.

Address: 60 Moo 1, Petch Cha Hueng Rd,
Phra Pradaeng, Samut Prakarn
Tel: 082 995 1150
www.bangkoktreehouse.com



Praya Palazzo

PRAYA PALAZZO: Even the bicycle friendly Bangkok Treehouse can be accessed via a vehicle, albeit going a long, roundabout way, but at Praya Palazzo the only way in is via the hotel's private shuttle boat. Set on the **Thonburi** side of the Chao Phraya, this beautiful historic property was built in 1923 in Venetian Palladian-style classical Italian architecture. A Thai-Chinese nobleman who served King Rama VI owned the lovely mansion, which later became a school and then fell into disrepair as Bangkok moved from canals to roadways for travel. The mansion was painstakingly restored to its original aesthetic and today is the perfect couple's getaway. Rooms feature wooden floors, Italian antiques, and children under the age of twelve aren't allowed (a problem for some but an absolute blessing for others). A garden swimming pool, dining room, and Wi-Fi access completes the package, and while you feel a zillion miles away from cars and the city, every guest gets a cell phone with which to call the boatmen from either side of the river for 24-hour service—should you feel any shopping withdrawal or the need for getting back to the bright lights of the big city.

Address: 757/1, Somdej Prapinklao Soi 2

Tel: 02 883 2998

www.prayapalazzo.com

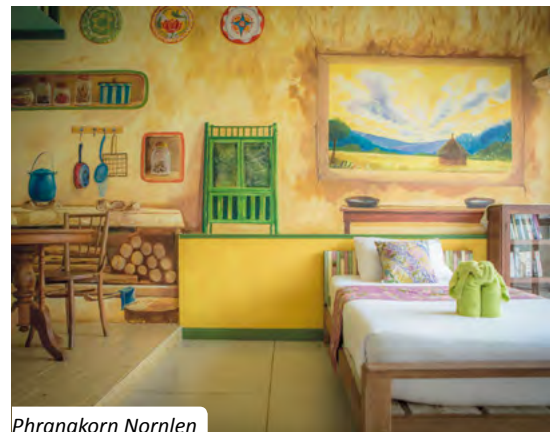
PHRANAKORN NORNLEN: Hidden away on a back street in **Dusit**, this funky boutique stay is a great spot from which to explore old Bangkok. The owner of the 31-room hotel is an artist, and has individually designed and painted the hallways and rooms with unique murals and distinctive themes. One room looks straight out of

San Francisco's 1970's Haight Ashbury, with psychedelic orange swirls, while the family room features an array of elephants and cool pastel blues. The downstairs common areas are particularly lovely, evoking a Thailand of yesteryear, with a recreated community that has façades of old photo and coffee shops, plus other vintage stores. You won't ever get bored here, as the hotel offers free Thai cooking classes, as well as instruction in soap carving and sewing. There's also an organic garden on the roof, plus superb views of the giant Buddha statue at the nearby Wat Intharawihan.

Address: 46 Thewet Soi 1

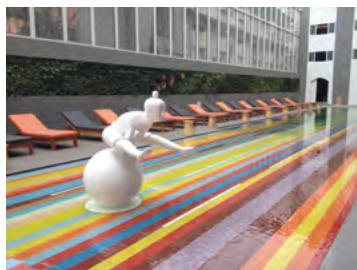
Tel. 02 628 8188

www.phranakorn-nornlen.com



Phranakorn Nornlen

HOTEL HIGHLIGHT: IBIS STYLES BANGKOK KHAOSAN VIENGTAI



For many of Bangkok's non-Thai residents, one of the earliest memories of this city is checking into a super cheap guesthouse on Khao San Road and partying till all hours at one of the many nearby buck-a-beer watering holes. Well, times may have changed, and the beer's no longer a buck, but the spirit of KSR is still alive and well. So why not take a weekend and go back in time, pretending to be a wide-eyed tourist again, freshly plunked down in this manic metropolis. However, this time skip the ratty guesthouse and check into the newly opened **Ibis Styles Bangkok Khaosan Viengtai**.

This stylish, yet still very affordable 3-star hotel, located on Rambutri Road—Khao San's cooler cousin—puts you front and centre to the carnival-like scene of street food, souvenir shops, and

entertainment. Inside there are 215 unique rooms, ranging from compact standard rooms to family-size rooms with king and bunk beds. Inside each guest will find amenities such as mini fridge, safe, 43" LED TV, free Wi-Fi, and tea and coffee making facilities.

The rooms themselves are decorated with a funky flair, so expect lots of space-age design and bright colours, as well as anything from polka-dot lampshades and modular furniture, to pillows featuring pop-art prints of super soaker squirt guns (a nod to the annual Songkran water festival that turns Khao San and Rambutri Roads into a water gun battleground). The fun and funky décor is echoed in other parts of the hotel, especially notable in the outdoor swimming pool (open till 10pm) where the tiling is a series of multi-coloured stripes, and a playful modern art statue shares the shallows with swimmers.

Of course, this property was not always so "modern". When the original Viengtai Hotel opened its doors in 1953, there were a lot fewer hotels in town and this one primarily catered to Thai visitors from upcountry (the name means "Southern city" in the Northern Thai dialect, and was referring to Bangkok as "the South"). It initially only had 20 rooms but the owners gradually acquired the adjacent plots of land and created a 100-room hotel. It was considered a pioneer in Bangkok's hospitality scene, and in the early '60s they added a swimming pool and boosted the room count to 215.

The hotel stayed in the family until March of this year when it was rebranded as an *Ibis Style Hotel*, and part of the makeover included revamping the F&B units. The main restaurant has been relaunched as **Streets Café**, with a large glassed-in terrace directly accessible from the main street and a kitchen that serves up all-day breakfast plus authentic Thai cuisine and more. The restaurant also has baked goods straight from the hotel's French-style **Streets Bakery**.

Finally, **Streets Bar**, which spills out right out into the action on Rambutri Road, features a great live band Tuesday to Sunday. Try one of their creative cocktails, such as the colourful *Bourbon to Bangkok*, a delicious mix of Jim Beam, passionfruit, watermelon, and red grenadine. **BY BRUCE SCOTT**

Ibis Styles Bangkok Khaosan Viengtai

42 Rambutri Rd, Banglamphu

Tel: 02 280 5434

www.ibis-styles-bangkok-khaosan-viengtai.com

SHANGHAI MANSION: For nostalgia buffs, you don't need to leave the city to go back a century in time. Located right in the heart of **Chinatown**, Shanghai Mansion looks like something right out of 1920s Shanghai. The mansion was built in 1892, and became Bangkok's first Chinese opera house in 1908 (later on becoming a stock exchange and then department store). These days it serves as one of Chinatown's most distinctive properties, and its interior—

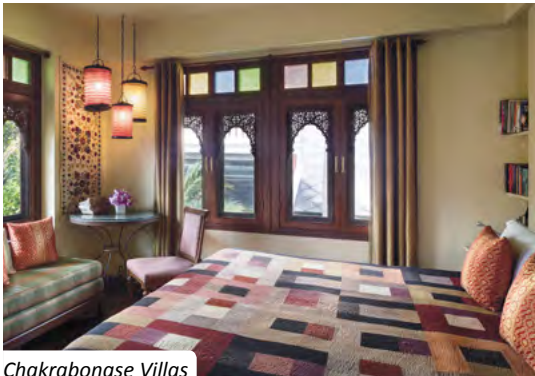
full of brocades, Chinese silks, and dark furniture—really belongs in the Shanghai of the Roaring Twenties. The design throughout is Chinese Art Deco, and rooms are filled with warm and vibrant colours, old photographs, and giant claw tubs. The hotel's Red Rose restaurant has checkered floors, Cantonese meals, and Chinese whiskeys and plum wine, plus there's also a vintage jazz bar upstairs, accessed via an iron spiral staircase, with



Shanghai Mansion

views out to bustling Yaowarat Road. Here you can travel from old-school Chinatown to present day Chinatown, and still be within minutes of the Hua Lamphong MRT station should you need to rush back to the Central Business District, or beeline to the clubs in Thong Lor if you happen to get modern urban withdrawal symptoms.

Address: 479-481 Yaowarat Rd
Tel. 02 221 2121
www.shanghaimansion.com



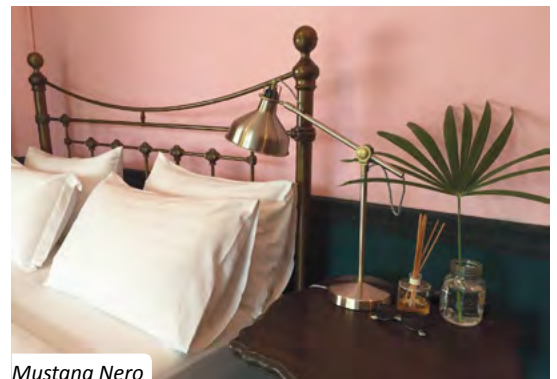
Chakrabongse Villas

CHAKRABONGSE VILLAS: Saying you might feel “princely” at this accommodation is not just adding words of praise to one of Bangkok’s more novel residences. **The Chakrabongse** actually was once the residence of a Thai prince, whose daughter has turned it into a gorgeous and intimate lodging. Built in 1908 by His Royal Highness Prince Chakrabongse, the home was used by the prince to attend ceremonies at the nearby Grand Palace, as well as for relaxing with picnics and excursions along the Chao Phraya River. In 1932, HRH Prince Chula Chakrabongse made it his permanent residence. The property is tucked behind

a large sealed gate, and bounded by trees and foliage on both sides (with the river in front) and there are only seven rooms within these lush hidden grounds—one of which is a traditional Ayutthaya teak home built on stilts, and another of which is Thai teak house overlooking the river. Meanwhile, larger groups can check out the Chinese family suite, which has two rooms and is decked out with antique Chinese furniture. There’s also a swimming pool, as well as loaner bicycles should you get restless, and the restaurant is noted for outstanding royal Thai cuisine.

Address: 396 Maharat Rd, Rattanakosin Island
Tel. 02 222 1290
www.thaivillas.com

MUSTANG NERO: Housed in what used to be an old commercial building, this unique **Air BnB** is one of the hottest properties in town, and it’s easy to see why. Owner ‘Joy’ Chalardcharoen has tastefully decorated this minimalist **Phra Khanong** hideaway with stuffed animals, tropical plants, and desert cacti, resulting in a kind of industrialist meets taxidermy in the jungle (yes, you



Mustang Nero

better love stuffed animals before checking in here). Both creative and eccentric, the property also includes plenty of sprawl out space for work or rest. A filling homemade breakfast is included with your stay, and you can opt between *Lion*, *Flamingo*, and *Zebra* as some of the room choices (there are only eight in total, so make sure to book well in advance). Despite feeling like you are in a

wild menagerie, the Phra Khanong BTS station is only a 5-minute walk down the road, as are the food stalls and bars of the happening **W District** should you feel the need to flee the hotel's wildlife.

Address: 1112/91-93 Soi Daimaru Department Store

Tel. 084 138 3172

www.facebook.com/themustangnero

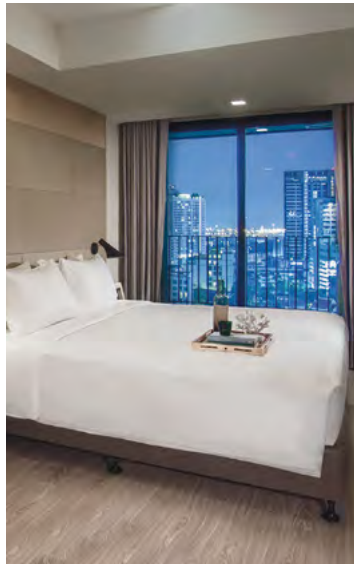
HOTEL HIGHLIGHT: SOMERSET EKAMAI BANGKOK

If you want a slick staycation spot that's right in the heart of Bangkok's trendiest shopping and dining quadrant—with Ekkamai Road at your doorstep, and Thong Lor and Phra Khanong a stone's throw away in either direction—the now fully-opened **Somerset Ekamai Bangkok** is a prime contender.

The property is under the wing of Ascott Ltd, a Singapore-based company that is one of the leading international serviced residence owner-operators. This is their first mixed-use development in Bangkok, combining serviced and corporate residences, urban community rooms with co-living space, and a conference centre.

There are 130 modern and stylish apartments to choose from, ranging from 45 sq.m studios to spacious 89 sq.m two-bedroom units. The 70 sq.m *One-Bedroom Premier* is a nice all-round option—especially for couples—and it includes a sizeable balcony, as well as plenty of interior space and Wi-Fi connectivity. Meanwhile, the fully-equipped kitchen area comes with a two-element countertop stove, microwave oven, full-height refrigerator, electric kettle, toaster, and a range of glassware, crockery, cutlery, and utensils. It also boasts a washing machine and dryer, which is a huge luxury for those used to old-school Bangkok apartments.

The design scheme is very urban-contemporary and business-like, combining the soothing tones of blonde wood, beige, and off-whites, together with a few dark wood furniture accents. In the bathroom you'll find lots of shiny marble, as well as a separate shower stall and a large, deep soaking tub. There's also a



flatscreen TV in both the living area and the bedroom, and the bed itself is very comfortable indeed.

The property's on-site facilities include an outdoor swimming pool, gymnasium, indoor and outdoor children's play areas, and residents' lounge—all on the ground floor level. Add to that the fact that it's located on a quiet side soi off the Ekkamai main road and you have the makings of a peaceful downtown getaway spot.

Finally, it's worth noting that the property's own **The Cured Chamber** restaurant (where the daily breakfast buffet for guests is served) is a great all-day dining spot. The bright, high ceilinged interior includes a glassed-in, humidity controlled display room full of hanging ham hocks and cured meats, while stacks of firewood and heavy wooden timbers complete the country farmhouse feel. Visitors should definitely try the signature Charcuterie selection platter (B520 for 2/B980 for 4), which includes tasty



portions of prosciutto di San Daniele ham, Jamon Iberico, chorizo, coppa, speck ham, and Milano salami. Other menu highlights include: Mesclun salad with cured salmon (B320); the exquisitely tender Char-grilled pork rib (B520); and the yummy Trio chocolate tart (B320).

NOTE: To celebrate the launch, special introductory room rates are now available, starting from B1,300++ per night for Urban Community Rooms and THB 2,800++ per night for Serviced Residence units. Book now for stays up until October 31st, 2017. For reservations, call 02 204 4400, or email: enquiry.thailand@the-ascott.com. **BY BRUCE SCOTT**

Somerset Ekamai Bangkok

No 22/1, Ekkamai Soi 2, Sukhumvit 63 Rd.
Tel: 02 032 1999

www.somerset.com

www.facebook.com/thecuredchamber

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The iconic and dramatic limestone karst cliffs that encircle Railay Beach

Photo by Bruce Scott

On Travel in Thailand

One of my passions is travelling. My wanderlust genes were probably passed down from my parents and their fore-generations. But gone are the days when merchants and migrants had to endure long and arduous voyages. These days we simply satisfy our nomadic nature and curiosity in search of new places, faces, and experiences. If life is nothing but a journey, our paths crisscross not only to marvel at something wondrous but also to explore internally and look deep within our soul à la *Eat Pray Love*.

However, when I travel, I don't sit in blissful idleness like **Julia Roberts** enjoying her "*Dolce far niente*" moments in Rome. I can indulge in the sweetness of doing nothing by relaxing at home. There is so much to explore in Thailand, and here are some of the places where I relish in nourishment, discover the power of prayer, and learn to appreciate beauty.

Historically speaking, all year round, and within all regions, Thais rarely ran out of food. Enjoying good, hearty fare runs in our veins and food is aplenty. From sizzling street food to several would-be Michelin-starred restaurants, one doesn't have to eat at the same place twice throughout the year in a city like Bangkok. Exotic delights are

regularly conjured up in the humble kitchens of store-front shops at buzzing markets like in Chinatown, whereas in other parts of town celebrity chefs' laboratories wow diners with lengthy dégustation menus showcasing their molecular, hybrid, and deconstructionist creations. And although the areas of street food stalls are systematically lessened, this doesn't stop the quest of global foodies to find, for instance, the best spots for the most mouth-watering bowl of noodles. Without mentioning any names from various lists and guides, suffice it to say that the flavours, textures, and aromas from all these dining experiences will tantalize your tastebuds and, in turn, make these meals some of the most memorable ones you'll have.

After pleasuring your appetite, your body and mind may need detoxification. Spiritual cultivation can be within reach but where would be the best place to start the journey to one's own soul. Founded by Buddhadasa Indapanno Bhikku, a highly revered monk, **Wat Suan Mokkh**, in Chaiya, Surat Thani, and the **Dipabhavan Meditation Centre**, Koh Samui, provide meditation centres and silent retreats at their International Dharma Hermitage. The Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives—there's a branch in Bangkok—also offers information on Dharma and meditation courses, in both Thai and English. Ironically, the Bangkok branch is located next to the **Chatuchak Park**, at the opposite end of a boisterous market where material acquisitions are lustily encouraged.

Still in Bangkok, **Wat Pho** (or Wat Phra Chetuphon), behind the Grand Palace—described as "the First University of Thailand"—is a learning centre where old languages and traditional Thai medical sciences were taught, in addition to traditional Thai massage courses (many travellers come to learn the tricks of the trade here). While the serene atmosphere of the temple appeases your soul, a strong foot massage soothes your soles. Paths to Nirvana can also be obtained at **Wat Pah Nanachat** (or the International Forest Monastery) in Ubon Ratchathani, where Buddhist meditation practice is

instructed via insight or concentration.

But if your mantras lean towards nature and adventure, Cheow Lan Lake or the Rajjaprabha Dam Reservoir in **Khao Sok National Park**, Surat Thani—one of the most peaceful places in the Kingdom—will surely cool you down. No longer the best-kept secret, it remains one of the best places to chill out and forget about all the worries in the world. Kayaking past towering karst rock cliffs and million-year-old jungles, with their therapeutic tranquillity, will rebalance your inner peace. But for the adrenaline junkies, zipline experiences, bungee jumping, rock-climbing, mountain-biking, white-water rafting, and other adventurous activities, guaranteed to raise your blood pressure and make you pray harder for dear life, are to be found all over the country.

Once your mind is cleansed, and has regained some wisdom, other passions should be indulged. While some tourists look for love in the wrong places and only quench their carnal thirst, my lust for life goes beyond the physical planes. To my heart's desires, I love sunny and sandy beaches along the **Andaman Coast** and the islands in the **Gulf of Thailand**. Railay Beach, Ao Nang, Koh Nang Yuan, Koh Lanta, Koh Kood, Ao Maya, and the Similan Islands, with their stunning scenery, makes me think that paradise is truly attainable on earth. However, these havens are now so well-travelled and well-loved, one can hardly have a Robinson Crusoe feeling without so many Man Fridays around.

Finally, as a romantic, culture and the arts gives me much joy. I love roaming around the ruins of the old capitals and towns in **Sukhothai**, **Ayutthaya**, and **Kampaeng Phet**, and the Angkorian ruins in the southern Isaan region. I enjoy exploring the foggy hills in the North—from **Mae Hong Son** to **Chiang Rai**—and visiting the hilltribe villages there. When one travels, one not only discovers new experiences but also learns and understands more about oneself—one's own strengths and weaknesses. So... where would you go to get out of your comfort zone and stimulate your body, elevate your mind, and inspire your spirit? ■

Tom's Two Satang



Join Bangkok-born but internationally bred aesthete Dr. Tom Vitayakul as he gives his own unique take on Thailand and its capital. Each month he tackles a different aspect of the local culture—from art and festivals to 21st-century trends—in a lighthearted yet learned manner.

Requiem for an Indie Rock Stalwart

Paying homage to a friend and trailblazing musician on the anniversary ceremony to commemorate his passing

By **Jim Algie**

At Thai funerals the deceased are not only honoured but treated as revered guests when family and friends gather each night at the temple, beside the coffin and the person's portrait, where the monks chant in drones and the loved ones offer food, drink, and solace to the person's spirit, which is believed to linger on this earthy plane until the body is cremated. For the passing of indie rock stalwart **Wasit 'Ooh' Mukdavijitr** last year, his kin put a musical spin on this tradition with a friend setting up a turntable next to the coffin to play Ooh's favorite records by The Smiths, David Bowie, The Clash and Leonard Cohen.

The ceremony to mark the first anniversary of his passing—on Sunday, June 4th 2017, at Wat Lat Bua Khao in Bangkok, where his ashes are interred—was a more solemn ceremony with family, friends, and a few fans offering food to the monks in his honour on that morning.

Despite his premature passing at the age of 47, his spectre continues to hover over the realm of Thai indie rock, which he helped to galvanize as the singer and main songwriter with the band **Crub**. Released in 1994, the group's debut album, *View*, has been hailed as the first full-length record of Thai alternative rock. The album's staying power was loudly attested to earlier this year when a white vinyl version of *View*—released by Cat Radio at its annual alternative music festival and marketed with the tagline "Thailand's Brit Pop Pioneer"—sold out in two days. Meanwhile, 10 test pressings of *View*, retailing for B9,999

and packaged along with a tote bag featuring Ooh's face and a new biography of him, *Sweet and Tender Hooligan*, written by his girlfriend, **Lasa Sakdadej**, sold out within a few hours after being announced on Facebook. All the proceeds from the latter sale were donated to the Baanpabrak Suratthani Foundation, which provides palliative care for cancer-stricken patients without means.

Crub's only album, like many debut records, is a patchwork of different influences, except that the musical references they were riffing on, like the Jam, the Stone Roses and Echo and the Bunnymen, had rarely ever been heard in Southeast Asia at that time. What would further distinguish them from the herd of hopefuls waiting in the wings to try and upstage them was Wasit's ability to write and sing in the most eloquent English. He also spoke English with a Cockney accent and used British slang terms he'd picked up from albums and a couple of ex-girlfriends.

As bad luck or poor timing would have it, just as Crub was splintering, **Modern Dog** was unleashing their first album. Possessing stagecraft beyond their peers, Modern Dog put on a wild show opening for Radiohead in a hall above the MBK mall in late 1994, quickly establishing themselves as Thailand's premier alt-rock outfit, a title they have never relinquished.

After Crub came **Day Tripper**, formed with lead guitarist and sometimes singer **Tuantong 'Tuan' Niyomchart**. The band went on to make three highly regarded albums. The second record, to my ears anyway,



sounds like Wasit's magnum opus. It is an album that leaps genres, skirts boundary lines, and defies pigeonholing by wandering all over the musical map—from low-key ballads sung in Thai, to lo-fi noise rock in the vein of Pavement, from spoken word poems in English recited over guitar feedback, to a Brit-pop stomper called "End of the Day".

Like a lot of musical pioneers, Wasit never reaped many much in the way of financial rewards for his efforts, but music ran too deeply in his bloodline for him to ever consider quitting. His mother, **Saowanee Rattanataya**, studied opera at Chulalongkorn University and performed in public as a soprano, whereas his father sang Elvis songs at family karaoke sessions. Since his mom gave in to family pressure to give up her musical career, spending much of

her life (cut short by leukemia in 1999) with the ground crew for Thai Airways, she was more encouraging of her son's aspirations, giving him his first alternative rock album, the debut by Aztec Camera, *High Land, Hard Rain*, which would be one of the musical compasses that guided the future direction of his music.

In 2011 he released what was essentially a solo album under the name **Ooh and the Ballyhoo**, on which his Beatles and Smiths roots still showed. He then formed **Blue's Bar** (named after a long-gone, alt-rock lair on Lang Suan Road) with guitarist and producer **Prawetch Nopnirapath**, which recorded one album of more straight up alternative fare.

That was the final entry in his discography, but it was not the last chapter of his life story. That tragic turn of events began in early 2015 with the diagnosis of Stage 4 lung cancer. Then came the chemo and radiation treatments, then the desperate measures of meditation retreats and his girlfriend ordaining as a Buddhist nun. Through all these upheavals and setbacks he bore the brunt of his illness with the same stoical determination in which he faced the disappointments of the music business.

Bizarre Thailand



Author Jim Algie has parlayed his experiences living in Thailand into books like the non-fiction collection, *Bizarre Thailand: Tales of Crime, Sex and Black Magic (2010)* and the collection of short stories entitled *The Phantom Lover and Other Thrilling Tales of Thailand (2014)*. Check out www.jimalgie.club for more.



Lasa Sakdadej

On what turned out to be my final hospital visit, I asked Lasa if he had any last requests. She said that, in the delirium caused by the painkillers, he kept babbling about leaving the hospital to go shopping for vinyl at an indie record store. By then the cancer had eaten into his spine and rendered his legs useless, so that simple wish had become an impossible dream.

When she asked me to contribute the only English-language part of his biography, which is on sale for B250 at the indie music shops Nong Taphrachan and Fat Black Records, I recalled that he is the only man in my adult life who has ever given me a Valentine's Day card—actually a postcard with a cartoon of an alien smoking a joint on the front next to the line "Lost It In Space". On the back, he had scribbled some lines from William Burroughs' novel *Naked Lunch*—"Rock and roll adolescent hoodlums storm the streets of all nations. They burst into the Louvre and throw acid in the Mona Lisa's face."—and said that he had never had a real brother but thought of me as his "spiritual brother," signing it off with, "Your punky lil' bro".

