amazing THAILAND
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THAILAND YOUR WAY

Brilliant Bangkok

Sublime south

Natural north

Welcome to

North
North-East
Central
West
East
South
Thailand
Chiang Rai
Mae Hong Son
Phayao
Chiang Mai
Nan
Lamphun
Lampang
Phrae
Uttaradit
Nong Khai
Loei
Udon Thani
Nakhon Phanom
Sakon Nakhon
Nong Bua Lamphu
Tak
Sukhothai
Phitsanulok
Mukdahan
Khon Kaen
Kalasin
Kamphaeng Phet
Phichit
Phetchabun
Maha Sarakham
Roi Et
Yasothon
Amnat Charoen
Chaiyaphum
Nakhon Sawan
Uthai Thani
Ubon Ratchathani
Chainat
Nakhon Ratchasima
Sisaket
Buriram
Surin
Sing Buri
Lop Buri
Ang Thong
Saraburi
Suphanburi
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya
Nakhon Nayok
Kanchanaburi
Pathum Thani
Prachinburi
Nakhon Pathom
Nonthaburi
Sa Kaeo
Bangkok
Chachoengsao
Ratchaburi
Samut Sakhon
Samut Prakan
Samut Songkhram
Chonburi
Phetchaburi
Rayong
Chanthaburi
Trat
Prachuap Khiri Khan
Chumphon
Ranong
Surat Thani
Phang Nga
Nakhon Si Thammarat
Krabi
Phuket
Phatthalung
Trang
Songkhla
Pattani
Satun
Yala
Narathiwat

Thailand

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Thailand is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world and when you experience this special country for the first time, it's easy to see why.

Whether eating street food in the sublime madness of Bangkok, relaxing on one of the picture perfect beaches or trekking through the jungle-coated mountains, Thailand delivers on all levels.

The diversity of experience is perhaps the most surprising aspect for those new to the country. It's also why it is a good idea to get an idea of what you can experience and the sites you can see in Thailand.

This guide aims to give an overview of the different regions, with tips on things to do, must-see attractions and some insider ideas that most tourists overlook.

Armed with this information you can create a holiday that is perfect for you and get the most out of this incredible country.

Be sure to use the checklist at the end of the guide to ensure you are fully prepared, although the only thing you really need to do is go to Thailand and soak up its many delights.

We know you will be returning time and again.

DID YOU KNOW?

Thailand's capital Bangkok is the most visited city in the World beating London to the top spot. It welcomed around 16 million visitors last year alone!

Fly Bangkok Air
Asia's Boutique

ASIA'S BOUTIQUE AIRLINE

Bangkok Airways Boutique lounges

Bangkok Airways great perks you get flying with them, their great service lounges. Bangkok Airways has always been distinguished as Asia's boutique airline.

It does so by offering its passengers a clean and comfortable atmosphere. Their Boutique Lounge where they can relax with no extra charge or get some snacks, a hot or cold beverage or enjoy free internet access from one of several computer booths for economy class.

The more prestigious Blue Ribbon Lounge is a more personalised lounge catering to the passengers individual needs. The blue ribbon lounges are more extravagant in design with hanging crystal chandeliers and a cozier atmosphere than its boutique lounges to wait for or in between your flights The exclusive lounge offers free wifi, shower room, massge chair, reading room from business class.

New Routes

Chiang Mai

Krabi

Yangon

Udon Thani

Chiang Rai

Bangkok Airways will launch new services and add frequency to its regional and domestic routes to enhance the airline's reach in 2015.

The new series include Chiang Mai-Mandalay (3 weekly flight), Chiang Mai-Udon Thani (2 daily flight) and Chiang Mai-Phuket (daily flight) which these new sectors will begin operations on 26 October 2014, Chiang Mai-Yangon (4 weekly flight) starting 27 October 2014 onwards and are now open for booking.

26 October 2014 will see additional services for Bangkok-Krabi (from 3 to 4 daily flights), and on 1st November for Bangkok-Chiang Rai (from 2 to 3 daily flights),

rways
e Airline

Furthermore, a revamped bangkokair.com presents every function to get you flying in an easily navigated format, made easier by the new PG Live Chat, in which a real Bangkok Airways agent walks you through any query, live online 24/7.

Passengers on the go can download the free Bangkok Airways mobile application for both iOS and Android or walk up to one of Thailand's first fully automated Ticket Kiosks to search flight data, make payments and even print tickets.

While all the channels offer easy payment, travellers can still pay via airline ticket offices and tour agents or at Counter Service outlets nationwide should they wish.

Before departure, log back online for Web Check-In or use the Self-Check-In Kiosk as little as fifty minutes before your flight. Environmentally minded domestic travellers even have the option of an E-Boarding Pass that will fast track them to the Bangkok Airways Lounge.

BOOKING

Bangkok Airways has linked up with the world's top Global Distribution Systems (GDS) giving access to more than 100,000 travel agencies in every major destination worldwide.

In addition, Bangkok Airways has Interline traffic agreements with international airlines such as All Nippon Airways, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Czech Airlines, Thai Airways International and Swissair. Passengers can make Bangkok Airways' flight reservations and purchase tickets through those airlines. The airline also has the codeshare agreement with Ethihad Airways, EVA Air, Air Berlin, KLM, Air France and Malaysian Air.

Bangkok Airways is also "E-ticket Ready" for both domestic and international flight routes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bangkok Airways was awarded the title of 'World's Best Regional Airline' and 'Best Regional Airline Asia' by Skytrax in 2014.

WORLD AIRLINE WINNER SKYTRAX AWARDS 2014

CONTACT : Email: reservation@bangkokair.com | Web: www.bangkokair.com

The St. Regis Sp

When only the most elegant and luxurious will do, look no further than The St. Regis Bangkok…

The St. Regis Bangkok continues the St. Regis heritage that started in New York in 1904 when John Jacob Astor IV created a new style of grandeur and elegance that changed the face of luxury hospitality.

