

Bangkok Quick City Guide

At a Glance

Bangkok is a tropical, high-energy capital of roughly 11 million people. Thai is the official language, but English works in hotels, malls, hospitals, and tourist-facing restaurants. The currency is the Thai Baht (THB); USD conversion is roughly 35 THB to \$1. The climate is hot and humid year-round; November-February is the most tolerable window. Expect afternoon downpours May-October and brutal heat March-April. Time zone is UTC+7 (ICT). Calling code is +66. Power sockets are Type A/C (220V); adapters are sold at every 7-Eleven.

First 48 Hours

Hour 0-2: Land, cash, SIM. Suvarnabhumi (BKK) is the main international airport. Take the Airport Rail Link to Phaya Thai for 45 THB and switch to the BTS, or grab a metered taxi for 250-400 THB plus tolls. At Don Mueang (DMK), use bus A1 to Mo Chit (30 THB) or A4 to Khao San (50 THB). Before you leave the airport, withdraw cash from an ATM and buy a local prepaid SIM from AIS or TrueMove H at the arrivals hall. Passport required.

Hour 2-6: Check in and eat. Drop your bags, walk to the nearest BTS or MRT station, and buy a stored-value card (Rabbit for BTS; separate card for MRT). Then find street food within 200 meters of your hotel. If you are in Sukhumvit, hit Terminal 21 Asok food court for air-conditioned 40-baht meals. If you are in Silom, walk Soi Convent or Soi Saladaeng for rice/curry stalls.

Day 1 evening: Pick one sight for sunset. Wat Arun is best at 17:30-18:30, reached by cross-river ferry from Tha Tien pier (4 THB). Alternatively, ride the free ICONSIAM shuttle boat from Saphan Taksin and eat at the indoor SookSiam floating market.

Day 2 morning: Hit the Grand Palace and Wat Pho early. Arrive at the Grand Palace by 08:30; dress code is strict (long pants, covered shoulders, no see-through fabric). Walk 10 minutes south to Wat Pho, birthplace of Thai massage. Finish with a 30-minute foot massage before the tour buses arrive.

Where to Stay

- **Sukhumvit/Nana/Asok – Best For:** First-timers, nightlife, food courts; **Nightly USD:** \$30-90; **The Catch:** Noise, traffic, sex-tourism pockets
- **Silom/Sathorn – Best For:** Business travelers, LGBTQ+ scene, street food; **Nightly USD:** \$35-100; **The Catch:** Dead weekends, crowded weekdays

- **Old City/Khao San – Best For:** Temple-hopping, budget backpackers, culture; **Nightly USD:** \$15-50; **The Catch:** No metro, tourist scams, early closing
- **Siam/Pathum Wan – Best For:** Mall rats, air-con comfort, cinema; **Nightly USD:** \$40-120; **The Catch:** Tourist prices, traffic, sterile
- **Thonglor/Ekkamai – Best For:** Digital nomads, craft coffee, brunch; **Nightly USD:** \$40-110; **The Catch:** Pricey, spread out
- **Ari – Best For:** Long-term stays, hip locals, cheap eats; **Nightly USD:** \$25-80; **The Catch:** Limited nightlife, 30 mins to center
- **Riverside/Charoen Krung – Best For:** Romantic splurges, river ferries; **Nightly USD:** \$60-200+; **The Catch:** Isolated, tourist traps, limited transit
- **Chatuchak/Ladprao – Best For:** JJ Market, long-term budget, parks; **Nightly USD:** \$20-60; **The Catch:** Far from nightlife, commute **Specific hotel picks:**
- **ibis Styles Sukhumvit 4:** clean budget box near Nana BTS.
- **Aloft Bangkok Sukhumvit 11:** mid-range crash pad on the party soi.
- **Lub d Bangkok Silom:** design hostel with pod beds near BTS Sala Daeng.
- **COMO Metropolitan Bangkok:** boutique luxury on South Sathorn.
- **The Yard Hostel Bangkok:** garden hostel in Ari.
- **Mandarin Oriental Bangkok / The Peninsula Bangkok:** splurge riverside icons.