While working on that tribute I decided to dedicate my new book,

On the Night Joey Ramone Died: Tales of rock and punk from Bangkok, New York, Cambodia and Norway, to him for being "a cornerstone of Thai indie rock and a dear old friend." But that inscription could hardly convey the breadth of his career and our 20-year friendship.

To frame the tribute in his biography I tried to document his last performance, which took place at the *Rock Against Cancer* benefit show on March 13, 2016 in Bangkok. Crippled by cancer and bloated by chemotherapy, he somehow summoned the strength to get on stage one last time with the help of a cane. Most of us were just happy to see him again, reunited with Tuan, the lead guitarist of Day Tripper, to play a rendition of their biggest hit, with the crowd sharing the vocal duties.

For a swan-song performance, he could not have bowed out on a higher or more heroic note, basking in the adulation of the crowd and some of the younger musicians he had inspired.



The author's shrine for Wasit

Thanks to the video-maker Ratthapoom WPD that performance has been immortalized on Youtube. www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_SlvJgeZ8o ■



For more musical stories, Jim Algie's latest book riffs on rock history, literature and his own experiences as a musician, radio DJ, sound man, and music critic. The book *On the Night Joey Ramone Died* has drawn five-star reviews from publications all over Southeast Asia and is available from Amazon as an ebook for US\$2.99.



The New TCDC

Bangkok's historic Central Post Office takes on a cultural brief

Words and photos by **Joe Cummings/CPA Media**

I wrote several *Joe's Bangkok* columns while seated in the library of the **Thailand Creative and Design Center** (TCDC) atop the Emporium shopping mall, along with countless stories for other publications—going back to 2008, when I paid for my first annual membership. Founded in 2005, the TCDC was a comfortable and convenient co-working space for days when I needed a change of scene from office or home. At B1,200 per year, it was also much less expensive than commercial co-working spaces around town.

Hence, I was disappointed when the centre closed last year so that it could be relocated to the **Central Post**

Office building at 1160 Charoen Krung Road. Nearly six months lapsed before the new location opened in April. I finally had a chance to try out the new TCDC last month.

Was it worth the wait? Other than the relative inconvenience of getting there—BTS to Saphan Taksin station and a 1.1-kilometre walk or taxi ride to the old PO building, compared to BTS to Phrom Phong and a stroll across the Emporium-linked bridge—I'd say yes, absolutely.

To begin with, the 80-year-old Central Post Office is an impressive piece of architecture in its own right. Considered the city's best surviving example of *Khana Ratsadon* (People's Party) architectural style, the building

luckily avoided the fate of the Supreme Court at Sanam Luang, which was demolished two years ago.

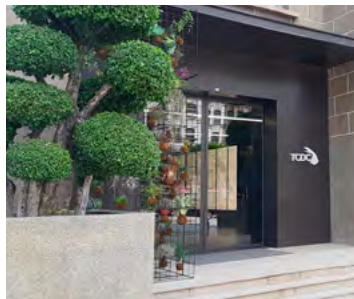
Thai architects **Jittasen Apphaiwong** and **Sarot Sukkayang** built the grand Art Deco structure in 1940 on the former grounds of the British delegation. A large central hall is flanked by two lesser wings, each of them fronted by six columns representing the Khana Ratsadon's six ideological principles: power of the people, national security, economic welfare, equality, the protection of rights and liberties, and public education for all citizens. Two huge, red-hued Garuda sculptures envelop the top corners of the facade. Local myth says that when allies bombed

Japanese-occupied Bangkok during WWII, the Garudas took flight and protected the post office from destruction, superhero-style.

Today the post office itself has been relocated to a small corner of the building, while the main hall is reserved for private functions. The new TCDC occupies the left wing of the building. New English signage for the building reads 'The Grand Postal Building', an exaggerated translation of the Thai signage, which is better translated as "central post office building".

Helmed by well-known Thai architects **Amata Luphaiboon** and **Twitee Vajrabhaya Tepakum**, the architectural transformation turned the empty wing into a vast five-story venue covering nearly 10,000 sq.m. The downstairs lobby doubles as an exhibition space for centre design projects, while the 2nd floor houses the Material & Design Innovation Centre, which promotes innovation and creativity through a database of over 8,000 materials used worldwide for all manner of design projects, divided into polymer, glass, ceramics, carbon-based, cement-based, metal, natural material, and process.

The 3rd floor features meeting rooms, 3D printing services, and



FabCafe, a reasonably priced café, while the fourth floor contains the main resource centre library. The main co-working space is surrounded by shelves containing more than 55,000 books covering art history, interior design, architecture, fashion, textiles, graphic design, photography, film, and other fields related to design, along with over 5,800 DVD films, documentaries, and TCDC's workshops and lectures for playback on iPod and iPad.

The rooftop garden/smoking area on the 5th floor affords cityscape views as well as a closer perspective of the two large guardian Garudas, which were sculpted by **Corrado Ferocci** (Thai name: *Silpa Bhirasri*), an Italian-born sculptor who is considered the father of modern art in Thailand and was instrumental in the founding of today's Silpakorn University. A separate cubicle on the roof houses a small café called **The Box**.

Lighting and space allocation is well handled throughout the new facility, and despite the challenges in getting here, the centre seems to be very well attended. Access to most of the floors now requires a membership QR code, downloadable to your

smartphone, rather than a plastic bar-coded card.

The Central Post Office conversion is so far the most prominent government initiative in what is being hailed as Bangkok's first 'creative district', a term coined by TCDC director **Apisit Laistrooglai**. In the private sector, a steady stream of art galleries, studios, cafes, restaurants, and bars are opening in restored Chinese-Thai shophouses on and off the Charoen Krung Road, particularly in the Talat Noi neighbourhood. The creative district concept is also linked to architect Duangrit Bunnag's **Jam Factory** on the opposite bank of the Chao Phraya River, which has transformed an old factory cluster into Bunnag's design office, two restaurants, a book store and cafe, a furniture showroom, and an art gallery.

The creative district idea will thrive, I think, only if the next phase involves the conversion of old shophouses and workshops into modern residences. ■

NOTE: A one-day pass costs B100, or you can enjoy unlimited access for just B1,200 per year. www.tcdc.or.th

Joe's Bangkok



Award-winning writer Joe Cummings was born in New Orleans but became one of Lonely Planet's first guidebook authors, creating the seminal Lonely Planet Thailand guide, as well as several other titles and updates for the region. Each month, he picks out his favourite cultural gems throughout Bangkok.

Taxi Altars

The colourful world of spiritual road insurance

Riding a taxi can become a tour of backstreets, but it is also an inadvertent tour through the byways of Thai belief. The cultural steering wheel is the Buddhist wheel of fortune, with motorists cruising on autopilot, otherwise known as *karma*. But taxi drivers need the extra talismans found in most cabs, because taking on board a passenger's karma throws the cabby's fate awry. Think of these spirit offerings like the public transport premium on motor insurance.

Spinning a steering wheel wrapped in sacred scarves, dials obscured by amulets, cabbies hurtle their taxi inches behind a pick-up, secure in the supernatural powers they've summoned. That is, until their time is up.

"Accidents, in the Thai scheme of things, don't just happen," observes pundit **Mont Redmond**. "They are hatched in the past, and it is only the suddenness with which they fly up in your face that leaves you breathless." Riding a Thai taxi thus becomes a religious experience. Those on white-knuckle rides may feel it's a near-death experience. Many drivers lift both hands off the wheel while cornering to wai a shrine—even one that marks an accident.

The taxi is culturally still a boat. The steering column doubles as the prow, the vehicle's sacred "head" where offerings go. Since Thai culture is aquatic, the garland, sacred strings, and tricolor scarves hawked by gangster-run kids at traffic lights honour **Mae Yanang**, the protective spirit of the boat, and by extension, any kind of vehicle: car, motorcycle, bus, tuk-tuk, train or plane.

Traffic jams, too, have a long Thai history. Name a thoroughfare more freeform than the floating market. Boat traffic, then rickshaw jams, were no less chaotic than car congestion. Thai road manners typify the commotion caused when the linear, rule-governed, first-come-first-served egalitarian Western ways contradict the circular, conforming, hierarchical mandala of Thai culture, where the biggest vehicle, like the biggest face, goes first—and goes anywhere it likes. Powered by technology, the

habits of slower times turned lethal, particularly when fuelled by caffeine drinks and *yaa baa* amphetamines that hyperactive drivers may be on. In the past, boat or rickshaw went at human speed, and canals with no lanes meant that collisions harmlessly glanced. Taxis behave as if nothing's changed. They tailgate and overtake at high

speed with inches to spare; they blithely straddle lane lines without indicating, or cut across three lanes and screech to a halt at the merest hint of a hand politely beckoning palm down. With driving lessons an affront to face, and licenses possibly bought, many Thais intuitively steer their car as if on water.

Boats, trucks and buses display charms outside, while taxis internalize the talismans. Blessed by a monk at an auspicious date and time, the cabin accumulates layers of propitious paraphernalia. The inaugural yantra blessing of gold leaf and daubed powder may soon flake from a fluffy velour lining or last for years on vinyl ceilings. From the sun visors rearward, ceilings display pictures

of kings, monks or deities, news clippings, foreign banknotes, or the driver's family snaps. Stickers of the amulet-making monk **Luang Phor Khoo** bear the slogan "*yaa khap raeo*" (don't drive fast). If that weren't reassuring enough, more stickers of bodhi leaves and auspicious slogans festoon the windscreen.

The dashboard—often carpeted to prevent overheating—becomes an altar of faux banknotes bearing a venerable monk's face, bronze images of monks, the Buddha or Kings Rama V and IX. Suspended amulets dangle from the rearview mirror, whether a red and gold plastic case trailing a red tassel, a Muslim calligraphy, or a string of Mahayana Buddhist meditation beads clattering against a magic *pha yantra* cloth of red, white, or saffron. Because these pendulous charms swing, the driver often grabs them just when he needs to change gear—causing a hazard, no matter how lucky they are for business. ■

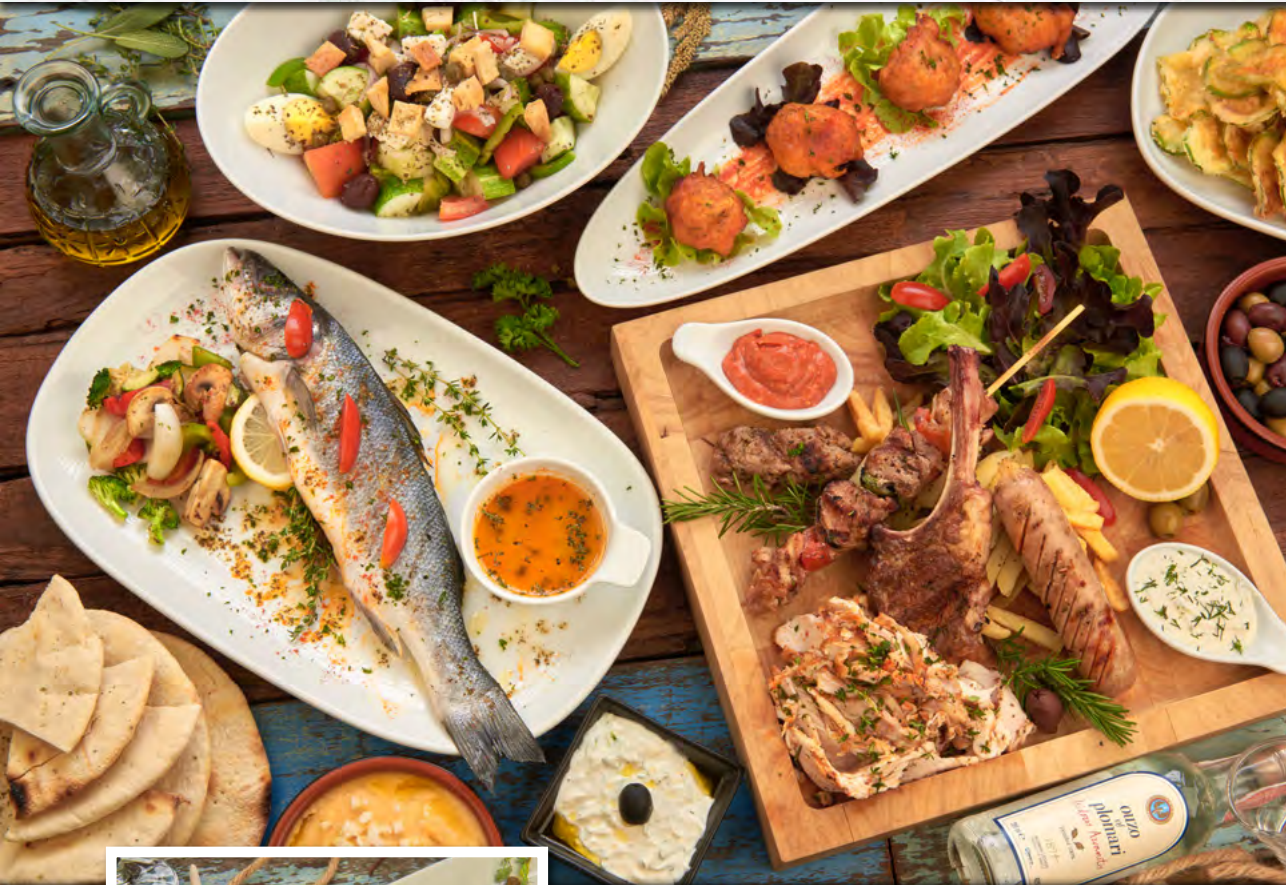
Taxi photo by John C Goss



► Very Thai

River Books
by Philip Cornwel-Smith
with photos by John Goss
and Philip Cornwel-Smith
B995

Now in its expanded, updated 2nd edition, "Very Thai: Everyday Popular Culture" is a virtual bible on Thai pop culture, and an influential must-read among foreigners and many Thais. Its 70 chapters and 590 photographs guide you on an unconventional Technicolor tour of the quirky things that make Thailand truly Thai. This column is based on different chapter every month. Prepare yourself for the sideways logic in what seems exotic, and buy a copy of the new edition at any good bookshop.



ΧΤΑΠΟΔΙ ΜΕ FAVA

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Every weekend AVRA's chef offers authentic Greek dishes for a true Mediterranean affair. It's not only about good food—it's about the people, the celebratory atmosphere and the famous Greek hospitality.

brings the warmth and charm of Greece to Bangkok. From the moment you enter AVRA, the Greek tradition of old-world taverna hospitality surrounds you; welcoming staff, abundant food and wine flows. AVRA's menu heavily leans on the grill, which creates juicy Lavraki with grilled vegetables touched with fresh lemon and helenic herbs; as well as feta-stuffed Calamari with green salad sprinkled with lemon-olive oil sauce; also smoky and juicy Soutzoukakia for meat lovers



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 AVRA GREEK RESTAURANT



Photo by Thip S. Selly / www.hippocramer.xyz

Open House

A contemporary heritage hub for Bangkok

By **Luc Citrinot**

The up-until-now rather quiet **Central Embassy** is finally bustling with life, and this has a lot to do with the opening last May of **Open House**, located on the 6th floor of this luxury shopping mall. And this living art space heralds a cultural shopping revolution in Bangkok.

Sometime in the future, Open House might be considered a “heritage site” for those interested to rediscover the early decades of the 21st century of Bangkok. Just imagine, a huge sunlit open space featuring light-coloured woods, green spaces, and... books! Probably for the first time in Bangkok, there is a space—which is not a public library—where books are the true stars.

“We wanted to put back books in the life of Bangkok people but make it

an attractive place to visit, as over the years, many Bangkokians, especially the younger generations, have lost the taste of reading and flipping into a book”, explains the man behind this cutting-edge concept, **Shane Suvikapakornkul**. This soft-speaking, well-mannered gentleman is well known in art circles, as he is the driving force behind the Serindia Art Gallery, Serindia Publishing House, and Hardcover Bookshop.

The project to create a new space began some three years ago but Central Pattana, the owner of Central Embassy, wanted to wait until the opening of the **Park Hyatt Hotel**, which is integrated to the whole complex. The idea of creating something totally new, different, and over-the-top came from **Tae Barom**

Bhicharnchitr, marketing manager of Central Embassy. He is himself son of **Yuwadee Chirathivat**, President of Central Retail Corporation, and represents this new generation in Thailand looking now at bringing Bangkok to a new era in development and lifestyle.

Some 300 million baht alone (US\$90 million) was invested into the 6th Floor of Central Embassy mall to transform it into a new mecca for arts, books, and culture. Central asked Tokyo-based **Klein Dytham Architecture** to oversee the innovative design.

“My ambition with Open House is to celebrate the print culture, especially art books,” continues Shane. “Open House represents all the various types of print culture, not only in

books but also in other forms such as printed photography and paperware. The purpose is to show that in our contemporary world, the print culture survives and continues to prosper.”

Shane also helped to design the bookshelves and the spaces, and now some 20,000 titles are on sale, including a lot of rare books and second-hand titles that are difficult to find nowadays. In the middle of the floor space, a cubicle serving Serindia Art Gallery has pieces of art on display.

So far, Open House has been successful, as any novelty will inevitably attract crowds of curious Bangkokians and non-Thais eager to discover a new space in the city. In fact, Open House has turned into one of the most exposed space on selfies with hundreds of youngsters taking pictures in front of open books and art pictures and photographs. Last but not least, this 6th floor concept also integrates a couple of restaurants and chic eateries between the two books spaces.

“It works so far,” admits Shane. “We sell far more books than before and this is turning into a place to hang-out—a new social life point as this huge

Historic Bangkok



Paris native Luc Citrinot has lived in Southeast Asia for the past 12 years, first in Kuala Lumpur and more recently in Bangkok. A seasoned traveller, he writes about tourism, culture, and architecture. He was instrumental on a recent EU-endorsed project to establish the European Heritage Map of Bangkok and subsequent app covering all of Thailand. Luc still travels extensively in Southeast Asia, looking particularly for new architectural gems related to colonial and European history.

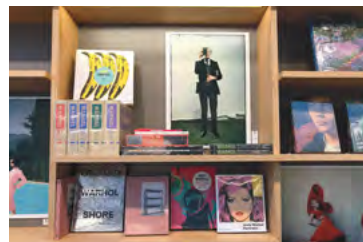


Photo by Thip S. Seley

Photo by Thip S. Seley

area contains lots of intimate private space that people can investigate.”

This was exactly the purpose behind the concept. As Central Embassy says on its website: “Open House is a collective place where passionate workers share the space with foodies, where crafters meet keen creators, where art students sit between book worms and film nerds, where diligent people join mutual area with happy-go-lucky personages, where families happily hang out with single friends, and where couples and lone souls can enjoy the same relaxed atmosphere.”

Although the website encourages visitors to eat and flip through books at the same time—which is totally forbidden if the book has not been purchased beforehand—Open House is likely to become Bangkok’s new chic, trendy, cultural hub, and the balconies

offer amazing views on the soon-to-disappear British Embassy (hopefully the old Embassy building, dating back to 1922 and shaped in late Edwardian classical style, will not become another victim of redevelopment).

Central Embassy is in full swing to bring into being a contemporary Bangkok—emphasizing shopping, but also the urban hipster art of living. Exhibitions, special events, the exclusive Park Hyatt (which contains an outstanding collection of contemporary art pieces), and more can all be discovered behind the glitzy façade designed by British architectural firm **Amanda Levete**. Finally, contemporary heritage in Bangkok gets a true icon. ■

Central Embassy is located at 1031 Ploen Chit Rd. (Ploen Chit BTS station) and is open daily from 10am to 10pm. Tel: 02 119 7777.



Relaxing on the idyllic beaches of Koh Larn

PATTAYA 101

When it comes to weekend getaways for the burned-out bastions of Bangkok, **PATTAYA** is, and always will be, the old standby that can (almost) always be relied on to provide some seaside solace. It's close, it's got beaches with sunset views, and there's plenty of hotels and resorts to choose from (including the über-luxury **RENAISSANCE PATTAYA RESORT & SPA** which is scheduled to open its doors this September). Even the shopping scene here is growing, with a **TERMINAL 21 MALL** opening up very soon (near the busy Dolphin Roundabout).

Pattaya has a reputation for being bold and brash, and it cannot be denied that Bangkok's naughty neighbour is rife with attractions that do tend to err on the side of spectacle. The city's notorious **WALKING STREET** is a gawker's paradise—and you'll get an eyeful if you go—while some of the city's side sois rival Bangkok's Soi Cowboy when it comes to lascivious behaviour. But there's much more to the city as well.

For the sporting types Pattaya has loads of options—from Muay Thai and mountain biking, to go-karts and golf courses. Meanwhile, single-minded thrill-seekers can try the **TOWER JUMP** zip-line run, which extends from the top of the 170-metre high **PATTAYA PARK TOWER** (or choose to go up and down via the gondola cable car and enjoy the view without any screaming). Pattaya also caters to all manner of water sports, so whether you like scuba diving, sport fishing, para-sailing, or luxury yachting, the open ocean awaits. Or, if you don't want to actually get wet, visit **UNDERWATER WORLD PATTAYA**, a giant aquarium complex that boasts a 100-metre long underwater tunnel which allows visitors to get up close to the thousands of marine creature on display there.

There are also a handful of temples and spiritual sites in Pattaya worth visiting, including **BUDDHA MOUNTAIN**, where a golden Buddha image over 100 metres high has been laser carved into the sheer rock face. Another big Buddha is the one found on **PRATUMNAK HILL**, which measures 18 metres tall and is the focal point of a picturesque hilltop lookout point.

However, if you only have a short time to unwind while visiting, simply choose to relax on one of the district's four most popular beaches—Pattaya Bay, Wongamat Beach, Jomtien Beach, or the idyllic white sands of nearby **KOH LARN** island, which is easily accessible by ferry. Get your fill of sun, sea, sand, and suds (or whatever your preferred beverage may be) and recharge those batteries.

It's also worth noting that Pattaya is putting in place some infrastructure that will increase its position as an important travel hub. Back in February of this year the **PATTAYA-HUA HIN FERRY SERVICE** was officially launched, which means the regular five-hour road trip now takes just two hours (see pg. 66). In addition, it has been reported that Pattaya's **U-TAPAO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT** will soon undergo a US\$5.7 billion upgrade.

What To See, What To Do



LADYBOY CABARET SHOWS:

Admittedly, the curves may be fake at these cross-dressing spectacles, but the entertainment value is mighty real. Like Vegas showgirls, these technicolour butterflies add a combination of glitz, glamour, and gaiety to the city's entertainment scene. The three most well-known ladyboy shows are: the world famous **Tiffany's Show Pattaya** (now in its 40th year); The **Alcazar Cabaret**; and the **Colosseum Show Pattaya**, where the theatre itself is designed to look like the famed ancient colosseum in Rome.