With a prestigious location along Rajadamri Road, Bangkok's key commercial corridor and prime shopping precinct, with BTS Skytrain connection link to the station, The St. Regis Bangkok offers unprecedented excellence.

Timeless elegance in design is the hallmark of the 176 guest rooms and 51 suites. The floor to ceiling windows offer unobstructed views of the city skyline, the greenery of the local parks and the golf course.

One of the many highlights of the property is the Sky Lounge which boasts panoramic views of the city, but there is plenty more to discover.

Unwinding is easy with the impeccable wine cellar, exclusive Elemis Spa and gym, and there is also an outdoor pool with café to shake off the Bangkok heat.

And when it comes to business, The St. Regis Bangkok is second to none with its state-of-the-art business centre, premier meeting technology, superbly appointed function venues and expert event staff.

Caroline Astor Suite Bedroom

Grand Deluxe Room at night

John Jacob Astor Living Room

olendour

ST REGIS
BANGKOK

TEL: + 66 2207 7777 WEB: stregis.com/bangkok

The St. Regis Bangkok is perfectly located for your stay in the capital

EXCEPTIONAL EVENTS

No matter what the event or occasion, from intimate meetings to spectacular weddings, The St. Regis Bangkok provides its world-renowned impeccable service and attention to detail.

With natural daylight and a captivating view of the Bangkok skyline from level 14, any event leaves a lasting impression for all the right reasons.

Contact the hotel to discover the incredible possibilities for your meeting or event.

YOUR PERSONAL BUTLER

It was John Jacob Astor IV's vision to "make The St. Regis the finest hotel in the world" and an important part of the strategy was the personal service. And what could be more personal than your own butler, on hand to cater to every request and desire you have? The St. Regis butler service in Bangkok ensures your stay in Thailand is not only comfortable, but magical as well.

Butler Service

RESTAURANT HEAVEN

The St. Regis Bangkok is a gourmand's dream, boasting eateries and lounges with some of the world's top chefs.

Viu restaurant, located on the 12th floor next to the Sky Lounge boasts spectacular views over the Royal Bangkok Sports Club and Bangkok skyline. By day, its atmosphere reflects the elegance of a stately home, and transforms in the evenings to a seductive dining venue, with an emphasis on exceptional grills.

JoJo offers an exceptional menu of authentic Italian cuisine in elegant contemporary surroundings. The enticing cuisine can be enjoyed with wines from a cellar thoughtfully composed with the connoiseur in mind.

Decanter features a selection of vintage wines in a gentlemen's club ambience with an oriental influence. It offers an extensive cellar from the world's most celebrated vineyards with two private rooms for exclusive tastings or wine dinners.

The Drawing Room provides a rare haven of refined luxury in which to enjoy the enduring tradition of Afternoon Tea as well as the ideal venue for a relaxing business meeting.

The St. Regis Bar introduces an extraordinary selection of premier and unique spirits, classic cocktails, champagne and caviar with backdrop of the sun setting, punctuated by expressive live music.

The Pool Bar is the oasis of serenity where guests can savour cuisine and refreshments from a hand-crafted menu in an alfresco setting while enjoying panoramic views of the city skyline.

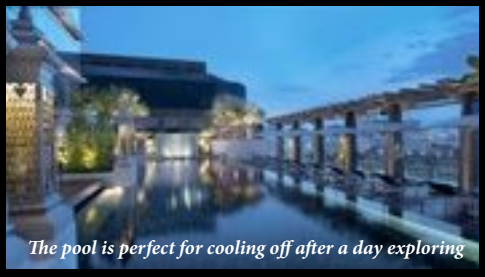
The St. Regis Bar

The terrace offers fantastic views of Bangkok

DID YOU KNOW?

The St. Regis Bangkok has revived The Champagne Ritual, the traditional art of sabering to free a magnum of champagne from its cork.

Swimming pool



The pool is perfect for cooling off after a day exploring

Bangkok

Sanphet Prasat Palace, Ancient City, Bangkok.

Eating street food in Bangkok is an experience not to be missed.

Floating market near Bangkok.

Modern meets old, fun sits alongside serenity and chaos lives with calm. Bangkok is truly a city of extremes and one that never fails to delight.

It is the archetypal modern Asian urban experience, with sophisticated eateries, five-star hotels and skyscrapers laden with modern technology. But it is also true to its past and street hawkers provide incredible food in the stifling, but somehow perfect heat.

Ancient temples and ruins nestle in comfortably with the modern structures, and the high end designer malls as much of an attraction as the traditional floating markets.

WAT ARUN is Bangkok's most famous ancient landmark and is usually first on visitors' to-do lists. This Buddhist temple was built in the seventeenth century, although the spires were added in the nineteenth. There is a small charge for foreigners who wish to visit it.

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Bangkok is a city that's wide awake night and day!

TRAVEL DETAILS

Bangkok has two airports, Suvarnabhumi Airport and Don Muang Airport and the first is used by all airlines in the country aside from Nok Air, Orient Thai and Air Asia, which all use the latter.

There is nearly a 20 mile journey into central Bangkok from both airports and a great deal of congestion on the road so allow time for this when booking. Use the Airport Rail Link to get into the city as it takes 15 minutes. The city boasts all the major transportation options you would expect to other parts of the country as well as the Skytrain, which was built in a bid to ease congestion.

TOP TIP!

Book a tour of the city as you will get so much out of the experience. They are inexpensive and will give an insight you would be hard to get by trusting to luck.

Wat Arun.

Chatuchak weekend market is the largest in Thailand.