Getting Around

- **BTS Skytrain:** Two elevated lines (Sukhumvit and Silom) intersect at Siam. Fares 17-59 THB. Operating hours roughly 06:00-24:00. Get a **Rabbit stored-value card**. Rush hour (07:30-09:00, 17:00-19:00) is packed; avoid if flexible.
- **MRT Subway:** Blue and Purple lines; fares 16-42 THB. Not integrated with BTS—you need a separate ticket or Bangkok Smart Card. Interchanges are at Asok, Sala Daeng, and Mo Chit, but walks are long and exposed to heat.
- **Airport Rail Link (ARL):** 45 THB from BKK to Phaya Thai (26 minutes) or Makkasan (22 minutes, MRT transfer).
- **Don Mueang buses:** A1 to Mo Chit (30 THB), A2 to Victory Monument (30 THB), A4 to Khao San (50 THB).
- **Taxis:** Metered taxis start at 35 THB. Insist on “meter krub.” Tolls (25-50 THB) are your cost. Airport taxis add 50 THB surcharge.

- **Grab:** Fixed price, 20-40% premium over metered taxis. GrabBike is faster and cheaper in gridlock but not insured.
- **Tuk-tuks:** 100-200+ THB for short rides. Negotiate hard; use for novelty, not efficiency.
- **Moto-taxis:** 10-50 THB for hops under 2 km. High accident risk; only use when traffic is a parking lot.
- **Chao Phraya Express Boat:** Orange-flag boat ~15 THB, every 15 minutes, 06:00-19:00. Fastest way to the Grand Palace, Wat Pho, and Khao San.

Eat This

- **Pad Thai – Venue:** Thip Samai (313-315 Mahachai Rd; +66 2 226 6666); **Cost / Note:** Queue 30-60 min after 18:00.
- **Crab Omelette – Venue:** Jay Fai (327 Maha Chai Rd; +66 2 223 9384); **Cost / Note:** Michelin street food; queue 2+ hrs, cash only.
- **Pad Thai – Venue:** Baan Phadthai (21-23 Soi Charoen Krung 44); **Cost / Note:** Charcoal-fired woks, blue crab meat.
- **Som Tam – Venue:** Som Tam Nua (392/14 Soi Siam Square 5); **Cost / Note:** Pair with fried chicken wings; expect heat.
- **Curry Crab – Venue:** Somboon Seafood (Soi Chulalongkorn 8; +66 2 216 4203); **Cost / Note:** Pu pad pong karee; avoid Surawong branch.
- **Fried Chicken – Venue:** Polo Fried Chicken (137/1-2 Soi Sanam Khli); **Cost / Note:** Order nam jim jaew; near Lumpini Park.
- **Tom Yum – Venue:** Pe Aor (68/51 Soi Petchaburi 5); **Cost / Note:** Milky tom yum; arrive before 12:00 or wait 1 hr.
- **Crab Stir-fry – Venue:** Krua Apsorn (169 Dinso Rd); **Cost / Note:** Royal Thai style; cash only; lunch queues 45 min.
- **Tom Yum Mama – Venue:** Jae Oh (113 Charat Mueang Rd); **Cost / Note:** Opens 23:00; queue starts 22:30.
- **Hainanese Chicken Rice – Venue:** Pratunam Chicken Rice (Phetchaburi Soi 30); **Cost / Note:** Morning spot; closes by 14:00. ### Eating Strategy Eat street food for dinner (30-80 THB), food courts for lunch (40-120 THB), and splurge once on Jay Fai or Somboon. Chinatown (Yaowarat Road) is best after 18:00. Chatuchak food courts are good for a half-day market visit. Do not drink tap water; ice with round holes is commercially purified.

