

Bangkok

Bangkok^[a] is the capital and most populous city of Thailand. It is known in Thai as **Krung Thep Maha Nakhon**^[b] or simply **Krung Thep**.^[c] The city occupies 1,568.7 square kilometres (605.7 sq mi) in the Chao Phraya River delta in central Thailand, and has a population of over eight million, or 12.6 percent of the country's population. Over fourteen million people (22.2 percent) lived within the surrounding Bangkok Metropolitan Region at the 2010 census, making Bangkok the nation's primate city, significantly dwarfing Thailand's other urban centres in importance.

Bangkok traces its roots to a small trading post during the Ayutthaya Kingdom in the 15th century, which eventually grew and became the site of two capital cities: Thonburi in 1768 and Rattanakosin in 1782. Bangkok was at the heart of the modernization of Siam, later renamed Thailand, during the late-19th century, as the country faced pressures from the West. The city was at the centre of Thailand's political struggles throughout the 20th century, as the country abolished absolute monarchy, adopted constitutional rule, and underwent numerous coups and several uprisings. The city grew rapidly during the 1960s through the 1980s and now exerts a significant impact on Thailand's politics, economy, education, media and modern society.

The Asian investment boom in the 1980s and 1990s led many multinational corporations to locate their regional headquarters in Bangkok. The city is now a regional force in finance and business. It is an international hub for transport and health care, and has emerged as a centre for the arts, fashion, and entertainment. The city is known for its street life and cultural landmarks, as well as its red-light districts. The Grand Palace and Buddhist temples including Wat Arun and Wat Pho stand in contrast with other tourist attractions such as the nightlife scenes of Khaosan Road and Patpong. Bangkok is among the world's top tourist destinations, and has been named the world's most visited city consistently in several international rankings.

Bangkok's rapid growth coupled with little urban planning has resulted in a haphazard cityscape and inadequate infrastructure. An inadequate road network, despite an extensive expressway network, together with substantial private car usage, have led to chronic and crippling traffic congestion, which caused severe air pollution in the 1990s. The city has since turned to public transport in an attempt to solve the problem. Five rapid transit lines are now in operation, with more systems under construction or planned by the national government and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration.

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<div>Bangkok</div> <div>กรุงเทพมหานคร</div> <div>Krung Thep Maha Nakhon</div>	
Special administrative area	
<div><div><div><div><div></div><div>Si Lom–Sathon business district</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>the Giant Swing</div></div><div><div></div><div>Victory Monument</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>Rama VIII Bridge</div></div><div><div></div><div>Wat Arun</div></div></div><div><div><div></div><div>the Grand Palace</div></div></div></div></div>	
<div><div><div><div><div></div><div><div>Flag</div></div></div></div><div><div><div><div></div><div><div>Seal</div></div></div></div></div></div></div>	
<div><div></div></div>	
 <div>Location within Thailand</div>	
Coordinates: 13°45′09″N 100°29′39″E﻿ / ﻿ ^[1]	
Country	 Thailand
Region	Central Thailand
Settled	c. 15th century
Founded as capital	21 April 1782
Re-incorporated	13 December 1972
Founded by	King Rama I
Governing body	Bangkok Metropolitan Administration
Government <div></div>	
 • Type	Special administrative area
 • Governor	Aswin Kwanmuang
Area ^[1]	

Transport

- Roads
- Buses and taxis
- Rail systems
- Water transport
- Airports

Health and education

- Education
- Healthcare

Crime and safety

International relations

- International participation
- Sister cities

See also

Notes

References

- Bibliography

Further reading

External links

<div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">City </div>	1,568.737 km ² (605.693 sq mi)
<div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Metro^[2] </div>	7,761.6 km ² (2,996.8 sq mi)
Elevation ^[3]	1.5 m (4.9 ft)
Population (2010 census) ^[4]	
<div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">CityDensity </div>	8,305,218 <div>5,300/km² (14,000/sq mi)</div>
<div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">MetroMetro density </div>	14,626,225 <div>1,900/km² (4,900/sq mi)</div>
Demonym(s)	Bangkokian
Time zone	UTC+07:00 (ICT)
Postal code	10###
Area code(s)	02
ISO 3166 code	TH-10
Website	www.bangkok.go.th (http://www.bangkok.go.th)

History

The history of Bangkok dates at least back to the early 15th century, when it was a village on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River, under the rule of Ayutthaya.^[8] Because of its strategic location near the mouth of the river, the town gradually increased in importance. Bangkok initially served as a customs outpost with forts on both sides of the river, and was the site of a siege in 1688 in which the French were expelled from Siam. After the fall of Ayutthaya to the Burmese Empire in 1767, the newly crowned King Taksin established his capital at the town, which became the base of the Thonburi Kingdom. In 1782, King Phutthayotfa Chulalok (Rama I) succeeded Taksin, moved the capital to the eastern bank's Rattanakosin Island, thus founding the Rattanakosin Kingdom. The City Pillar was erected on 21 April 1782, which is regarded as the date of foundation of the present city.^[9]

Bangkok's economy gradually expanded through international trade, first with China, then with Western merchants returning in the early-to-mid 19th century. As the capital, Bangkok was the centre of Siam's modernization as it faced pressure from Western powers in the late-19th century. The reigns of Kings Mongkut (Rama IV, 1851–68) and Chulalongkorn (Rama V, 1868–1910) saw the introduction of the steam engine, printing press, rail transport and utilities infrastructure in the city, as well as formal education and healthcare. Bangkok became the centre stage for power struggles between the military and political elite as the country abolished absolute monarchy in 1932.



Engraving of the city from British diplomat John Crawford's embassy in 1822

Allied with Japan in World War II, it was subjected to Allied bombing, but rapidly grew in the post-war period as a result of US aid and government-sponsored investment. Bangkok's role as a US military R&R destination boosted its tourism industry as well as firmly establishing it as a sex tourism destination. Disproportionate urban development led to increasing income inequalities and migration from rural areas into Bangkok; its population surged from 1.8 million to 3 million in the 1960s.

Following the US withdrawal from Vietnam in 1973, Japanese businesses took over as leaders in investment, and the expansion of export-oriented manufacturing led to growth of the financial market in Bangkok.^[10] Rapid growth of the city continued through the 1980s and early 1990s, until it was stalled by the 1997 Asian financial crisis. By then, many public and social issues had emerged, among them the strain on infrastructure reflected in the city's notorious traffic jams. Bangkok's role as the nation's political stage continues to be seen in strings of popular protests, from the student uprisings in 1973 and 1976, anti-military demonstrations in 1992, and successive anti-government demonstrations by opposing groups from 2008 on.

Administration of the city was first formalized by King Chulalongkorn in 1906, with the establishment of Monthon Krung Thep Phra Maha Nakhon (มณฑลกรุงเทพมหานคร) as a national subdivision. In 1915 the *monthon* was split into several provinces, the administrative boundaries of which have since further changed. The city in its current form was created in 1972 with the formation of the Bangkok



Map of 17th-century Bangkok, from Simon de la Loubère's *Du Royaume de Siam*

Metropolitan Administration (BMA), following the merger of Phra Nakhon Province on the eastern bank of the Chao Phraya and Thonburi Province on the west during the previous year.^[9]

Name

The origin of the name *Bangkok* (บางกอก, pronounced in Thai as [bāːŋ kǝːk] [ⓘ]listen)), is unclear. *Bang* is a Thai word meaning 'a village on a stream',^[11] and the name might have been derived from *Bang Ko* (บางเกาะ), *ko* meaning 'island', stemming from the city's watery landscape.^[8] Another theory suggests that it is shortened from *Bang Makok* (บางมะกอก), *makok* being the name of *Elaeocarpus hygrophilus*, a plant bearing olive-like fruit.^[4] This is supported by the former name of Wat Arun, a historic temple in the area, that used to be called *Wat Makok*.^[12]

Officially, the town was known as *Thonburi Si Mahasamut* (ธนบุรีศรีมหาสมุทร, from Pali and Sanskrit, literally 'city of treasures gracing the ocean') or *Thonburi*, according to the *Ayutthaya Chronicles*.^[13] *Bangkok* was likely a colloquial name, albeit one widely adopted by foreign visitors, who continued to use it to refer to the city even after the new capital's establishment.