A great way to get a perspective on Bangkok is to travel by boat.

A short journey out of the city and you will find what's dubbed the largest outdoor museum in the world, **ANCIENT SIAM**. It contains replicas of many of Thailand's most important structures including the Sanphet Prasat Palace. The park is even shaped to replicate Thailand and the structures are placed geographically.

Back in the city, when exploring the streets you will be tempted by all sorts of street food from various hawkers. Standards vary but we say try as much as you can and the more exotic the better (don't blame us though if it goes wrong!)

And when it comes to shopping you need to visit the floating markets of Taling Chan Market, Bang Ku Wiang Market, Tha Kha and Damnoen Saduak.

And on dry land **CHATUCHAK WEEKEND MARKET**, once the preserve of wholesalers, is now an institution for individuals looking for a bargain.

DID YOU KNOW?

The World Meteorological Organisation has Bangkok as the world's hottest city. The average air temperature throughout the year is 28 degrees centigrade but this hits 34 degrees between the months of March and May along with 90% humidity!

GRANDE CENTR

RATCHADAMRI

Looking for your own private paradise in the heart of the city? Look no further than Grande Centre Point Hotel Ratchadamri where exceptional service and facilities provide the perfect spot to explore Bangkok.

The hotel is just minutes away from the central shopping district of Ratchadamri and offers easy access to local landmarks, diverse entertainment and fine dining options – from the upscale Siam Paragon and CentralWorld designer malls to inexpensive bargains at the Maneeya Center, Amarin Plaza and President Tower Arcade.

Whether you are spending the night or looking for an extended stay, the tastefully designed living spaces create a relaxed and comfortable space to call your own.

Boasting a swimming pool, Rarinjinda Spa, fitness centre, sauna & Jacuzzi, reading room and entertainment room, to name just a few of the many facilities, the perfect way to unwind is always found at Grande Centre Point Hotel Ratchadamri.

There are also three dedicated meeting and function rooms and one conference boardroom, perfect for making a great first impression when hosting anything from an international video conference to a lavish cocktail reception

ROOM FACILITIES

Work station, microwave & refrigerator, washing machine & dryer, heating element & toaster, free cable & satellite TV, widescreen TV, stereo & DVD player, IDD line with fax machine, magnetic key card, safety box, in-room Wi-Fi internet.

TERMINAL 21

SERVICES & AMENITIES

24-hour room service, 24-hour reception and concierge, Internet station in lobby, free wifi access in room, restaurant, all day dining & poolside service, limousine service, laundry service, doctor on call 24 hours, parking, meeting, catering and banquet services.

CLICK HERE FOR A VIRTUAL TOUR

E POINT HOTEL

Grande Centre Point Hotel Terminal 21 is situated by the BTS (Asok Skytrain Station) and MRT (Sukhumvit Subway Station), at the heart of the vibrant Sukhumvit Road making it an ideal stay for exploration.

Blending Thai style with Western amenities both business travellers and leisure guests are raving about this hotel.

With an extensive range of well-appointed and fully furnished guestrooms and suites, the hotel also boast world-class facilities complemented by friendly service.

Highlights include an outdoor infinity-style swimming pool, pond with gazebo, a fully equipped gym, sauna and Jacuzzi, a kid's room, conference room, restaurant and high speed Wi-Fi Internet.

Sophisticated meeting and conference facilities are also available and guests can utilise the executive lounge, tennis court and golf putting green.

BlueSpice Restaurant provides wholesome and healthy eating options with its European and Thai-fusion menu.

Grande Centre Point Hotel Terminal 21 offers five meeting rooms that can be converted into two large meeting rooms: the Grand Ballroom and the Grand Sukhumvit.

PLOENCHIT

The extremely popular Grande Centre Point Hotel Ploenchit provides guests the convenience of space and location, whether they are in the city for business or leisure.

Set within walking distance to the Ploenchit Skytrain station, guests have easy access to not only the business district, but also the shops and malls in and around Siam, the night markets, and nightlife hotspots.

A range of recreational facilities are available for guest use, including an outdoor pool and sauna.

The apartment style rooms enjoy the convenience of a full kitchen, living room, and a separate bedroom. With one of the best locations in the city, a stay at Grande Centre Point Hotel Ploenchit is one of convenience.

FACILITIES

24-hour front desk, airport transfer, ATM/cash machine on site, car park, coffee shop, concierge, currency exchange, laundry service, meeting facilities, restaurant, room service, fitness centre, outdoor pool, kids pool, free Wi-Fi in all rooms.

minal21.com for more information

VISIT www.grandecentrepointploenchit.com for more information

The Central Plain

The ruins of Ayutthaya are captivating.

Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat houses one of Thailand's most revered statues of Buddha.

Phra Pathom Chedi marking the arrival of Buddhism in the region.

Synonymous with the war, taking a train over the River Kwai is a popular tourist activity.

The baby monkeys at Lopburi are a curious bunch.

Once the delights of Bangkok have been experienced, head north to discover a wealth of history and some of the former capitals of Thailand.

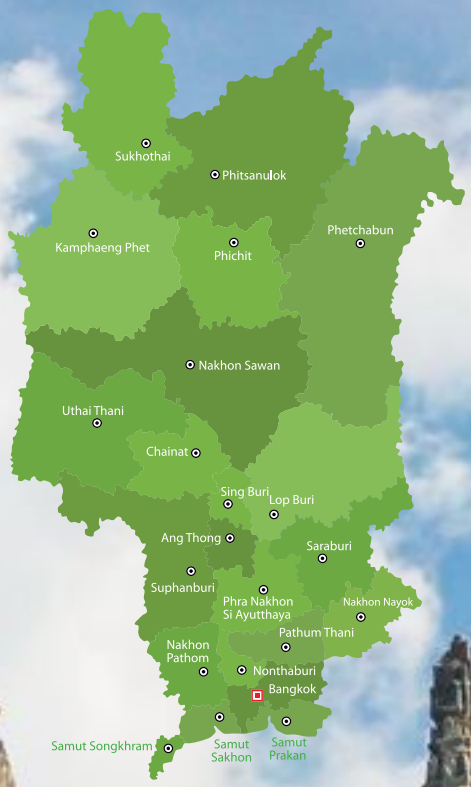
The central plains are resplendent with agriculture and this rural food bowl, or 'great rice bowl' as it's sometimes referred to, has long been the envy of neighbouring nations.

