



Bangkok at a Glance

From densely packed skyscrapers to centuries-old temples, Bangkok is a study in contrasts. Your best bets for getting around the capital of Thailand are boats on the Chao Phraya River (which runs near most attractions) and tuk-tuks, three-wheeled, open-air, motorized taxis. — HALEY SHAPLEY



GRAND PALACE ↗

Built in 1782 and featuring an explosion of ornate architecture, swirling spires, and detailed mosaics, this was the official residence of the king of Thailand until the mid-1900s. Don't miss the Emerald Buddha, a jade figurine clothed in gold and said to have been created in 43 BC.

WAT PHO The oldest and largest temple in

Bangkok, it contains more than 1,000 images of Buddha, including the famous Reclining Buddha, whose face reaches a height of more than 49 feet. Visit the temple's massage school for a traditional Thai massage.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM A comprehensive collection of artwork, clothing, ceramics, weapons,

musical instruments, and more takes visitors chronologically through Thailand's history.

VIMANMEK MANSION MUSEUM

This former royal estate is the largest golden teakwood building in the world. It contains 81 rooms, halls, and antechambers, some with themed displays.

LUMPHINI PARK

There's always something to do in this 143-acre park — rent a paddleboat, play chess, sing karaoke, weight lift, jog the trails, or

watch ballroom dancers and martial artists perform — but peace and quiet can also easily be found.

ROYAL BARGE NATIONAL MUSEUM

Eight barges once used in war now serve a ceremonial purpose. The king's personal boat, *Suphanahong* (Golden Swan), is decorated with gilt carvings and a colorful mosaic.

CHATUCHAK MARKET

Spanning 35 acres and known as the largest market in the world, Chatuchak boasts thousands of

weekend vendors with wares that range from rice to teacups to antique wooden carvings to leather sandals.

RATCHADAMNOEN STADIUM

The popular sport of *muay Thai* (Thai boxing) may be brutal, but it's rich with history. To see it firsthand, head to Ratchadamnoen Stadium, where the atmosphere outside the ring rivals the excitement within.

THE JIM THOMPSON HOUSE

Here, you'll find six traditional Thai-style teak structures from vari-

ous parts of Thailand. Purchased and brought to this present location by American expatriate Jim Thompson (who is credited with reviving the silk industry in Thailand), the houses are decorated with rare sculptures, paintings, and other antiques.

CHAO PHRAYA DINNER CRUISE

Relax and enjoy a quiet dinner set to traditional Thai music as you float down the river on a teakwood rice barge and take in all the sights of Bangkok illuminated against the night sky.

GO FIGURE Bangkok ... is the 22nd most populated city in the world // accounts for more than 40 percent of Thailand's gross domestic product // has one of the highest average temperatures of any city in the world // is approximately 95 percent Buddhist // is said to be sinking two inches per year // refers to a district within the city, as the city's actual name is Krung Thep.