ART IN PARADISE: The 5,800 sq.m **Art in Paradise** Interactive Art Museum (78/34 Pattaya Sai 2 Rd) is a visual funhouse where visitors interact with three-dimensional, optical illusion artworks painted on the walls and floors. Charge up your camera batteries and go crazy! Admission is B400 (B200 children under 130 cm), and opening hours are 9am to 10:30pm.

www.artinparadise.co.th



NONG NOOCH: Although officially opened in 1980, the official history of the **Nong Nooch Tropical Botanical Garden** dates back to 1954, when it was a private residence. Divided into thematic sections—such as the Italian garden, the Versailles-inspired French garden, the animal sculpture garden, and Butterfly Hill—these sprawling, vibrantly coloured grounds are nothing short of breathtaking. There are also daily Thai cultural performances and elephant shows here, and you can even stay overnight at the **Nong Nooch Resort**.

www.nongnoochgardenpattaya.com



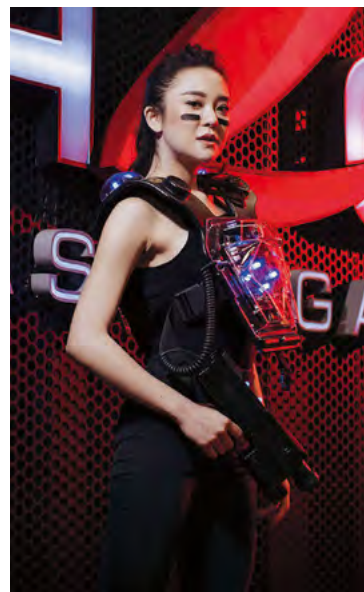
KAAN: Inspired by classic Thai literature, **Kaan** is an all-new theatrical experience that combines live action and cinema with stage performance and dazzling pyrotechnics. Held at the **Singha D'Luck Cinematic Theatre**—the world's first levitating theatre—Kaan tells the tale a young man who embarks on a fantastic adventure where the characters of ancient literature come to life. A team of 600 creative professionals spent more than three years developing the project, which includes spectacular projection mapping, state-of-the-art animatronics, aerial silk and flying globe acrobatics, a tesla coil act, and even an eight-metre tall robot. The 90-minute shows run Tuesdays through Sundays at 5pm and 8:30pm, and tickets range from B2,500 to B4,000.

www.kaanshow.com



SANCTUARY OF TRUTH: Arguably the most unique and visually captivating attraction in all of Pattaya, the **Sanctuary of Truth** is a gigantic wooden “temple” situated on more than two rais of land by the seashore at Rachvate Cape in North Pattaya. The entire complex has been constructed according to ancient Thai ingenuity—without any nails or screws—and every square inch is covered with intricate carvings that reflect teachings from Thailand’s four major philosophical and artistic influences, namely: Hindu, Chinese, Khmer, and Thai. Tours are led through the building every 30 minutes while Thai cultural dance performers, Thai fighting, elephant trekking, horse riding, and speedboat sightseeing tours are on offer throughout the day. Temple admission is priced at B450 for adults and B225 for children. You can also cycle your way to the temple with **Pattaya Bike & Boat Tours** (tel: 086 788 8007). Their *Colours of Pattaya Special Edition Bicycle Tour* is an interesting sightseeing day-tour of the region, priced at B1,750 per person, that includes a visit to the Sanctuary of Truth and a local lunch.
www.sanctuaryoftruth.com

LAZGAM LASER GAMES: For indoor fun, head to the Central Festival Pattaya Beach mall where you’ll find the local branch of Bangkok’s popular **Lazgam Laser Games**. The 900 sq.m maze-like laser-tag complex space lets you shoot fellow players to your heart’s content (at least from 11am till midnight, that is).
www.lazgam.com



FROST MAGICAL ICE OF SIAM: If the heat gets to be too much, make a trip to the recently opened **Frost Magical Ice of Siam** theme park, where you can take a stroll around ice sculptures depicting mythical Thai creatures, relax with a cool drink at the Ice Bar, or take a spin on the “ice ride”. Sounds cool!
www.facebook.com/frostpattaya



A WORLD OF ILLUSIONS: For something out of the ordinary, take a trip to the world’s most unusual museum, **Ripley’s Believe It Or Not!** Located on 2nd floor of Royal Garden Plaza, and open from 11am till 11pm daily, Ripley’s ‘World of Entertainment’ features over 350 fascinating exhibits, as well as several other eye-popping attractions—including *Ripley’s 12D Moving Theatre*, the nightmarish *Ripley’s Haunted Adventure*, the *Louis Tussaud’s Waxworks*, and *The Vault: Laser Maze Challenge*. By contrast, just up the road you can get a different set of thrills at the newly opened **Tuxedo Illusion Hall** which hosts daily shows of illusion and trickery performed by master magicians and professional dancers. Open daily from 1pm to 9pm, with shows running every two hours from 2pm onwards.
www.ripleysthailand.com | www.tuxedo-magic.com

Smooth Sailing

Boating is big business at the Ocean Marina Yacht Club



Thailand's Eastern seaboard has long been blessed with optimal sailing conditions. The winds are perfect, the islands are beautiful, the waters are clear, and the weather is generally sunny. In 1957, the **Varuna Marine Club** opened in Pattaya—later to be renamed the **Royal Varuna Yacht Club** when it was bestowed royal patronage—and the first national sailing championship recorded in the Kingdom was the 'Enterprise Nationals', held here in 1962. The history of yacht racing, sailing, and cruising in Thailand is closely aligned with this club, and their current premises formally opened in 2003 (near the base of Pratumnak Hill).

Amazingly, however, it wasn't until 1995 that a full marina for yacht lovers finally opened in Pattaya. Today, the **Ocean Marina Yacht Club**, located in Na Jomtien, ranks as one of Asia's largest marinas, and one of the few that offers full facilities for yachts. The marina currently provides 380 floating berths capable of accommodating yachts up to 200 ft, and features a variety of shops pertaining to marine related products, services, and accessories.

The marina also offers those wishing to charter boats easy access to some of the most spectacular and underrated islands in the Gulf of Thailand. A total of five yachts are offered for exclusive charter, including a 26 ft. catamaran for six people, an elegant 53 ft. catamaran for groups of 20-25, and two power boats, measuring 36 ft. and 48 ft. respectively. Food catering is also provided, ranging from simple picnics anchored off a secluded white sand swimming beach, to full meals with attentive staff on hand.

For overnight guests, the **Yacht Club** has 51 nautical-décor guest rooms, as well as meeting rooms and a sports complex facility, while bungalows are also provided for



guests looking for long-term economic stay. And for some post sailing snacks, both the **Captain's Table** restaurant and the **Sailor Bar** provide dining and drinks with incredible panoramic views of the bay. Ocean Marina does offer membership, and members receive discounts on berthing, boat storage, yacht charter, and special rates in the Yacht Club's food and beverage outlets.

NOTE: Throughout the year, Ocean Marina Yacht Club hosts many small and large scale events, from private receptions, music concerts, yachting regattas and large expos. This year, from November 23rd to 26th, don't miss the **Ocean Marina Pattaya Boat Show**, Thailand's biggest outdoor lifestyle boating event. Past shows have seen attendance of well over 5,000 visitors and up to 100 exhibitors—showcasing everything from luxury boats and cars, to property, jewellery, luxury toys, fashion, and more! ■

www.oceanmarinayachtclub.com

ONE DAY IN PATTAYA

By sticking to a schedule, you can visit and experience these four unique attractions in less than 24 hours



9:30 AM: SWISS SHEEP FARM PATTAYA

Set against a mountainous backdrop, this Euro country style farm is home to dozens of woolly sheep and alpacas. Many activities are on offer including animal feeding, sheep racing, and horse riding, but there's an onsite café and shop as well. The farm is open daily from 9am-6pm, or you can choose to spend the night at the farm's 'Swiss Hotel' which offers comfortable, affordable rooms. www.swissheepfarmpattaya.com

11:00 AM: UPSIDE DOWN PATTAYA

Visit a beautifully decorated and stylish western home, where the living room, kitchen, bedroom, furniture, and appliances have been designed upside down! Open daily from 10am-6pm, this wacky dwelling is a great place to take fun photos. www.upsidedownpattaya.com



12:00 PM: SILVERLAKE VINEYARD

Established in 2002 and covering more than 400 acres of land, Silverlake Vineyard is the first and only vineyard in Eastern Thailand. The beautiful natural surroundings and the adjacent lake create an excellent backdrop for exploring the vineyards and gardens. Take in the breathtaking views on



foot or by joining the Tram Ride Tours that depart regularly from the wine tasting room. Visitors can also join the Vineyard and Winery Tours to learn about the winemaking process. The duration of the tour is between 30-45 minutes, and they operate from 9am-6pm. www.silverlakevineyard.com

1:00 PM: RAMAYANA WATER PARK

Ranked by TripAdvisor as the biggest and best water park in Thailand, Ramayana Water Park offers 21 exhilarating rides—including four that you won't find anywhere else in Asia. With a length of 230 metres, the *Duelling Aqua-Coasters* are amongst the longest rides in the world, and one cannot find the likes of the *Python & Aquaconda* anywhere else in the world, designed to intersect for a truly interactive experience. Take the ultimate thrill on the *Freefall* ride where you step into the launch capsule, cross arms and legs, countdown, and feel the floor disappear below you. Experience the forces of gravity and make the 360-degree loop on the *Aqualoop*. For families and the faint of heart, there are also plenty of fun and safe zones such as the *Aqua Play* and *Aqua Splash*. All rides and attractions were constructed using international safety standards, and are watched over by highly trained operatives and life guards. The extensive grounds offer all-day entertainment as well as various refreshment and dining facilities. Open daily from 10am-6pm. www.ramayanawaterpark.com



Plan Your Trip

Upcoming festivals, seasonal events, and more

JULY 16



PATTAYA MARATHON 2017

The annual **Pattaya Marathon**, organized by Pattaya City Hall, is one of the most popular local events, and it attracts athletic participants from all over the world. It offers a picturesque running route and is divided into different categories—Full Marathon (42 km), Half Marathon (21 km) and Mini Marathon (10 km).

www.pattayamarathon.go.th

SEPTEMBER 9

SPARTAN SPRINT

The exceedingly challenging **Spartan Sprint** run is finally coming to Thailand, and will be held at the **Siam Country Club**. All Spartan courses are designed to test participants physically—so rest assured there will indeed be fire, mud, water, barbed wire, and plenty of other onerous obstacles on this arduous 5+ km run.

www.spartanrace.co.th



OCTOBER 7

CHONBURI BUFFALO RACES

In Chonburi province—of which Pattaya is part—water buffalo are paraded around the centre of Chonburi town each October, dressed in silk and satin. Competitions are held to determine the healthiest and best decorated animals, but the most popular events are the **Buffalo Races**, attracting spectators from all over Thailand. It is amazing to see how fast the massive beasts can actually run. There's also a beauty contest to determine the most attractive 'farm maiden', plus lots of other festivities (and food) as well.



NOVEMBER 17-18

PATTAYA INTERNATIONAL FIREWORKS FESTIVAL

Pattaya Bay is set ablaze every year during a weekend in November as teams from around the world show off their pyrotechnic expertise at the **Pattaya International Fireworks Festival**. Spectators can watch as thousands of rockets—launched from floating barges just offshore—are propelled into the air, often with a musical accompaniment. There's also DJ performances, and plenty of live music on **Beach Road**. Admission is free, and the party is set get underway at around 8pm each evening.

DECEMBER 14-17

WONDERFRUIT FESTIVAL

If you missed the **Wonderfruit Festival** back in February, then you can already start prepping for the one coming up this December, once again taking place on the fields at the **Siam Country Club**. All access 4-day passes to this 3-day eco-friendly music, arts, and lifestyle extravaganza are B5,500, but early-bird packages are just B4,200 (limited quantity available).

www.eventpop.me

Insider's Guide

Restaurateur and beauty blogger Rika Dila stands up for Pattaya

I love Pattaya! And some people just don't understand that. To most Thais, and many expats as well, Pattaya is considered dirty, and low-class, with Hua Hin being the more Hi-So style, preferred destination. For me, however, one of the main things is that I simply love watching the sunset, not the sunrise, and Hua Hin's beach is east facing so it doesn't offer sunsets. Plus, to be honest, the sand is whiter and nicer in the Pattaya area. Well, at least on the beach I'm located on, which is known as **Sunset Beach**. The Thai name is *Hat Tawan Ron*, and it's in the area near Bang Saray (literally down the road from the Cartoon Network amusement park). I've had a home here for a few years, but I've been going to Pattaya regularly since I was a kid.



My Pattaya is amazing—very quiet and private. And the seafood is great! My favourite restaurant is the **Surf & Turf Beach Club & Restaurant**, on Naklua Soi 16 (near Long Beach Garden Hotel). It's right next to the beach. Go early for lunch and try to score one of the sofas on the sand. Order a bottle of rosé or white wine and order the spicy lobster spaghetti. Tel: 091 758 3895

For Thai food the place I recommend is **Rimpa Lapin**, on Na Jomtien 36 (below). Make sure you don't get too tipsy while you're there as it's a long walk up or down the steep narrow stairs. They're a bit hard to navigate, but you'll be rewarded with amazing views and decent food. Tel: 03 823 5515



For drinks I love to go **Drift** (above), which is on the 16th floor of the **Hilton Pattaya** hotel (333/101 Moo 9). I like to slouch on the daybeds outdoors, have a drink, and enjoy the views. You may have to share the serenity with a few more Chinese tourists than you bargained for—there is no escaping them in Pattaya—so just join them and enjoy the experience.

At night, I sometimes make it out to **Pattaya City's infamous Walking Street**. It can be fun just to walk around, observe the sleaze, have a good laugh, and watch as the touts and hawkers hustling there try to trick me out of my money.

One of the best kept secrets of Pattaya is the boating scene. I use **Ocean Marina** (see pg.54) to keep my boat and when I take it out, in just 20 minutes I can reach some of the best little islands, with sand as pristine as what you find in Phuket. ■



Society darling **Rika Dila's** long list of accomplishments include being the owner and designer at such restaurants as **Surface** and **Cafe Chill**. Recently she began sharing her health, beauty, and lifestyle tips online. www.facebook.com/RikadilaOfficial

Hotel Dining Guide

Even if you're not staying at one of these luxurious Pattaya resorts, you can still take advantage of some of the amazing F&B outlets each has to offer



SALA RIM NAM: In late 2016 the Marriott Pattaya became rebranded as the **Avani Pattaya Resort & Spa**, and the 298-room resort underwent a US\$5-million refurbishment, which included upgrading its F&B outlets.

GINGER & LIME: Strategically placed floor mats lead you through the “jungle path” to the Thai Village-styled **Ginger & Lime** restaurant at the **Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya**. Each evening, from 6pm till 11pm, this sleek, chic, and thoroughly modern restaurant presents an expansive ‘Asian & Thai Buffet’. There’s plenty of room as the spacious interior has seating for 282 customers—240 outside, 42 inside, plus 2 private rooms.

The recently expanded culinary buffet selection now include shrimp, mussels, rock lobster, lamb, pizza, and more, with a varied choice of savoury and tangy dips, plus a salad station with garden-fresh produce. At the four Teppanyaki stations you can watch the entertaining chefs showing off their skills as they prepare the items you have chosen—chicken, pork, fish, beef, etc. Or perhaps you’d prefer a favourite spicy Thai dish such as *Som Tam* or *Tom Yum Kung*? Whichever, be sure to leave room for dessert, featuring crème brûlée, crepe Suzette, ice cream, or fresh fruits. www.centarahotelsresorts.com/centaragrand/cnbr



So fans of **Sala Rim Nam**, the open-air Thai restaurant that remains part of the resort’s dining line-up, should definitely make a return visit (as should anyone else seeking fine Thai cuisine in a beautiful setting). The 80-seat restaurant is an open-air wooden sala, encircled by lotus ponds and tropical flora. Standout dishes include: the Massaman Chicken Curry; the Choo Chee Salmon (Norwegian salmon steak topped, with creamy, mild red curry); the Pla Kapong Thod Samun Prai (deep fried sea bass fillet, with Thai herbs); and the Talay Phad Char (wok fried seafood, with chili, garlic, kaffir lime, fresh peppercorn and sweet basil).

NOTE: Every Friday evening Sala Rim Nam offers an exclusive ‘Moonlight Dining’ experience—from 7pm to 10pm—wherein all diners will receive a 20 percent discount off their bill.

www.minorhotels.com/en/avani/pattaya



ROYAL GRILL ROOM & WINE CELLAR: The mammoth 474-room property known as the **Royal Cliff Beach Hotel**, established four decades ago, is a Pattaya landmark. The hotel underwent extensive renovations in 2011 but still retains a solid link to the past, especially at the **Royal Grill Room & Wine Cellar**, one of the dozen dining outlets visitors can choose from here. The beautiful dark wood interior—much of it intricately hand-carved by Thai craftsmen—is both warm and welcoming.

Executive Chef **Walter Thenisch**—a native of Switzerland but a resident in Thailand for over 30 years—helms the kitchen. Choice appetizers include the Pacific Scallop Carpaccio, and the delicious Escalope of Duck Foie Gras, served with tomato, fig, and drizzled with a maple syrup, balsamic glaze. For mains try the Grilled Australian Beef Tenderloin with River Prawn—an elaborately constructed dish served with a five colour coleslaw salad. www.royalcliff.com

THE BAY INTERNATIONAL SKEWERS

RESTAURANT: The parcel of land on which the **Dusit Thani Pattaya** rests has a beautiful spit of land that juts out in to Pattaya Bay, providing lots of sea breezes and some pretty sweet views as well. This is where **The Bay International Skewers Restaurant** is located—right beside the saltwater swimming pool—and diners can choose to sit indoors or on the shaded outdoor terrace that overlooks the pool and the bay. The restaurant used to be the hotel’s signature Italian eatery, but back in March a new dining concept was introduced in



which almost everything on the menu (at least 85 percent the chef admits) is served on skewers—whether metal, wooden or otherwise. Even the signature Caesar Salad arrives on a pike, as do most of the desserts.

The fare as well has a new concept, showcasing four specific types of cuisine: Indian, Thai, Western, and Chinese. Diners can start with the Thai Tom Yum Kung Grilled Prawn served on a lemongrass skewer, followed by the colossal, and appropriately named Messy Monster. This “hamburger on a skewer” arrives at the table on a hanging metal rod—broken down into sections (bun above cheese, above lettuce, above patty, and so on). It’s enough for two people and is definitely an Instagram-worthy conversation piece.

NOTE: The restaurant is closed on Sundays, and on Friday and Saturday evenings a Grill & Buffet dinner is served from 6:30pm till 10pm.

www.dusit.com/dusitthani/pattaya

HAVANA BAR & TERRAZZO: In the beachfront Bay Tower of the Holiday Inn Pattaya, diners have a choice of two ground floor restaurants that, in reality, are one. The **Havana Bar & Terrazzo** presents diners with a mix of modern Italian cuisine and Western favourites. The Havana Bar is a split-level Cuban-inspired indoor bar and restaurant, with seating for 80 persons. The low-lit interior features large leather couches, a pool table, a long wooden bar, medieval chandeliers, and a mid-sized humidor filled with cigars for purchase. The menu, meanwhile, lists plenty of wines by the glass or bottle, as well as a selection of craft beer. The hearty fare on offer includes the excellent Farm Fresh Burger, which comes piled high with goat cheese, rocket salad, mushrooms, roasted red capsicum, and topped with special garlic mayo, served alongside fries and coleslaw. Another great menu choice is the cheesy Chicken Parmigiana, a very recent addition.

By contrast, outdoor terrace seating (80 persons) is available at the appropriately named **Terrazzo** restaurant, which allows diners a view of the passing parade on busy Beach Road. Here the specialty is thin crust wood-fired oven pizzas, and there are many to choose from. Try the Porto Fino pizza for a combination of tomato sauce—they don’t skimp on it—mozzarella, cooked ham, and prawns. Both restaurants are open for lunch and dinner, with entertainment nightly (including a jazz and blues band every Friday and Saturday).

www.holidayinn-pattaya.com



INFINITI: Set on Phratamnak Hill, a 10-minute drive from Pattaya’s bustling centre, the **InterContinental Pattaya Resort**—formerly the Sheraton Pattaya Resort—has both an ideal location and several ideal F&B outlets to lure in diners. The resort’s al fresco **Infiniti** restaurant, which specializes in grilled seafood, presents guests with a wide-ranging array of contemporary Mediterranean cuisine prepared in the wood oven or on the char grill.

Signature dishes include: Seabass Carpaccio with avocado purée, salsa verde and wild rocket; Fried Mini Blue Crab Cakes with caponata, caper aioli and avocado salsa; Roasted Calamari with black ink lentils and mushrooms cream; and the slow-cooked Short Rib with asparagus and roasted carrot purée. Desserts are just as spectacular, and include Salted Caramel Budino with chocolate, cookie crumbs, and whipped cream, and Vanilla Bean Creme Brûlée with berry and mint salad, and vanilla ice cream. In addition, a live band performs on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday evenings.

pattaya.intercontinental.com

The Coffee Club

All-day dining plus coffee, cake, and more



Although most of Pattaya’s “action” can be found along the main drags of Beach Road and Second Road, if you travel north past the Dolphin Roundabout you’ll come across a somewhat quieter strip known as Naklua Road where a surprising number of cool restaurants and cafés have popped up over the past few years. **The Coffee Club**—which opened along this strip in late 2013—integrates both those categories, and offers a friendly and flavourful oasis of calm; whether you just want a latte and some Wi-Fi or a full meal.

Started in 1989, The Coffee Club is an Australian company that has expanded internationally over the past few decades. The Pattaya branch—one of many in Thailand—offers comfortable indoor and outdoor seating (97 persons, over two floors), and a menu that includes brunch favourites, Thai specialties, and plenty of sweets—in both dessert and drink form.

If you start with the restaurant’s signature hot Latte or Cappuccino (B115 each), you’ll be pleased to know

that The Coffee Club uses UTZ certified coffee—a program that supports sustainable farming practices. Or, if you prefer something cool to begin with, try the Signature Iced Coffee (B150) which adds to the mix a scoop of sweet vanilla ice cream.

The main menu features a wide range of snacks, including a tempting Rueben Sandwich (B280), but the kitchen also handles Thai food deftly and the yummy Pad Thai (B165) makes a great main course. These classic Thai-style fried noodles come with your choice of chicken, pork, or prawn (B180), and the dish arrives attractively plated with the meat and noodles carefully tucked into a banana leaf pouch and the ground peanuts, chives, bean sprouts, and lime on the side.

For heartier fare try the spicy Beef Massaman Curry (B590), a Southern Thai favourite. Here a thick and juicy medallion of imported beef—cooked to your preference—is topped with fragrant curry, liberally sprinkled with cashews, and served alongside potatoes, shallots, and steamed jasmine rice. It’s a delicious and filling main course with a spicy zing.

Hopefully you’ll have saved room for dessert, or perhaps you’re just interested in stopping by for coffee and cake. Either way, the menu’s trio of signature desserts is bound to please any sweet tooth. The new Salted Caramel Banana and Cinnamon Ricotta Pancake (B240) features pancakes smothered in salted caramel sauce, with roasted banana and cinnamon ricotta cheese. Equally tempting is the Red Velvet (B230), where three cut triangles of delicious red velvet cake are served alongside fresh fruit, strawberry yoghurt parfait, and strawberry lychee ice cream. Finally, chocolate lovers won’t be able to resist the Mocha Assiette (B230) which combines double chocolate espresso cheesecake, chocolate espresso brûlée, mocha cream, and dark chocolate ice cream.

BY BRUCE SCOTT

The Coffee Club–Pattaya

668/28, Soi Naklua 13/5

Tel: 092 248 6900

Open daily: 6:30am–10pm

www.coffeeclub.com.au/thailand



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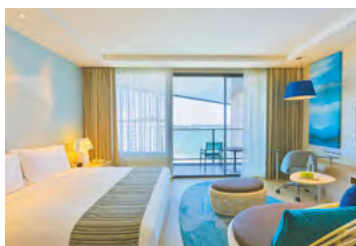
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CHIANG MAI / BANGKOK / PATTAYA

FlightOfTheGibbon.com

Holiday Inn Pattaya

Getting the executive treatment at this beachfront vacation spot



When the original **Holiday Inn Pattaya** opened its doors approximately eight years ago it seemed plenty big enough. But as the demand for accommodations in Pattaya grew—especially the demands of corporate clients—the property expanded and the 25-storey **Executive Tower** opened next to the original **Bay Tower** in August of 2014. This expansion brought the total room count of the two neighbouring towers to a whopping 567, while the new MICE facilities included 10 meeting rooms and a 115 sq.m theatre-style auditorium facility.

But you don't need to be part of a convention to enjoy the *Executive Club Benefits* offered in the Executive Tower, which include personalized check-in and check-out, and access to the 25th floor Executive Club area which features an exclusive breakfast each morning, all-day complimentary refreshments, newspapers and magazines, and free-flow drinks and canapés from 6pm till 8pm. This private club lounge also accesses the hotel's beautiful open-air **Sky Bar**, where guests are treated to sweeping, unobstructed views of the city and the ocean.

The club privilege rooms on offer in the Executive Tower are decorated in a clean, contemporary, modern style, and range in size from the spacious *Executive Club Ocean View* (located on the top six floors), to the 47 sq.m *Executive Club Corner View* (featuring floor-to-ceiling windows), and the *Executive Club Suite Ocean View*, which covers 74 sq.m and includes a separate living room and two private balconies with sea views. Each room style comes complete with comfortable king-sized bed, freeform lounge, work desk area, flatscreen TV, in-room Wi-Fi, safe, mini-fridge, balcony access, and more.

Guests in either tower have access to all the Holiday Inn's facilities (except for the Executive Club lounge) so holiday makers can take advantage of the property's four outdoor swimming pools, the **Tea Tree Spa**, the fitness centre, and either of the two Kid's Clubs. Similarly, access to the F&B outlets is open to all, and there are seven to choose from, including the **East Coast Kitchen**, **Café G**, the **Splash Cafe Pool Bar**, and either the **Flow Café** in the Bay Tower or the **Flow Express** café in the Executive Tower.

There are also lots of scheduled activities that go on at the hotel, including a very interesting **Farmer's Market** which takes place at the Bay Tower's indoor/outdoor **Havana Bar & Terrazzo** restaurant (see more on pg. 59). Every 2nd Saturday, from 10am till 3:30pm, the venue is home to a variety of local merchants selling organic fruits and vegetables, craft beer, health products, specialty foods, and handicrafts. There are only two more scheduled for this year—July 8th and August 12th—so don't miss them!

Another regular event is the Saturday afternoon **Sunset Pool Party** which takes over the 6th floor swimming pool in the Executive Tower each week from 3pm till 7pm. It's a great spot for watching the sun go down over Pattaya Bay while listening to the sounds of a live DJ and enjoying a selection of colourful cocktails and other snacks and beverages.

BY BRUCE SCOTT

Holiday Inn Pattaya

463/68, 463/99 Pattaya Sai 1 Rd.