This is Thailand relatively untouched by the modern world and the seemingly endless rice fields are something to behold.

Having said that, visits to the heart of the country are more about the discovery of its past rather than spectacular scenery.

About 30 minutes outside of the capital is **NAKHON PATHOM**, which boasts Thailand's tallest Buddhist monument, the 380 foot high Phra Pathom Chedi. It marks the location of where Buddhism was introduced to the region more than

ns



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TRAVEL DETAILS

The Central Plains are well connected with the rest of Thailand through the roads, but the most spectacular way to travel up is by boat. Alternatively it is possible to travel by rail.

TOP TIP!

Visit Nakhon Sawan, which is not yet a relatively well known tourist destination. But there is plenty to see and do including a large aquarium a space observatory centre and the largest swamp in the country.

2000 years ago.

The ruins of **AYUTTHAYA** are spellbinding and there is plenty of fun to be had further north in **LOP BURI** where ruins meet cheeky monkeys for a great day out.

For those who want to take the infamous trip over the River Kwai should head to **KANCHANABURI** in the west of the region, which is the base for the experience. It also has museums dedicated to remembering the plight of those who died building the railways during the Second World War when Japan was in control of the area.

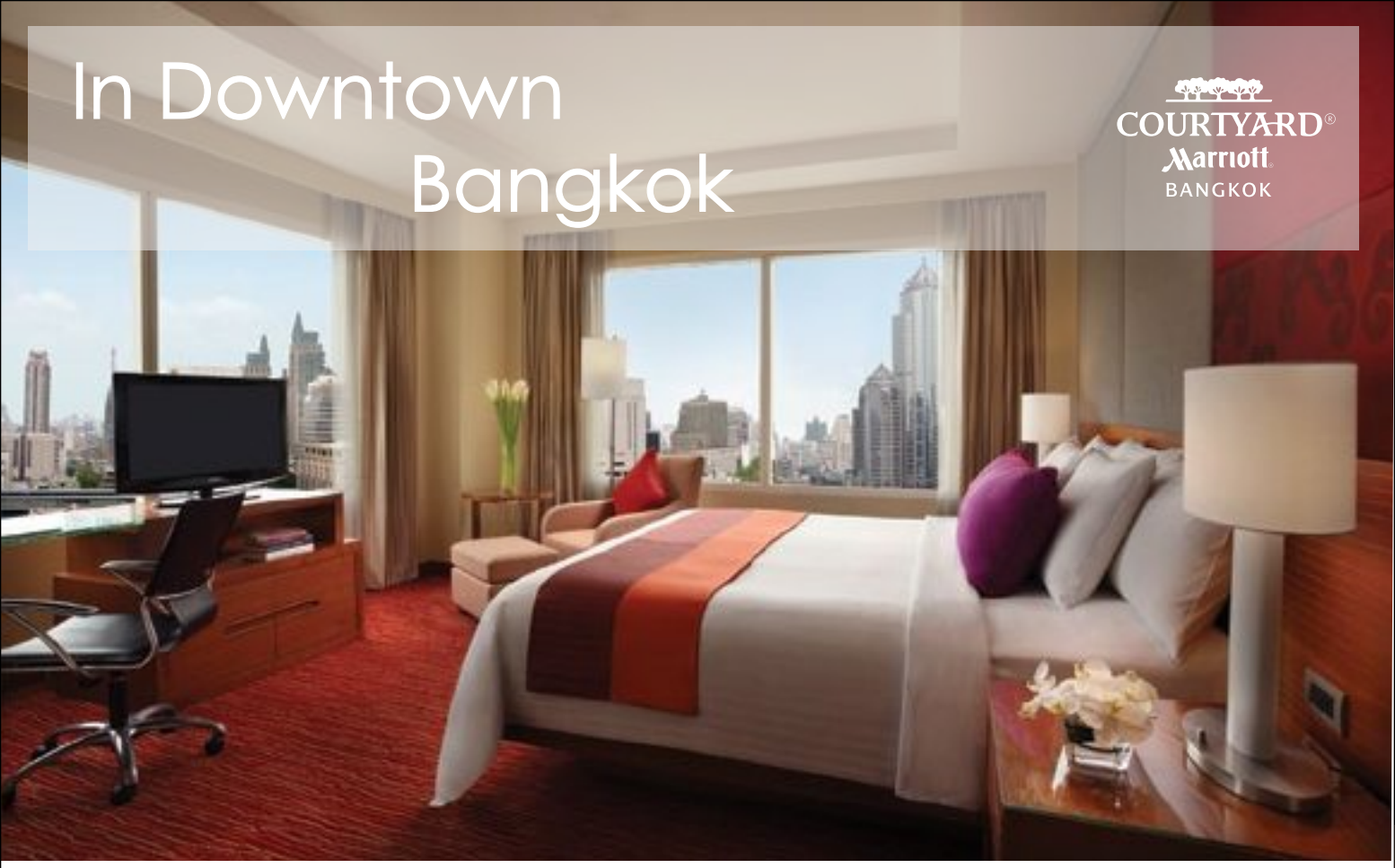
PHITSANULOK is one of the oldest cities in Thailand and due to its position sat on the cross roads of the north and central regions plays an important commercial role. While most of the old city was destroyed in a devastating fire in 1955, the city is known for its house boats that sit on the River Nan and the stunning Wat Phra Sri Rattana Mahathat.