When King Rama I established his new capital on the river's eastern bank, the city inherited Ayutthaya's ceremonial name, of which there were many variants, including *Krung Thep Thawarawadi Si Ayutthaya* (กรุงเทพมหานครีศรีอยุธยา) and *Krung Thep Maha Nakhon Si Ayutthaya* (กรุงเทพมหานครศรีอยุธยา).^[14] Edmund Roberts, visiting the city as envoy of the United States in 1833, noted that the city, since becoming capital, was known as *Sia-Yut'hia*, and this is the name used in international treaties of the period.^[15]

Today, the city is known in Thai as *Krung Thep Maha Nakhon* (กรุงเทพมหานคร) or simply *Krung Thep* (กรุงเทพฯ), a shortening of the ceremonial name which came into use during the reign of King Mongkut. The full name reads as follows:^[e]^[9]

KrungthepmahanakhonAmonrattanakosinMahintharayutthayaMahadilokphopNoppharatratchathaniburiromUdomratchaniwetmahasathanAmonphimanawatansathitSakkathattiyawitsanukamprasit^[f]

กรุงเทพมหานครอมรรัตนโกสินทร์มหินทรายุธยามหาดิลกภพนพรัตนราชธานีบูรีรมย์อุดมราชนิเวศน์มหาสถานอมรพิมานอวตารสถิต
สีกะทัดติยวิษณุกรรมประสิทธิ์

The name, composed of Pali and Sanskrit root words, translates as:

City of angels, great city of immortals, magnificent city of the nine gems, seat of the king, city of royal palaces, home of gods incarnate, erected by Vishvakarman at Indra's behest.^[16]

The name is listed in *Guinness World Records* as the world's longest place name, at 168 letters.^[17] Thai school children are taught the full name, although few can explain its meaning as many of the words are archaic, and known to few. Many Thais who recall the full name do so because of its use in the 1989 song "Krung Thep Maha Nakhon" by Thai rock band Asanee—Wasan, the lyrics of which consist entirely of the city's full name, repeated throughout the song.

The city is now officially known in Thai by a shortened form of the full ceremonial name, *Krung Thep Maha Nakhon*, which is colloquially further shortened to *Krung Thep*. Bangkok is the city's official English name, as reflected in the name of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration.

Government

The city of Bangkok is locally governed by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA). Although its boundaries are at the provincial (*changwat*) level, unlike the other 76 provinces Bangkok is a special administrative area whose governor is directly elected to serve a four-year term. The governor, together with four appointed deputies, form the executive body, who implement policies through the BMA civil service headed by the Permanent Secretary for the BMA. In separate elections, each district elects one or more city councillors, who form the Bangkok Metropolitan Council. The council is the BMA's legislative body, and has power over municipal ordinances and the city's budget.^[18] However, after the coup of 2014 all local elections have been cancelled and the council was appointed by the government on 15 September 2014. The current Bangkok Governor is Police General Aswin Kwanmuang, who was appointed by the military government on 26 October 2016^[19] following the suspension of the last elected governor M.R. Sukhumbhand Paribatra.

Bangkok is divided into fifty districts (*khet*, equivalent to *amphoe* in the other provinces), which are further subdivided into 180 sub-districts (*khwaeng*, equivalent to *tambon*). Each district is managed by a district director appointed by the governor. District councils, elected to four-year terms, serve as advisory bodies to their respective district directors.

The BMA is divided into sixteen departments, each overseeing different aspects of the administration's responsibilities. Most of these responsibilities concern the city's infrastructure, and include city planning, building control, transportation, drainage, waste management and city beautification, as well as education, medical and rescue services.^[20] Many of these services are provided jointly with other agencies. The BMA has the authority to implement local ordinances, although civil law enforcement falls under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Police Bureau.

The seal of the city shows Hindu god Indra riding in the clouds on Airavata, a divine white elephant known in Thai as Erawan. In his hand Indra holds his weapon, the *vajra*.^[21] The seal is based on a painting done by Prince Naris. The tree symbol of Bangkok is *Ficus benjamina*.^[22] The official city slogan, adopted in 2012, reads:



The city's ceremonial name (partially visible) is displayed in front of Bangkok City Hall. On the building is the BMA seal bearing an image of Indra riding Erawan.

As built by deities, the administrative center, dazzling palaces and temples, the capital of Thailand กรุงเทพมหานคร เมืองศูนย์กลางการปกครอง วัดวังงามเรืองรอง เมืองหลวงของประเทศไทย^[23]

As the capital of Thailand, Bangkok is the seat of all branches of the national government. The Government House, Parliament House and Supreme, Administrative and Constitutional Courts are all in the city. Bangkok is the site of the Grand Palace and Dusit Palace, respectively the official and *de facto* residence of the king. Most government ministries also have headquarters and offices in the capital.

Calls to move the capital

Bangkok is faced with multiple problems—including congestion (see (§ Transport below), and especially subsidence and flooding (see § Geography)—which have raised the issue of moving the nation's capital elsewhere. The idea is not new: during World War II Prime Minister Plaek Phibunsongkhram planned unsuccessfully to relocate the capital to Phetchabun. In the 2000s, the Thaksin Shinawatra administration assigned the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) to formulate a plan to move the capital to Nakhon Nayok Province. The 2011 floods revived the idea of moving government functions from Bangkok. In 2017, the military government assigned NESDC to study the possibility of moving government offices from Bangkok to Chachoengsao Province in the east.^{[24][25][26]}

Geography

Bangkok city proper covers an area of 1,568.7 square kilometres (605.7 sq mi), ranking 69th among the other 76 provinces of Thailand. Of this, about 700 square kilometres (270 sq mi) form the built-up urban area.^[1] It is ranked 73rd in the world in terms of land area.^[27] The city's urban sprawl reaches into parts of the six other provinces it borders, namely, in clockwise order from northwest: Nonthaburi, Pathum Thani, Chachoengsao, Samut Prakan, Samut Sakhon, and Nakhon Pathom. With the exception of Chachoengsao, these provinces, together with Bangkok, form the greater Bangkok Metropolitan Region.^[2]



Bangkok city proper is highlighted in this satellite image of the lower Chao Phraya delta. The built-up urban area extends northward and southward into Nonthaburi and Samut Prakan Provinces.

Topography

Bangkok is in the Chao Phraya River delta in Thailand's central plain. The river meanders through the city in a southerly direction, emptying into the Gulf of Thailand approximately 25 kilometres (16 mi) south of city centre. The area is flat and low-lying, with an average elevation of 1.5 metres (4 ft 11 in) above sea level.^{[3][g]} Most of the area was originally swampland, which was gradually drained and irrigated for agriculture by the construction of canals (*khlong*) which took place from the 16th to 19th centuries. The course of the river as it flows through Bangkok has been modified by the construction of several shortcut canals.



Bangkok's major canals are shown in this map detailing the original course of the river and its shortcut canals.

The city's waterway network served as the primary means of transport until the late 19th century, when modern roads began to be built. Up until then, most people lived near or on the water, leading the city to be known during the 19th century as the "Venice of the East".^[28] Many of these canals have since been filled in or paved over, but others still criss-cross the city, serving as major drainage channels and transport routes. Most canals are now badly polluted, although the BMA has committed to the treatment and cleaning up of several canals.^[29]

The geology of the Bangkok area is characterized by a top layer of soft marine clay, known as "Bangkok clay", averaging 15 metres (49 ft) in thickness, which overlies an aquifer system consisting of eight known units. This feature has contributed to the effects of subsidence caused by extensive ground water pumping. First recognized in the 1970s, subsidence soon became a critical issue, reaching a rate of 120 millimetres (4.7 in) per year in 1981. Ground water management and mitigation measures have since lessened the severity of the situation, although subsidence is still occurring at a rate of 10 to 30 millimetres (0.39 to 1.18 in) per year, and parts of the city are now 1 metre (3 ft 3 in) below sea level.^[30] There are fears that the city may be submerged by 2030.^{[31][32][33]} A study published in October 2019 in *Nature Communications* corrected earlier models of coastal elevations^[34] and concluded that up to 12 million Thais—mostly in the greater Bangkok metropolitan area—face the prospect of annual flooding events.^{[35][36]}

Subsidence has resulted in increased flood risk, as Bangkok is already prone to flooding due to its low elevation and an inadequate drainage infrastructure.^[37] The city now relies on flood barriers and augmenting drainage from canals by pumping and building drain tunnels, but parts of Bangkok and its suburbs are still regularly inundated. Heavy downpours resulting in urban runoff overwhelming drainage systems, and runoff discharge from upstream areas, are major triggering factors.^[38] Severe flooding affecting much of the city occurred in 1995 and 2011. In 2011, most of Bangkok's northern, eastern and western districts were flooded, in some places for over two months. Coastal erosion is also an issue in the gulf coastal area, a small length of which lies within Bangkok's Bang Khun Thian District. Global warming poses further serious risks, and a study by the OECD has estimated that 5.138 million people in Bangkok may be exposed to coastal flooding by 2070, the seventh highest figure among the world's port cities.^{[39]:8}

