

Title:

Bangkok. A Brilliant Place To Visit In 2006.

Word Count:

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Summary:

Bangkok is an exciting, high energy melting pot of east meets west. A dynamic city that has embraced technology and modern living with its busy expressways, bold skyscrapers and designer-filled shopping malls. Yet underneath it all, it remains a traditional haven of culture, history and time-honored customs, where elders are respected and family always comes first.

Keywords:

Thailand, Bangkok, hotel, shopping, culture, sightseeing, nightlife

Article Body:

Approximate flying times: From New York: 17 hrs. From Chicago: 22 hrs 30 mins.
From LA: 19 hrs 25 mins.

If New York is the city that never sleeps, forget the alarm clock. Bangkok, Thailand's capital city, comes a very close second. The city was founded in 1782 by the first monarch of the present Chakri Dynasty. Today it's the country's spiritual, commercial and educational hub, home to approximately ten million people or more than 10% of the Thai population.

- City of contrasts and confusion.

Bangkok (or Krung Thep in Thai which means "city of angels") is an exciting, high energy melting pot of east meets west. A dynamic city that has embraced technology and modern living with its busy expressways, bold skyscrapers and designer-filled shopping malls. Yet underneath it all, it remains a traditional haven of culture, history and time-honored customs, where elders are respected and family always comes first.

As you travel from the airport you'll see plenty of examples of modern architecture dotting the city scape and amongst them all, standing proud, are glittering Buddhist Wats (temples) such as Wat Phra Kaew and The Grand Palace. Snaking through the concrete jungle, you'll spy echoes of the "old Bangkok" below you - ancient canals and waterways that are well worth exploring on a boat trip.

Every Thai household and building, even the most modern, has a traditional spirit house built outside for good fortune and to honor the spirit of the land. Each day, small offerings of fruit and water are laid out, often with garlands of orchids. If you're an early riser, keen to make the most of your vacation time in Bangkok, don't be surprised when you see Buddhist monks in saffron robes making their morning "alms" rounds accepting food and donations from local people, young and old.

- Some like it hot, but not all the time.

Thailand has a tropical climate with an annual average temperature of around 75 to 92 degrees Fahrenheit, so pack light clothing for your trip. Natural fibers are often more comfortable when you're walking and touring in hot weather. Practically everywhere you go in Bangkok you'll find you some relief from the heat, with blasts of icy cold air conditioning in shops and hotels.

From March to May it's the hottest time, with the highest temperatures and humidity. From June to October is monsoon season, so remember to take an umbrella. November to February is cooler and less humid. Bear in mind that the monsoon season varies throughout the country and can affect the weather you experience.

- Bangkok Hotels to match every budget.

You'll find all types of accommodation in Bangkok - from lavish 5 star international names to smaller hostels, favored by back packers. Book online and see what special rates you can find to suit your mood and that all-important budget. You'll discover everything from peaceful luxury escapes with spas to exciting hotels right in the heart of the action.

- Getting around is easier.

One of the first words you'll learn in Bangkok is "Rot tip" or "rot tit" which literally means "cars that stick", in other words traffic jam. But the everyday snarls and gridlock have been vastly improved by Bangkok's cosmopolitan transport system.

You can now ride the subway, the Hua Lamphong - Bang Sue line has 18 stations along the 12 mile route. It's fast, quiet and modern.

Jump on a BTS Sky Train. BTS sky trains ply along Sukhumvit, Silom and Phahonyothin roads. The routes connect Bangkok's leading hotels and major shopping areas such as Siam Square, Silom, Ratchaprasong and Chatuchak Weekend

Market.

Of course, you can't go to Bangkok without a ride in a tuk-tuk. These zippy three-wheeled open-air motorized taxis are popular for short journeys. Fares must be bargained in advance, it's part of the fun.

- Top 5 must-see highlights.