DID YOU KNOW?

Si Nakharin National Park boasts Huai Mae Kamin Waterfall, one of the most beautiful in the country.

In Downtown Bangkok

COURTYARD® Marriott BANGKOK



Whether it's business or pleasure, Courtyard by Marriott Bangkok is the perfect place to explore Thailand's vibrant capital.

With so many things to do and see in Bangkok, and in such little time for some, it's recommended you stay in the heart of the city, with its endless possibilities.

Experience a refreshing stay right in central Bangkok at the Courtyard by Marriott Bangkok hotel where you'll find an oasis of business and leisure. Combining sheer comfort with warm friendly service, this city centre hotel allows you to explore and do more with your time.

The famous sacred Erawan Shrine, which is within walking distance, is visited by millions to pay tribute and ask for blessings. Then across the road you can delve into the Rajaprasong area with its world class shopping, dining destinations, entertainment and much more.

The property is also in close proximity of the BTS Skytrain so the city is truly at your fingertips.

Stay in any of the 316 comfortable deluxe rooms or suites featuring the convenience of a large desk, high-speed Internet connectivity, a wide 32" LCD TV screen and enjoy the exclusivity of the Executive Lounge on the top floor with an amazing view of the city.

The hotel has highly versatile function rooms that can be configured up to five meeting spaces accommodating up to 160 people for events.

Enjoy modern dining in the newly renovated dining outlet MoMo Café, which serves culinary creations that will not only satisfy your hunger, but give your taste buds a treat.

Enjoy modern dining in the newly renovated dining outlet MoMo Café, which serves culinary creations that will not only satisfy your hunger, but give your taste buds a treat.

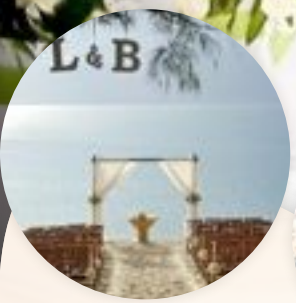
Dine in the contemporary ambience inside or bask out on the terrace with friends and family for a relaxing evening after a long day of city exploration, or simply unwind in the tropical tranquility of the poolside area.

For business and pleasure, reserve a room at the Courtyard Bangkok hotel in the heart of the city for both a relaxing and productive trip.

Courtyard by Marriott Bangkok
155/1 Soi Mahadleklaung 1
Rajdamri Road, Pathumwan
Bangkok 10330, Thailand
T +66 2690 1888 I courtyardbangkok.com

Married by Renaissance Phuket

When it comes to combining the most special day of your life with the wonder of Thailand, Marriott is on hand to make your dreams come true…



Getting married is already a special occasion, but it's also the perfect excuse to treat you and your loved ones to an experience like no other.

That is why Renaissance Phuket Resort & Spa is the perfect choice for your wedding celebrations.

Renaissance ensures your wedding is beyond everything you want it to be wrapped up in a Thai dream.

And rather than having to worry, the Marriott's planners provide complimentary services, handling all of the event details and working closely with you and your own wedding planner to ensure the perfect wedding.

There are various packages based on the style of wedding you would like and the number of people you want to share your day with. Below is a summary of just some of the benefits of hosting your day with Marriott, but remember to get in contact to discover all the incredible options.

WESTERN WEDDING CEREMONY

For those wanting a western wedding ceremony, all of the traditional moments are catered to in this package.
With up to 80 people it includes English speaking celebrant to conduct ceremony, the wedding vow and ring exchange ceremony and a white and green flower decoration theme with the bridal bouquet and corsages.
Other highlights include welcome drinks and towels, a bottle of bubbly and a photographer.
Extra indulgences include spa treatment for bride and groom for two hours, a complimentary upgrade to a pool villa or suite and bottle of sparkling wine in villa on wedding day and breakfast for the couple on the following day.

THAI WEDDING CEREMONY

For those looking for a traditional Thai wedding ceremony for up to 80 people, look no further.
This package includes a flower backdrop and water blessing set, a pair of Thai wedding neck garland for the bride and groom, and wedding blessing and prayer conducted by five Thai Buddhist monks.
It also provides offer of prayers for food and beverage to the monks and all of the room services mentioned in the traditional package.

JUST THE TWO OF US

This intimate ceremony for two people includes a celebrant to conduct ceremony, wedding vow and ring exchange ceremony and flower decorations as well as corsage for the groom and bouquet for the bride.
There is a welcome drink and cold towel upon arrival at ceremony area as well as a bottle of champagne for toasting.
There is also a wedding cake and two hours of photography plus digital photos on CD.

RENAISSANCE
PHUKET RESORT & SPA

TEL: +66 7 636 3999
WEB: renaissancephuket.com

The North

A region that seems a lifetime away from the adrenaline fuelled beaches in the south, northern Thailand boasts hills, temples, staggering views and a truly unique culture.

The larger part of the north is a national park, which means there is an abundance of wildlife including tigers, birds and elephants.

This makes it ideal for trekking and experiencing contact with some of the hill tribes who are scattered across the terrain.

But there is more to the region than endless jungle as it includes among its cities, Thailand's second largest hub and former capital, **CHIANG MAI**.

An incredible city resplendent with temples and architecture contained in the old city walls, it is the perfect base for exploring the rest of the region.

For those who prefer a more relaxed atmosphere, **CHIANG RAI** is a great

Cabbages being grown by the hill tribes of the north.

One of the statues of Buddha in Sukhothai.

Pai River is a great place to raft.

