

SHOPPING

top picks

- Chatuchak Weekend Market (p140)
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SHOPPING

Commerce and shopping are so ubiquitous in Bangkok that they appear to be genetic traits of the city's inhabitants. Hardly a street corner in the city is free from a vendor, hawker or impromptu stall, and Bangkok is also home to one of the world's largest outdoor markets, not to mention Southeast Asia's largest mall. There's something here for just about everybody, and often genuine and knock-off items live happily side by side. Although the tourist brochures tend to tout the upmarket malls, Bangkok still lags slightly behind Singapore and Hong Kong in this area, and the open-air markets are where the best deals and most-original items are found.

Bargaining is part of the culture at markets and small family-run shops where prices aren't posted. When engaging in this ancient sport, remember that it requires finesse rather than force, and the best approach is one of camaraderie. If you're interested in buying, ask the vendor the price and then ask if they could lower it. You can then counter with a lower sum that will tug the return offer closer to a comfortable range. Figures are sometimes volleyed back and forth at this point, but stay calm and cool. It is poor form to haggle over a difference of 10B. Prices aren't negotiable when a price is posted.

This is generally so friendly and laid-back that some visitors are lulled into a false sense of security, forgetting that Bangkok is a big city with untrustworthy characters. While your personal safety is rarely at risk in Thailand, you may be unwittingly charmed out of an unfair amount of the contents of your wallet. See [opposite](#) for more information about scams.

SHOPPING AREAS

The area around Siam Sq has the greatest concentration of shopping malls for designer and department-store goods. Street markets for souvenirs and pirated goods are on Th Khao San, Th Sukhumvit and Th Silom. Thai-style housewares and handicraft items can be found in the older parts of Bangkok, such as Banglamphu or around Th Charoen Krung.

OPENING HOURS

Most family-run shops are open from 10am to 7pm daily. Street markets are either daytime (from 9am to 5pm) or night-time (from 8pm to midnight). Note that streetside vendors are forbidden by city ordinance to clutter the pavements on Mondays, but do so every other day. Shopping centres are usually open from 10am to 10pm.

SHOPPING GUIDE

The city's intense urban tangle sometimes makes orientation a challenge in finding intimate shops and markets. Like having your own personal guide, *Nancy Chandler's Map of Bangkok* (www.nancychandler.net) tracks all sorts of small, out-of-the-way shopping venues and markets as well as dissecting the innards of the Chatuchak Weekend Market (p140). The colourful map is sold in bookshops throughout the city.

KO RATANAKOSIN & THONBURI

The leafy lanes of Bangkok's oldest district specialise in the ancient arts of health, safety and fortune. Locals come to inspect sacred amulets and pick up pellet-sized pills of Thai traditional medicines.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE SHOPS

Map p56 Health Supplies

Th Maharat from Thammasat University to Wat Pho, Ko Ratanakosin; ☎ 8am-7pm; 🚗 air-con 503, ordinary 32, 53 & 203, 📍 **Tha Chang**

Bangkok's commercial medicine cabinet occupies the riverside thoroughfare of Th Maharat. Packaged in plastic pill bottles bearing an unsmiling photo of a trusted authority, commercial formulas combine various herbal ingredients – such as galangale, lemon grass, kaffir lime and other flavourings used in Thai dishes – to target a specific disease or to promote general wellness.

Shops carrying massage supplies cater to practitioners and to students at the nearby Wat Pho massage training school. Keep an eye out for the dumpling-shaped herbal compresses that are heated and pressed onto the body during sessions of Thai herbal massage.

BUYER BEWARE

The disparity between the Thai baht and foreign currencies often clouds the judgment of otherwise eagle-eyed shoppers. Do your homework and approach each expensive transaction with a healthy amount of scepticism.

Antiques

Real Thai antiques are rare and costly and reserved primarily for serious collectors. Everything else is designed to look old and most shopkeepers are happy to admit it. Reputable antique dealers will issue an authentication certificate. Contact the **Department of Fine Arts** (☎ 0 2226 1661) to obtain the required licence for exporting religious images and fragments, either antique or reproductions.