There are no mountains in Bangkok. The closest mountain range is the Khao Khiao Massif, about 40 km (25 mi) southeast of the city. Phu Khao Thong, the only hill in the metropolitan area, originated with a very large chedi that King Rama III (1787–1851) built at Wat Saket. The chedi collapsed during construction because the soft soil could not support its weight. Over the next few decades, the abandoned mud-and-brick structure acquired the shape of a natural hill and became overgrown with weeds. The locals called it *phu khao* (ภูเขา), as if it were a natural feature.^[40] In the 1940s, enclosing concrete walls were added to stop the hill from eroding.^[41]

Climate

Like most of Thailand, Bangkok has a tropical savanna climate under the Köppen climate classification and is under the influence of the South Asian monsoon system. It experiences three seasons: hot, rainy, and cool, although temperatures are fairly hot year-round, ranging from an average low of 22.0 °C (71.6 °F) in December to an average high of 35.4 °C (95.7 °F) in April. The rainy season begins with the arrival of the southwest monsoon around mid-May. September is the wettest month, with an average rainfall of 334.3 millimetres (13.16 in). The rainy season lasts until October, when the dry and cool northeast monsoon takes over until February. The hot season is generally dry, but also sees occasional summer storms.^[42] The surface magnitude of Bangkok's urban heat island has been measured at 2.5 °C (4.5 °F) during the day and 8.0 °C (14 °F) at night.^[43] The highest recorded temperature of Bangkok metropolis was 40.1 °C (104.2 °F) in March 2013,^[44] and the lowest recorded temperature was 9.9 °C (49.8 °F) in January 1955.^[45]

The Climate Impact Group at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies analyzed climate data for major cities worldwide. It found that Bangkok in 1960 had 193 days at or above 32 °C. In 2018, Bangkok can expect 276 days at or above 32 °C. The group forecasts a rise by 2100 to, on average, 297 to 344 days at or above 32 °C.^[46]

Climate data for Bangkok Metropolis (1981–2010)													
Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °C (°F)	37.6 (99.7)	38.8 (101.8)	40.1 (104.2)	40.2 (104.4)	39.7 (103.5)	38.3 (100.9)	37.9 (100.2)	38.5 (101.3)	37.2 (99.0)	37.9 (100.2)	38.8 (101.8)	37.1 (98.8)	40.2 (104.4)
Average high °C (°F)	32.5 (90.5)	33.3 (91.9)	34.3 (93.7)	35.4 (95.7)	34.4 (93.9)	33.6 (92.5)	33.2 (91.8)	32.9 (91.2)	32.8 (91.0)	32.6 (90.7)	32.4 (90.3)	31.7 (89.1)	33.3 (91.9)
Daily mean °C (°F)	27.0 (80.6)	28.3 (82.9)	29.5 (85.1)	30.5 (86.9)	29.9 (85.8)	29.5 (85.1)	29.0 (84.2)	28.8 (83.8)	28.3 (82.9)	28.1 (82.6)	27.8 (82.0)	26.5 (79.7)	28.6 (83.5)
Average low °C (°F)	22.6 (72.7)	24.4 (75.9)	25.9 (78.6)	26.9 (80.4)	26.3 (79.3)	26.1 (79.0)	25.7 (78.3)	25.5 (77.9)	25.0 (77.0)	24.8 (76.6)	23.9 (75.0)	22.0 (71.6)	24.9 (76.8)
Record low °C (°F)	10.0 (50.0)	14.0 (57.2)	15.7 (60.3)	20.0 (68.0)	21.1 (70.0)	21.1 (70.0)	21.8 (71.2)	21.8 (71.2)	21.1 (70.0)	18.3 (64.9)	15.0 (59.0)	10.5 (50.9)	10.0 (50.0)
Average rainfall mm (inches)	13.3 (0.52)	20.0 (0.79)	42.1 (1.66)	91.4 (3.60)	247.7 (9.75)	157.1 (6.19)	175.1 (6.89)	219.3 (8.63)	334.3 (13.16)	292.1 (11.50)	49.5 (1.95)	6.3 (0.25)	1,648.2 (64.89)
Average rainy days	1.8	2.4	3.6	6.6	16.4	16.3	17.4	19.6	21.2	17.7	5.8	1.1	129.9
Average <u>relative humidity</u> (%)	68	72	72	72	75	74	75	76	79	78	70	66	73
Mean monthly <u>sunshine hours</u>	272.5	249.9	269.0	256.7	216.4	178.0	171.8	160.3	154.9	198.1	234.2	262.0	2,623.8
Source #1: Thai Meteorological Department, ^[47] humidity (1981–2010): RID; ^[48] Rainfall (1981–2010): RID ^[49]													
Source #2: Pogodaiklimat.ru(High/Low Record) ^[50] NOAA (sun, 1961–1990) ^[51]													

Districts

Bangkok's fifty districts serve as administrative subdivisions under the authority of the BMA. Thirty-five of these districts lie to the east of the Chao Phraya, while fifteen are on the western bank, known as the Thonburi side of the city. The fifty districts, arranged by district code, are:^[52]

1. Phra Nakhon District

2. Dusit District

3. Nong Chok District

4. Bang Rak District

5. Bang Khen District

6. Bang Kapi District

7. Pathum Wan District

8. Pom Prap Sattru Phai District

9. Phra Khanong District

10. Min Buri District

11. Lat Krabang District

12. Yan Nawa District

13. Samphanthawong District

14. Phaya Thai District

15. Thon Buri District

16. Bangkok Yai District

17. Huai Khwang District

26. Din Daeng District

27. Buang Kum District

28. Sathon District

29. Bang Sue District

30. Chatuchak District

31. Bang Kho Laem District

32. Prawet District

33. Khlong Toei District

34. Suan Luang District

35. Chom Thong District

36. Don Mueang District

37. Ratchathewi District

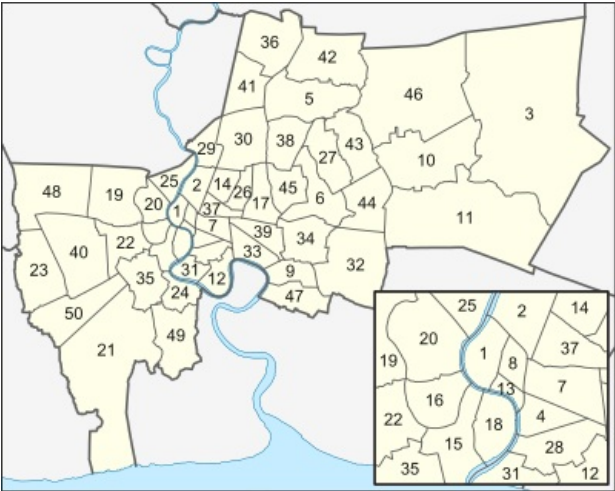
38. Lat Phrao District

39. Watthana District

40. Bang Khae District

41. Lak Si District

42. Sai Mai District



Map showing the 50 districts of Bangkok

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 18. <u>Khlong San District</u> | 43. <u>Khan Na Yao District</u> |
| 19. <u>Taling Chan District</u> | 44. <u>Saphan Sung District</u> |
| 20. <u>Bangkok Noi District</u> | 45. <u>Wang Thonglang District</u> |
| 21. <u>Bang Khun Thian District</u> | 46. <u>Khlong Sam Wa District</u> |
| 22. <u>Phasi Charoen District</u> | 47. <u>Bang Na District</u> |
| 23. <u>Nong Khaem District</u> | 48. <u>Thawi Watthana District</u> |
| 24. <u>Rat Burana District</u> | 49. <u>Thung Khru District</u> |
| 25. <u>Bang Phlat District</u> | 50. <u>Bang Bon District</u> |

Cityscape

Bangkok's districts often do not accurately represent the functional divisions of its neighbourhoods or land usage. Although urban planning policies date back to the commission of the "Litchfield Plan" in 1960, which set out strategies for land use, transportation and general infrastructure improvements, zoning regulations were not fully implemented until 1992. As a result, the city grew organically throughout the period of its rapid expansion, both horizontally as ribbon developments extended along newly built roads, and vertically, with increasing numbers of high rises and skyscrapers being built in commercial areas.^[53] The city has grown from its original centre along the river into a sprawling metropolis surrounded by swaths of suburban residential development extending north and south into neighbouring provinces. The highly populated and growing cities of Nonthaburi, Pak Kret, Rangsit and Samut Prakan are effectively now suburbs of Bangkok. Nevertheless, large agricultural areas remain within the city proper at its eastern and western fringes. Land use in the city consists of 23 percent residential use, 24 percent agriculture, and 30 percent used for commerce, industry, and government.^[1] The BMA's City Planning Department (CPD) is responsible for planning and shaping further development. It published master plan updates in 1999 and 2006, and a third revision is undergoing public hearings in 2012.^[54]



View of the Chao Phraya River as it passes through Bang Kho Laem and Khlong San districts



The Royal Plaza in Dusit District was inspired by King Chulalongkorn's visits to Europe.