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Phra Singh temple is located in the western part of the old city centre of Chiang Mai.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Flights to Chiang Mai from Bangkok take just under an hour and a half and Thai International flies daily. By road, the journey is far longer, often taking longer than 12 hours. Night coaches are popular for those wanting to try and sleep and save some money.

TOP TIP!

It is best to visit the north between November and April due to the weather conditions, but it does get cooler at night, so pack suitable cold weather clothing, especially if hiking. Those looking for a deal on accommodation should travel in the wet season, June to September, as options are plentiful and temperatures remain warm.

alternative. Ideally located for elephant treks and hiking tours, there are markets selling goods crafted by the tribes in the surrounding area.

THE NORTHERN PLAINS, while flatter than the far north, still boasts numerous hills and forests and holds the city of **SUKHOTHAI.**

This 13th century delight is a **UNESCO** World Heritage Site, offering an insight into the kingdom's rich history, with ruins of palaces and city walls.

There are five zones to the old city and each charges a separate entry fee.

The modern part of the city provides entertainment though as well as numerous restaurants and bars.

For those looking for an experience that only became available 40 years ago, **MAE HON SON** is a worthwhile visit.

Formerly considered a frontier town with Burma, it was isolated from the outside world until the 1970s, but is now firmly on the map thanks to new roads.

It allows for incredible views, often complemented by morning mists. And rather than images of Wild West ramshackle properties, five-star hotels have moved into the area.

White water rafting enthusiasts and those with a taste for adventure should head to PAI, 100km west of Mae Hong Son. Named after its river, the town has tour companies that offer the chance to tackle the longest river in the region. Some even have the option to return by elephant!

A limestone cave in Mae Hon Son.

Rice fields in northern Thailand.

DID YOU KNOW?

Roughly seven hill tribes (Akha, Lahu, Lisu, Yao, Hmong, Lawa and Karen) inhabit the north, thought to have migrated from neighbouring countries such as China and Tibet.

The East

The pristine beaches of the east coast and short mountain ranges have long attracted travellers from across the globe.

PATTAYA, Thailand's first international resort, is attempting to rebuild its image as a hedonistic destination for singles to a more family-orientated resorts.

That's not to say there aren't still an abundance of bars and clubs for night-time enthusiasts.

Accommodation options are plentiful and there is so much to see and do, it's a great base for those who want it all on their doorstep.

Water sports, restaurants and market shopping are just a few of the must dos in Pattaya.

There are also plenty of small islands to discover which can be reached by chartered boats.

If you want to get back to nature, **KO SAMET ISLAND** ticks all the boxes and is part of a national marine park.

While it is not unspoiled and development has taken place, it offers a real chance to escape with beaches and plenty of camping. Due to its proximity to Bangkok is does get busy at weekends, but there is plenty of wonderful scenery and lush rainforests spilling onto white beaches and crystal waters to keep you happy.

A visit to **CHANTHABURI** region and its evergreen forest is a great place to discover beautiful waterfalls and is a

Ko Samet Island is part of a marine park

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Pattaya at night.

TRAVEL DETAILS

There are two domestic airports on the east coast, one near Trat and one at U-Tapao naval base. For road options Highway 3 stretches across the coast, beginning at Bangkok and there are routes to avoid heading back into the capital if you wish to head north. There is also a rail service from Bangkok to Si Racha and Pattaya.

TOP TIP!

Visit Chachoengsao and marvel at Wat Sothon.

popular place to explore by hiking. It's also a welcome alternative to the resort destinations in the east.

Close to the Cambodian border is the **KO CHANG** archipelago, which attracts tourists with its waterfalls, beaches, mangrove forests and reefs. It is quickly becoming more advanced in its tourist offering and the rainforest is home to an impressive range of wildlife, some of which is only found on the island. Be sure to explore the neighbouring islands as well as there are some hidden gems to discover.

SI RACHA is worth visiting for its seafood and just follow the locals to find the best spots to eat.

To get to the islands you will need to go through **TRAT PROVINCE,** which boasts a breath-taking woodland landscape. The region thrives on its rubber and chili plantations as well as fishing.

The capital of the same name is used as a departure point for visits to the islands or Cambodia.

A waterfall in Chanthaburi evergreen forest.

Big Buddha in Pattaya.

Diving in Thailand is a magical experience.

DID YOU KNOW?

Hat Lek is the Thai border crossing with Ko Kong in Cambodia and many use the route between the two.

The North East

The North East region is known as **ISAN** and accounts for around a third of Thailand. This incredibly rural, but densely populated area is complete with ancient fossils, nature parks and Khmer temples.

Due to the traditional nature of the region, some of the country's older customs can be seen here that aren't practiced in the rest of the country.

Candle processions and festivals are just some of the vibrant and beautiful moments to capture while travelling in Isan.

And that is what the region is about, sightseeing, buying local craft and the chance to immerse yourself in a more traditional aspect of Thai culture.

A real highlight is **KHAO YAI NATIONAL PARK** where you can camp and look out for its abundance of wildlife. This can either be undertaken on foot or by bike, but expect crowds at weekends as it is popular with tourists and locals alike.

For an incredible glimpse into the past, head to **BAN CHIANG HISTORICAL SITE** where the small village of Ban Chiang was discovered. It turned out to be part of a civilization predating China and is an important part of Asian prehistory.

Ancient pottery in Ban Chiang

And an insight in the Khymer Empire can be seen at **PRASAD HIN PHANOM RUNG**, which was built in the eleventh century.

KHON KAEN is the political centre of the region and is very much part of developing Thailand. Commerce is in abundance and it is a good example of modern Thailand sat alongside the traditional way of life. There is also a unique spicy culinary aspect to the city,

KORAT or Nakorn Rachisima to give it its official name, is ideally situated to explore the many ruins and temples of the area.

