



Spending Three Perfect Days In Bangkok

By Forbes Travel Guide Correspondent Erica Firpo

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Stupas Dot The City's Landscape, Photo Credit: Erica Firpo

Bangkok often overwhelms travelers with its traffic, concrete and heat. Not to mention that Thailand's capital city has 14 million people flocking to its urban center, nearly double the population of New York City.

The secret to navigating Bangkok is to do a little preparation. Follow our three-day itinerary to discover the city in a whole new and calming way.

Day One

After more than 20 straight hours of flying, there are three things you must do once you've checked into the Forbes Travel Guide Four-Star **Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel**: First, reserve a massage for that very afternoon in the hotel's Four-Star spa. Our suggestion is the 90-minute Siam 2482, an indulgent muscle and circulation stimulation completely necessary before running around the city.

Second, be sure to book your space at Morning Wellness for Day 3 (more to come on that). Lastly, head to the pool, a palm-tree-lined sundeck with hints of Bangkok's

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unforgettable skyline, where you're going to soak in some relaxation before your full cultural immersion begins.



Anantara Spa. Photo Credit: Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas

You have a date with Smiling Albino. Founded by Canadian-born Thai television celebrity Daniel Fraser in 1999 to showcase and share Thai cultural heritage, Smiling Albino is one of Southeast Asia's leading luxury and adventure tour companies.

According to Fraser, the best way to understand Bangkok is through its street food scene, and Smiling Albino has planned a six-hour walking tour from Soi Pipat, a road lined with vendors, to Yaowarat, the city's Chinatown. (Take advantage of this now, as the government announced it will wipe out all street food vendors by the end of 2017.)

You'll sample yam (a bag filled with spicy Thai salad that's charmingly nicknamed Plastic Wife), knomjeen (a rice noodle dish with brown curry), the trendy rot-duan (your choice of dried bamboo worms, crickets or grasshoppers), Thai iced tea and more.

The tasting tour will have you scurrying around on foot and by tuk tuk (those Instagram-worthy three-wheel taxi carts) before your journey ends for the evening on a city rooftop watching the glow of Wat Arun, the Temple of Dawn.

Day Two

You've seen the city by night, so now it's time for Bangkok in Technicolor with a full day of back-to-back excursions. Walk around Ko Rattanakosin, the historic Phra Nakhon district and Bangkok's ancient city where cylindrical temple stupas dot the landscape. Both **Anantara** and Smiling Albino can organize dynamic day tours.

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Nahm, Photo Credit: The COMO Group

Ko Rattanakosin is the city's culture center of Thai Buddhism, an area concentrated with historic wats ("temples"). Wear lightweight long pants and sandals for visiting sacred sites such as Wat Pho, one of Bangkok's oldest temples and home to the 150-foot-long Reclining Buddha; Wat Phra Kaew, the most important Buddhist temple in Thailand and site of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha; and Wat Mahatat, headquarters of Thailand's largest monastic order, university and meditation center.

In the afternoon, you'll be floating down the River of Kings with the Klong Guru to explore the western neighborhoods via a network of klongs ("canals"). Traveling by long-tail boat (a long and multicolored canopied canoe-like hull), you'll peek into life in "Venice of the East," with floating markets, houses, temples, restaurants and even a traditional puppet show.

Make your way back to the Pathum Wan district for a unique take on traditional Thai cuisine. Take a tip from Fraser and try Issaya Siamese Club, a century-old Thai villa; Namsaah Bottling Trust, a former soda-bottling factory and bank; or Nahm, the poolside restaurant of COMO Metropolitan Bangkok. These three restaurants are pushing the boundaries of local dining with a progressive take on traditional and village recipes.

Enjoy a nightcap 83 stories above the city on the rooftop observation deck of the Baiyoke Sky Hotel, Thailand's tallest building.

Day Three

Rise and shine for a 6 a.m. sunrise wellness session starting with a Buddhist blessing. The Tak Bart Buddhist ritual takes place in Anantara Siam Bangkok's lobby, a gorgeous gilded space. Every day, at 6:20 a.m., hotel staff and guests present

Buddhist monks alms, returned with the monk's blessing, completing a traditional and peaceful way to start the day.



Sunrise Wellness, Photo Credit: Erica Firpo

From the hotel, it's a short walk to Lumpini Park for a 45-minute Light Energy Session combining yoga and meditation, followed by a picnic brunch — a smorgasbord of quinoa and mixed fruit salad, poached salmon, sandwiches and juices.

Head back to the Bangkok hotel for a 60-minute Chakra Crystal Balancing Therapy to wrap up the wellness session.

After you've found your center, you're ready to explore the city's industrial history with a visit to the Jim Thompson House. Thompson, a retired army officer and alleged CIA operative, settled in Bangkok in the late 1940s and built up a silk empire, until his mysterious 1967 disappearance.

His home, a beautiful assemblage of sections from century-old Thai villas, is now a museum showcasing Thompson's art collection of historical Buddhist statues and traditional Thai paintings.

Onsite is a Jim Thompson store selling beautiful silk clothing, accessories and housewares. The surrounding neighborhood is also home to local Bangkok silk weavers and dyers, whose studios and laboratories can be visited.

Chakras balanced and perfectly coordinated with a Jim Thompson silk scarf, head back to the **Anantara Siam Bangkok** for your last pad Thai at Spice Market, the hotel's signature restaurant.