Bangkok's historic centre remains the Rattanakosin Island in Phra Nakhon District. It is the site of the Grand Palace and the City Pillar Shrine, primary symbols of the city's founding, as well as important Buddhist temples. Phra Nakhon, along with the neighbouring Pom Prap Sattru Phai and Samphanthawong Districts, formed what was the city proper in the late 19th century. Many traditional neighbourhoods and markets are found here, including the Chinese settlement of Sampheng. The city was expanded toward Dusit District in the early 19th century, following King Chulalongkorn's relocation of the royal household to the new Dusit Palace. The buildings of the palace, including the neoclassical Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, as well as the Royal Plaza and Ratchadamnoen Avenue which leads to it from the Grand Palace, reflect the heavy influence of European architecture at the time. Major government offices line the avenue, as does the Democracy Monument. The area is the site of the country's seat of power as well as the city's most popular tourist landmarks.

In contrast with the low-rise historic areas, the business district on Si Lom and Sathon Roads in Bang Rak and Sathon Districts teems with skyscrapers. It is the site of many of the country's major corporate headquarters, but also of some of the city's red-light districts. The Siam and Ratchaprasong areas in Pathum Wan are home to some of the largest shopping malls in Southeast Asia. Numerous retail outlets and hotels also stretch along Sukhumvit Road leading southeast through Watthana and Khlong Toei Districts. More office towers line the streets branching off Sukhumvit, especially Asok Montri, while upmarket housing is found in many of its sois ('alley' or 'lane').



The Sukhumvit area appears as a sea of high-rise buildings from Baiyoke Tower II, the third-tallest building in Bangkok.

Bangkok lacks a single distinct central business district. Instead, the areas of Siam and Ratchaprasong serve as a "central shopping district" containing many of the bigger malls and commercial areas in the city, as well as Siam Station, the only transfer point between the city's two elevated train lines.^[55] The Victory Monument in Ratchathewi District is among its most important road junctions, serving over 100 bus lines as well as an elevated train station. From the monument, Phahonyothin and Ratchawithi / Din Daeng Roads respectively run north and east linking to major residential areas. Most of the high-density development areas are within the 113-square-kilometre (44 sq mi) area encircled by the Ratchadaphisek inner ring road. Ratchadaphisek is lined with businesses and retail outlets, and office buildings also cluster around Ratchayothin Intersection in Chatuchak District to the north. Farther from the city centre, most areas are primarily mid- or low-density residential. The Thonburi side of the city is less developed, with fewer high rises. With the exception of a few secondary urban centres, Thonburi, in the same manner as the outlying eastern districts, consists mostly of residential and rural areas.

While most of Bangkok's streets are fronted by vernacular shophouses, the largely unrestricted building euphoria of the 1980s has transformed the city into an urban area of skyscrapers and high rises of contrasting and clashing styles.^[56] There are 581 skyscrapers over 90 metres (300 feet) tall in the city. Bangkok was ranked as the world's eighth tallest city in 2016.^[57] As a result of persistent economic disparity, many slums have emerged in the city. In 2000 there were over one million people living in about 800 slum settlements.^[58] Many slums are concentrated near the Bangkok Port in Khlong Toei District.



Skyscrapers of Ratchadamri and Sukhumvit at night, viewed across Lumphini Park from the Si Lom – Sathon business district

Parks and green zones

Bangkok has several parks, although these amount to a per capita total park area of only 1.82 square metres (19.6 sq ft) in the city proper. Total green space for the entire city is moderate, at 11.8 square metres (127 sq ft) per person. In the more densely built-up areas of the city these numbers are as low as 1.73 and 0.72 square metres (18.6 and 7.8 sq ft) per person.^[59] More recent numbers claim that there is 3.3 m² of green space per person,^[60] compared to an average of 39 m² in other cities across Asia. In Europe, London has 33.4 m² of green space per head.^[61] Bangkokians thus have 10 times less green space than is standard in the region's urban areas.^[62] Green belt areas include about 700 square kilometres (270 sq mi) of rice paddies and orchards on the eastern and western edges of the city, although their primary purpose is to serve as flood detention basins rather than to limit urban expansion.^[63] Bang Kachao, a 20-square-kilometre (7.7 sq mi) conservation area on an oxbow of the Chao Phraya, lies just across the southern riverbank districts, in Samut Prakan Province. A master development plan has been proposed to increase total park area to 4 square metres (43 sq ft) per person.^[59]



Lumphini Park, an oasis amid the skyscrapers of Ratchadamri and Sukhumvit

Bangkok's largest parks include the centrally located Lumphini Park near the Si Lom — Sathon business district with an area of 57.6 hectares (142 acres), the 80-hectare (200-acre) Suanluang Rama IX in the east of the city, and the Chatuchak—Queen Sirikit—Wachirabenchathat park complex in northern Bangkok, which has a combined area of 92 hectares (230 acres).^[64]

Demography

The city of Bangkok has a population of 8,305,218 according to the 2010 census, or 12.6 percent of the national population.^[4] In 2018, the population has been estimated to be about 10 million. Roughly half are internal migrants from other Thai provinces.^[44] Only 5,692,284 residents, belonging to 2,672,423 households, registered Bangkok as their legal domicile, according to 2014 statistics.^[66] Much of Bangkok's daytime population commutes from surrounding provinces in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region, the total population of which is 14,626,225.^[4] Bangkok is a cosmopolitan city; the census showed that it is home to 567,120 expatriates from Asian countries (including 71,024 Chinese and 63,069 Japanese nationals), 88,177 from Europe, 32,241 from the Americas, 5,856 from Oceania and 5,758 from Africa. Migrants from neighbouring countries include 216,528 Burmese, 72,934 Cambodians and 52,498 Lao.^[67] In 2018, numbers show that there are 370,000 international migrants registered with the Department of Employment, more than half of them migrants from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar.^[44]

Although it has been Thailand's largest population centre since its establishment as capital city in 1782, Bangkok grew only slightly throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries. British diplomat John Crawford, visiting in 1822, estimated its population at no more than 50,000.^[68] As a result of Western medicine brought by missionaries as well as increased immigration from both within Siam and overseas, Bangkok's population gradually increased as the city modernized in the late 19th century. This growth became even more pronounced in the 1930s, following the discovery of antibiotics. Although family planning and birth control were introduced in the 1960s, the lowered birth rate was more than offset by increased migration from the provinces as economic expansion accelerated. Only in the 1990s have Bangkok's population growth rates decreased, following the national rate. Thailand had long since become highly centralized around the capital. In 1980, Bangkok's population was fifty-one times that of Hat Yai and Songkhla, the second-largest urban centre, making it the world's most prominent primate city.^{[69][70]}

Historical census populations^[65]

Year	Population
1919	437,294
1929	713,384
1937	890,453
1947	1,178,881
1960	2,136,435
1970	3,077,361
1980	4,697,071
1990	5,882,411
2000	6,355,144
2010 ^[4]	8,305,218

The majority of Bangkok's population identify as Thai,^[h] although details on the city's ethnic make-up are unavailable, as the national census does not document race.^[i] Bangkok's cultural pluralism dates back to the early days of its founding: several ethnic communities were formed by immigrants and forced settlers including the Khmer, northern Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, Tavoyan, Mon and Malay.^[9] Most prominent were the Chinese, who played major roles in the city's trade and became the majority of Bangkok's population—estimates include up to three-fourths in 1828 and almost half in the 1950s.^{[74][j]} Chinese immigration was restricted from the 1930s and effectively ceased after the Chinese Revolution in 1949. Their prominence subsequently declined as younger generations of Thai Chinese integrated and adopted a Thai identity. Bangkok is still nevertheless home to a large Chinese community, with the greatest concentration in Yaowarat, Bangkok's Chinatown.

The majority (91 percent) of the city's population is Buddhist. Other religions include Islam (4.7 percent), Christianity (2 percent), Hinduism (0.5 percent), Sikhism (0.1 percent) and Confucianism (0.1 percent).^[76]



Yaowarat Road, the centre of Bangkok's Chinatown. Chinese immigrants and their descendants form the largest ethnic group in the city.