Tel: 03 872 5555

www.holidayinn-pattaya.com

Centara Grand Mirage

Lose yourself in Pattaya's 'Lost World' themed hotel



Opened in 2009, the **Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya** is Thailand's first "themed" hotel, revolving around a prehistoric 'Lost World' concept. The two building, 19-storey resort occupies over 40 rai on Wong Amat Bay in North Pattaya, and is ideal for families, couples, and over-stressed business travellers alike. The bold thematic concept is exceptionally executed, and the extensive grounds lend themselves to hours of wandering around the maze-like jungle paths, crossing swaying rope bridges, or floating on innertubes in the elaborately interconnected serpentine water park network of pools and channels.

Each of the resorts 555 ocean-facing rooms have stunning views over the bay, the island-dotted horizon, and the resort's abundant, lush greenery. Rooms and suites range from the 42 sq.m standard *Deluxe Ocean Facing* rooms, through to the 157 sq.m *Club*

Mirage Suites, and all the way up to the crowning glory—the 326 sq.m, two-floored *Royal Suite* with its own private sundeck and swimming pool. All rooms are decorated in accordance with the 'Lost World' theme, and feature clever detailing that includes writing desks and chairs disguised as old-fashioned travel-trunks, tiger motif lampshades, and faux-bamboo headboard, shower and bath trimmings. And all accommodation units have either a balcony or extensive terrace.

Guests choosing the *Club Room* options gain access to the exclusive 16 and over **Club Mirage Lounge** located on the 12th floor of the North Tower, which offers five daily meal presentations, while providing a 'quiet zone' that actively discourages the use of mobile devices for conversation. Other Club benefits include discounts at the resort's spa and limited complimentary laundry service.

For unwinding, the **Spa Cenvaree**—set in its own "village", comprised of three buildings and a separate reception area—is a sanctuary of relaxation, surrounded by water, that harnesses the positive energy of nature with traditional Thai therapies that deliver holistic well-being through a comprehensive range of treatments.

For diners, eight restaurants and bars provide a plethora of F&B options. **Oasis** offers a buffet breakfast, daytime à la carte snack menu, and dinner featuring international, Thai, and Asian cuisines. On the beachfront the **Coast Beach Club & Bistro** serves handcrafted cocktails and daily food specials while in the evenings **Flames** grill, **Acqua**, and **Ginger & Lime** (see more on page 58) add to the already plentiful culinary choices.

The facilities and services offered are too numerous to mention in their entirety, but highlights include free-form swimming pools, waterfalls, waterslides, and a lap pool (for adults only), a state-of-the-art fitness centre that also offers group fitness classes (including Yoga and Zumba), tennis courts, table-tennis, snooker, rock-climbing, beach volleyball, aqua-aerobics... the list goes on (and on). Meanwhile, for children there's a fully supervised Kids Club, and Monsoon Island, a water park play area.

Completing the list of highlights is the knowledgeable and friendly staff who create a happy, fun atmosphere from the moment you arrive until you reluctantly check out. They ensure your time here leaves nothing to be desired, and make Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya a "world" you'll happily get "lost" in. **BY GARY A. RUTLAND**

Centara Grand Mirage Resort
277, Moo 5, Naklua, Banglamung
Tel: 03 830 1234
www.centarahotelsresorts.com

Mera Mare

Groovy getaway spot right in the heart of the city



If you're in the market for a modest-sized, luxury hotel with a boutique feel and a supremely central location, the chic and stylish **Mera Mare** hotel definitely ticks all those boxes. Situated right on Beach Road, in the heart of the action and overlooking the curved expanse of Pattaya Bay, the location alone makes it ideal for business and leisure travellers alike.

The 7-storey property features 80 well-appointed, spacious rooms and luxurious suites, ranging in size from the 35 sq.m *Deluxe Room*, to the 76 sq.m 2-bedroom *Family Suite*, to the impressive 78 sq.m *Junior Suite* which includes a double balcony, kitchenette, and a private in-room dining area. Of course, for the ultimate in luxury the hotel's one-and-only *Sensation Suite*—located on the top floor—boasts 105 sq.m of space, a sprawling balcony with panoramic beachfront views, a luxurious whirlpool spa tub, plus kitchenette, dining area, and quite a bit more.

As for myself, I was booked into one of the sleek 38 sq.m *Deluxe Premier Rooms*, furnished with a comfy king-sized bed, ceiling mounted 40"

LED TV, electronic safety box, and mini-fridge, and offering reliable in-room Wi-Fi. The colour scheme consists of a mix of black, gold, white, and off-whites, but it was the abundance of shiny, silvery marble—on the floors, in the bathroom, and even on the wall behind the bed—that made the whole thing feel like a swanky, Euro-glam bachelor pad... which I loved! Other room features worth noting include a divinely deep soaking tub, thick black-out curtains that run the length of the room's large Northeast facing windows (sleeping in can be crucial while on holiday), bathrobes fitted for a Western physique, and a long marble counter/table by the window that doubles as a work desk.

While the beach is right across the road, the hotel's 2nd floor outdoor swimming pool—with an unobstructed view of the ocean—is a nice place to sun one's self in the daytime. The pool is a modest size, but it does the trick and the daybeds built for two, as well as the single-person sunloungers, offer ample reclining room. Right next to the pool area is the hotel's **Get Lean Fitness** facility, should you fancy a work out.

For diners the hotel offers two attractively designed, ground floor F&B outlets. All-day dining is available at **October Sky**, where the menu features an extensive list of well-crafted Thai and international dishes, while at the adjacent **Pastry Addiction** café the offerings include—as the name implies—a huge selection of cakes, pastries, chocolates, and decadent desserts (they even do a daily afternoon English High Tea).

However, diners at either spot can order from either menu during lunch and dinner, so the choices are abundant. From the Pastry Addiction menu I recommend the Japanese Curry Crab—special breaded crab cakes with dipping mayo—and the Tomato Butter Curry Chicken—imagine a chicken cacciatore with way more spice—followed by a few hearty scoops of the delectable rum raisin gelato (one of a dozen flavours on display). **BY BRUCE SCOTT**

Mera Mare

420/200, Moo 9 Beach Rd.

Tel: 03 811 1800

www.meramarerhotel.com

Dusit Thani Pattaya

Historic property with a rock solid reputation



In December of this year, the historic **Dusit Thani Pattaya Hotel** celebrates its 30th anniversary. It's quite a milestone, but given the solid reputation of this venerable hotel brand it's no surprise that it has stood the test of time.

The hotel is ideally situated at the north end of Pattaya Bay, set amidst lush garden greenery and directly facing the sea. There are 457 accommodation options, ranging from the 40 sq.m *Deluxe Rooms*, to the lavish 160 sq.m *Royal Princess Suite* which features two bedrooms, three bathrooms, a living room and dining room, elegant Thai-style décor throughout and, of course, magnificent views. Somewhere in-between you'll find the spacious, well-appointed, and supremely tasteful 80 sq.m *Club Grand Rooms*. These modern, executive-style units feature a king-sized bed, daybed lounge,

and a huge bathroom with separate shower and tub and a dual sink vanity, as well as such modern conveniences as flatscreen TV, mini-bar and fridge, Wi-Fi, and more. However, what I liked the most was the extra-large terrace overlooking Pattaya Bay that comes complete with two sun loungers and an outdoor rain shower.

Guests who check in to the Club units are automatically granted 'Dusit Club Privileges', which include private check-in and check-out, in-room butler service, exclusive breakfast service in the hotel's top-floor restaurant, all day refreshments in the Dusit Club Lounge, evening cocktails and hors d'oeuvres from 5:30pm to 7:30pm, complimentary laundry and pressing (up to three pieces per day), and more.

As for general recreational amenities there are two outdoor swimming pools with direct beach access—and both use eco-friendly

salt water—as well as a fitness centre, four tennis courts, and a kid's club and playground. In addition, the award-winning **Devarana Spa** has nine soothing treatment rooms and suites available.

For diners there are plenty of choices, starting with **The Bay International Skewers Restaurant**, which took over the poolside spot formerly held by the hotel's Italian eatery (see pg. 59). This new and totally redesigned restaurant offers a menu showcasing four cuisines—Indian, Thai, Western, and Chinese—and virtually all the dishes are presented on skewers, though not necessarily cooked on skewers. Meanwhile, up on the 9th floor a very different dining experience can be had at **The Peak**, the hotel's stately Chinese restaurant (currently under renovation but due to re-open in mid-August).

Lavish breakfast buffets are served at the **Cascade Restaurant**, another of the hotel's dining spots, and if you can snag one of the seats overlooking the indoor garden and waterfall you'll also be able to admire the beautiful glass-ceilinged expanse that encloses this atrium space. It's huge, and the light it lets in is gorgeous.

This main floor atrium, and the grand lobby that welcomes visitors upon arrival, are two of the most interesting architectural aspects of the property. They are both arresting in their size and grandeur, but never ostentatious. Instead, the whole experience is one of old-world class and sophistication. And while the even more historic Dusit Thani Bangkok is slated for demolition in 2018—with a rebuilt, mixed-use complex taking its place—here's hoping the Pattaya property remains intact for many more years to come. **BY BRUCE SCOTT**

Dusit Thani Resort Pattaya

240/2 Pattaya Beach Rd.

Tel: 038 425 611

www.dusit.com/dusitthani/pattaya

CITY MAP

HOTELS

- 1 Centara Grand Mirage Beach Resort Pattaya
- 2 Dust Thani Pattaya
- 3 Hilton Pattaya Resort
- 4 Holiday Inn Pattaya
- 5 Hotel Mera Mare
- 6 Pullman Pattaya Hotel G

RESTAURANTS

- 1 Coffee Club Pattaya
- 2 Infiniti
- 3 Rimpa Lapin
- 4 Royal Grill Room
- 5 Sala Rim Nam
- 6 Surf & Turf Beach Club & Restaurant

ATTRACTIONS

- 1 Art in Paradise
- 2 Bali Hai Pier
- 3 Lazgam Laser Game

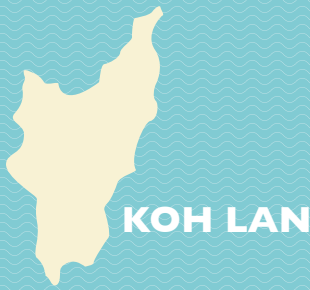
- 4 Ocean Marina Yacht Club
- 5 Pratumnak Hill (Big Buddha)
- 6 Ripley's Believe It Or Not!
- 7 Sanctuary of Truth
- 8 Underwater World Pattaya
- 9 Walking Street

ENTERTAINMENT

- 1 Alcazar Cabaret
- 2 Colosseum Show Pattaya
- 3 Singha D'Luck Cinematic Theatre
- 4 Tiffany's Show Pattaya
- 5 Tuxedo Illusion Hall

OFF THE MAP

- A Buddha Mountain
- B Ramayana Waterpark
- C Silverlake Vineyard
- D Siam Country Club
- E Frost Magical Ice of Siam
- F Swiss Sheep Farm
- G Upside Down Pattaya



PATTAYA-HUA HIN FERRY: With the launch of the new Royal Passenger Liner, travellers can now get from Pattaya to Hua Hin in just two hours. The 116 km route cuts across the Gulf of Thailand on a high-speed catamaran ferry, going from **Bali Hai Pier** in Pattaya to **Khao Takiab Pier** in Hua Hin. Tickets are B1,250 for economy class, B1,550 for Business Class, and B14,000 for a VIP Room that seats up to eight people. Although somewhat more pricey, the

high-speed cruise cuts the travelling time by more than half compared to driving the 380 km route (which can take five-six hours). Currently there is only one round-trip per day, with the ferry departing from Pattaya at 10am and arriving in Hua Hin at noon, and departing again from Hua Hin at 12:30pm and arriving in Pattaya at 2:30pm. Check-in desks open one hour before scheduled departure time and are open for 30 minutes. www.royalferrygroup.com

To attractions D, E →



To attractions A, B, C, F, G →



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www.phuketmarriottnaiyang.com

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MARRIOTT RESORT
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NAI YANG BEACH

WAX SCULPTURE & CANDLE FESTIVAL

July 8-9

Every year, Ubon Ratchathani is home to the incredible **International Wax Sculpture and Candle Procession Festival**, organized to celebrate the beginning of Buddhist Lent. The province will showcase the wax candle festival at **Thung Si Mueang** where visitors can marvel at a spectacular parade of ornately carved wax castles located around the city, as well as being awed by the superb wax candles sculptures by guest artists from around the world. In addition, there are merit-making activities, a light-and-sound presentation at night, folk dance performances, tours of the candle making communities, and more.



TAK BAT DOK MAI FESTIVAL

July 8-10

The **Tak Bat Dok Mai** floral offering merit-making ritual is unique to Saraburi province. It includes a candle ceremony and offerings of *Dok Khao Phansa* flowers that only come into bloom during this time. **Asanha Bucha Day**—Saturday, July 8th—is a sacred Buddhist holy day that commemorates the Lord Buddha's first Dharma discourse to the first Buddhist monk, and the following day marks the start of Buddhist Lent. It is the custom in Thailand to offer flowers to monks on this occasion, and anyone able to do so will receive merit and blessings.

KATHU CULTURE STREET FESTIVAL

July 9-11

Kathu, located roughly halfway between Patong and Phuket Town, is a small village that once relied on rice farming and tin mining. Many Kathu residents are of mixed Chinese and Thai ancestry, hence, the area is rich with Chinese-influenced traditions and customs. The annual **Kathu Street Culture Festival** takes place along the street in front of the Kathu Municipal Hall and the festival will include a 'walking street' in the old quarter of Kathu, an exhibition of contemporary arts, a market and food fair, and a display of Kathu's history.



PAI JAZZ & BLUES FESTIVAL

July 21-23

The weekend-long **Pai Jazz & Blues Fest 2017** will see many talented musicians performing in various cafés, restaurants and bars around the town **Pai**. The festival, which is free, begins on the Friday at 4pm (continuing till well after midnight). On the Saturday and Sunday things get underway at 1pm, and continue till the wee hours. Expect a mix of jazz, blues, soul, hip-hop jazz, and folk, with such names as Mike Sriwiengping, Doggy (featuring Cici Sparks), Andy Martin, the Banglumpoo Blues Company, and the Rhythm Brothers jazz band scheduled to perform. For updates, listings, and more information email: hipthailand.cm@gmail.com.



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ART

Cosmic View

*Renowned Japanese printmaker
showcases a huge body of work*

Well-known Japanese printmaker **SEIKO KAWACHI** expresses his inner thoughts concerning the existence of nature in this exhibition. Audiences can feel the artist's thoughts, which also reflect Buddhism and Oriental philosophy and how they affect human culture—birthing out of the customs which arise from each country's natural and social environments. The theme of this current exhibition is meant to show works that reflect assorted varieties of Buddhist beliefs, so some of Seiko's previous work, from 'Majestic II' (1991) to 'Poem of the Universe' (2017), will be shown in this exhibition as well.

In the artist's own words: "I began my print expressions in the woodblock medium, starting in about 1969. Since then, I have been producing my art works while posing questions about who I am and what is the society where I am living now. And, I have been continuing to search for what is the best way to express our current society. One my biggest themes is to think about the existence of human beings in modern society.

"I believe that culture is born out of the customs which came from each country's natural and social environments. I am exhibiting my art works from 1994 to 2017, and I think that these works well represent the Japanese culture, and I hope viewers will appreciate our culture through this exhibition.

"Buddhism thought and philosophy in the Orient have had a great influence on human culture. I am also thinking about myself, based on the Buddhist thought. The theme 'Cosmic View', which I am expressing in those works, could be said to be the existence of a large galaxy in which Buddha attained enlightenment 2,500 years ago."

COSMIC VIEW runs from **JULY 4-AUGUST 5** at **ARDEL'S THIRD PLACE GALLERY** (137/1, Sukhumvit Soi 63). Viewing hours are Monday to Saturday, from 10am to 6pm. For more information, call 02 422 2092.

www.ardelgallery.com

JULY 4-AUGUST 6

Prostration**Ardel Gallery**

99/45 M.18 Boromratchonnane Rd.
Viewing hours: Tue-Sun, 10am-7pm.
Tel: 02 422 2092 | www.ardelgallery

This exhibition by Thai artist **Thavorn Ko-udomvit** showcases painted portraits of the late **King Bhumibol Adulyadej**, King Rama IX of the Chakri Dynasty. In collaboration with several other talented Thai artists including **Prateep Kochabua**, **Suradej Kaewthamaj**, **Nitikorn Kraivixien**, and **Watchara Klakhakhai**, who all worked together on the same canvases, the artwork is symbolic of the cooperation and unity of Thai people who still feel grateful for His Majesty's royal grace. Moreover, the technique, which is a mixture of painting and printmaking on canvas, expresses the change of time found from the past to the present.



JULY 1-AUGUST 27

Meridians**H Gallery**

201 Sathorn Soi 12
Viewing hours: Wed-Mon, 10am-6pm
Tel: 085 021 5508 | www.hgallerybkk.com

In this exhibition, **Lesley Dumbrell** embraces a waywardness from the 'pure' forms of mathematical precision and implied objectiveness to allow for cultural references and emotional impact: from the implications of textile design and decorative arts to the aesthetics of spirituality. The artist's practice explores diversity in the affective impact of colour, through which her compositional structures move and meld. The artworks are primarily based on the pattern of a grid; radical relationships in colour then play with our perception of weight and space, shaping a layered dynamism across the deceptively flat surfaces.



JULY 8-AUGUST 26

Imprint of Spirit**Kathmandu Photo Gallery**

87 Pan Rd.
Viewing hours: Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm
Tel: 02 234 6700 | www.kathmanduphotobkk.com

Showcasing the atmospheric black and white images of Buddha statues and pagodas overgrown with creepers, this exhibition by **Rabil Bunnag** evokes romantic memories through mysterious mythic lands. With exquisite patience and meticulousness, he captured the optimum play of light and shadow to bring out the subject's true beauty. "These photographs are most valuable for study, as they were taken before restoration, so any interested party could use them for comparison, to see how they differ from today's reality", wrote Buddhadasa Bhikku in the foreword to the book *Three Old Cities of Siam*, a compilation of this set of photographs.



UNTIL AUGUST 2

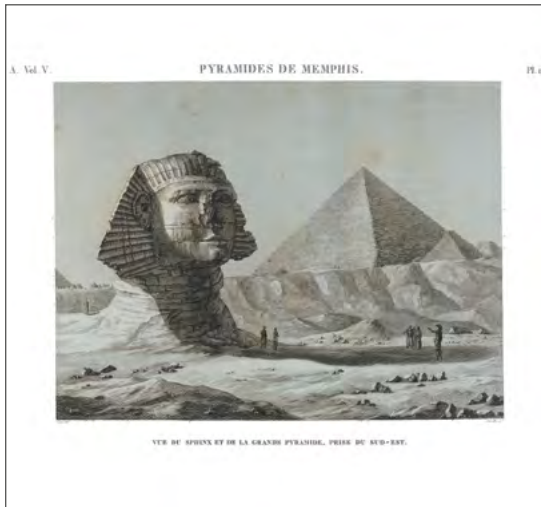
Over All, All Over**Tang Contemporary Art**

153 Ratchadamri Rd.

Viewing hours: Tue-Sat, 11am-7pm

Tel: 02 652 2732 | www.tangcontemporary.com

The latest solo exhibition by renowned Sino-Malaysian artist **H.H.Lim**, is derived from the artist's intent to create through the use of a particular media—the panorama. The artist aims to present a wide and articulated view of what is present and the reality that surrounds us. This media is appropriately subjected to the personal outlook of the artist who wonders about uncertainty and questions related to our time. This exhibition functions as a central investigation that tries through the exhibited works to describe the global storm and the emotional crisis that characterizes our century.



UNTIL JULY 14

Description de l' Egypte**Duke Contemporary Art Space**

1F, Gaysorn Village, 999 Phloen Chit Rd.

Viewing hours: 11am-midnight

Tel: 094 647 8888 | www.facebook.com/duke.gaysorn

This photo exhibition showcases the observations and research conducted by a group of scholars who accompanied **Napoleon Bonaparte** during his expedition to Egypt in 1798 to 1801. Originally compiled into a series of books entitled *Description de l' Egypte*, it attempted to comprehensively present an in-depth story of Egypt's historical, cultural, artistic, and religious heritage, as well as the topography of the country. Printed using the most advanced technologies in the printing industry at the time, the pictures demonstrate the power of new advanced printing technologies.

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Flower Power

Hidden in Old Bangkok's Dusit district lies the world's first Museum of Floral Culture, the passionate life's work of Khun Sakul Intakul

By Sara Honeybell



The word “museum” suggests a showcase of antiques of yesteryear, and this building boasts many unique trophy pieces, but the **Museum of Floral Culture** is so much more. It's a truly visionary celebration of life, combining the beauty and history of floral culture—the passionate life's work of the world-renowned floral designer **Sakul Intakul**. This enchanting home to all-things-floral was inspired by **Her Majesty Queen Sirikit**, with her promotion, preservation, and contribution to Thai floral art. The result is housed in a building, built in the reign of King Rama VI, that captures the spiritual beauty of life. I imagine that the August 12th, 2012, opening date—Mother's Day in Thailand, and Queen's Sirikit's birthday—was an auspicious affair.

We arrive at the charming gated entrance and are greeted at the open air reception by its creator, Khun Sakul Intakul himself. The alfresco reception and museum shop is a preview of what's to come; with its rich heritage, tradition, and artisan qualities all beautifully blended. A selection of the owner's best-selling books is displayed in the museum shop, and offer an insight into his global success and influence. We're then invited to choose afternoon tea from the carefully curated selection of glass bottled teas, with their fragrant aromatic leaves curiously displayed on the countertop. The afternoon tea menu offers exquisite choices, I order ahead the *Love Pekoe Rose Tea*, and begin imagining Sakul's epic journeys, in search of the finest empires and tea estates.

In front of the house, guests are sat on wicker loom chairs and gaze in wonder at the hauntingly beautiful mobiles and otherworldly sculptures, with their organic trailing pink orchids. All around us, passion, love

and admiration of flora, nature, Thai art and culture is celebrated. For a cost of B4,500 per person, with a minimum of two guests, you can specially request the director's tour, hosted by the delightful owner, which includes a set of tea for two. The proceeds of the Directors' tour supports the museum's CSR programme, so by opting for the premium tour you'll be supporting floral workshops for children, held on the first Saturday of the month.

Tours are available in English, Thai, or Japanese, and are run by volunteers. We choose from a colourful stack of hand-held fans, as we joined our English-speaking guide on the Colonial veranda. We're captivated for over an hour, beginning in a room influenced by Siam, then venturing through references of India, China, Japan, Laos, Tibet, and Indonesia. And Balinese culture clearly influences Sakul the most. We learn about the flower temples, generations of secrets, and heritage beliefs of the banana leaf.



We're invited upstairs to the exhibit called 'Pen, Paper, and Possibility', that proudly displays artwork that graced the Grand Palace state banquet. The facing walls are adorned with images documenting red-carpet sculpture from Rome's International Film Festival, and hand-written thank you notes filled with gratitude, from famous fashion names. There's even a nod to Sakul's engineering background echoed in bronze sculptures.

We glide through the rooms and passage of time, history, and geography, with cultural references sparking inspiration at every step. Each corner of the museum is steeped in past, present, and future flora. When we have completed the interior tour





we continue outside in the Thai-Zen botanical garden, where we learn insights of flora, with its medicinal and healing qualities. Our guide shares ancient wisdom like significant flowers used for dyes, and their historical and spiritual connection.

The bamboo framed pathway takes us past purple parasols, gigantic sculptures, and wooden garden furniture—where one can sit and soak-in the enchanting landscape. After a brief rest-bite we make our way to the shade of the pagoda, to watch a gentle flower workshop, and the garden tour is complete.

We are beckoned back to the stylish **Dom Mai Tai Salon Du The** where the ‘Inspired’ Japanese tea and

Asian *petit fours* (B240 each for the set)

are served on grand gold platters. The ever-evolving thread of design detail continues throughout and makes me marvel. As I sip from a sizable Japanese tea cup I am told that the museum will soon be debuting the launch of a very special afternoon ‘Raj tea’, and Sakul’s passion captivates us as he describes the Taj Mahal of teas. Its design is the ultimate decadence—

truly opulent, and adorned in colourful

flora, and dazzling jewels—and will be an afternoon tea fit for royalty.

Between 6pm and 7pm guests can book the ultimate dining experience called **Midnight Moon**. This à la carte group set menu caters exclusively for 20, and is priced at B1,450++ per person. It consists of seven courses, with a night time tour intermission under the stars. Dinner begins with Japanese inspired Takayama Miso Grilled Tofu, paired with the perfumed aroma of the white champaka leaf, served up with homemade preserved white turmeric. We then sample the secret recipe of Mumbai Masala Mango and a spicy fruit salad served on a bed of Marigold blossoms (it’s deemed to be an lucky combination).