The Grand Palace: the number one attraction. Every visitor to Bangkok should see the magnificent buildings within the Grand Palace compound to get a feeling of this grand architectural style. Since the founding of Bangkok as the Nations capital by King Rama I, The Grand Palace has been the major architectural symbol of The Thai Royal Family. The Royal Family actually resides at Chitralada Palace while The Grand Palace is used for ceremonial purposes.

Wat Pho: possibly the most interesting temple in Thailand. It combines history, medical science and is a center for meditation and traditional massage training. Have a massage while you're here, at a very fair price.

Chatuchak Weekend Market: with over 9,000 shops and stalls you'll be tempted over and over. Close to everything that is for sale in Bangkok is here, including antiques, Buddha amulets, handicrafts, clothes, flowers and furniture. (You'll notice that some maps spell it "Jatuchak". Many English words have multiple spellings, so if you're in doubt, ask the hotel concierge to write it in Thai for the taxi driver.)

Vimanmek Mansion Museum: the world's largest golden teak building located in the compound of the Dusit Palace on Ratchawithi Road. The three-storey royal mansion has 81 rooms, halls and ante-chambers containing unique memorabilia.

Jim Thompson's House: this exquisite Thai house and buildings stand as a museum to the man who revived the Thai silk industry after the Second World War. The company he founded, Jim Thompson Thai Silk, is recognized worldwide for its brilliant fabrics, home accessories and fashion items. The gardens are equally impressive with a lush tropical jungle imitating nature's haphazard beauty right in the center of the city.

- Shopping till you drop!

Shopping in Bangkok is not limited to one or two streets. You'll find dozens of malls, markets and luxury retail outlets throughout the city. The most popular are located around the Ploenchit-Ratchaprasong area, Sukhumvit Rd and Silom-Surawong-Patpong, including the fantastic Patpong night market where you can

pick up your souvenirs, fashion and Thai handicrafts. Don't be shy to bargain in the market (nicely) as your dollar can go a long way.

- Bangkok rocks.

Bangkok has no single area for nightlife - it has several. Bars are spread out all over town in places such as Patpong, Silom Soi 2 and 4, Soi Sarasin and Lang Suan, Royal City Avenue, Banglumpoo, Soi Cowboy and Sukhumvit Soi 33, among others.

One of the hottest new spots is called "Bed" is an extraordinary space-age designer lounge in fashionable Sukhumvit Soi 11. The Bed Supper Club is a "dining in bed" experience. Best described as a unique combination of upscale restaurant, club, art gallery, theater and stage merged into one.

- Celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

If you need another good reason to visit "The Land of Smiles", here it is. This year marks the Diamond Jubilee of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the ninth king of the Chakri Dynasty. The King has reigned for almost 60 years, making him not only the longest reigning Thai monarch, but the longest reigning King in the world today.

- A once-in-a-lifetime spectacle.

In true Thai style, the Bangkok celebrations promise to be a spectacular tribute to the Royal Family, full of color, pomp and ceremony. One of the main highlights is The Royal Barge Procession on June 12-13 2006. It will be an international event with twenty-eight monarchs from around the world in attendance. This is a once-in-a lifetime opportunity for visitors, as the Procession is only held to mark significant historical events such as His Majesty's ascension to the throne.

- A river of splendor.

Bangkok's main river, the Chao Phraya will become the place to be. Imagine a royal armada stretching as far as your eyes can see. A flotilla of superbly carved royal barges slowly sail into view, manned by the Royal Thai Navy dressed in ancient ceremonial uniforms. Each sailor rowing in perfect unison, honed through months of intense practice.

If you plan to be in Bangkok in June, do leave the bargains for a few hours and be part of the adoring crowd - and bring your camera. Incidentally, two major

dress rehearsals are planned for the June 6 and 9, so if you can't attend the real event, this is as close as you may get.

Thailand has a well deserved reputation as the "The Land of Smiles". You'll receive a warm welcome and feel the genuine friendliness of the locals. One thing's for sure, the memories of a vacation here will stay with you for a lifetime.