Top 10 Sight

Attraction	Time / Cost	Pro Tip
Grand Palace & Wat Phra Kaew	2-3 hrs / 500 THB	Arrive 08:30; strict dress code.

Attraction	Time / Cost	Pro Tip
Wat Pho	1-2 hrs / 300 THB	Before 09:00; on-site Thai massage school.
Wat Arun	1 hr / 100 THB	Sunset; cross-river ferry from Tha Tien pier.
Wat Saket (Golden Mount)	1 hr / 50 THB	344 steps; go 17:30-18:30 for views.
Chatuchak Weekend Market	Half day / free	Arrive 09:00; haggle 20-30%.
Jim Thompson House	1-2 hrs / 200 THB	10:00; free English tours every 20 min.
Lumphini Park	1-2 hrs / free	06:00-08:00; free gym, monitor lizards.
ICONSIAM	2-3 hrs / free entry	18:00-21:00; free shuttle from Saphan Taksin.
Bangkok National Museum	2-3 hrs / 200 THB	Wed/Thu 09:30; free English tours.
Museum Siam	1-2 hrs / free	Tue-Sun 10:00; interactive Thai history.

Day Trips

- **Ayutthaya:** 3rd-class train from Hua Lamphong or minivan from Mo Chit 2; full day; 20-400 THB transport.
- **Kanchanaburi:** Bus from Southern Bus Terminal; 10-12 hrs round trip; river and bridge history.
- **Damnoen Saduak / Maeklong Railway Market:** Floating market + train market combo; best as an early-morning tour or self-drive.
- **Bang Kachao (Sri Nakhon Khuean Khan Park):** “Bangkok’s green lung,” accessible by ferry from Khlong Toey pier.

Safety & Etiquette

Bangkok is generally safe, but watch for bag-snatchers on motorbikes, tuk-tuk gem scams, and taxi drivers who refuse the meter. Dress modestly for temples: shoulders and knees covered. Shoes come off at temple entrances. Pointing feet toward Buddha images or people is rude. Do not touch anyone’s head. Haggling is normal in markets but not in malls or restaurants. Carry your hotel’s business card with the address in Thai; most taxi drivers do not speak English.

Budget Snapshot

- Accommodation – **Lean:** 12; **Comfortable:** 40; **Flashpacker:** 90
- Food – **Lean:** 8; **Comfortable:** 20; **Flashpacker:** 40
- Transport – **Lean:** 4; **Comfortable:** 10; **Flashpacker:** 20
- Coworking/coffee – **Lean:** 3; **Comfortable:** 10; **Flashpacker:** 20
- Insurance/health – **Lean:** 2; **Comfortable:** 5; **Flashpacker:** 10
- Miscellaneous – **Lean:** 6; **Comfortable:** 15; **Flashpacker:** 30
- **Total – Lean: 35; Comfortable: 100; Flashpacker: 210**
- Lean – **Daily USD:** \$35; **Weekly USD:** ~\$245; **14-Day USD:** ~\$490
- Comfortable – **Daily USD:** \$100; **Weekly USD:** ~\$700; **14-Day USD:** ~\$1,400
- Flashpacker – **Daily USD:** \$210; **Weekly USD:** ~\$1,470; **14-Day USD:** ~\$2,940 Assumptions: 2026 prices in Thai Baht converted at roughly 35 THB per USD. Insurance reflects a pro-rated daily cost of annual travel medical coverage.

Quick Links

- Immigration Bureau: <https://www.immigration.go.th>
- Tourism Authority of Thailand: <https://www.tourismthailand.org/About-Thailand/Destination/Bangkok>
- Suvarnabhumi Airport: <https://www.suvarnabhumiairport.com>
- State Railway booking: <https://dticket.railway.co.th>
- Transport Co. intercity buses: <https://home.transport.co.th>
- Southern Bus Terminal: +66 2 894 6122