The third course is Southern Lemongrass Soup with shrimp, mushroom, and blossoms of ‘moon flower’, the divine floral vine that magically opens up to gain energy from the moonlight. Then follows a traditional dish from the capital of Laos; the tropical *Muang Luang* salad, with blossoms of sesbania pea and blue butterfly pea. The auspicious number five course is Kolkata Pan-Grilled Chicken with homemade mango mustard sauce, inspired by Sakul’s journey to Kolkata (formerly Calcutta). This dish is served up with deep blue butterfly-pea infused jasmine rice.

The intermission is a delightful pause, and a tealight tour of the perfumed garden in the moonlight. As for the finale, the desert is Indian Rose Tea Sorbet decorated with rose petals, with tea grown in the desert city of Pushkar and Rajasthan, where rose blossoms yield the highest intensity of essential oil. This is complemented with a blend of ten-thousand miles scented tea, and osmanthus flowers. Khun Sakul hand-carried this unique tea-of-choice home from his favoured tea merchant in India. The character of the pink rose petals are blended to perfection, proving Sakul is a true tea connoisseur.



On any given afternoon in Bangkok, nowhere else offers a more genuinely charming experience—richly referencing the Song Dynasty, the Taj Mahal, and more. Like the tea served up, you will be transported “ten-thousand miles”, through a journey of the senses.

The Museum of Floral Culture has been an ongoing life’s work for Khun Sakul, as he enchants royalty, fashion designers, friends and guests alike. And his passion and work will no doubt continue to bloom, blossom, and captivate us, under the Midnight Moon. The lingering romance and charm of both the museum and its owner will leave you nothing less than mesmerized. ■

The Museum of Floral Culture

315 Samsen Road, Soi 28, Yaek Ongkarak 13

Tel: 02 669 3633

Open: Tue-Sunday, 10am-6pm

Tours: 10am and 1pm.

Admission: Adults B150, children B75

Recipes for Life

A delicious new memoir from author Kay Plunkett-Hogge

By **Gary Anthony Rutland**

Although born in Bangkok, and brought up on Sukhumvit Soi 31 in the early 70s, 52-year-old **Kay Plunkett-Hogge** currently resides in London.



She is the author of the recently published *Adventures of a Terribly Greedy Girl: A Memoir of Food, Family, Film & Fashion*, and a recent press trip brought her to Thailand to talk about her latest projects.

In conversation, Kay recalls those early happy days in Thailand, and reminisces about water buffaloes in the next door

neighbour's garden, being surrounded by khlongs, and how there was loads of traffic—even then. She also recalls spending large parts of her childhood accompanying the family's cook, Yoon, to the local market.

"It was a cacophony of smells and sights and sounds, with piles of lemongrass, garlic, chillies of every hue, and shrimp paste and dried squid," she says, adding that she would also watch Yoon prepare authentic Thai meals. This is where the young Kay learned to balance flavours, while at the same time nurturing a love for all things Thai. To this day there's a special place in her heart reserved for Bangkok, the city she still thinks of as home and visits as often as her hectic schedule will allow.

"I feel like I'm Thai," she explains, and she's one of those rare farang who actually speak the language like a native—a testament to her formative years growing up in the 'Big Mango'. Her newly released, 224 page hardcover book is a fun and feisty eclectic memoir, and about 80 percent of it is stories relating to Thailand and its cuisine. "Our memories are so wrapped up in what we eat and I fervently believe food is a communication process," Kay points out.

The book also contains tales from the author's days in the fashion and film industries—beginning when the 18-year-old Kay was cast as an extra in Roland Joffé's 1984 film *The Killing Fields*, which was shot in part right here in Thailand. It also includes recipes from many of the world's most exciting cities and, fittingly, that includes a recipe for Kay's favourite Thai dish.

"Pad Krapow! This is my ultimate Thai comfort food," she gushes. "Hot, fragrant and delicious, if I'm pissed off—that's English for fed up—this is my go-to dish, so I cook it at least once a week (laughs)! Everyone in Thailand

has a different recipe for it. You can use pork, beef, duck, chicken, tofu, mushrooms... up to you. But when following my recipe, make sure you serve it on a pile of freshly cooked jasmine rice topped with a deep fried egg."

A prolific writer, to date Kay has written six books of her own, and co-authored a further five, including *The Tucci Table*, with the award-winning American actor Stanley Tucci (described as a "food porn manifesto" by chef Mario Francesco Batali). Meanwhile, *Make Mine a Martini* was the Financial Times' pick for drinks book of the year in 2014, and is part of a trilogy that will conclude with *Aperitivo: Drinks and Snacks for The Dolce Vita*, due to be published later this month.

When asked about feedback for her latest food-centric book, Kay informs—with a laugh—that reviews have been generally very positive. "The Metro newspaper in London called it: 'A manifesto for our times', which seems a little over the top but...." she trails off, smiling modestly.

"I never planned to be a cook, and I'm NOT a chef, I'm a good home cook," Kay adds emphatically, while explaining the process behind her writing. "Once I started it came really quickly. I'm quite quick in general, and once I have an idea and get going it takes me about three months to finish a book."

So, what's next for this vivacious, warm, and witty bon vivant?

"I'm working with the newly opened **Ananda Hua Hin Resort and Spa** to offer Thai culinary journeys, slated to begin in early 2018. It's something I've been thinking about for some time now. The four corners of the country really have so many different tastes to offer. We're thinking groups of 8 to 14 because I think the more intimate you keep it, the better it is."

When asked about advice for aspiring cooks, writers, and fellow journeyers through life, Kay offers the following typically forthright and upbeat morsels to chew over and savour: "If there's a chance for adventure, take it. Be curious, never stop being curious. It's never too late to do something new. I didn't start writing until my 40's, and now I want to write a novel. However, I still haven't decided what I want to be when I grow up." ■



www.kaycooks.com

www.anandahuahin.com

CUISINE

ART



Thank you to all of the customers and friends whose support during our first 10 years has made Ruen Urai one of the best Thai restaurants in Bangkok.

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Film News & Screenings

By **Bruce Scott**



Iris



3 1/2 Minutes Ten Bullets



Sriracha



Kusuthara-Pattern of Love



Handsome Devil

The ongoing documentary series at the **Foreign Correspondent's Club of Thailand (FCCT)** has a great line up this month, starting on Monday July 3rd with *Iris*, a fascinating 2014 doc that pays tribute to the iconic **Iris Apfel**, a quick-witted, American interior designer and outspoken champion of eclectic fashion, especially her own. The FCCT has a very different sort of film screening lined up for July 17th when they present—in partnership with the U.S. Embassy and the American Film Showcase—the 2015 doc *3 1/2 Minutes Ten Bullets*, the Sundance Film Festival 2015 winner directed by **Marc Silver**. The film focuses on the murder of a 17-year-old black youth, killed by a 45-year-old white man, and delves into the intricate web of racial prejudice in 21st century America (the evening includes a Skype Q&A session with the filmmakers).

Before the month winds to a close the FCCT will present two more films in partnership with the U.S. Embassy and the American Film Showcase. The 2014 film *Sriracha* will be shown on Monday, July 24th, and it reveals the intriguing story of the man behind the iconic “rooster sauce” which has earned a cult following around the globe. Then, on Monday, July 31st, don't miss *Resilience*, a gripping documentary which shows how toxic stress can trigger hormones that wreak havoc on the brains and bodies of children, putting them at a greater risk for disease, homelessness, prison time, and early death.

Each film will screen at 7pm and admission for all films for FCCT non-members is B150 (free admission for members). www.fccthai.com

Meanwhile, this month's screening at the **Thailand Knowledge (TK) Park**, located on the 8th floor of CentralWorld (999/9 Rama 1 Rd), will be *Kusuthara-Pattern of Love* from Bhutan (directed by **Karma Deki**, the country's first female film-maker). Beautifully shot in the uppermost mountains of Bhutan, it's a love story between a Bhutanese married woman and an American tourist which turns out to be a “karmic” romance. The film has created waves at many international film festivals and will be shown here in Bangkok on Saturday July 29th at 4pm. The event will be supported by the Embassy of Bhutan, with food and drink on hand, and the Bhutanese Ambassador presiding over the event. Tickets are only B20 each. For more information, visit www.tkpark.or.th.

Finally, the **Bangkok Screening Room** has a varied roster this month, including the 2016 doc *The Incomparable Rose Harman* which profiles a sharp-tongued, 80-year-old NYC socialite. By contrast the 2016 UK drama *Handsome Devil* is a coming-of-age story about a bullied outsider and a star athlete forced to room together, while *Homme Less* (2014) profiles a homeless man who mingles with wealthy society figures. Check the website for screening dates and times. www.bkksr.com ■

From Rubik's Cube to YouTube

The rise of Thai music sensation Billy Chuchat

By **Rianka Mohan**

Musician **Billy Chuchat** likes going against the grain. When his friends were into partying, he preferred tinkering with a Rubik's Cube—he placed second at a speed solving contest—or mastering a fast-paced, incredibly coordinated dance move with his fingers called “tutting”, which he decided to record and post on YouTube one evening. It's a grainy home video featuring 16-year-old Billy in a silver NY Yankees hat, freestyle finger-tutting to a Timbaland song. The video quickly went viral (it's been viewed over 70,000 times) and changed the course of his life.

Fast forward seven years and today, Billy's channel *BILLBilly01* is one of the most successful music channels in Thailand with almost one million subscribers and more than 230 million views. His baseball hat of old has been replaced by a black fedora and now his videos are covers of English songs by him and his friends, which are remarkably polished for someone who's mixing and editing out of his apartment.

Billy is of a new ilk of artist emerging on music's most powerful platform; a skilled-in-everything-from-video-to-vocals-to-viral-distribution wunderkind eschewing the middlemen of big record labels in accessing their fan base. And his meteoric success is partly attributable to the fact that he's immensely watchable. He may prefer to shine the spotlight on his singers but your eyes gravitate to him strumming a guitar, switching instruments, experimenting on the mixer, or merely snapping his fingers to the beat. His most popular video, a cover by **Violette Wautier**, has a moment when Violette tries a dance move and Billy, a second later, copies her. She mock hits him mid-song, while he's working in myriad instrumentation to the melody. It's a charming piece of showmanship and typical of Billy's penchant for adding relatability to his otherwise jaw-dropping versatility with sound. Just watch his version of Ed Sheeran's “Shape of You” where all the music comes from one guitar.

His process begins with the song. “I listen to a song and first I try to focus on what it's trying to convey. Does the emotion it evokes feel fake or rubbish? If so, I try to turn it into something that's more authentic.” To which

the obvious question becomes, don't you like the songs you cover? He laughs. “Yes I do but I did go through a phase of covering songs I disliked to bring my own take to them. I'm not a fan of the guitar in ‘Paris’ so Alyn and I took hours to pull off our version, which I prefer.”

Billy isn't arrogant; he's just an avid and astute pop culture consumer. “My friends get upset when I criticize songs. But we all have the right to be critical of music, not be mere passive consumers. Popularity doesn't always

mean quality. In commenting on songs, you're engaging in music appreciation. You've got to be able to independently decide what you like or don't and why. We shouldn't take good art for granted. Art is meant to be criticized and we're better for it.”

But the internet is sometimes a scary place with trolls on the loose. “I think every YouTuber remembers their first hate comment. To me, it means I've got to be better. I make it work as inspiration to push myself. Beyond that, I don't let it bother me.”

Billy is also too busy to be bothered. He's in a band, **Tilly Birds**, with his childhood friend **Third Keith** and this year, they've released their first Thai EP. Furthermore, he graduates from Chulalongkorn University with his thesis film being publicly screened at the BACC on July 29th and 30th.

Do you see yourself doing anything else post graduation? Billy frowns before declaring with confidence, “You mean a regular desk job? No way, music is it for me. This is my life.” ■



K-POPALOOZA

Four-man indie Korean pop/rock band **Hyukoh** hits Bangkok this July 15th to perform at **Voice Space** (BBD Building, 197 Viphavadi Rangsit). Known for their avant-garde music and aesthetic sensibility, Hyukoh is often touted as the ‘Band of the New Generation.’ Tickets start at B2,100 and doors open at 7pm. www.facebook.com/thelowdowns.

Art & Culture

Photo Feature

THAILAND FROM ABOVE

Drone photos by
Richard Barrow

When it comes to travel bloggers living and working in Thailand, the name **Richard Barrow** is inevitably going to come up top of the list (on Twitter he is followed by well over 100,000 people). This soft-spoken Englishman has been exploring Thailand for over 20 years now, and his online presence is arguably one of the strongest when it comes to blogging about Thailand.

"I started off by sharing photos of my trips during the school holidays," he explains. "Now it's like a full time job as I am travelling nearly every weekend. However, my day time job is still a teacher, twenty three years later."

Among the thousands of excellent photos Richard has taken and posted over the years, his drone photos have garnered considerable attention—so much so that he has an entire website dedicated to them at www.thailandfromabove.com. And because we know you're curious, the drone he currently flies is a **DJI Phantom 3 Professional**.

"I have flown my drone all over Thailand," he explains. "From North to South and in jungles and on islands. I haven't been to all 77 Thai provinces yet, but I'm getting there."

As with our special 'Weekend Escapes' section (starting on pg. 14), this photo feature showcasing some of Richard's favourite drone pics will hopefully inspire at least a few readers to get out there and explore this fascinating Kingdom. If not from above, then at least on the ground.

www.richardbarrow.com





Floating market in Songkhla



Benevolent Buddha in Hat Yai, Songkhla province



Wat Samphan Dragon Temple, Nakhon Pathom



Aerial view of the historic ruins at Wat Sa Kamphaeng Yai, in Sisaket province



Sukhothai Historical Park



Phaya Khan Khak, the frog and toad museum in Yasothon province



Mangrove walk Rayong province



Aerial view of Pha Taem National Park in Ubon Ratchathani



Idyllic beaches of Koh Kai island in Satun



It's all about the handmade pasta at La Dotta

A R O Y

oodles of artisanal noodles

Just opened this past June, **LA DOTTA** (161/6 Thong Lor Soi 9) is the latest venture of the **FOODIE COLLECTION** group and is serving up handcrafted quality pasta dishes with a strong focus on fresh produce, just like how it is done in Italy. Operating as both a restaurant and a store, the focus is on craftsmanship, ingredients, and authenticity in recipes to make a perfect plate of pasta. Tasty appetizers and desserts and a wide selection of natural and boutique old world wines are also available, while the cocktail menu focuses on revisited Italian classics and fresh ingredients. Open Tuesday to Sunday from 11:30am to 2:30pm for lunch and 5:30pm to 11pm for dinner.

www.ladotta.co

for the love of cheese

What do France, Italy, Holland, Switzerland, and England have in common? Stinkin' good cheese! **SO SOFITEL** (2 North Sathorn Rd) will be hosting a **SO CHEESE EVENING** from 7pm to 9pm on the first Friday of every month at **MIXO BAR** on the 9th Floor. The cheesy selection of goodness by Executive Chef **PAUL SMART** includes brie, raclette, Comté, Morbier, Tête de Moine, Valençay, camembert, gorgonzola, and Brillat-Savarin cheeses. On July 7th, enjoy two full hours of free-flow wine and cheese alongside artisan breads, cold cuts, charcuterie, and more. Entertainment will be provided in the form of a live DJ accompanied by saxophonist. Call 02 624 0000 to secure your spot. Priced at B999 per person.

sukhumvit soi 11's newcomer

SOHO HOSPITALITY has long been famed for bringing us some of Bangkok's hottest bars and restaurants, including Above Eleven, Charcoal Tandoor Grill & Mixology, and Havana Social. Their latest venture, **BRASSERIE CORDONNIER**, is an authentic Parisian restaurant in the heart of Bangkok's bustling Sukhumvit Soi 11. Staying true to Soho's DNA, this French outlet has a unique concept that combines two of the most recognized aspects of French culture: food and fashion. At the helm of the kitchen is chef **CLEMENT HERNANDEZ**, who rolls out French classics as well as a few of his own unique creations. Completing the experience, the drinks menu hosts a catalogue of specially sourced fine wines and spirits, alongside an array of unique French inspired cocktails. Open daily from 6pm till midnight.

back by popular demand

Chef **SYLVAIN SENDRA**, chef and owner of the Michelin-starred Itinéraires Restaurant in Paris, France, returns to Bangkok for three days of sheer culinary pleasure at **LA VIE**, the creative French restaurant at **VIE HOTEL BANGKOK** (117/39-40 Phaya Thai Rd). From July 26th to 28th he will present a tantalizing 3-course set lunch and a 6-course set dinner. Lunch will be served at noon and is priced at B2,500 per person for food only and B4,000 for food and wine pairing, and dinner will be served at 7pm and is priced at B5,500 per person for food only and B7,500 for food and wine pairing. Seats are limited so book now by calling 083 820 4224.



'Bon Appetit' Luxury Lunch at The Reflexions

Plaza Athénée Bangkok, A Royal Meridien Hotel | 61 Wireless Rd.
Tel: 02 650 8800 | www.plazaatheneebangkok.com

Fine food lovers no longer have to wait until the evening to savour the classic and creative cuisine of Chef Roxanna Lange. The Reflexions Modern French Restaurant is now open for lunch from Tuesday to Saturday. The new set lunch offers starters such as salmon, lobster soup, and steak tartare. For mains, choose from Japanese seabream, aquarello risotto or Wagyu striploin no.4. Finally, top your meal off with a wide range of desserts. The set-lunch menus are available from noon to 2pm and are priced at B999++ for a two-course set menu and B1250++ for three-course set menu.



Bunker's Four Favourites

Bunker | 118/2 Soi Suksa (Sathorn 12)
Tel: 02 234 7749 | www.bunkerbkk.com

Throughout the month of July, Bunker is serving up their new four favourite menu items. Start your meal with Cajun Spiced Hamachi comprising of cauliflower, oregano and black olive (B800). For something healthy but delicious, the Heirloom Tomato Salad with peanut greens, ricotta salata and cashews (B350). For beef lovers, Bunker has introduced the Wagyu Beef and Beet Tartare made with tofu cream, parmesan and bagel crisps (B450). Last but not least, the Burnt Orange Creamsicle composed of Campari sponge, vanilla cream and Mandarin sorbet (B325). Available daily from 5:30pm to 11pm.



Lavender Delight Afternoon Tea at Up & Above Bar

Okura Prestige Bangkok | Park Ventures Ecolex, 57 Wireless Rd.
Tel: 02 687 9000 | www.okurabangkok.com

Ranging from deep purple to pale lilac in colour, the beautifully scented lavender flower is blessed with essential oils and when used in cuisine the bloom imparts a delicate sweet floral flavour. These attributes have inspired the talented pastry chefs at The Okura Prestige Bangkok to create the Lavender Delight Afternoon Tea at Up & Above Bar. From July to September guests can indulge in sweet delights from 2pm to 5pm daily. Priced at B1,190++ inclusive of premium coffee or tea for two persons, B1,690++ with sake (250 ml) or with two glasses of prosecco, and B2,750++ with two glasses of champagne.



Dark Delights at Luce

Eatin Grand Hotel Sathorn Bangkok | 33/1 South Sathorn Rd.
Tel: 02 210 8100 | www.eastingrandsathorn.com

From July until the end of August, Luce Italian Restaurant invites diners to embrace the dark side of creative cuisine. Enjoy a variety of desirable dishes with a black-themed twist paired with seductively sinful special drinks, such as pan-seared US scallops with a classic charcoal martini and black Kalamata olives (B340), Noir ravioli with a gin-based Dreams of Summer concoction (B500), Charcoal Pizza Volcano with Malibu-inspired The Parrot (B530) and a Dark Nights tiramisu accompanied by a healthy shot of NC 21 coffee with amaretto (B300). Prices are for food only, drinks are priced at B220 each.



'Come 4 Pay 3' Sunday Brunch at Feast

Royal Orchid Sheraton Hotel & Towers | 2 Charoen Krung Rd.
Tel: 02 266 9214 | www.royalorchidsheraton.com

Gather your family and friends and enjoy the 'Come 4 Pay 3' Sunday brunch buffet promotion at Feast! Menu highlights include a variety of seafood on ice such as lobster, Alaskan crab legs, oysters, scallops, king prawns, rock lobster and caviar. There's also European, Japanese, and Chinese stations; a live cooking stations serving foie gras, grilled and roasted meats; and more. Priced at B2,000 per person inclusive of free flow blended fresh fruit juices, or for an additional B800 per person get free flow red, white and sparkling wine, and beer. Available every Sunday from 11:30am to 3pm until October 31, 2017.



Crack a Crab at The Square

Novotel Bangkok on Siam Square | 392/44 Siam Square Soi 6, Rama I Rd.
Tel: 02 209 8888 | www.novotelbkk.com

Crack open a selection of fresh crab at The Square, Novotel Bangkok on Siam Square. Every Sunday to Thursday night throughout July, experience a variety of crabs, including blue crab, mud crab, and tiger crab on ice, steamed and barbequed, yellow curry soft crab, crab and leek tart, and more. The buffet also includes other seafood delights such as prawns and salmon gravlax as well as customizable pizza, pasta, and meat stations. This promotion is available from 6pm to 10:30pm and is priced at B1,150++ per person. Book your table online and receive a 50% discount.

Canvas

A diverse palette of flavours creates artistry on the plate



When you call your restaurant **Canvas**, it stands to reason that the correlation between food and art is well understood. And when you have a visionary chef like Texas-born **Riley Sanders** helming the kitchen, and the team from the ever-popular **Rabbit Hole** bar (located just up the road) helping to put the whole thing together, you can definitely expect some masterpiece meals.

Inside, this recently opened space evokes European elegance with plenty of dark wood and classic black and white floor tiling, while the compact but airy interior offers a choice of counter and table seating for 40 persons (with additional seating on the 2nd floor loft level bar). The half-dozen or so kitchen staff work in an open kitchen area behind the counter, where diners can watch them painstakingly finesse each and every plating.

Our meal began with the Chilled Clams, Barely Cooked (B400), which sees seven delicate clams served on the half-shell like oysters, resting on a large bed of ice. But it's all the additional flavourings that make these

shellfish soar, as ginger, snakefruit, turmeric, and a very piquant yellow chili are all added to the mix, while the seafood morsels soak in an elaborately prepared salty brine. They were, in a word, divine... and a wonderful indicator of what else lay in store.

Chef Riley makes it a point to use almost 100 percent locally sourced ingredients, and his interest in deeply exploring the ins and outs of Thai cuisine results in some amazing concoctions. Case in point: his Thai Waygu, Grilled Rare & Chopped (B720), in which the Thai beef is served in tartare fashion, with flavours of bone marrow, green peppercorn, garlic, and sweet basil adding complement. And although the dish comes beautifully separated into four sections on the plate, the intoxicating flavours are not fully released till one mixes it, like a *Khao Yam* (Southern Thai tossed salad).

Another superb beef dish on the compact menu is the Beef Cheek (B940), in which the meat is cooked *sous vide* for three days, and served with guava—puréed as well as in thin slices atop the beef—mushrooms, and red chili. It is simply like nothing you've ever tasted before. Even the

plate (handmade locally) is stunning, and visually mimics the dish itself.

Another unforgettable dish is Meklong Catfish, Caramelized with Tamarind (B680), in which Thailand's humble catfish is prepared Japanese *unagi* (eel) style. Expertly cooked in a Jospier oven, it's served with two kinds of local eggplant, grapes, fermented coconut sauce, and a second sauce made from local herbs. It's a revelation.

The artistry of these dishes is apparent visually, but listening to Chef Riley describe the intricacies of each—where a dizzying multitude of ingredients and preparation styles contribute to the end product—adds much to the experience. Thankfully, there are plans afoot to introduce a tasting menu where the young chef can fully elucidate his craft with individual diners. **BY BRUCE SCOTT**

Canvas

113/9-10, Sukhumvit Soi 55

Open: Mon-Fri, 6pm-midnight, Sat-Sun, 6pm-12:30pm

Tel: 099 614 1158

www.canvasbangkok.com

Tables Grill

Deliciously furnished tribute to the Raja of Ratchaprasong



A majestic elder statesman in the exclusive club of long-established five-star Bangkok properties, the **Grand Hyatt Erawan** is a landmark hotel situated at one of the four points of the exclusive and world-renowned Ratchaprasong junction—in the heart of the city's prime shopping district—and home to **Tables Grill** steak and seafood restaurant.

The award-winning restaurant features prime-cut steaks and sustainably sourced seafood in an elegantly unique setting that offers a fresh take on à la minute dining.

Many of the house's signature dishes are prepared tableside at any of the grill stations that dot the dining area. The stylish, wood-panelled plinths used for this purpose—the "tables" from which the restaurant's

name is derived—also facilitate tableside meat carving and last minute dessert prepping.

After being delightfully *amuse-bouche'd* by a couplet of dainty tuna rillettes, our table was off to a palate-dazzling starter of Ocean trout tartare (B600), the pink-fresh fish's stronger flavour gently tempered with the citrusy tartness of Japanese Yuzu fruit and Nori fresh cilantro (aka: coriander). Then, an intensely flavourful Bellotta Iberico ham (B800) was brought out. Cured for 36 months, the tender, dark-red pork has a buttery-smooth bite and savoury goodness that makes respected gourmands and chefs call it the world's finest ham.