Apart from Yaowarat, Bangkok also has several other distinct ethnic neighbourhoods. The Indian community is centred in Phahurat, where the Gurdwara Siri Guru Singh Sabha, founded in 1933, is located. Ban Khrua on Saen Saep Canal is home to descendants of the Cham who settled in the late 18th century. Although the Portuguese who settled during the Thonburi period have ceased to exist as a distinct community, their past is reflected in Santa Cruz Church, on the west bank of the river. Likewise, Assumption Cathedral on Charoen Krung Road is among many European-style buildings in the Old Farang Quarter, where European diplomats and merchants lived in the late 19th to early 20th centuries. Nearby, the Haroon Mosque is the centre of a Muslim community. Newer expatriate communities exist along Sukhumvit Road, including the Japanese community near Soi Phrom Phong and Soi Thong Lo, and the Arab and North African neighbourhood along Soi Nana. Sukhumvit Plaza, a mall on Soi Sukhumvit 12, is popularly known as Korea Town.

Economy

Bangkok is the economic centre of Thailand, and the heart of the country's investment and development. In 2010, the city had an economic output of 3.142 trillion baht (US\$98.34 billion), contributing 29.1 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). This amounted to a per-capita GDP value of 456,911 baht (\$14,301), almost three times the national average of 160,556 baht (\$5,025). The Bangkok Metropolitan Region had a combined output of 4.773 trillion baht (\$149.39 billion), or 44.2 percent of GDP.^[77] Bangkok's economy ranks as the sixth among Asian cities in terms of per-capita GDP, after Singapore, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Osaka—Kobe and Seoul.^[78]

Wholesale and retail trade is the largest sector in the city's economy, contributing 24 percent of Bangkok's gross provincial product. It is followed by manufacturing (14.3 percent); real estate, renting and business activities (12.4 percent); transport and communications (11.6 percent); and financial intermediation (11.1 percent). Bangkok alone accounts for 48.4 percent of Thailand's service sector, which in turn constitutes 49 percent of GDP. When the Bangkok Metropolitan Region is considered, manufacturing is the most significant contributor at 28.2 percent of the gross regional product, reflecting the density of industry in the Bangkok's neighbouring provinces.^[79] The automotive industry based around Greater Bangkok is the largest production hub in Southeast Asia.^[80] Tourism is also a significant contributor to Bangkok's economy, generating 427.5 billion baht (\$13.38 billion) in revenue in 2010.^[81]



MahaNakhon, the city's tallest building from 2016 to 2018, stands among the skyscrapers of Sathon Road, one of Bangkok's main financial districts.



The Siam area is home to multiple shopping centres catering to both the middle and upper classes and tourists.

The Stock Exchange of Thailand (SET) is on Ratchadaphisek Road in inner Bangkok. The SET, together with the Market for Alternative Investment (MAI) has 648 listed companies as of the end of 2011, with a combined market capitalization of 8.485 trillion baht (\$267.64 billion).^[82] Due to the large amount of foreign representation, Thailand has for several years been a mainstay of the Southeast Asian economy and a centre of Asian business. The Globalization and World Cities Research Network ranks Bangkok as an "Alpha" world city, and it is ranked 59th in Z/Yen's *Global Financial Centres Index* 11.^{[83][84]}

Bangkok is home to the headquarters of all of Thailand's major commercial banks and financial institutions, as well as the country's largest companies. Many multinational corporations base their regional headquarters in Bangkok due to the lower cost of labour and operations relative to other major Asian business centres. Seventeen Thai companies are listed on the Forbes 2000, all of which are based in the capital,^[85] including PTT, the only Fortune Global 500 company in Thailand.^[86]

Income inequality is a major issue in Bangkok, especially between relatively unskilled lower-income immigrants from rural provinces and neighbouring countries, and middle-class professionals and business elites. Although absolute poverty rates are low—only 0.64 percent of Bangkok's registered residents were living under the poverty line in 2010, compared to a national average of 7.75 percent—economic disparity is still substantial.^[87] The city has a Gini coefficient of 0.48, indicating a high level of inequality.^[88]

Tourism

Bangkok is one of the world's top tourist destinations. Of 162 cities worldwide, MasterCard ranked Bangkok as the top destination city by international visitor arrivals in its *Global Destination Cities Index 2018*, ahead of London, with just over 20 million overnight visitors in 2017.^[89] This was a repeat of its 2017 ranking (for 2016).^{[90][91]} Euromonitor International ranked Bangkok fourth in its Top City Destinations Ranking for 2016.^[92] Bangkok was also named "World's Best City" by *Travel + Leisure* magazine's survey of its readers for four consecutive years, from 2010 to 2013.^[93] As the main gateway through which visitors arrive in Thailand, Bangkok is visited by the majority of international tourists to the country. Domestic tourism is also prominent. The Department of Tourism recorded 26,861,095 Thai and 11,361,808 foreign visitors to Bangkok in 2010. Lodgings were made by 15,031,244 guests, who occupied 49.9 percent of the city's 86,687 hotel rooms.^[81] Bangkok also topped the list as the world's most popular tourist destinations in 2017 rankings.^{[94][95][96][97]}



Wat Phra Kaew in the Grand Palace is among Bangkok's major tourist attractions.

Bangkok's multi-faceted sights, attractions and city life appeal to diverse groups of tourists. Royal palaces and temples as well as several museums constitute its major historical and cultural tourist attractions. Shopping and dining experiences offer a wide range of choices and prices. The city is also famous for its dynamic nightlife. Although Bangkok's sex tourism scene is well known to

foreigners, it is usually not openly acknowledged by locals or the government.



Khao San Road is lined by budget accommodation, shops and bars catering to tourists.

Among Bangkok's well-known sights are the Grand Palace and major Buddhist temples, including Wat Phra Kaew, Wat Pho, and Wat Arun. The Giant Swing and Erawan Shrine demonstrate Hinduism's deep-rooted influence in Thai culture. Vimanmek Mansion in Dusit Palace is famous as the world's largest teak building, while the Jim Thompson House provides an example of traditional Thai architecture. Other major museums include the Bangkok National Museum and the Royal Barge National Museum. Cruises and boat trips on the Chao Phraya and Thonburi's canals offer views of some of the city's traditional architecture and ways of life on the waterfront.^[98]

Shopping venues, many of which are popular with both tourists and locals, range from the shopping centres and department stores concentrated in Siam and Ratchaprasong to the sprawling Chatuchak Weekend Market. Taling Chan Floating Market is among the few such markets in Bangkok. Yaowarat is known for its shops as well as street-side food stalls and restaurants, which are also found throughout the city. Khao San Road has long been famous as a destination for backpacker tourism, with its budget accommodation, shops and bars attracting visitors from all over the world.

Bangkok has a reputation overseas as a major destination in the sex industry. Although prostitution is technically illegal and is rarely openly discussed in Thailand, it commonly takes place among massage parlours, saunas and hourly hotels, serving foreign tourists as well as locals. Bangkok has acquired the nickname "Sin City of Asia" for its level of sex tourism.^[99]

Issues often encountered by foreign tourists include scams, overcharging and dual pricing. In a survey of 616 tourists visiting Thailand, 7.79 percent reported encountering a scam, the most common of which was the gem scam, in which tourists are tricked into buying overpriced jewellery.^[100]

Among Bangkok's well-known sights



Grand Palace



The Giant Swing



Wat Arun

Culture

The culture of Bangkok reflects its position as Thailand's centre of wealth and modernisation. The city has long been the portal of entry of Western concepts and material goods, which have been adopted and blended with Thai values to various degrees by its residents. This is most evident in the lifestyles of the expanding middle class. Conspicuous consumption serves as a display of economic and social status, and shopping centres are popular weekend hangouts.^[101] Ownership of electronics and consumer products such as mobile phones is ubiquitous. This has been accompanied by a degree of secularism, as religion's role in everyday life has rather diminished. Although such trends have spread to other urban centres, and, to a degree, the countryside, Bangkok remains at the forefront of social change.

A distinct feature of Bangkok is the ubiquity of street vendors selling goods ranging from food items to clothing and accessories. It has been estimated that the city may have over 100,000 hawkers. While the BMA has authorised the practice in 287 sites, the majority of activity in another 407 sites takes place illegally. Although they take up pavement space and block pedestrian traffic, many of the city's residents depend on these vendors for their meals, and the BMA's efforts to curb their numbers have largely been unsuccessful.^[102]

In 2015, however, the BMA, with support from the National Council for Peace and Order (Thailand's ruling military junta), began cracking down on street vendors in a bid to reclaim public space. Many famous market neighbourhoods were affected, including Khlong Thom, Saphan Lek, and the flower market at Pak Khlong Talat. Nearly 15,000 vendors were evicted from 39 public areas in 2016.^[103] While some applauded the efforts to focus on pedestrian rights, others have expressed concern that gentrification would lead to the loss of the city's character and adverse changes to people's way of life.^{[104][105]}



Temporary art display at Siam Discovery during the Bangkok Art Biennale 2018

Festivals and events

The residents of Bangkok celebrate many of Thailand's annual festivals. During Songkran on 13–15 April, traditional rituals as well as water fights take place throughout the city. Loi Krathong, usually in November, is accompanied by the Golden Mount Fair. New Year celebrations take place at many venues, the most prominent being the plaza in front of CentralWorld. Observances related to the royal family are held primarily in Bangkok. Wreaths are laid at King Chulalongkorn's equestrian statue in the Royal Plaza on 23 October, which is King Chulalongkorn Memorial

Day. The present king's and queen's birthdays, respectively on 5 December and 12 August, are marked as Thailand's national Father's Day and national Mother's Day. These national holidays are celebrated by royal audiences on the day's eve, in which the king or queen gives a speech, and public gatherings on the day of the observance. The king's birthday is also marked by the Royal Guards' parade.