There is plenty to explore including ancient rock paintings and one of Thailand's earliest images of the reclining Buddha.

It would be a shame to not experience the **MEKONG RIVER** and cruises are available of all lengths from a couple of hours.

BAN CHIANG NATIONAL MUSEUM is another one of Thailand's many UNESCO World Heritage sites and displays ancient tools and artefacts from the Bronze Age.

Sat on the banks of the Mekong River is **NONG KHAI** a centre of activity and commerce. Despite this its French history is still prevalent and the attitude is very much laid back. Once again craftware is available as well as the chance to explore outside of the town into the forests or along the river.

To understand the role of elephants in the building of Kymer temples, venture to **SURIN**, where the Elephant Roundup festival reveals all about this fascinating relationship between man and beast.

It includes demonstrations of how elephants are trained, a football match and other performances.

Wat Nong Wang in Khon Kaen.

Sculpture park in Nong Khai.

Elephant football in Surin

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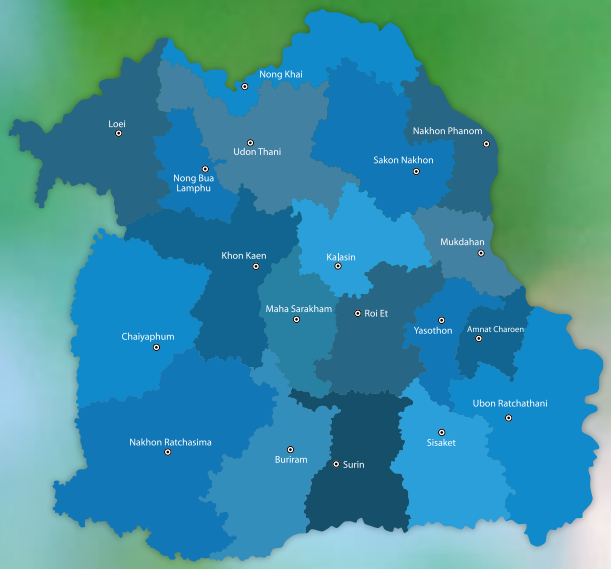

A female kingfisher in the national park

TRAVEL DETAILS

Nakhon Ratchasima, Korat, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani and Ubon Ratchathani all have flights operated by Thai Airways Domestic. It is also convenient to travel by road as the region boasts four highways and there are plenty of air-conditioned buses that link to other regions in Thailand. There are also express trains that leave daily form Bangkok to various cities and towns in Isan.

TOP TIP!

Look out for Matmee silk and wickerwork items that are unique to the region that make a perfect gift or memento.

DON'T MISS: Phimai boat racing is an annual festival that is more than a hundred years old. It takes place between October and November.

The historical park in

DID YOU KNOW?

The Candle Festival in Ubon in July is an incredible procession with giant carved candles all in honour of Buddha.

The South – Gul

The realm of the traveller, the southern Gulf coast of Thailand is best known for its islands of Ko Samui, Ko Tao and Ko Pha Ngan.

And while there is a very good reason to go and see these beautiful destinations (which we will get to in a minute), there is plenty to see and do on the mainland.

Most people head to the southern Gulf coast from Bangkok or Phuket and depending on the route travelled there are a few interesting stops along the way.

PHETCHABURI is the sweet making capital of Thailand thanks to the regions palms that provide the sap that is used to create the sugar. It's a charming place and there are historical wats to explore in varying conditions.

Thanks to its proximity the stretch of coast south of Bangkok is littered with holiday homes and is the favoured retreat for many of the capital's residents for weekend breaks. While the beaches are still beautiful, it's worth travelling further south to the likes of **BAN KRUD** or **PRACHUAP KHIRI KHAN**.

These coastal towns are perfect for watching the sunset in relaxed restaurants on white sandy beaches.

A temple in Ban Krud

A lake on Prachup Khiri Khan's national park.

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A cave in Phetchaburi

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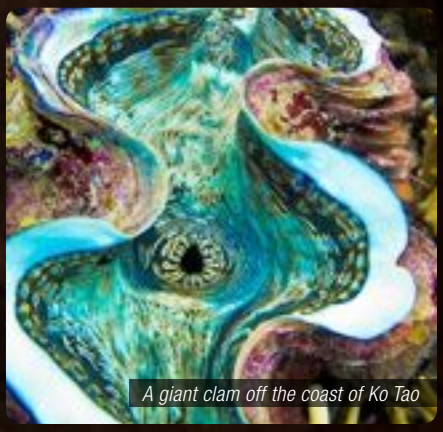
TRAVEL DETAILS

Samui Airport has flights to Phuket and other mainland destinations. There is also an airport in Surat Thani. There are several regular ferry services to Samui as well. Ko Thao has no airport and you will have to arrive by boat. This will depend on where you are travelling from.

TOP TIP!



A giant clam off the coast of Ko Tao

Learn to dive on Ko Tao where the waters are ideal for beginners and the island is geared towards the activity.

Due to their distance from the capital, they are far less built up, but also offer less in terms of activities.

Nature and geological lovers should make time to visit **KHAO SAM ROI YOT NATIONAL PARK**.

It boasts incredible limestone formations and caves as well as marshes that are a haven for migratory birds. With nearly 100 square kilometres, there are also beaches and forests to explore.

The island of **KO SAMUI** is now Thailand's second largest resort business, knocking Phuket into third. Developers have flooded in to cater to the demand for the incredible beauty it possesses. This is the archetypal white sandy coconut lined beaches slipping into crystal waters.

KO TAO is where to head if you want to grab a slice of underdeveloped heaven. There are still rustic huts to stay in if that is your style. The realm of the diver, its perfect for the beginner and offers plenty for the experienced underwater enthusiast. On land there is plenty of jungle exploration and partying through the night.