Gems & Jewellery

Thailand is one of the world's largest exporters of gems and ornaments, but scams are more prevalent than bargains. Don't buy goods from a shop that claims to have a 'one-day' sale or wants you to deliver uncut gems to your home country for resale.

Reputable dealers don't pay commissions to tuk-tuk drivers but are known by customer referrals. Most are members of the Jewel Fest Club, established jointly by the **Tourism Authority of Thailand** (TAT; ☎ 0 2250 5500; www.tourismthailand.org); ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) and the **Thai Gem Jewellery Traders Association** (www.thaigemjewellery.com). When you purchase from a member shop, a certificate detailing your purchase will be issued and a refund is guaranteed (less 10% to 20%). A list of members offering government guarantees is available from TAT, or visit the association's website for buying information.

The latest trend is to open a gem 'museum', charging a hefty admission price, with an attached jewellery store. Proceed with caution.

Tailor-Made Clothes

Tailors are as prolific as massage parlours in Bangkok and so are the scams. Workmanship and fabric quality ranges from shoddy to excellent.

Good tailors don't have to advertise; their reputation precedes them in the well-dressed circles of the diplomatic corps. Commission a few small pieces from a reputable shop (one that doesn't have hawkers out the front) before committing to high-dollar items, and know your fabrics before being duped by synthetics.

AMULET MARKET

Map p56 Outdoor Market

Several small soi off Th Maharat, along Th Maharat near Wat Mahathat, Ko Ratanakosin; ☎ 8am-6pm; 🚗 air-con 503, ordinary 32, 53 & 203, 📍 **Tha Chang**

Catholics with their parade of saints and protective medals will recognise a great kinship with this streetside amulet market. Ranging from pendant-sized to medallion-sized, *phrá khreuang* (amulets) come in various classes, from rare objects or relics (like antlers, tusks, or the dentures of abbots) to images of Buddha or famous monks embossed in bronze, wood or clay. Itinerant dealers spread their wares on blankets along the broken pavement across from the temple, and more-permanent shops proliferate in the sunless alleyways along the river. Taxi drivers, monks and average folk squat alongside the displays inspecting novel pieces like practised jewellers. Mixed

in with certain amulets are pulverised substances: dirt from a special temple, hair from a monk, or powerful herbs.

When the serious collectors aren't perusing the market, they are flipping through amulet magazines that discuss noteworthy

TAX REFUNDS

Thailand allows for value added tax (VAT) refunds but some complicated rules apply. First you need to qualify as a VAT recipient, which excludes Thais and airline crew members. Each receipt must be for more than 2000B spent on one day and must be issued by a participating VAT shop, which must also supply other accompanying paperwork. Your total purchases need to exceed 5000B in order to qualify. You also must have been in Thailand for less than 180 days in a calendar year and be leaving the country by plane. Call the **VAT Refund for Thailand Office** (☎ 0 2272 9387) for more information.

CLOTHING SIZES

Women's clothing

Aus/UK	8	10	12	14	16	18
Europe	36	38	40	42	44	46
Japan	5	7	9	11	13	15
USA	6	8	10	12	14	16

Women's shoes

Aus/USA	5	6	7	8	9	10
Europe	35	36	37	38	39	40
France only	35	36	38	39	40	42
Japan	22	23	24	25	26	27
UK	3½	4½	5½	6½	7½	8½

Men's clothing

Aus	92	96	100	104	108	112
Europe	46	48	50	52	54	56
Japan	5		M	M		L
UK/USA	35	36	37	38	39	40

Men's shirts (collar sizes)

Aus/Japan	38	39	40	41	42	43
Europe	38	39	40	41	42	43
UK/USA	15	15½	16	16½	17	17½

Men's shoes

Aus/UK	7	8	9	10	11	12
Europe	41	42	43	44½	46	47
Japan	26	27	27½	28	29	30
USA	7½	8½	9½	10½	11½	12½

Measurements approximate only – try before you buy

women's clothing shop seems to have with Th Khao San is its Bohemian roots. Bright colours and bold patterns rule among the Thai-designed and -made togs, and the elegant shop even features a restaurant and café, a hair and nail salon, and private rooms for movie viewing. You may never need to leave.