Sanam Luang is the site of the Thai Kite, Sport and Music Festival, usually held in March, and the Royal Ploughing Ceremony which takes place in May. The Red Cross Fair at the beginning of April is held at Suan Amporn and the Royal Plaza, and features numerous booths offering goods, games and exhibits. The Chinese New Year (January–February) and Vegetarian Festival (September–October) are celebrated widely by the Chinese community, especially in Yaowarat.^[106]

Media

Bangkok is the centre of Thailand's media industry. All national newspapers, broadcast media and major publishers are based in the capital. Its 21 national newspapers had a combined daily circulation of about two million in 2002. These include the mass-oriented *Thai Rath*, *Khao Sod* and *Daily News*, the first of which currently prints a million copies per day,^[107] as well as the less sensational *Matichon* and *Krungthep Thurakij*. The *Bangkok Post* and *The Nation* are the two national English language dailies. Foreign publications including *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, *The Straits Times* and the *Yomiuri Shimbun* also have operations in Bangkok.^[108] The large majority of Thailand's more than 200 magazines are published in the capital, and include news magazines as well as lifestyle, entertainment, gossip and fashion-related publications.

Bangkok is also the hub of Thailand's broadcast television. All six national terrestrial channels, Channels 3, 5 and 7, Modernine, NBT and Thai PBS, have headquarters and main studios in the capital. With the exception of local news segments broadcast by the NBT, all programming is done in Bangkok and repeated throughout the provinces. However, this centralised model is weakening with the rise of cable television, which has many local providers. There are numerous cable and satellite channels based in Bangkok. TrueVisions is the major subscription television provider in Bangkok and Thailand, and it also carries international programming. Bangkok was home to 40 of Thailand's 311 FM radio stations and 38 of its 212 AM stations in 2002.^[108] Broadcast media reform stipulated by the 1997 Constitution has been progressing slowly, although many community radio stations have emerged in the city.

Likewise, Bangkok has dominated the Thai film industry since its inception. Although film settings normally feature locations throughout the country, the city is home to all major film studios. Bangkok has dozens of cinemas and multiplexes, and the city hosts two major film festivals annually, the Bangkok International Film Festival and the World Film Festival of Bangkok.

Art

Traditional Thai art, long developed within religious and royal contexts, continues to be sponsored by various government agencies in Bangkok, including the Department of Fine Arts' Office of Traditional Arts. The SUPPORT Foundation in Chitralada Palace sponsors traditional and folk handicrafts. Various communities throughout the city still practice their traditional crafts, including the production of *khon* masks, alms bowls, and classical musical instruments. The National Gallery hosts permanent collection of traditional and modern art, with temporary contemporary exhibits. Bangkok's contemporary art scene has slowly grown from relative obscurity into the public sphere over the past two decades. Private galleries gradually emerged to provide exposure for new artists, including the Patravadi Theatre and H Gallery. The centrally located Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, opened in 2008 following a fifteen-year lobbying campaign, is now the largest public exhibition space in the city.^[109] There are also many other art galleries and museums, including the privately owned Museum of Contemporary Art.

The city's performing arts scene features traditional theatre and dance as well as Western-style plays. *Khon* and other traditional dances are regularly performed at the National Theatre and Salachalermkrung Royal Theatre, while the Thailand Cultural Centre is a newer multi-purpose venue which also hosts musicals, orchestras and other events. Numerous venues regularly feature a variety of performances throughout the city.

Sport

Modern Bangkok has developed a strong spectator sport culture. While muay Thai kickboxing matches at Rajadamnern and Lumpini Stadiums are regularly broadcast on television, the sport has mostly been overtaken in popularity by association football. Several foreign leagues and competitions, especially England's Premier League, have large followings in Bangkok as well as other Thai urban centres. In recent years, the Thai League has been gaining popularity. Police Tero based in Bangkok and Muangthong United based in the Bangkok Metropolitan Region are leading clubs.^[110] For more information on this topic, see Football in Bangkok.

While sepak takraw can be seen played in open spaces throughout the city, especially by the working class, football and other modern sports are now more of the norm. Western sports were introduced during the reign of King Chulalongkorn, and were originally only available to the privileged. Such status is still associated with certain sports. Golf is popular among the upwardly mobile, and while Thailand's more famous clubs are in the countryside, there are several courses in Bangkok itself. Horse riding takes place in a couple of exclusive clubs in the city. Horse racing is very popular in Bangkok and betting on horses is legal. There are two racecourses in Bangkok: "Royal Bangkok Sports Club" and "Royal Turf Club of Thailand".



Ratchadamnoen Avenue is annually decorated with lights and displays in celebration of King Bhumibol's birthday.



The Bangkok Art and Culture Centre, the city's major public contemporary art venue, was opened in 2008 after many delays.



Games of sepak takraw can be spotted throughout Bangkok's parks and streets.

There are many public sporting facilities located throughout Bangkok. The two main centres are the National Stadium complex, which dates to 1938, and the newer Hua Mak Sports Complex, which was built for the 1998 Asian Games. Bangkok had also hosted the games in 1966, 1970 and 1978; the most of any city. The city was the host of the inaugural Southeast Asian Games in 1959, the 2007 Summer Universiade and the 2012 FIFA Futsal World Cup.

Transport

Although Bangkok's canals historically served as a major mode of transport, they have long since been surpassed in importance by land traffic. Charoen Krung Road, the first to be built by Western techniques, was completed in 1864. Since then, the road network has vastly expanded to accommodate the sprawling city. A complex elevated expressway network helps bring traffic into and out of the city centre, but Bangkok's rapid growth has put a large strain on infrastructure, and traffic jams have plagued the city since the 1990s. Although rail transport was introduced in 1893 and electric trams served the city from 1894 to 1968, it was only in 1999 that Bangkok's first rapid transit system began operation. Older public transport systems include an extensive bus network and boat services which still operate on the Chao Phraya and two canals. Taxis appear in the form of cars, motorcycles, and "tuk-tuk" auto rickshaws.

Bangkok is connected to the rest of the country through the national highway and rail networks, as well as by domestic flights to and from the city's two international airports. Its centuries-old maritime transport of goods is still conducted through Khlong Toei Port.

The BMA is largely responsible for overseeing the construction and maintenance of the road network and transport systems through its Public Works Department and Traffic and Transportation Department. However, many separate government agencies are also in charge of the individual systems, and much of transport-related policy planning and funding is contributed to by the national government.

Roads

Road-based transport is the primary mode of travel in Bangkok. Due to the city's organic development, its streets do not follow an organized grid structure. Forty-eight major roads link the different areas of the city, branching into smaller streets and lanes (*soi*) which serve local neighbourhoods. Eleven bridges over the Chao Phraya link the two sides of the city, while several expressway and motorway routes bring traffic into and out of the city centre and link with nearby provinces.



Traffic jams, seen here on Ratchadamri Road, are common in Bangkok.

Bangkok's rapid growth in the 1980s resulted in sharp increases in vehicle ownership and traffic demand, which have since continued—in 2006 there were 3,943,211 in-use vehicles in Bangkok, of which 37.6 percent were private cars and 32.9 percent were motorcycles.^[112] These increases, in the face of limited carrying capacity, caused severe traffic congestion evident by the early 1990s. The extent of the problem is such that the Thai Traffic Police has a unit of officers trained in basic midwifery in order to assist deliveries which do not reach hospital in time.^[113] While Bangkok's limited road surface area (8 percent, compared to 20–30 percent in most Western cities) is often cited as a major cause of its traffic jams, other factors, including high vehicle ownership rate relative to income level, inadequate public transport systems, and lack of transportation demand management, also play a role.^[114] Efforts to alleviate the problem have included the construction of intersection bypasses and an extensive system of elevated highways, as well as the creation of several new rapid transit systems. The city's overall traffic conditions, however, remain poor.

