

Two Nights in BANGKOK

The hub for much of Southeast Asia, Bangkok deserves a few days of your time. Natalie Lewis, Audley's Southeast Asia Programme Manager, explains where to stay and eat and what to do.



Sirocco, Bangkok



Thai House Cookery School

FACT FILE

EVA Air fly to Bangkok six times per week from London Heathrow. From Bangkok you can fly on to almost anywhere in Asia, be it Indochina, Indonesia, Burma or the Philippines. There is also an onward service to Taiwan and Australia. To discuss any of the ideas for spending time in Bangkok please contact Simon, James, Sarah, Charlie or Nick on 01993 838 115.



Where to stay

Baan Chantra

Originally built in 1936, this recently renovated historic home offers a unique travel experience with a touch of local flavour. It is owned and run by a delightful Thai couple and a considerable step up from the nearby Khao San Road, where I stayed when travelling as a backpacker.

Lebua

This all-suite hotel is located in the State Tower. The 198 suites share their wonderful views of the city of Bangkok and the Chao Phraya River with the famed open-air Sirocco restaurant, located on the 63rd floor.

The Peninsula

The Peninsula is an old Audley favourite, frequently in top position in worldwide hotel surveys, and one of the best placed hotels in Bangkok. I stayed in a Grand Deluxe room – these are on the higher floors and have the better views of the Chao Phraya river and the city. The hospitality is splendid and matched by an equally good choice of restaurants.



The Peninsula hotel riverfront view

Where to eat

Cabbages & Condoms

My favourite place to eat in Bangkok is Cabbages & Condoms. The food is fantastic and the restaurant is run by a charitable organisation that puts all the profits into projects that help hill tribes in the north of the country: crop substitution (cabbages) and population control (condoms).

Vertigo

Aptly named, Vertigo is located on the roof of the Banyan Tree hotel and offers spectacular views of the city lights and the river below. One of the most stylish places to eat and drink in Bangkok, it offers excellent modern cuisine; a great place to push the boat out. Banyan Tree also offer a new dinner cruise on the Chao Phraya river, on the Apsara cruise boat. The boat carries 64 guests for sunset cocktails or a full dinner.

Lemongrass

If I am in the mood for something more traditional I head to Lemongrass. This much praised restaurant serves traditional Thai food in a lovely old house. Imaginative flower arrangements and the attractive presentation of the food make this a great option.

Seafood market

The motto of this famous Bangkok Restaurant is "if it swims we have it" and this is no idle boast. The restaurant is a huge open-plan affair seating 1,500 people and part of the fun comes from watching the chefs hard at work in the open-plan kitchen. You can choose from the bewildering display of seafood on offer and choose how you would like it cooked. The four-foot long Alaskan crab claws come very highly recommended!



Garuda, Grand Palace complex

What to do

Cycling tour

Last time I was in Bangkok I went on a cycling tour of the city. This full day excursion discovers the beauty of Bangkok's hidden gems, Nonthaburi and Ko Kret. The ride started at a temple near the banks of the Chao Phraya River in Nonthaburi and continued along the canal path through local villages, past rice paddies, fruit plantations and the local riverside communities. We then crossed the river to Koh Kret where we cycled along a peaceful car-free road before heading back to the city centre.

Cookery course at the Thai House

My favourite cookery course is at the Thai House. Arriving by boat, you pull up at the traditional house to be welcomed by the whole family. I stayed overnight, which would not suit everyone as the accommodation is very basic, but you can visit for the day. We went to the market to buy the ingredients and were then shown how to prepare each of these weird and wonderful things before we were let loose on concocting the dishes. A thoroughly enjoyable experience and I still have the recipes at home, although the dishes don't taste the same when made from my Oxfordshire kitchen!

Day Spa

There are now several day spas operating in Bangkok offering a full range of traditional Thai massage and other treatments. Some of our favourites, located in traditional Thai buildings are the Nibhana Spa, the Baan Thai Wellness Retreat and the Oasis Spa.

WEB PLUS

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For ideas of where to travel to from Bangkok plus an interactive demonstration from EVA Air



Vertigo at the Banyan Tree



Buddhist monk resting in front of the Royal Palace