Mains included Grass-fed Iberico lamb (B1,200/150gr) from the Aragón region of Catalonia. The

magret-cut loin comes adorned with Spanish morels and garlic confit in a lamb *glacé*, while a side-bowl of smoked sea-salt provides an exciting additional dimension of flavour. The fish course was a lovely and light Braised ocean trout fillet (B900) with endive dusted in grated French truffle, pumpkin purée, and a tartness-shot of Citrus Sabayon.

What the oven-baked Jidori chicken (B1,000/900gr) lacked in heft, it more than made up for in supremely satisfying taste and robust bite. The Japanese-Thai cross-breed fowl has a distinctly firm bite (think a more tender and succulent version of local-style *ban gai*). Served with grilled broccoli florets, and drizzled with a chicken-stock glaze, our bird was oven-browned to perfection.

Amidst chit-chat about the aforementioned chicken's fascinating pedigree, a wooden plank of Grain-fed Wagyu (B1,300/150gr) flank steak quickly brought the table to attention. The M3-rated beef—from the celebrated Darling Downs farms of Queensland, Australia—shared its timber platter with rhubarb jelly, beetroot purée, and balsamic vinegar.

And when the clock struck after-hour (featured desserts B400 each), it was upon this versatile furnishing that our Lemon tart burnt meringue with lemon sorbet made landfall, where a finishing layer of egg-white was piped on and *brûlée* torched before being served. Fire was also a key element of the Baked Alaska with forrest berries and berry coulis, which in fact is not oven-rendered but dramatically *flambéed* in cognac, which is elegantly warmed and decanted plate-side.

BY CHRIS MICHAEL

Tables Grill

Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel, 494 Rajdamri Rd.
Tel: 02 254 6250
Open: Mon-Sat, 11:30am-2:30pm, 6:30pm-10pm, Sunday Brunch: 11am-3pm
bangkok.grand.hyatt.com

Biscotti

Italian Chef brings to diners the heart-warming dishes of his childhood



A staple on the lunchtime roster for suits and their business partners, **Biscotti** has been serving up authentic Italian fare since the late '90s. Over the years though, it has grown casual enough to warrant a visit by anyone on any day of the week. And all the better for it. This evolution has taken the restaurant—located inside the **Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel**—from “just another hotel restaurant” to a sophisticated venue with plenty of personality.

The stacks of awards it has collected in recent years are testament to this, as is the popularity of the place come lunchtime. I visited on a Friday in late May, and by midday the sizeable restaurant was at capacity. All credit to the waiting staff who maintained their levels of attentiveness and speed of service from start to finish.

Food is crafted from the open-plan kitchen at the helm of the room, and prepared by Italian chef **Flavio Argenio**. The Rome-born chef has put together a lunch menu that focuses on the authentic, heart-warming dishes of his childhood, and it's something

to be savoured (perhaps over a long break from the office). But for those in a hurry, the ‘Express Lunch’ menu offers a quick but sufficient glimpse into what Biscotti can do.

With time to spare, I chose from the à la carte selection, opting first for the Rocket Salad (B430), served with artichoke, tomatoes, olives, and parmesan. It was a simple starter but even with salad there's room for error—too much dressing or wilted leaves, perhaps. Thankfully there was no such thing with this refreshing appetizer.

Onto the soup course next, and I gulped down a comforting Porcini and Wild Mushroom Bowl (B410), liberally sprinkled with a layer of aromatic herbs. And of course, it wouldn't be right to visit an Italian restaurant without sampling the pasta, so I stumped for the Homemade Fettuccine with Parma Ham, Mushrooms, Truffle Essence and Parmesan (B520). Both dishes were a success in fundamental cuisine, proving that sometimes the best plates are the simplest. What's more, the majority of ingredients used here

are imported from Italy, and it doesn't get much more authentic than that.

The highlight of the meal was the main course—a Grilled Angus Tenderloin (B1,850), accompanied by foie gras, sautéed spinach, shaved black truffle, and drizzled in a rich red wine sauce. Cooked to order, it's a luxurious hunk of meat that melts beautifully at the bite, and is perfectly complemented by the bed of vegetables and gravy it sits upon.

There's plenty of dessert options to choose from too, with the Strawberry Semifreddo (B280), being a light yet flavoursome choice. Finally, wine lovers will find plenty to love here with a generous selection of bottles and wines by the glass—I recommend the organic *Campoluce Chianti* (B280). **BY ANNALIESE WATKINS**

Biscotti

Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel
155 Rajadamri Rd.

Tel: 02 126 8866

Open daily: 11:30am-2:30pm, 6pm-10:30pm
www.siam-bangkok.anantara.com

Pizza Massilia

The gourmet pizzeria stakes out new territory



You don't have to travel far to find Italian food in Bangkok, and with such an abundance of Italian restaurants and pizzerias, newcomers have to offer something spectacular to make themselves stand out. Case in point being **Pizza Massilia**; striving to not just be a pizzeria but rather an "art of living" experience.

Established by French restaurateur **Frederic Meyer** in partnership with Italian chef **Luca Appino**, Pizza Massilia strives to combine French cuisine with traditional Italian tastes. References to the French city of Marseille (once known as Massilia) can be found in both the menu and the décor. High-quality raw materials are prioritized and only the best artisanal ingredients

from Italy and France are used. Key ingredients are sourced from Italy and are strictly *Denominazione di Origine Protetta* (DOP)—Protected Designation of Origin—certified, ensuring the products are made and taste as they traditionally should.

Pizza Massilia's first branch, located in Soi Ruam Rudee, opened in December of 2015. Riding high on that success, the second branch opened this past June on Sukhumvit Soi 49, featuring the same gourmet pizza concept. Themed in shades of blue and white—the colours of the Marseille flag—and decorated in chic baroque style, the Sukhumvit branch offers both cozy, romantic indoor seating options as well as outdoor tables in the leisure garden.

Despite being only metres away from Sukhumvit Road, the garden provides a quiet leafy green oasis perfect for afternoon or evening dining.

We started our meal with the Octopus Carpaccio (B390), thinly sliced slow-cooked octopus topped with mixed leaves, almond flakes, and a fresh lemon dressing that made for a beautifully balanced and tasty first dish.

Next, we tucked into a classic pizza, the base of which is made with a mix of biological organic flours from Italy that are fermented for at least 72 hours—the result is an incredibly light dough that is easily digestible and won't leave you feeling too heavy. The Burrata & Culatello (B590) is a must-try, made from organic Italian tomato sauce, Italian basil, soft and creamy burrata cheese from Andria, *culatello* from Zibello, and topped with extra virgin olive oil. Adding to the authenticity, all pizzas are baked in a wood-fired Stefano Ferrara Forni brick oven.

The Lobster Angel Hair (B1,790), with perfectly cooked whole Canadian lobster, homemade angel hair pasta, organic cherry tomato sauce, and fresh herbs served in the lobster shell, was a showstopper and surprisingly light too.

Chocolate lovers will rejoice over the Chocolate Sinfonie (B390), dark chocolate mousse, milk chocolate ganache, ground cocoa, tuille cocoa *grue*, caramel salt butter sauce, white chocolate *namelaka*, and dark chocolate ice cream. The Citron Givre (B290) comprising of candied lemon, lemon sorbet, and crumbled pistachio, was light and blissfully refreshing—making for the perfect end to a large meal. **BY KELLY HARVEY**

Pizza Massilia Sukhumvit

1/8, Sukhumvit Soi 49

Open daily: 11:30am-2:30pm,

5:30pm-midnight

Tel: 02 015 0297

www.pizzamassilia.com

Pagoda Chinese Restaurant

Traditional Cantonese cuisine served in a contemporary setting



The **Marriott Marquis Queen's Park Hotel's** upscale Chinese restaurant **Pagoda** is one of the newest additions to the city's dining scene. The restaurant, still in its soft-opening, serves traditional Cantonese cuisine in a contemporary setting. The spacious eatery is spread across a main dining room, with seven adjoining private rooms that come with their own wait staff. The interiors balance *chinoiserie* elements such as lanterns, Oriental ceramics, and lattice woodwork with non-traditional touches like vintage gothic chandeliers, bright wallpapers, and throw pillows. The modern eatery exudes a warm and familial ambience, steering clear of the cliché red—and we are truly thankful for that.

The kitchen here is manned by Executive Chef **Oscar Pun** from Hong Kong, whose culinary expertise spans over 30 years and at several Michelin-starred restaurants across Southeast Asia. At Pagoda, he teams up with Restaurant Manager **Piyanan 'Pui' Karawa** to create a menu that focuses on healthy Cantonese cuisine that retains its authenticity and flavours.

As is customary, we begin with a range of dim sums that we pair with Seven Angels (B120), one of their many fine selections of premium teas. The first to arrive is Gold Fish Wanton (B120), with shrimp roe in Sichuan sauce. True to their name, the dumplings are delicately shaped to resemble the fish, which is a fun touch. Up next, Steamed Rice Rolls Stuffed with Crispy Prawns (B150) doused with generous amounts of black vinegar sauce. The last in this course are the Wantons with Fresh Prawn (B150), soaked in a peppery Sichuan sauce. One bite and the piquant flavours of ingredients, which include star anise and peppercorns, will guarantee a memorable sensation on your palate. To complement all of these striking flavours, we highly recommend the Double-Boiled Fish Maw Soup (B680), made with the earthy and fragrant morel mushrooms. It's the perfect combination.

This is followed by Chef Oscar's signature Crispy Pork (B400) which we enjoyed with Pagoda's Rosella Tea Soda (B100). The delicious offering is served alongside mustard sauce which, the chef tells me, is how locals in his home

town pair it. The skin of the pork is thin and the meat, succulent and juicy. This perfection is achieved by the process of 'slow' baking the dish three times.

For the mains, we sample bites of flavoursome Baked Cod (B980) paired with fluffed egg whites, and topped with balsamic vinegar—"it's his favourite," Pui informs us. The light batter, sans oil, makes this one a healthy option. We then see Chef bring his local inspiration to the table with Steamed Sticky Rice with Crab Meat (B1,900), served in a bamboo basket. For that extra flavour we are recommended to team that with seasoned minced pork that is served in a crab shell. This one was a definite winner across the table. We accompanied this final dish with the simple yet delectable *al dente*, Stir-Fried Okra with *Lao Gan Ma* Spicy Sauce (B320). **BY REENA KARIM**

Pagoda Chinese Restaurant
4F, Marriott Marquis Queen's Park Hotel
199, Sukhumvit Soi 22
Tel: 02 059 5999
Open daily:
www.marriott.com

Embassy Room

The Park Hyatt invites you to succumb to the pleasures of succulent seafood



The long wait is over and the **Embassy Room**, at the flagship **Park Hyatt Bangkok** hotel, has finally arrived. Ultra-modern and sophisticated, the restaurant co-exists in a space where several living areas ebb and flow into one another with an understated charm that blurs the lines between function and style. An evocative colour palette of earth tones in crème, soft white, and black set a scene highlighted by polished limestone floors, silk accents in soft lavender and green tones, and striking contemporary art gracing the expansive walls and ceilings. Another intriguing design aspect is that seating options within the same space vary—with intimate semicircle bench style seating, traditional tables along the glass viewing wall, al fresco poolside dining, and the ever popular tables facing the open kitchen where you can watch the food being prepared (and you are encouraged to interact with the chefs in action).

Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Embassy Room features an all-day menu of contemporary

European cuisine with an Asian flair. The venue boasts several wood burning ovens, and they have beef and poultry available, but the main focus is on high quality seafood dishes that are both internationally and locally sourced. Another highlight is that dishes can be ordered by an individual portion or a “shared” portion. Start your meal off with their version of bouillabaisse called “Gran Ma” Fish Soup (B400), with mud crab ravioli, tarragon and kaffir lime oil. It’s a refined version, with a deep and rich complex seafood aroma.

I also recommend the Australian King Fish Ceviche (B420) with grilled avocado, coriander, and sweet potato chips, as well as the Hokkaido Scallop (B450) with cauliflower, broccoli, hazelnut, and wholegrain mustard—both are stunning! For a main dish you won’t go wrong with either their creamy and rich Canadian Lobster Risotto (B950), or the perfectly executed Atlantic Cod Fish (B610). But my hands down favourite was the Wild French Monkfish Osso Bucco (B760), with polenta, black olive, and grilled jalapeño. This dish is a celebration of

subtle Mediterranean flavours that have been elevated to surpass the sum of its parts.

Be sure to enjoy a nice wine with your meal, such as the crisp and clean 2016 *Broglia, Gavi “Il Doge” Del Comune di Gavi DOCG* (B360/glass), from Piedmont, Italy which works well with every dish mentioned thus far. The Embassy Room also gets high marks for their professional service, striking minimalist design aesthetics, and thoughtful and vibrant cuisine that fills you up without ever weighing you down. After your meal be sure to extend your pleasure by enjoying a signature cocktail, or single malt scotch and cigar, at **The Bar**, which is located just one level up from Embassy Room. **BY MELISSA RICHTER**

Embassy Room

9F, The Park Hyatt Bangkok
Central Embassy, 88 Wireless Rd.
Tel: 02 012 1234

Open daily: 6am-10:30am, noon-2pm,
6pm-10pm
bangkok.park.hyatt.com



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Breaking Bread with Garima Arora

At Gaa, a Mumbai-born chef fashions local and homemade ingredients into an eclectic and highly personal cuisine

In a narrow, quiet alley off Soi Lang Suan, one of the hottest restaurants to open so far this year occupies a spot directly opposite **Gaggan**, the legendary Bangkok eatery that has earned a number-one ranking on the Asia's 50 Best Restaurants three years running. The first of three new restaurants that chef and restaurant entrepreneur Gaggan Anand plans for the same alley, **Gaa** is helmed by 29-year-old Mumbai native **Garima Arora**.

A graduate of Le Cordon Bleu Paris, Arora worked at Le Quartier du Pain, one of the French capital's

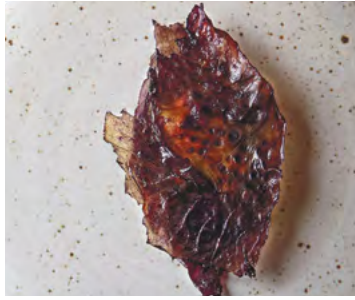
top boulangeries, before accepting an internship at prestigious Noma in Copenhagen. While she was at Noma, Anand contacted her through mutual friends to discuss cooperating on a restaurant in Mumbai. Two months later, she moved to Bangkok to train at Gaggan. When the Mumbai enterprise didn't happen, Anand suggested that Arora start her own place in a former massage parlour opposite Gaggan.

The simply decorated, multi-story structure boasts steel-framed windows and glass doors, with separate dining areas on three levels, along with a chef's table near the kitchen, and a bar

lounge which offers a short a la carte menu. Although celebrity chef Gaggan Anand owns a minority share in Gaa, it would be a mistake to think of the latter as a spinoff.

"He was thinking I might do a curry house here," Arora says. "But when I decided to go my own way, Gaggan gave me free rein."

Resisting existing genre names for Gaa, Arora refers to her cuisine as modern eclectic. "I do what I do with no particular cuisine in mind," says the youthful chef. "I'm inspired by my experiences in five different countries over the last 10 years. The main thing



is I work almost exclusively with local ingredients.”

Gaa’s team of 11 chefs make all cheeses, butter, soy sauce, and fish sauce used in the kitchen. Even plates, cutlery, and pots are locally sourced, according to Arora.

Two tasting menus are offered, one with 12 courses and a shorter one with eight. Dishes are assigned simple names that state the basic ingredients, making it easy to follow. Each dish is brought to the table by a different server or chef who explains a bit about the ingredients and cooking methods.

We start with Crispy Cabbage, Roasted Peppers, Bitter Gourd, a dish in which cabbage leaves are air-dried and flattened into translucent bright green discs which form a sandwich for the savoury pepper and gourd filling. Simple, easy to eat, and very easy to appreciate, it’s an immediate hit at our table. This is followed by Chicken Liver, Longan Berry, consisting of slivers of frozen chicken liver atop a berry sorbet, one of the most unique and innovative of the starters.

Next up, the simply titled Corn turns out to be stalks of incredibly tasty young corn grilled in the husks and brushed with salt and chili. It’s served with a thick corn emulsion, which intensifies the flavours and sets it apart from otherwise similar Mexican-style

grilled corn. Another North American native, the canistel—or eggfruit—plays a role in Crayfish, Egg Fruit, Pomelo, a delicious rectangle supporting perfectly cooked crayfish morsels topped with citrusy pomelo.

Indian inspiration is apparent in Banana Flower Dumpling, Tomato Fennel, Split Peas, a beautiful deconstruction of Indian dal in which a savoury ball of goodness floats in a spicy, tomato-ey broth. Thailand comes to the fore in Fish Khanom La, inspired by a Southern Thai sweet. Here caramelized milk skin, fashioned into a crunchy taco-like shell, holds chunks of fresh, succulent grouper.

Crab, Cauliflower, Whey with Potato Mochi looks and tastes exactly like it sounds. Grilled cauliflower buds nestle alongside fresh-picked crabmeat atop a foamy layer of potato and whey in a delicious Indian-Japanese fusion. Pork Ribs, Pickles, Bread features a single thick pork rib brined in split-pea miso and grilled to perfection, and then layered with a topping of pomegranate, shallots, and onions. A nod to India again arrives in the form of Butter and Pav, a saucer of whipped home-churned butter to be folded into fresh-baked pav, the Mumbai-native soft roll.

The menu turns to its sweet side at this point, with two consecutive dessert offerings. The first offers a

choice of three different ice cream cones made entirely from scratch: Jaggery and Coriander Seeds with Toasted Whole Wheat Cone; Turmeric and Toasted Safflower with Black Sesame Cone; and Beeswax and Wild Honey with Bee Pollen Cone. We enjoy them all, but our favourite is the jaggery (palm sugar) cone.

We’re further indulged by Four Elements of Chocolate, a complex plating that includes a *bai cha-phlu* (betel leaf) dipped in dark chocolate on one side and dusted with fennel powder on the other, flanked by three chocolate truffles of differing composition. It’s so Instagram-ready, we hesitate before digging in, but once the spoons are out, it doesn’t last long.

Along with wise wine pairings for each tasting menu, Gaa offers a juice-pairing consisting of novel fruit concoctions made on the premises, a nice option for non-drinkers. Standouts include Strawberry Kambucha, Pumpkin Mango Kaffir Lime, and especially Guava Mint Chili.

Asked about the future, Arora says, “I want to travel around Thailand more, scouting new ingredients. There is so much here to be discovered, and that’s where I’ll find new dishes, through those discoveries.”

INTERVIEW BY JOE CUMMINGS/CPA MEDIA

www.gaabkk.com

Guangzhou Goodness

For this month's column I'm riding the BTS skytrain to an unfamiliar stop in search of some local and secret eateries. As always, I'm seeking out Bangkok's best gastronomic gems. As the train speeds above the clogged city streets, the concrete jungle of Bangkok expands towards the horizon—its complex angular shapes revealing themselves like the perspective of an unfinished painting.

At Bang Chak BTS Station a vast building site immediately catches my attention. The old market I had enjoyed on earlier visits has vanished, replaced by a dusty building site soon become yet another towering condominium. I couldn't help but reflect wistfully on the traditional charm and colour of the former fresh market, and on the web of economic and social relationships it supported—as well as all the delicious dishes I had tasted there.

My ultimate destination, however, is a Guangzhou-style restaurant on the other side of the road, on the corner of Soi Sukhumvit 60/2 (not that I really need the address, as the roast duck hanging inside the window display looked so appealing I couldn't miss it).

First opened 30 years ago, the appropriately named **Guangzhou**

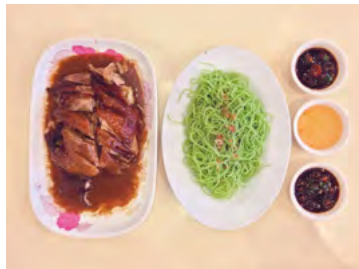


Restaurant has undergone a modern makeover, though the atmosphere created by rows of ducks, eager customers, and busy staff are all clear signals that if the design has been updated, the restaurant's essential appeal remain unchanged.

Focusing now on the menu, I order up a storm of dishes as if in trance: roast duck with green jade noodles (*mee yhok*), *Guangzhou Sukiyaki*, *Pad Hainan* and shrimp springrolls (*Poh Pia Koong*).

The first roast duck dish signals its imminent arrival with its fragrance. The five spices in the duck sauce are perfectly balanced, and the meat divinely tender. I dab my *mee yhok* noodles in the sauce while using my chopsticks to pick out pickled gingers, further elevating this already delicious combination.

The Guangzhou sukiyaki arrives right after the roast duck. The small bowl is filled with goodness. The perfumed soup contains coriander and fragrant spring onion, with a hint of chili. The wonderful broth is crammed full of goodies—tender pork, crispy jellyfish, shrimp, and pork liver. The sweetness of the soup is balanced nicely with the suki sauce, and is so



unlike the famous modern sukiyaki shops around Bangkok that the taste of its sauce overpowers the flavour of its broth. Exquisite!

Next up is *Pad Hainan* (or “pad hainan”, the word Thais use for the Hainan region in China). This dish turns out to be quite a star. It surprises me with its unassuming look and screamingly delicious taste! The mix of *al-dente* vegetables and glass noodles is so soft and tender. And there's an added bonus in the form of wdried shrimps that I come across from time to time.

The last order, *Poh Pia Koong*, is supposed to be an appetizer but I decide to give this a try along with the main course, following the lead of some of the tables around me. It's served flat, unlike most springrolls which are cylindrical. The *poh pia* is filled with soft shrimp meat, wrapped with thin crispy blankets of flour. It's best enjoyed by dipping it in an aromatic plum sauce that is a delicate balance of sweet and sour. ■

Address: Guangzhou Restaurant is at the corner of Sukhumvit Soi 60/2, and is open daily from 10am to 10pm. It's really reasonably priced for the quality and quantity.

eat like
Nym



Our roving roadside gourmand Nym knows her local grub inside-out and thrives on the stories behind the dishes. Each month, she takes an offbeat tour in search of the city's next delectable morsel.



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La Scala at The Sukhothai Bangkok



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– Chef Jim Ophorst,
PRU at Trisara Phuket

Thailand will be cheering you on in the S.Pellegrino Young Chef Southeast Asia Regional Finals on 23rd October in Singapore.

For more info, visit sanpellegrino.com.

#SPYoungChef

CHINESE



Bai Yun

Bai Yun

The Chinese outlet with the best view in town and one of the highest representatives of Pearl Delta cuisine on the planet, offers high-quality ingredients you can really savour. 59F, Banyan Tree Bangkok 21/100 South Sathorn Rd. Tel: 02 679 1200 Open daily: 11:30am-2:30pm,

Shang Palace

The interior is elegant, but more importantly, the food is a glowing reminder of how Chinese food should be executed and presented. The dim sum

is the obvious place to start, and the signature dishes are serious standouts. 3F, Shangri-La Hotel 89 Soi Wat Suan Plu, New Road Tel: 02 236 7777 Open daily: 6pm-10:30pm, Mon-Sat, 11:30am-2:30pm, Sun, 11am-3pm www.shangri-la.com

FRENCH

Aldo's Bistro

This superb French restaurant, founded by chef Hervé Frerard, offers a refined and welcoming dining atmosphere, and a tantalizing menu to match (with dishes seldom found elsewhere in Bangkok). 7/F, Ascott Sathorn 187 South Sathorn Rd. Tel: 02 676 6982 Open daily: 11:30am-11pm www.aldosbistro.com

Alex Brasserie

Chef Arnaud Drouvillé is taking that chance with Alex Brasserie, a new restaurant that opened back in April on Bangkok's busy Sukhumvit Soi 11

servicing a wide range of food including Mediterranean menu, and plenty of Thai options. 18, Sukhumvit Soi 11 Tel: 02 057 3079 Open daily: 6am-2am www.alexbrasserie.com



Chez Pape

Chez Pape

The menu brims with traditional French fare, an indulgent roll call of sauces and great bread, seafood, and meat. Those in the mood for a proper French feast won't be disappointed. 2/7, Soi Sukhumvit 11 Tel: 02 255 2492 Open daily: 11:30am-2pm, 5pm-11pm www.chezpape.com



Tables Grill

New menu by Chef Kevin Kristensen awaits you with the finest selection of seafood, grilled meats and side dishes to enjoy. Tables Grill is not to be missed.

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GRILL

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Loulou Forks & Glasses

Trendy Soi Suan Phlu recently welcomed a friendly newcomer into the bosom of its ever-expanding fine dining scene. This place offers superb savoury selections such as cold cuts and cheeses, the Quinoa and pomelo salad, and affordably good wines.

459/61, Suan Phlu Soi 8

Open daily: 5pm-1am

Tel: 083 041 4351

www.louloubangkok.com

INTERNATIONAL

Dine in the Dark

The title says it all. Guests experience an exercise in coping by entering a world of total darkness—which both accentuates the flavours of the delicious food, but also gives diners a taste of what it's like for their visually-impaired servers, who deal with blindness as an everyday fact of life.