Traffic has been the main source of air pollution in Bangkok, which reached serious levels in the 1990s. But efforts to improve air quality by improving fuel quality and enforcing emission standards, among others, had visibly ameliorated the problem by the 2000s. Atmospheric particulate matter levels dropped from 81 micrograms per cubic metre in 1997 to 43 in 2007.^[115] However, increasing vehicle numbers and a lack of continued pollution-control efforts threatens a reversal of the past success.^[116] In January–February 2018, weather conditions caused bouts of haze to cover the city, with particulate matter under 2.5 micrometres (PM_{2.5}) rising to unhealthy levels for several days on end.^{[117][118]}

Although the BMA has created thirty signed bicycle routes along several roads totalling 230 kilometres (140 mi),^[119] cycling is still largely impractical, especially in the city centre. Most of these bicycle lanes share the pavement with pedestrians. Poor surface maintenance, encroachment by hawkers and street vendors, and a hostile environment for cyclists and pedestrians, make cycling and walking unpopular methods of getting around in Bangkok.

Buses and taxis

Bangkok has an extensive bus network providing local transit services within the Greater Bangkok area. The Bangkok Mass Transit Authority (BMTA) operates a monopoly on bus services, with substantial concessions granted to private operators. Buses, minibus vans, and song thaew operate on a total of 470 routes throughout the region.^[120] A separate bus rapid transit system owned by the BMA has been in operation since 2010. Known simply as the BRT, the system currently consists of a single line running from the business district at Sathon to Ratchaphruek on the western side of the city. The Transport Co., Ltd. is the BMTA's long-distance counterpart, with services to all provinces operating out of Bangkok.

Taxis are ubiquitous in Bangkok, and are a popular form of transport. As of August 2012, there are 106,050 cars, 58,276 motorcycles and 8,996 tuk-tuk motorized tricycles cumulatively registered for use as taxis.^[121] Meters have been required for car taxis since 1992, while tuk-tuk fares are usually negotiated. Motorcycle taxis operate from regulated ranks, with either fixed or negotiable fares, and are usually employed for relatively short journeys.



Streetlamps and headlights illuminate the Makkasan Interchange of the expressway. The system sees a traffic of over 1.5 million vehicles per day.^[111]

Despite their popularity, taxis have gained a bad reputation for often refusing passengers when the requested route is not to the driver's convenience.^[122] Motorcycle taxis were previously unregulated, and subject to extortion by organized crime gangs. Since 2003, registration has been required for motorcycle taxi ranks, and drivers now wear distinctive numbered vests designating their district of registration and where they are allowed to accept passengers.

Rail systems

Bangkok is the location of Hua Lamphong Railway Station, the main terminus of the national rail network operated by the State Railway of Thailand (SRT). In addition to long-distance services, the SRT also operates a few daily commuter trains running from and to the outskirts of the city during the rush hour.

Bangkok is served by three rapid transit systems: the BTS Skytrain, the underground MRT, and the elevated Airport Rail Link. Although proposals for the development of rapid transit in Bangkok had been made since 1975,^[123] it was only in 1999 that the BTS finally began operation.

The BTS consists of two lines, Sukhumvit and Silom, with 43 stations along 51.69 kilometres (32.12 mi).^[124] The MRT opened for use in July 2004, and currently consists of two lines, the Blue Line and Purple Line. The Airport Rail Link, opened in August 2010, connects the city center to Suvarnabhumi Airport to the east. Its eight stations span a distance of 28 kilometres (17 mi).

Although initial passenger numbers were low and their service area has long remained limited to the inner city, these systems have become indispensable to many commuters. The BTS reported an average of 600,000 daily trips in 2012,^[125] while the MRT had 240,000 passenger trips per day.^[126]

As of July 2019, construction work is ongoing to extend the city-wide transit system's reach, including the construction of the Light Red grade-separated commuter rail line. The entire Mass Rapid Transit Master Plan in Bangkok Metropolitan Region consists of eight main lines and four feeder lines totaling 508 kilometres (316 mi) to be completed by 2029. In addition to rapid transit and heavy rail lines, there have been proposals for several monorail systems.

Water transport

Although much diminished from its past prominence, water-based transport still plays an important role in Bangkok and the immediate upstream and downstream provinces. Several water buses serve commuters daily. The Chao Phraya Express Boat serves thirty-four stops along the river, carrying an average of 35,586 passengers per day in 2010, while the smaller Khlong Saen Saep boat service serves twenty-seven stops on Saen Saep Canal with 57,557 daily passengers. Long-tail boats operate on fifteen regular routes on the Chao Phraya, and passenger ferries at thirty-two river crossings served an average of 136,927 daily passengers in 2010.^[127]

Bangkok Port, popularly known by its location as Khlong Toei Port, was Thailand's main international port from its opening in 1947 until it was superseded by the deep-sea Laem Chabang Port in 1991. It is primarily a cargo port, though its inland location limits access to ships of 12,000 deadweight tonnes or less. The port handled 11,936,855 tonnes (13,158,130 tons) of cargo in the first eight months of the 2010 fiscal year, about 22 percent the total of the country's international ports.^{[128][129]}

Airports

Bangkok is one of Asia's busiest air transport hubs. Two commercial airports serve the city, the older Don Mueang International Airport and the new Bangkok International Airport, commonly known as Suvarnabhumi. Suvarnabhumi, which replaced Don Mueang as Bangkok's main airport after its opening in 2006, served 52,808,013 passengers in 2015,^[130] making it the world's 20th busiest airport by passenger volume. This volume exceeded its designed capacity of 45 million passengers. Don Mueang reopened for domestic flights in 2007,^[131] and resumed international service focusing on low-cost carriers in October 2012.^[132] Suvarnabhumi is undergoing expansion to increase its capacity to 60 million passengers by 2019 and 90 million by 2021.^[133]

Health and education

Education

Bangkok has long been the centre of modern education in Thailand. The first schools in the country were established here in the later 19th century, and there are now 1,351 schools in the city.^[134] The city is home to the country's five oldest universities, Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Kasetsart, Mahidol and Silpakorn, founded between 1917 and 1943. The city has since continued its dominance, especially in higher education; the majority of the country's universities, both public and private, are located in Bangkok or the Metropolitan Region. Chulalongkorn and Mahidol are the only Thai universities to appear in the top 500 of the *QS World University Rankings*.^[135] King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, also located in Bangkok, is the only Thai university in the top 400 of the 2012–13 *Times Higher Education World University Rankings*.^[136]



Many buses, minibuses and taxis share the streets with private vehicles at Victory Monument, a major public transport hub.



A BTS train passes over the busy Sala Daeng Intersection. The MRT also crosses below the street at this location.



The Chao Phraya Express Boat serves over 35,000 passengers daily.



Suvarnabhumi International Airport is home to flag carrier Thai Airways.

Over the past few decades the general trend of pursuing a university degree has prompted the founding of new universities to meet the needs of Thai students. Bangkok became not only a place where immigrants and provincial Thais go for job opportunities, but also for a chance to receive a university degree. Ramkhamhaeng University emerged in 1971 as Thailand's first open university; it now has the highest enrolment in the country. The demand for higher education has led to the founding of many other universities and colleges, both public and private. While many universities have been established in major provinces, the Greater Bangkok region remains home to the greater majority of institutions, and the city's tertiary education scene remains over-populated with non-Bangkokians. The situation is not limited to higher education, either. In the 1960s, 60 to 70 percent of 10- to 19-year-olds who were in school had migrated to Bangkok for secondary education. This was due to both a lack of secondary schools in the provinces and perceived higher standards of education in the capital.^[137] Although this discrepancy has since largely abated, tens of thousands of students still compete for places in Bangkok's leading schools. Education has long been a prime factor in the centralization of Bangkok and will play a vital role in the government's efforts to decentralize the country.

Healthcare

Much of Thailand's medical resources are disproportionately concentrated in the capital. In 2000, Bangkok had 39.6 percent of the country's doctors and a physician-to-population ratio of 1:794, compared to a median of 1:5,667 among all provinces.^[138] The city is home to 42 public hospitals, five of which are university hospitals, as well as 98 private hospitals and 4,063 registered clinics.^[139] The BMA operates nine public hospitals through its Medical Service Department, and its Health Department provides primary care through sixty-eight community health centres. Thailand's universal healthcare system is implemented through public hospitals and health centres as well as participating private providers.