Half way between Ko Samui and Ko Tao, geographically and in terms of offering Is **KO PHA NGAN**, home of the notorious full moon party.

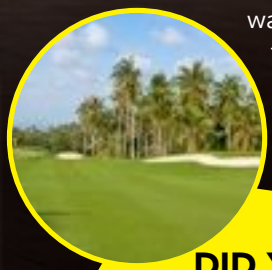
It is an island that still offers the delights of a seemingly undiscovered jungle and relaxed beautiful beaches, but higher end offerings are creeping in, offering the best of the backpacker world and that of the more upmarket experience.

Then of course there is the deep south of the Gulf Coast, where there is a unique blend of Thai-Buddhist, Malay-Muslim and Chinese culture.

There are points of interest for tourists, but many organisations warn against travel to the region due to unrest.

The draw of Ko Samui is understandable.

A party on Ko Pha Ngan.



DID YOU KNOW?

Ko Samui has its own championship golf club at the Santiburi Samui Country Club. It boasts some of the most spectacular scenery for a golf course in the world.

The South – Anda

Iconic images of Thailand abound on the Andaman coast. With its lush vegetation, staggeringly beautiful beaches and exquisite islands, the backpacker destinations of choice Phuket and Krabi are located here.

But there is far more to the area and its differences with central Thailand are obvious, especially as many southern Thais are Muslim.

Before engaging in the adrenaline of the south of the region, you can find a more traditional traveller vibe in **KO CHANG** and the National Park island chains of **KO SURIN** and **KO SIMILAN** attract divers and snorkelers.

For those wanting to explore the jungle, **KHAO SOK NATIONAL PARK** is the ideal base and provides an eclectic range of accommodation options that include rafts on lakes and treehouses.

The quintessential destination for package tourists and families, **PHUKET** is Thailand's largest island and it is full of restaurants, entertainment and shopping.

It is also the preferred base of novice divers looking to explore the incredible waters and marine life. While certain resorts should be avoided due to their more seedy clientele, Phuket is often tarnished with the same brush where it in fact is a great place to stay as long as you choose the right location and

A traditional boat is an iconic image of the region.

Totems protecting the moken on Ko Surin.

A beach on the sedate Ko Yao Noi

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property for your tastes.

For a more authentic experience you can venture to one of the nearby smaller islands such as **KO YAO NOI**, and from here visit the celebrated bay of **AO PHANG NGA**.

Further along the coast is **KRABI**, which in keeping with the region boasts crystal waters and stunning islands along with some of the finest sand in the world.

Once again, Thailand delivers on offering something for all, **KO PHI PHI** perfect for those wanting to party the night away as well as superb diving and beautiful beaches, and **KO JUM** for an underdeveloped and unhurried experience.

Koh Khai Nok in Phuket.

Kayaking in Khao Sok National Park.

Phi-Phi Don Island.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Phuket has an international airport and Bangkok has connecting flights to Ranong and Phuket. There are also the overnight bus connections from the capital as a cheaper alternative. If you prefer the train it is best to head for Surat Thani to get to Phuket as it is not on the main rail line. The best way to explore the region is by boat and these can easily be chartered but be sure to use a reputable company.

TOP TIP!

Brave the weather!

From May to October a southwest monsoon hits the Andaman coast bringing with it heavy rain and rough seas. While it stops potential island visits it does provide great discounts on accommodation, ideal for a diving holiday when it doesn't matter if it is raining or not!

DID YOU KNOW?

Food in Phuket tends to be more spicy than in the rest of Thailand. Grab a bowl of Tom Yum Koong, a spicy bowl of sour prawn soup, to get your taste buds singing!

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TRAVEL CHECKLIST

Weather

In general you can expect a typically tropical climate that is hot and humid, but there are three seasons. There's a hot, wet and cool season, although the country offers a diverse range of geography that allows you to pick weather that suits your needs.

Population

There are 65 million citizens in Thailand of which seven million live in the capital, Bangkok.

Language

The official language is Thai, but English is spoken throughout much of Thailand.

Religion

The large majority (94.6%) of Thais are Buddhist, 4.6% of Thais are Muslim 0.7% of Thais are Christian.

Currency

The Thai Baht is used as coins and notes. Most banks are open weekdays, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, though certain banks have shorter Saturday hours. In tourist destinations currency booths are often open for longer periods.

Time

Thailand Standard time is GMT +7 with no daylight savings.

Electricity

Electrical outlets in Thailand are charged to 220v at 50 cycles per second, which is compatible with appliances from the U.K. but not those from the US and many other nations.

Accommodation

From budget to luxury, there is accommodation for all in Thailand. Offpeak (May-Aug) is the best time to find a deal, while December to February is the premium time to go and prices reflect this. Thai hospitality is celebrated around the world, so whether staying in a beach hut or a five-star hotel, you will be in for a treat.

Telephone

Emergency numbers are often three or four digit numbers, including Tourist Police, which is 1155. Cell coverage is widespread and it is cheap to purchase a mobile phone.

Getting there

As you would expect with one of the most popular destinations in the world, flying to Thailand can be expensive in high season so be sure to book tickets as far in advance as possible. Road access in and out of the country is improving and there is a crossing with China. It is worth finding out requirements and the documentation needed specific to your nationality and where you will be entering Thailand.

Getting around

Once you are in, Thailand is a relatively inexpensive and generally efficient destination to navigate. Whether it's by bus, car, boat or bicycle each mode of transport has its merits. The country is set up to accommodate tourism, but always research companies and check safety records. Alternatively use a trusted tour company to handle the logistics of your trip.

Visas

Certain countries have visa exemptions, some nationalities can apply for visa on arrival and others need to apply in advance. For more information on visas **click here**