GF, Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit
250 Sukhumvit Rd.

Tel: 02 649-8358

Open: Mon-Sat, 6:30pm-9:30pm

www.dineinthedarkbangkok.com



Harvest

Harvest

Rustic to the core, this wood-decorated venue relies heavily on Mediterranean influences and high-quality seafood.

24, Sukhumvit Soi 31

Tel: 02 262 0762, 097 235 8286

Open daily: 5:30pm-midnight

www.facebook.com/HARVESTrestaurantBKK

Park Society

Excite both your taste buds and eyes with a cutting-edge, elegant dinner overlooking Lumpini Park and the amazing skyline of Bangkok. Perfect for a romantic evening or a friendly get-together.

50 Sofitel Bangkok

2 North Sathorn Rd.

Tel: 02 624 0000

Open daily: Kitchen, 6pm-10:30pm,

www.so-sofitel-bangkok.com

Red Oven

Styled as a World Food Market, this 7th-floor all-day dining venue puts a contemporary twist on buffet spreads. On weekends, the restaurant offers an irresistible scrumptious, free-flow wine brunch buffet.

7F, 50 Sofitel Bangkok, 2 North Sathorn Rd.

Tel: 02 624 0000

Open daily: 6:30pm-10:30pm, Sat-Sun Wine Brunch, noon-3pm

www.so-sofitel-bangkok.com

Salt

A hipster's dream, this gastro bar with a post-modern finish offers everything from fresh sashimi platters to generously-dressed, thin-crust pizzas cooked over a proper wood fire.

Phahonyothin 7 (Corner Soi Ari 4)

Tel: 02 619 6886,

Open: 6pm-midnight

www.saltbangkok.com



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restaurant Italian Sommelier
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slow food = sweet life

Sukhumvit Soi 27, Khlong Toei Nuea, Watthana, Bangkok
T. 02 258 4386 | F. 02259 9175

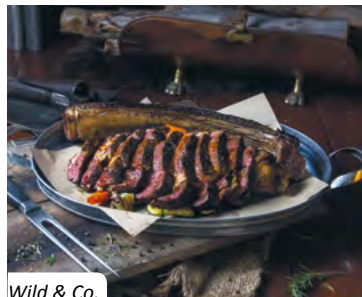
www.enotecabangkok.com



Vertigo Too Bar & Restaurant

Neither an open-air rooftop bar, nor the kind of jazz den found in smoky brickwalled basements, the al-fresco Vertigo Too deftly toes the line between the two milieus.

Banyan Tree Bangkok
21/100 South Sathorn Rd.
Tel: 02 679 1200
Open daily: 5pm-1am
www.banyantree.com



Wild & Co.

Wild & Co.

Arguably the most unique restaurant to open so far in 2017, takes the Thai taste for “forest food” and fuses it with the

Western yen for grilled meats. In this case the meat happens to be wild or farmed game, for the most part.

33/1 Soi Farm Wattana, Phra Khanong
Open daily: 5:30pm-1am
Tel: 061 515 6989
www.wildnco.com

ITALIAN

Don Giovanni

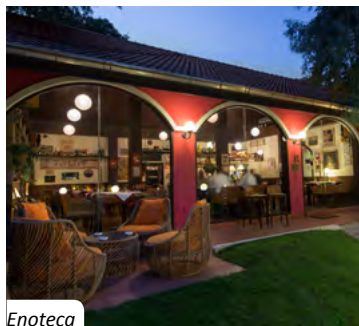
This trattoria-inspired restaurant offers a menu full of home-style recipes. Along with neoclassical décor, the culinary approach lends this restaurant a decorous air befitting its operatic name. Centara Grand at Central Plaza Ladprao, Bangkok, 1695 Phaholyothin Rd.

Tel: 02 541 1234
Open: Mon-Sat 11:30am-2:30pm, 8pm-10:30pm
www.centarahotelsresorts.com

Galleria Milano

An Italian restaurant in the hands of Italians, where the pride is tasted in every bite, serves as the inspiration for a restaurant aiming to conquer the city.

1F, Mille Malle, Sukhumvit Soi 20
Tel: 02 663 4988
Open daily: 3pm-11pm
www.millemalle.com



Enoteca

Enoteca Italiana Bangkok

Rustic from the barn-like roof to the homemade breads, this place is traditional Italian to the bone. There’s a long list of vino to enjoy, and impeccable a la carte and degustation menus to explore. As authentic as it is delicious.

39, Sukhumvit Soi 27
Tel: 02 258 4386
Open daily: 6pm-midnight
www.enotecabangkok.com



BLUE ELEPHANT
Cooking School & Restaurant



Comments / ข้อเสนอแนะ: ฉันจึงประทับใจกับอาหารที่อร่อยและสไตล์ที่แตกต่างจากที่อื่นที่เคยทานมาในกรุงเทพฯ
 ปรุงรสดี ใจดี อร่อยและบรรยากาศดีมาก พนักงานบริการดีมาก มีที่นั่งชานชาลาภายใน 2 ชั้น
 ห้องครัว แล่: นทท. นักรักอาหาร: 😊 Jarinya Thanasoonthonkul, Bangkok THAILAND 18/01/17

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 cooking.school@blueelephant.com

PHUKET: 96 Krabi Road. Talad Neua,
 Muang District Tel: +66(076)-354-355-7
 phuket@blueelephant.com

www.blueelephant.com

La Bottega di Luca

This elegant Italian eatery, overseen by the ever charming Luca Appino, serves over 15 different kinds of pasta and an array of Italian specialties you won't find on many other menus.

2F, Terrace 49 Building, Sukhumvit Soi 49
Tel: 02 204 1731

Open: Tue-Sun, 11am-3pm, 5pm-11pm,
Mon, 5pm-11pm

www.labottega.name/restaurant

JAPANESE



Ten-Sui

Ten-Sui

High-end Japanese restaurants abound in Bangkok, but it's hard to imagine a more authentic experience than you'll find at this elegant eatery.

33, Sukhumvit Soi 16

Tel: 088 540 1001

Open daily: 11:30am-2pm, 5:30pm-10pm

www.tensui.co

Utage

This five star hotel's F&B outlet offers a one-of-a-kind dining experience with their 'Atarachi' brunch (meaning new or fresh). It highlights all the best Japanese delicacies you could possibly desire, such as starters, sushi, sashimi, noodles, teppanyaki, sukiyaki, tempura, and many more.

Plaza Athénée Bangkok

Open daily: 11:30am-2:30pm, 6pm-10:30pm

Tel: 02 650 8800

www.plazaatheneebangkok.com

MEXICAN

El Diablo's Burritos

The enormous burritos are the stars of the show, but they make their own tortillas on the premises, too. The tacos are particularly impressive, and the salsa and toppings are light, refreshing, with just enough spice.

330, Sukhumvit Soi 22

Tel: 02 259 4140

Open: Mon-Fri, 4pm-11pm, Sat-Sun,
11:30am-11pm

Facebook: El Diablo's

La Monita Taqueria

If you're looking for classic, affordable, Mexican fare that still packs some serious fireworks, then check out any of La Monita's three downtown locales. Load up on guacamole, burritos, fajitas, quesadillas, and soft corn tacos, all washed down with some wonderfully potent margaritas.

Mahatun Plaza, Tel: 02 650 9581

GF, Siam Paragon, Tel: 02 650 9581

7F, EmQuartier, Tel: 02 003 6238

www.lamonita.com

SEAFOOD

Crab and Claw

Ensclosed on an upper curve of the EmQuartier mall Helix building, this popular restaurant features "New England-style" lobster, clams, crabs, and plenty more.

7F, Helix Bldg, EmQuartier

Tel: 096 197 5769

Open daily: 10am-10pm

www.facebook.com/crabandclaw



Raw Bar

Raw Bar

Oysters, tartare, carpaccio, ceviche: it's all raw here, and it's all very good. A nice low-key spot to shuck some shellfish and hang out with friends.

440/9, Sukhumvit 55

Tel: 02 713 8335

Open daily: 5:30pm-midnight

www.facebook.com/TheRawBarBKK

THAI

Baan Rub Rong

One of the few restaurants in the area that we can confidently say is worth the effort to track down. A plainly attired,

Crêpes & Co.

1ST FLOOR, 9:53
COMMUNITY MALL,
THONGLOR SOI 9

(+66) 02 726 93 98



MON - FRI:
9AM TO 11PM

SAT - SUN:
8AM TO 11PM



#CREPESNCO

CREPESNCO.COM

affordable bastion of very good Thai food, made the old-fashioned way. 8 Soi Mooban Seri Villa (Srinakarin Soi 55)
Tel: 02 185 6029
Open: 10am-10pm
www.baanrubrong.com

Blue Elephant

A wildly successful brand since it was first established in 1980, this restaurant (and cooking school) sits in a gorgeous historic mansion. On the menu, Chef Nooror takes a riff on the Thai food of tomorrow, but also shares her heritage with every dish. 233 South Sathorn Rd.
Tel: 02 673 9353
Open daily: 11:30am-2:30pm, 6:30pm-10:30pm
www.blueelephant.com



80/20

80/20

Sharing a massive former warehouse with the always-full Old town Hostel, this is the place where the best Thai local products are combined with the brightest passion for hospitality.

1052-1054, Charoen Krung 26
Tel: 087 593 1936
Open: Wed-Mon, 5pm-11:45pm
www.facebook.com/8020bkk

Suan Bua

Located in the busy North end of Bangkok, this Thai restaurant offers a comfortable and relaxing atmosphere with a focus on natural and organic ingredients. It encompasses traditional dishes from all over Thailand. LLF, Centara Grand, Ladprao 1695 Phahonyothin Rd.
Tel: 02 541 1234 ext. 4068
Open daily: 11:30am-2:30pm; 6pm-10:30pm
www.centarahotelsresorts.com

CAFÉ

D'Ark

The stylish interior and furnishings embrace a coffee-coloured palette, offset by abstract artwork and tasteful lighting. The coffee machines are manned by world champion baristas and roasters, and the kitchen whips up some amazing Mediterranean-inspired fare (3 locations). EmQuartier, Tel: 02 003 6013 Piman 49, Tel: 02 662 7900 Central Festival EastVille www.darkoffee.com

Kiosk Café

Located in The Barkyard Bangkok Complex, this dog-friendly boite is a fetching choice for an exceptional meal, a friendly cake-and-chat, or a delicious hot coffee.

65, Sukhumvit Soi 26
Tel: 02 259 4089
Open: Tue-Thu, 10:30am-9pm, Fri-Sun, 10:30am-11pm
www.kiosk-cafe.com



Not Just Another Cup

Not Just Another Cup

This cozy cafe, suitable for early birds, serves a variety of brunch menus, while the drink menu covers everything from coffee to cold-pressed juices and infused water. 75/1, Sathorn Soi 10
Tel: 02 635 3464
Open daily: 7am-7pm
facebook.com/notjustanothercup

VEGETARIAN

Broccoli Revolution

This veg-friendly restaurant features a menu full of bright veggie bites that could pull in even the most stubborn carnivore. Now with two locations. 899 Sukhumvit Rd (at Soi 49)
Tel: 02 662 5001
6F, Central Embassy, Tel: 02 160 5788
Facebook: Broccoli Revolution

Carabinero Prawn Risotto



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Celebrating five years of crazy beats at Levels

NIGHTLIFE

start the insanity

On Wednesday July 12th **LEVELS** nightclub, on Sukhumvit Soi 11, celebrates their 5th Anniversary with a huge free party. It's great to see that this popular dance spot—housed on the 6th Floor of the **ALOFT HOTEL**—is still going strong, but the same cannot be said for other nightlife venues in town. **LIVE RCA** shut their doors at the end of June, which is sad news as the club often hosted live performance nights featuring cool indie bands and cutting edge DJ talents. Meanwhile, the long-running **INSANITY** nightclub has left it's home on Sukhumvit Soi 12, and has opened afresh on Sukhumvit Soi 11 (a soft opening period will run until mid-July, after which a spectacular Grand Opening celebration is planned).

www.levelsclub.com

refined character

The **ANANTARA SIAM BANGKOK** recently opened a cozy little smokers lounge called **CHARACTER WHISKY & CIGAR BAR**, located in the same courtyard as Aqua. The interior is modelled after the famed Eastern Oriental Express rail cars, with plenty of hardwood and leather, while the walk-in cigar room is well stocked with ready-to-smoke cigars—almost exclusively non-Cuban labels, leaning more heavily towards the Nicaraguan, Honduran, and Dominican labels. To help with your selection the accompanying cigar menu comes with notes on each cigar's origin, format, strength, wrapper, filler, tasting notes, etc. Meanwhile, the bar offers a long list of exceptional single malts, or you can order mixed drinks, beers and/or snacks from Aqua. Open daily, from 6pm till midnight.

siam-bangkok.anantara.com

an offer you can't refuse

Just opened this past April, **WARP** is a new addition to the fine wine and spirit scene in Thong Lor. The shop, located at **MARKET PLACE** (Thong Lor Soi 4) is under the umbrella of the **GODFATHER** chain, one of the country's leading wine and spirits boutiques. This new concept venue—a casual style bottle shop—invites guests to buy a few bottles to take home, or just sit, sip, and swirl in the shop's (limited) seating area. The extensive and impressive product range available includes wine, beer, whisky, spirits, and even cigars, and the team is always on hand to steer you towards the perfect selection. Open daily from 10am till 10pm.

www.facebook.com/warpthonglor

enter the dragon

While it's a bit off the beaten track for some, the recently opened **SMOKING DRAGON**, in Bangkok's Eastern **UDOM SUK** district (Udom Suk Soi 58), is already proving that a mix of good food, great craft beer, and live music never goes out of style. The owners explain that they're on a bit of a mission, trying to create "a proper community place that is equally Thai and Western and encourages interaction through mutual interests". As such they're planning on doing quite a few things here—including live gigs, magic shows, dance lessons, open mike nights, etc. Meanwhile, the menu boasts smoked meats (from the woodfire BBQ pit), wood-fired pizzas, Thai dishes, Mexican treats, and more.

www.facebook.com/smokingdragonbkk

Riedel Wine Bar & Cellar

World-class wine bar that isn't just all about wine



Walk past the retail—the long stemware, the mouth-blown glass, the decanters in impossible shapes, including the serpentine Mamba and Boa—and come face to face with the showpiece at the **Riedel Wine Bar & Cellar**: the ‘Wine Emotion’. This example of oenological intrigue contains 40 fine wines, evoking not so unfounded comparisons to a display of macarons and cakes at a Hong Kong patisserie. Beyond, the wine finally flows, and the whole place starts to feel like a Maserati showroom on steroids, where you can somehow test-drive the wheels without ever leaving the building.

You would be hard-pressed to find another bar that puts so much emphasis on the entire wine-drinking experience than this one. The shelves display a range of world-class products from Austrian glassmaker **Riedel** (the bar is *licensed* by Riedel, after all), the staff includes the soon-to-be Level 2 sommelier **Dirakerit ‘DK’ Kotchawong**, and there’s that one-of-a-kind Wine Emotion mentioned above—a machine that dispenses but prevents wines from oxidizing, so you

can sample multiple labels without having to buy the bottles.

However, the bar has recently been made over and, believe it or not, Riedel is no longer just about the wine. Executive Chef **Patrick Martens**, formerly of Zuma (in London, Hong Kong, and Bangkok) and the Sapparot Group, was brought into the fold to revamp the food menu. He’s now offering what he calls “refined, rustic European cuisine”. Interpret that to mean lots of touches from across the wine-making regions of Europe. For example: Spanish-style Prawns Cooked in Olive Oil (B590) with chili and garlic; Smoked Burrata Cheese (B350) with basil, confit tomatoes, and aged balsamic; and 200 grams of Ibérico Pork Pluma (B890), a fatty, succulent cut of pig that comes from the neck/shoulder region—a cut that reportedly is only found in Spain.

The food is a little more fine-tuned, the menu makes more sense, and the tapas-style method of eating is more appropriate for the social gatherings Riedel is hoping to invoke as Gaysorn Plaza prepares to open its adjacent tower. The foot traffic has already increased; when the office

annex is complete, it’s easy to see Riedel becoming a popular spot for boozy business lunches or after-work drinks—especially now that there’s a proper list of cocktails to enjoy.

Well-travelled barman and consultant **Francesco Moretti**, of Vogue Lounge fame, has added some exciting options for the non-wine-inclined. His takes on the Negroni—the Parmanita (B320), with lemon and pomelo zest as well as grapefruit juice, and the Espresso (B320) featuring coffee-infused Campari—will wow those who prefer bitter notes, while Memory (B320), a fruity and aromatic gin fizz with jasmine tea-infused gin, kaffir lime, and lemon zest in the egg white, is an absolute crowd-pleaser. And with buy-one-get-one deals from 5pm until 9pm (Wed-Sat), you might find yourself going back just to try all these new cocktails. **BY CRAIG SAUERS** (*all prices listed are net*)

Riedel Wine Bar & Cellar

2F, Gaysorn Plaza, 999 Ploenchit Rd.

Tel: 02 656 1133

Open daily 11am-midnight

www.riedelwinebarbkk.com



Mojjo Lounge Bar

Swanky skybar definitely has its mojo workin'

Stepping out of the elevator into **Mojjo Lounge Bar**, the elegantly appointed, Latin-flavoured cocktail joint on the 32nd floor of Phrom Phong's **Compass Skyview Hotel**, is a novelty even for seasoned veterans of Bangkok's bar scene. Here, the familiar gloss and sparkle found in many of the city's upscale skybars, is eschewed in favour of a subtle, more classic décor.

Anchored by reassuring leather, dark wood, and a marble bar, Mojjo expresses itself with liberal splashes of colour—striking green, blue, and red walls are finished with gold trim. Artfully placed mirrors provide a salubrious twinkle and inviting charm more likely to be found in the drawing room of a bohemian European aristocrat than in a 5-star hotel.

My first drink is the Guatemalan Old Fashioned (B440), where Head Mixologist **Pil Lee** has replaced the traditional whisky element of the 200-year-old classic with the rather tasty and slightly-sweet premium rum, Ron Zacapa 23. It's an inspired swap and even diehard whisky fans will be seduced by the potent meeting of

muddled lime, sugar, and angostura bitters. But what makes the drink really sing is the caramelized orange garnish with rose syrup, which boosts the citrus notes of the drink's already heady aroma. My guest went for the refreshing Duchess of Bangkok (B320). Tanqueray gin, Aperol, fresh raspberries, and cucumber, all topped with egg white foam, creates a drink that plays like a lighter, fruitier Negroni with similar moreish qualities to the classic gin/Campari combo.

Next, I plumped for the Mojjo Margarita (B380). This mix of Don Julio Reposado, triple sec, lime and Tabasco sets itself apart with a flavoured rim of paprika, cinnamon, and salt, ramping up the flavoursome cocktail with a warm spicy punch. My guest opted for the Bandito (B390), another fruity number containing Ron Zacapa 23, lime, sour cherry syrup, cherry juice, bitters, topped with egg-white foam and a sour cherry garnish—and it proved to be her favourite drink of the night. Mixologist Pil noted that it's also her own signature tippie and a clever nod toward a whisky sour.

My guest sat out the final round of drinks, choosing instead to concentrate on the exquisite Black and Blue Tuna (B295), Spiced Calamari (B225), and delightfully cheesy Shrimp Quesadilla (B295), all ideal accompaniments for late evening drinks and essential to maintaining a fair and balanced POV at this stage in the proceedings.

I capped the evening with The Sweet Smoke (B380), a masterful combination of Ardbeg 10 year single malt, lime juice, caramel and blueberry syrups, citrus bitters, and a puff of cigar smoke to enhance the peaty notes of the scotch. It's the perfect introduction to the sophisticated flavours of Islay whisky, and a suitably grand way to finish an evening at Mojjo. **BY ALASTAIR NEWPORT**

Mojjo Lounge Bar

32F, Compass SkyView Hotel
12, Sukhumvit Soi 24
Open daily: 5pm-2am
Tel: 02 011 1111
www.facebook.com/mojjouloungebar

BAR



3 Bears Craft Brewery

3 Bears Craft Brewery

This craft beer bar is a collaborative project by an architect, a sound engineer, and a renowned local chef. Alongside the great locally made suds, diners can order brewpub favourites like fried chicken wings and gourmet snacks such as piquant tempura-fried calamari. 1154, Sukhumvit Soi 22
Open: Mon-Fri, 4pm-midnight
Sat-Sun 11am-midnight
Tel: 095 456 8298
facebook.com/3bearsclub

About Eatery

The bottom line is this: if you are a wine lover, you'll love this place. It's a warm and welcoming bar and restaurant that specializes in Mediterranean fare and artisan wines made using natural, biodynamic, and organic methods. GF, Ocean Tower II, Sukhumvit 21, Soi 3
Tel: 081 920 0740
Open: Mon-Fri, 11:30am-2pm, Mon-Sat, 5pm-1am
www.abouteatery.com

Backstage Bar

Acclaimed as Bangkok's best new cocktail bar, this drink spot offers a variety of cocktail menus created by talented bartenders. While a soundtrack featuring big band covers of pop songs plays on, the fun-loving staff jokes around with everyone, even the first-timers, but they also make sure all customers get the right drink for their tastes. Playhaus Thong Lor, 205/22-23, Sukhumvit Soi 55
Tel: 02 712 5747
Open daily: 6pm-1am
facebook.com/backstagecocktailbarbkk

Chez Jay Tapas Bar

Those who miss the beloved Bellino Wine Room take note, the same amazing selection of wines, cocktails, plus a menu of easy to share tapas, is available at this stylish outdoor space where owner Jay Boccia has set up shop. The garden setting, accented with vintage furniture and featuring a 200-year-old wooden bar, attracts the local film industry and advertising crowd both at lunch and after work. 49 Terrace, Sukhumvit Soi 49
Tel: 02 010 1852
Open: Mon-Sat, noon-2:30pm, 6pm-late
www.facebook.com/49terrace

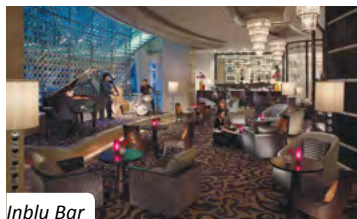
Duke

Although it's in a mall, this high-end whisky and cigar lounge—full to bursting with paintings and sculptures—feels more like a SoHo warehouse loft space owned by an eccentric millionaire.

1F, Gaysorn Village, 999 Phloen Chit Rd.
Tel: 094 647 8888
Open daily: 11am-midnight
facebook.com/pg/duke.gaysorn

Gypsy Spells Bar

A themed bar, focusing on fortune telling and Thai legends, offers a unique cocktail menu, as well as live gypsy jazz music on Friday nights and blues on Saturdays. 2, Sukhumvit Soi 29
Tel: 02 662 3060
Open daily: 5:30pm to midnight
www.mahanaga.com



Inblu Bar

Inblu Bar

Located on the hotel's lobby level, this stylish drink spot offers an extensive selection of beers, whiskies, cocktails, and wines, plus tasty nibbles and great live music seven days a week. Pullman Bangkok Grande Sukhumvit 30, Sukhumvit Soi 21
Tel: 02 204 4000
Open daily: 5pm-1am
www.pullmanbangkokgrandesukhumvit.com

Rabbit Hole

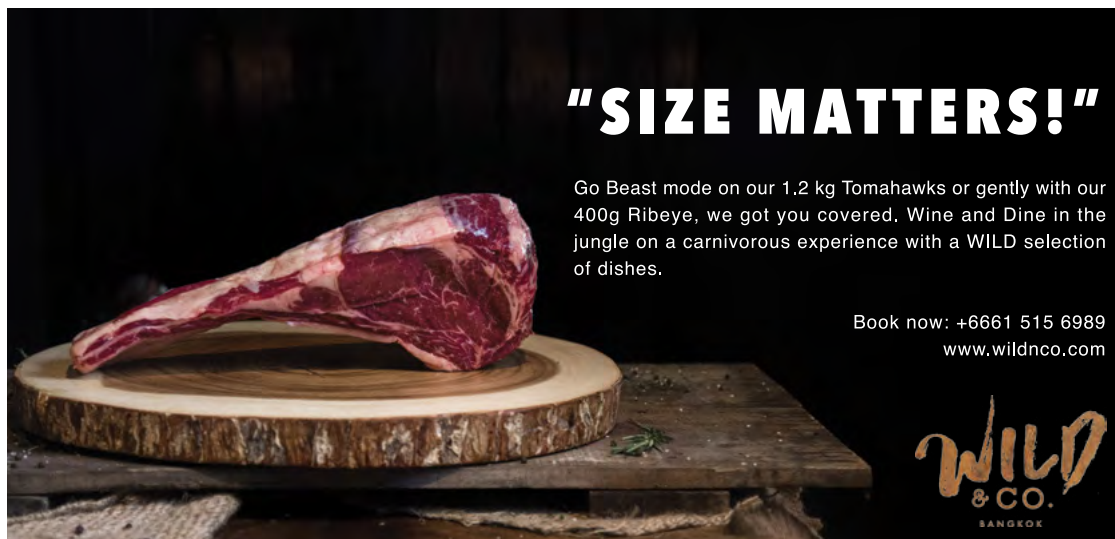
A proper cocktail bar, run by industry insiders, where the drinks come first and

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WILD
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BANGKOK



the cool interior just tops it off. What's more, the personable bartenders really know their spirits.