Research-oriented medical school affiliates such as Siriraj, King Chulalongkorn Memorial and Ramathibodi Hospitals are among the largest in the country, and act as tertiary care centres, receiving referrals from distant parts of the country. Lately, especially in the private sector, there has been much growth in medical tourism, with hospitals such as Bumrungrad and Bangkok Hospital, among others, providing services specifically catering to foreigners. An estimated 200,000 medical tourists visited Thailand in 2011, making Bangkok the most popular global destination for medical tourism.^[140]

Crime and safety

Bangkok has a relatively moderate crime rate when compared to urban counterparts around the world.^[141] Traffic accidents are a major hazard^[142] while natural disasters are rare. Intermittent episodes of political unrest and occasional terrorist attacks have resulted in losses of life.^[143]

Although the crime threat in Bangkok is relatively low, non-confrontational crimes of opportunity such as pick-pocketing, purse-snatching, and credit card fraud occur with frequency.^[141] Bangkok's growth since the 1960s has been followed by increasing crime rates partly driven by urbanisation, migration, unemployment and poverty. By the late 1980s, Bangkok's crime rates were about four times that of the rest of the country. The police have long been preoccupied with street crimes ranging from housebreaking to assault and murder.^[144] The 1990s saw the emergence of vehicle theft and organized crime, particularly by foreign gangs.^[145] Drug trafficking, especially that of *ya ba* methamphetamine pills, is also chronic.^{[146][147]}

According to police statistics, the most common complaint received by the Metropolitan Police Bureau in 2010 was housebreaking, with 12,347 cases. This was followed by 5,504 cases of motorcycle thefts, 3,694 cases of assault and 2,836 cases of embezzlement. Serious offences included 183 murders, 81 gang robberies, 265 robberies, 1 kidnapping and 9 arson cases. Offences against the state were by far more common, and included 54,068 drug-related cases, 17,239 cases involving prostitution and 8,634 related to gambling.^[148] The Thailand Crime Victim Survey conducted by the Office of Justice Affairs of the Ministry of Justice found that 2.7 percent of surveyed households reported a member being victim of a crime in 2007. Of these, 96.1 percent were crimes against property, 2.6 percent were crimes against life and body, and 1.4 percent were information-related crimes.^[149]

Political demonstrations and protests are common in Bangkok.^[143] While most events since 1992 had been peaceful, the series of protests since 2006 have often turned violent.^[143] Demonstrations during March–May 2010 ended in a crackdown in which 92 were killed, including armed and unarmed protesters, security forces, civilians and journalists. Terrorist incidents have also occurred in Bangkok, most notably the 2015 Bangkok bombing at the Erawan shrine, and also a series of bombings on the 2006–07 New Year's Eve.

Traffic accidents are a major hazard in Bangkok. There were 37,985 accidents in the city in 2010, resulting in 16,602 injuries and 456 deaths as well as 426.42 million baht in damages. However, the rate of fatal accidents is much lower than in the rest of Thailand. While accidents in Bangkok amounted to 50.9 percent of the entire country, only 6.2 percent of fatalities occurred in the city.^[150] Another serious public health hazard comes from Bangkok's stray dogs. Up to 300,000 strays are estimated to roam the city's streets,^[151] and dog bites are among the most common injuries treated in the emergency departments of the city's hospitals. Rabies is prevalent among the dog population, and treatment for bites pose a heavy public burden.^[k]

International relations

The city's formal international relations are managed by the International Affairs Division of the BMA. Its missions include partnering with other major cities through sister city agreements, participation and membership in international organizations, and pursuing cooperative activities with the many foreign diplomatic missions based in the city.^[153]



The campus of Chulalongkorn University was surrounded by rural fields when it was established in 1917. Pathum Wan District has since become part of the Bangkok city centre.



Siriraj Hospital, established in 1888, is the oldest hospital in Thailand.



Political violence has at times spilled onto the streets of Bangkok, as seen during the military crackdown on protesters in 2010.

International participation

Bangkok is a member of several international organizations and regional city government networks, including the Asian Network of Major Cities 21, the Japan-led Asian-Pacific City Summit, the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, the ESCAP-sponsored Regional Network of Local Authorities for Management of Human Settlements in Asia and Pacific (CITYNET), Japan's Council of Local Authorities for International Relations, the World Association of the Major Metropolises and Local Governments for Sustainability, among others.^[153]

With its location at the heart of mainland Southeast Asia and as one of Asia's hubs of transportation, Bangkok is home to many international and regional organizations. Among others, Bangkok is the seat of the Secretariat of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), as well as the Asia-Pacific regional offices of the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).^[154]



Protesters in front of the United Nations Building during the 2009 Bangkok Climate Change Conference. Bangkok is home to several UN offices.

Sister cities

Bangkok has made sister city and/or friendship agreements with twenty-eight other cities in nineteen countries, as of 2019.^[155] They are:

- Washington, D.C., United States (1962, 15 July 2002)^{[156][157]}
- Beijing, China (26 May 1993)^[158]
- Budapest, Hungary (20 February 1997)^[159]
- Brisbane, Australia (7 May 1997)^[160]
- Moscow, Russia (19 June 1997)^[161]
- Saint Petersburg, Russia (20 June 1997)^{[162][163]}
- Manila, Philippines (24 June 1997)^{[164][165]}
- Jakarta, Indonesia (21 January 2002)^[166]
- Hanoi, Vietnam (25 February 2004)^[167]
- Vientiane, Laos (24 May 2004)^[168]
- Astana, Kazakhstan (11 June 2004)^[169]
- Chaozhou, China (23 November 2005)^{[170][171]}
- Fukuoka, Japan (8 February 2006)^[172]
- Seoul, South Korea (16 June 2006)^[173]
- Guangzhou, China (13 November 2009)^{[174][175]}
- Lausanne, Switzerland (29 December 2009)^[176]
- Busan, South Korea (14 March 2011)^[177]
- Chongqing, China (26 September 2011)^[178]
- Tianjin, China (27 February 2012)^[179]
- Ankara, Turkey (21 March 2012)^[180]
- George Town, Malaysia (5 April 2012)^[181]
- Aichi, Japan (9 July 2012)^[182]
- Tehran, Iran (27 November 2012)^[183]
- Shanghai, China (10 May 2012)^[184]
- Phnom Penh, Cambodia (4 January 2013)^[185]
- Shandong, China (7 July 2013)^[186]
- Wuhan, China (20 November 2013)^[187]
- Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (3 April 2015)^[188]
- Shenzhen, China (10 July 2015)^[189]
- Lisbon, Portugal (19 January 2016)^[190]
- Dalian, China (19 July 2016)^[191]
- Porto, Portugal (30 July 2016)^[192]
- Thừa Thiên-Huế, Vietnam (5 August 2016)^[193]
- Chengdu, China (10 May 2017)^[194]
- Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia (27 July 2017)^[195]
- Daegu, South Korea (17 August 2017)^[196]

See also

- Outline of Bangkok
- World's largest cities

Notes

a. British English: /bæŋˈkɒk/,^{[5][6]} American English: /bæŋkɒk/^{[6][7]}

b. กรุงเทพมหานคร, pronounced [kr̩uŋ tʰɛːp ma hǎː nákʰwān]ⓘ listen)

c. ⓘ Thai pronunciation

d. Two plants are known in Thai by the name *makok*: *E. hygrophilus* (*makok nam*, "water *makok*") and *Spondias pinnata* (*makok pa*, "jungle *makok*"). The species that grew in the area was likely *makok nam*.

e. While this ceremonial name is generally believed, based on writings by the Somdet Phra Wannarat (Kaeo), to have originally been given by King Rama I and later modified by King Mongkut, it did not come into use until the latter reign.^[14]

f. This ceremonial name uses two ancient Indian languages, Pāli and Sanskrit, prefaced with the only one Thai word, *Krung*, which means 'capital'. According to the romanisation of these languages, it can actually be written as *Krung-dēvamahānagara amaratanakosindra mahindrāyudhyā mahātilakabhava navaratanarājadhānī purīramya uttamarājanivēsana mahāsthāna amaravimāna avatārasthitya shakrasdattiya viukarmaprasiddhi*ⓘ listen) .

- g. The BMA gives an elevation figure of 2.31 metres (7 ft 7 in).^[1]
- h. Thai ethnicity is rather a question of cultural identity than of genetic origin.^[71] Many people in Bangkok who self-identify as Thai have at least some Chinese ancestry.^[72]
- i. An introductory publication by the BMA gives a figure of 80 percent Thai, 10 percent Chinese and 10 percent other, although this is likely a rough estimate.^[73]
- j. By one recent estimate, at least 60 percent of the city's residents are of Chinese descent.^[75]
- k. A 1993 study found dog bites to constitute 5.3 percent of injuries seen at Siriraj Hospital's emergency department.^[152]

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External links

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-  Geographic data related to Bangkok (<https://www.openstreetmap.org/relation/7191699>) at OpenStreetMap

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