125, Sukhumvit Soi 55

Tel: 081 822 3392

Open daily: 7pm-2am

www.facebook.com/rabbitholebkk

Touché Hombre

This hugely popular Mexican bar and restaurant offers curious customers a chance to sample the finest mezcal and top-end tequilas, as well as superb Mexican-inspired dishes.

2F, 72 Courtyard, Sukhumvit Soi 55

Tel: 02 392 7760

Open daily: 6pm-1am (Fri-Sat till 2am)

www.touchehombre.com

ROOFTOP SKY BAR

amBar

Located on the 8th floor rooftop of the Four Points by Sheraton Bangkok, this pool bar offers an inviting and relaxed lounge atmosphere.

Four Points by Sheraton Bangkok

4, Sukhumvit Soi 15

Tel: 02 309 3288

Open daily: 4pm-midnight

www.ambarbangkok.com

Bangkok Heightz

This chic and stylish semi-alfresco lounge offers great views, plus an upscale take on street food and a drinks menu full of cocktails inspired by Thai culture.

39F, The Continent Hotel

413 Sukhumvit Rd.

Open daily: 6pm-1am

Tel: 02 867 7000

www.facebook.com/bangkokheightz



Cielo Sky Bar

Cielo Sky Bar

A rooftop bar, with a business-casual ambiance and unbeatable views of Bangkok, serving a wide-ranging and impressive list of cocktails at fair prices.

46F, Sky Walk Condominium

Sukhumvit Soi 69

Tel: 02 348 9100

Open daily: 5pm-1am

www.cieloskybar.com

Char

Located on the 26th floor of the Hotel Indigo, visitors here can enjoy a beautiful view of Bangkok's lively downtown core. The breezes are gentle, the chairs and couches are comfortable, and the cocktails are delicious.

26F, Hotel Indigo Bangkok

81 Wireless Rd.

Tel: 02 207 4999

Open daily: 6pm-11:30pm

www.hotelindigo.com/bangkok

Sky On 20

At this new, and very stylish rooftop venue, the food and drink prices don't rise higher as the floors ascend. Instead, they stay within the realm of the reasonable, making it a great spot to watch the sun go down over downtown Bangkok.

Novotel Bangkok Sukhumvit 20

26F, 19/9, Sukhumvit Soi 20

Open: Mon-Sat, 5pm-2am, Sun, 4pm-2am

Tel: 02 009 4999

www.facebook.com/skyon20bangkok

CLUB

8 on Eleven

A gastro bar with a modern industrial twist and a 2nd floor dance area, this newest addition to the Sukhumvit Soi 11 nightlife scene offers a wide selection of cocktails and classic European dishes with a modern twist.

14, Sukhumvit Soi 11

Tel: 093 421 1991

Open daily: 5pm-2am

www.facebook.com/8oneleven

Cé La Vi

Cé La Vi Bangkok (formerly Ku De Ta Bangkok) is one of Bangkok's top nightlife venues, a vast and glittering club with skyscraper ceilings and a long window that affords an exceptional view.

39-40F, Sathorn Square Complex

98 North Sathorn Rd.

Tel: 02 108 2000

Open daily: 12pm-late

www.celavi.com

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WWW.BUNKERBKK.COM

Mixx Discotheque

Classier than most of Bangkok's afterhour dance clubs, the space is a two-room affair—one plays R&B and Hip Hop, the other does Techno & House—decked out with chandeliers, paintings, and billowing sheets.
 President Tower Arcade
 973 Ploenchit Rd.
 Tel: 02 656 0382
 Open daily: 10pm-late
www.mixx-discotheque.com/bangkok

Onyx

An upscale nightclub borrowing from the futuristic interiors of other outlets in the milieu. It's laid out over two stories, with most of the action confined to the ground floor.
 RCA, Soi Soonvijai, Rama 9 Rd.
 Tel: 081 645 1166
 Open daily: 8pm-2am
www.onyxbangkok.com

Sing Sing Theater

Not entirely a club, nor exactly a bar in the truest sense, Sing Sing Theater transcends the limitations of our nightlife vocabulary.

Sukhumvit 45
 Tel: 097 285 6888
 Open: Tue-Sun, 8pm-2am
www.facebook.com/singsingtheater

PUBS



The Drunken Leprechaun

The Drunken Leprechaun

This heavily Irish-themed establishment offers delicious pub grub and drinks from the Emerald Isle and beyond. The nightly entertainment includes weekly pub quizzes, generous happy hours, and complimentary snacks.
 Four Points by Sheraton,
 4, Sukhumvit 15
 Tel: 02 309 3255

Open daily: 10am-1am
www.thedrunkenleprechaun.com

The Royal Oak

An old British enclave serving up delicious food in substantial portions, draft beer, and weekly pub quizzes. There's even a comedy club upstairs which is open every Friday.
 595/10, Sukhumvit Soi 33/1
 Tel: 02 662 1652
 Open daily: 10am-1am
www.royaloakthailand.com

LIVE MUSIC

Black Cabin

Half the space at Wild & Co. restaurant is given over to this brick-walled pub which eschews the mainstream Billboard 100, focusing instead on live bands. Before and after the bands play, resident DJ's spin vinyl, relying on personal collections rather than playlists.
 Wild & Co, 33/1 Soi Farm Wattana
 Tel: 061 515 6989
 Open daily: 5:30pm-1am
www.facebook.com/blackcabinbar



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Sugar'n Cream

Party

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The Liv & Stella Collection by Phya

LIFE + STYLE

handbags for any occasion

Designed specifically for modern working women, the all-new **LIV & STELLA COLLECTION** by **PHYA** are handbags that can be used for any occasion and with any outfit. The Liv bag features an elegant geometric structure, with sharp lines and angles and is made with chemical-free, vegetable-tanned genuine leather. The Stella bag features a trapezoid shape to allow more space, and can be used as a shoulder bag or carried in hand. For luxurious comfort and a smooth touch, the bag is made with high-quality quilted Nappa leather from Italy on the front and back, while the vegetable-tanned leather on the sides gives it a strong and chic look. The collection is available to buy online or at the Phya flagship store in **GAYSORN VILLAGE**.

www.phyaphilo.com

social skaters

Thailand's first and only roller derby league, **BANGKOK ROLLER DERBY**, is a small but growing group that caters to skaters of every size, shape, and fitness level. The full-contact point-scoring game—played by two teams on roller skates around an oval track—is fast, hard-hitting and a whole lot of fun! Skate sessions are held every Tuesday at **IMPERIAL WORLD** in Lad Phrao, and cost only B100 for equipment hire plus training fee. Beginners can join the 7pm session, while the regular session is from 8pm-10pm. Whether you're a seasoned skater or a nervous first-timer, come along and give it a go. No equipment or experience needed, but skaters must be over the age of 18.

www.facebook.com/BangkokRollerDerby

going green, literally

It's no secret that spirulina is incredibly good for you. One of the oldest life forms on earth, this non-toxic, blue-green algae is loaded with nutrients that have powerful effects on your body and brain. Harnessing the cleansing and beauty benefits of spirulina, **TAMMACHART SPA**, located on the 4th floor of **NOVOTEL BANGKOK**, has introduced the **SPIRULINA SUPER SCRUB**. Packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, the effects of spirulina include reducing wrinkles, and nourishing and moisturizing the skin, leaving it healthy and renewed. This treatment is available as a 60-minute facial or body scrub, and is priced at B1,500. The spa is open daily from 8am till midnight (last bookings at 11pm).

www.novotelbkk.com

library lifesavers

Filled with over 17,000 books, the **NEILSON HAYS LIBRARY** is a historic Bangkok landmark, originally commissioned by American expatriate Dr. Thomas Hayward Hays in memory of his beloved late wife Jennie Neilson Hays. Over its proud century, the library has been a bit too well-loved, and needs a major restoration. Having already raised the bulk of the funds via generous partners, the Neilson Hays Library Board are now running a crowdfunding campaign with **ASIOLA**—until mid-July—to raise the remaining funds for these essential repairs. By making a donation, the library will also give you something in return; get a one-year, 20-year, or lifetime membership, or even get your name on a shelf. Visit the website for more information.

www.neilsonhayslibrary.com

Natural Therapy Hair and Skin Products



Karmakamet first opened its doors in 2001 with a small shop selling first grade essential oils located in Bangkok's Chatuchak Weekend Market. Over the years the brand has grown substantially and now concentrates on developing their products to exceed customers' expectations.

WHITE GRAPEFRUIT PEEL ORIGINAL MOISTURIZING HAND LOTION

This special hand lotion helps nourish and protect your hands and nails from dehydration. It absorbs well, is non-greasy, and is perfect for all skin types. Made from fine ingredients such as Shea butter, organic Jojoba oil, jasmine flower extract, and lotus stamen extract—which are further enriched with hydrolyzed Keratin, Vitamin E, and Vitamin B3. The lotion helps reduce inflammation while keeping your hands soft, supple, and smooth. It is priced at B850 and available at Karmakamet stores citywide, including CentralWorld, Siam Center, Mega Bangna, and Chatuchak Weekend Market.
www.karmakamet.co.th

Gla is a Thai skincare brand that expertly combines Thai local herbs and advanced scientific technology, creating products that everyone can easily use in everyday life. They also make it a point to use environmentally-friendly packaging for their product lines.

GLA BAMBOO CHARCOAL AND TEA TREE OIL DETOXIFYING HAIR SHAMPOO

Keep your hair and scalp healthy with the feeling of purity with this unique all-natural shampoo, which is formulated for normal hair, oily hair, treatment. The bamboo charcoal helps remove impurities and absorbs excess oils without stripping the hair of its own natural oils. Combined with ingredients such as tea tree oil and eucalyptus leaf oil, it helps to clarify and revitalize the scalp. Olive fruit oil and Panthenol are also added to the mix to help moisturize and condition hair and add shine. This product is priced at B435 for a 400ml bottle and is available at Gla product counters at CentralWorld and EmQuartier.
www.facebook.com/glaskincarethailand



Botanique, established in 1995, is a manufacturer of natural home fragrance, using 100 percent natural raw material only. Initially, they produced only scented dried flower (potpourri), but have extended their line to include scented home fragrance products for interior design purposes. They also continue to develop many new skincare products to cover a wide range of uses—including sun protection, body lotion, hand cream, and many more.

BOTANIQUE SUN PROTECTION LOTION

If you want to have soft, bright, healthy, and radiant looking skin, start using this sun protection lotion which contains SPF 50+ and PA++ to protect your skin from UVA and UVB effects. The lotion is formulated from peony extract, AHA, Vitamin C, marine extract and Witch Hazel extract. It promises to help revive and rehydrate damaged skin. This product is priced at B690 for 30ml, and is available at Botanique shops citywide, including Siam Paragon, CentralWorld, Emquartier, and Terminal 21.

www.botaniqueshop.net





Arom:D Artisan Spa

If a spa concept was considered a work of art then **Arom:D Artisan Spa** would be an organically framed, handcrafted masterpiece—a shining example of artistic expertise, creative skill and mindful dexterity. Whilst a good massage can appear to transport you to another dimension, here is a spa that is already there, waiting for you to join; one that takes the wellbeing experience to an altogether deeper and infinitely more interesting level.

Newly opened in Phrakanong's **Naiipa Art Complex**, treatments for the body and mind are richly natural and innovatively unique, including semi-precious stone scrubs, colour therapy massages, and organic crystal facials. The spa has a strong artsy, design-led sense that, along with its green-tree setting, gives it an art-space vibe. This combines with a thoughtful sense of luxury that is all about not only *feeling* good but about *being* good (to yourself), and ultimately about *being* yourself.

From the natural wood tree-trunk tables to the earthy tones and soothing décor with old-style Thai touches, the interior exudes a beautifully presented pastoral feel. Here is a theatrical spa set-design that evokes the nostalgic sentiment of rural Thailand; of handicrafts and artisans,

of simplicity, and a gentler way of life. The moment you step inside the nature-inspired environment you experience a much-needed modern-day antidote for the spirit with echoes of the goodness of the past that resonate throughout your whole being—the spa equivalent to the warm-fuzzy feeling of a happy, carefree childhood when life seemed far less complex.

The 90-minute **Muay Thai Massage** (B2,500), reimagines the traditional Thai massage by integrating the concept of Thai boxing technique using the elbows, knees, feet and hands. The impact is a powerful muscle relaxer that is invigorating yet soothing, whilst being energy boosting and smoothly relaxing. The silk boxing shorts and dressing gown add a whimsical touch, whilst the hot towels and cold-towel back slapping feels great.

The spa's own brand oil feels exquisitely fine with every stroke and there is nothing left to do except surrender. Gold leaf applied to the forehead is a nice touch, quite literally, and is intended to stimulate the 'Third Eye', integrating Buddhist beliefs and Thai culture in a spa journey that has genuine narrative.

Whilst the spa is new and offers massage workshops too, the brand name has long been known in Bangkok

with a former home in Sala Daeng as a well-respected academic spa training therapists. This professional heritage is proven with every small detail carefully presented creating service, quality and spa beauty of the highest calibre. Even the post-treatment mocktails are artistic beauties, and could have been taken straight off the menu of a high-end, on-trend mixologist Bangkok bar.

The Naiipa Art Complex combines art, nature, and office space and is a leafy oasis in up-and-coming Phrakanong, which is shaking off its image as a Thonglor and Ekkamai hanger-on and becoming an area that is now stepping forward to take its own star turn. Certainly, with the sky train extending to what central Bangkokians see as being as far as the moon, Phrakanong suddenly seems pretty city central. Naiipa Art Complex is a breath of fresh air for stressed-out urbanites and the perfect home for the trendsetting Arom:D Artisan Spa with its intelligent, international allure.

BY NADIA WILLAN

Arom:D Artisan Spa

46, Sukhumvit Soi 46

Open daily: 10am-9pm

Tel: 02 392 1329, 095 883 6633

www.aromdlife.com

Did You Know?...



Did you know that **Scomadi**, the iconic British scooter brand, is now making some of its classic European design models right here in Thailand?

Registered in 2005, Scomadi Ltd. is a British Company and partnership between two internationally recognized pioneers of the scooter industry—**Frank Sanderson** and **Paul Melici**. In 2009, the limited edition *Scomadi Turismo Leggera* 250cc was released, and all were sold prior to completion. A further 20 hand-built, custom-painted, customer-specific 300cc models were introduced, and once again all sold instantly.

As Scomadi's reputation gathered rapid momentum, contracts were established with high-quality manufacturers in Asia. When the company's agreement with their previous manufacturer came to an end, production moved to Thailand as a joint venture and partnership between the two co-founders and the eminent business professionals **Pimol Srivikorn** (himself a scooter enthusiast) and his sister **Taya Teepsuwan**. Together they formed Marin Company Ltd., and the Thai production facility was in full swing as of February 2017. Thailand is already a well-known manufacturing hub for automobile assembly, so the management expertise, infrastructure, and technical skill was already at hand.

With a production capacity of about 20,000 units per annum, the facility—located in Bangplee Noi, Samut









Prakan—has been very busy hand-assembling these fine-tuned road machines. The first batch of the new *Scomadi Turismo Technica* 200cc model just came onto the market as of June, and are retailing for approximately B169,500. This new model comes with many amazing features, including: electronic fuel injection; a single cylinder, water cooled, 4T, 4V DOHC engine; an ergonomically retro design with slim-style side panels and new retro design headlamp and handlebar assembly in cast alloy; a new plushride suspension system allowing longer suspension travel with a smoother ride; and tubeless front and rear tires.

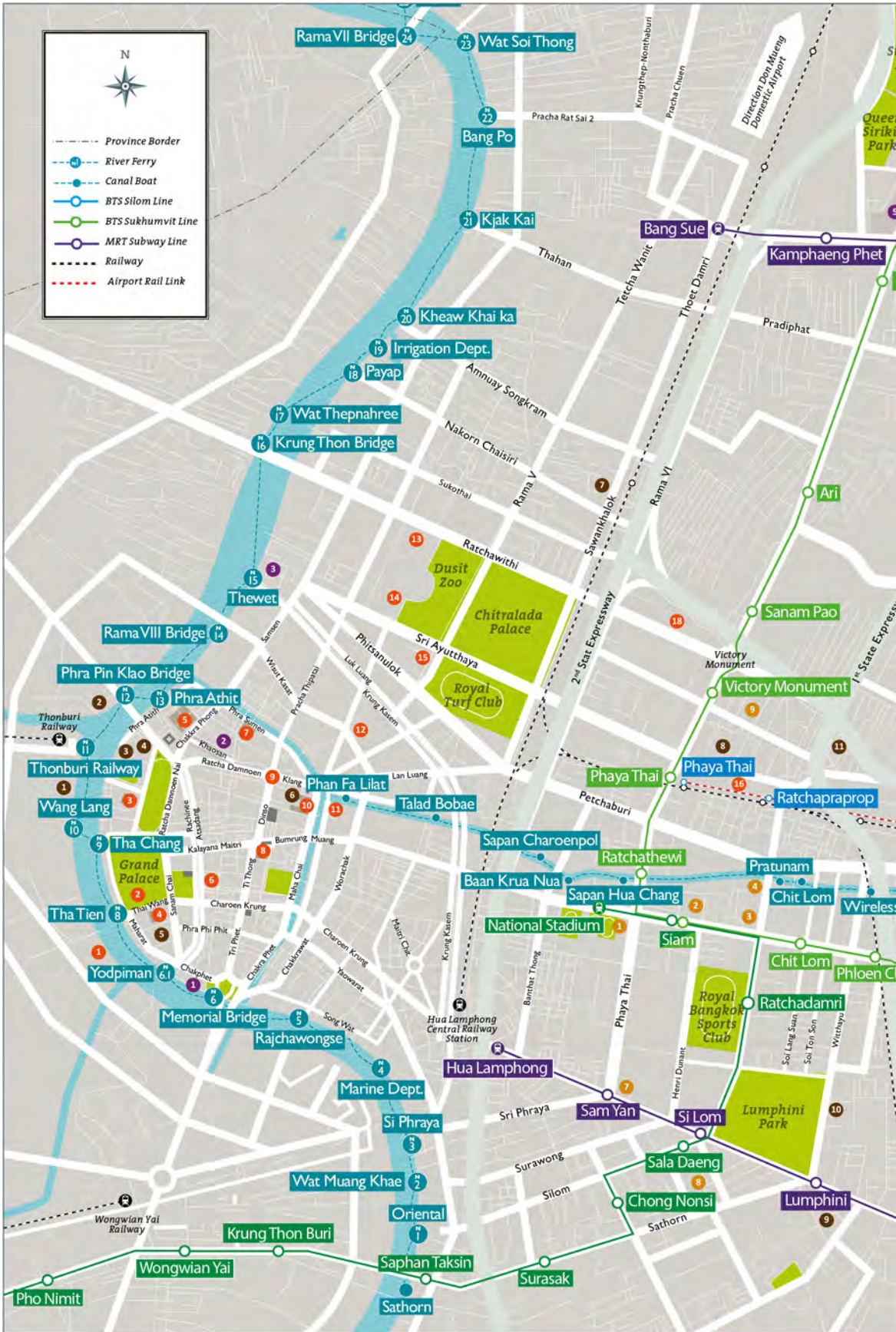
There are many dealers in Thailand who will be stocking the new model (and some may even still have the previous TL Series in stock if you hurry). For full dealership locations, check the website. www.scomadithailand.com

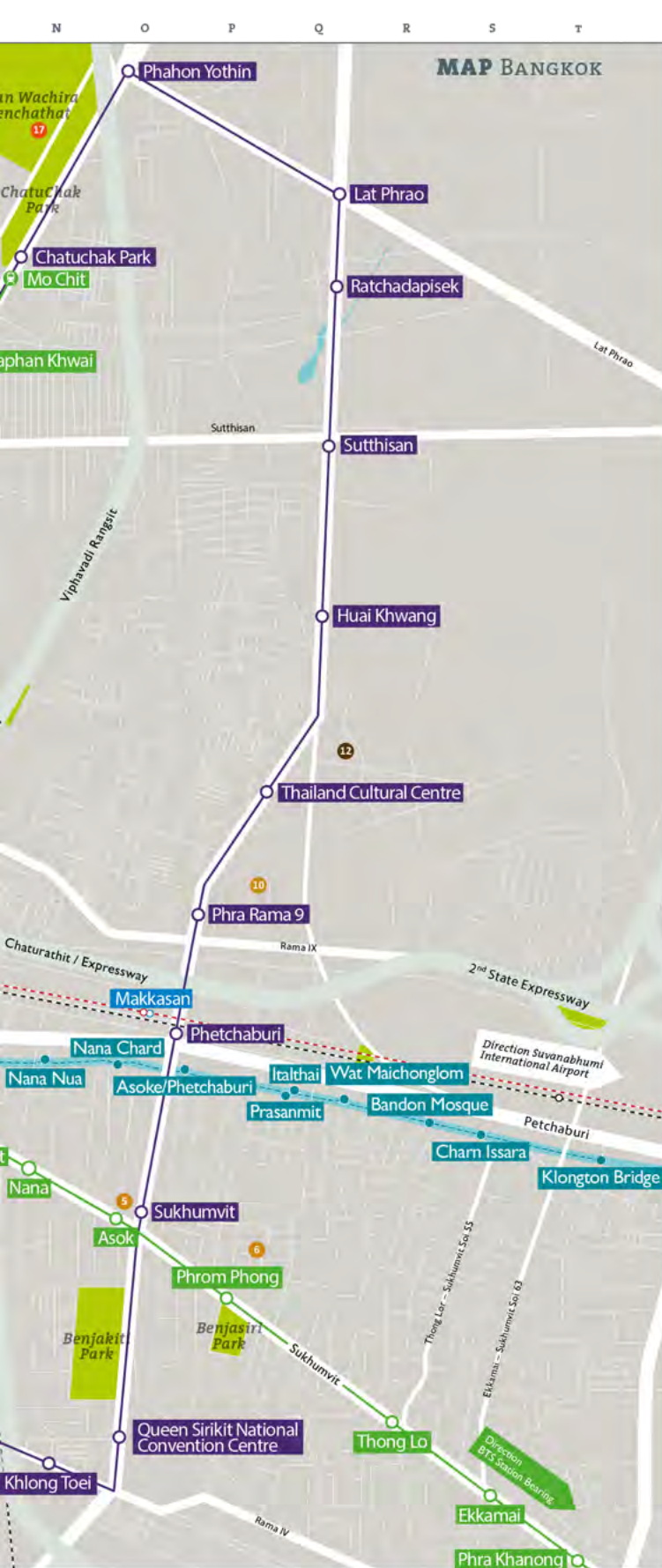
Travelling by motorcycle is one of the best ways to really see Thailand. For some suggestions as to weekend escapes you can make by taking the open road out of Bangkok, turn to our cover feature on page 14. ■



Legend

-  Province Border
-  River Ferry
-  Canal Boat
-  BTS Silom Line
-  BTS Sukhumvit Line
-  MRT Subway Line
-  Railway
-  Airport Rail Link





- SIGHTSEEING**
- 1 Wat Arun
 - 2 Grand Palace
 - 3 Wat Mahathat
 - 4 Wat Pho
 - 5 Wat Chana Songkhram
 - 6 Wat Ratchabophit
 - 7 Wat Bowornniwet Viharn
 - 8 Wat Suthat & Giant Swing
 - 9 Democracy Monument
 - 10 Wat Ratchanatda
 - 11 Wat Saket
 - 12 Ratchadamnoen Boxing Stadium
 - 13 Vimanmek Mansion
 - 14 Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall
 - 15 Wat Benchamabophit
 - 16 Suan Pakkad Palace
 - 17 Bangkok Butterfly Garden
 - 18 Phaya Thai Palace
- ARTS & CULTURE**
- 1 Siriraj Medical Museum
 - 2 Royal Barges Museum
 - 3 National Museum
 - 4 National Theatre
 - 5 Museum of Siam
 - 6 Rattanakosin Exhibiton Hall
 - 7 Numthong Gallery
 - 8 Aksra Theatre
 - 9 Goethe Institut
 - 10 Galerie N
 - 11 Bangkok Doll Museum
 - 12 Siam Niramit
- MARKETS**
- 1 Pak Khlong Talad
 - 2 Khao San Road
 - 3 Thewet
 - 4 Ratchada Night Market
 - 5 Chatuchak Weekend Market
- SHOPPING**
- 1 MBK Center
 - 2 Siam Paragon
 - 3 CentralWorld
 - 4 Platinum Fashion Mall
 - 5 Terminal 21
 - 6 EmQuartier
 - 7 Charmchuri Square
 - 8 Silom Complex
 - 9 Century Mall
 - 10 Central Plaza Grand Rama 9



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