NITTAYA CURRY SHOP Map pp68–9 Food

☎ 0 2282 8212; 136–40 Th Chakhraphong, Banglamphu; ☎ 10am–7pm; 🚗 air-con 3, 32 & 49, ordinary 30, 32, 33 & 65, 🏠 Tha Phra Athit

Follow your nose; Nittaya is famous throughout Thailand for her pungent but high-quality curry pastes. Pick up a couple of take-away canisters for prospective dinner parties or peruse the snack and gift sections, where visitors to Bangkok load up on local specialities for friends back in the provinces.

TAEKEE TAEKON Map pp68–9 Handicrafts

☎ 0 2629 1473–4; 118 Th Phra Athit, Banglamphu; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Sat; 🚗 air-con 3, 6, 15 & 82, 🏠 Tha Phra Athit

This atmospheric shop has a decent selection of Thai textiles from the country's main silk-producing areas, especially northern Thailand, as well as assorted local knick-knackery and interesting postcards not widely available elsewhere.

THAI NAKORN Map pp68–9 Handicrafts

☎ 0 2281 7867; 79 Th Prachathipathai, Banglamphu; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat; 🚗 ordinary 10

This family-owned enterprise has been in business for 70 years and often fills commissions from the royal family for nielloware and silver ornaments. Silver-moulded cases and clutches, ceremonial bowls and tea sets are also among the offerings. If you can navigate the language, ask to go behind the showroom to witness the aged artisans at work.

THANON KHAO SAN MARKET

Map pp68–9 Outdoor Market

Th Khao San, Banglamphu; ☎ 10–2am Tue–Sun; 🚗 air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65, 🏠 Tha Phra Athit

The main guesthouse strip in Banglamphu is a day and night shopping bazaar, selling all but the baby and the bath water. Cheap T-shirts, trendy purses, wooden frogs, fuzzy puppets, bootleg CDs, hemp clothing, fake

READING FRENZY

The Banglamphu area is home to nearly all of Bangkok's independent bookstores. In addition, Th Khao San is virtually the only place in town to go for used English-language books. You're not going to find any deals here, but the selection is decent.

Passport (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2629 0694; 523 Th Phra Sumen, Banglamphu) Although the vast majority of the titles here are in Thai, the shop is worth a visit for its artsy atmosphere and tasty drinks.

Rim Khob Fah Bookstore (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2622 3510; 78/1 Th Ratchadamnoen, Banglamphu) Without having to commit loads of your suitcase space, you can sample an array of slim scholarly publications from the Fine Arts Department on Thai art and architecture. The academic texts in English have also been joined by your standard-issue travel books and region-specific titles.

Saraban (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2629 1386; 106/1 Th Rambutri, Banglamphu) Stocking the largest selection of international newspapers and new Lonely Planet guides, this claustrophobic shop also has a good selection of used yarns.

Shaman Bookstore (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2629 0418; D&D Plaza, 68–70 Th Khao San; 127 Th Tanao, Banglamphu) This longstanding shop spans two locations on Th Khao San and has the area's largest selection of used books. Titles can conveniently be searched using a computer program.

Suksit Siam (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2225 9531; 113–5 Th Fuang Nakhon, Banglamphu) Opposite Wat Ratchabophit, this shop specialises in books on Thai progressive politics and Buddhism. It also has mainstream titles on Thailand and Asia in both English and Thai.

student ID cards, knock-off designer wear, souvenirs, corn on the cob, orange juice... You name it, they've got it.

CHAROEN CHAIKARNCHANG SHOP

Map pp68–9 Religious

☎ 0 2222 4800; 87 Soi Nava, Th Bamrung Muang, Banglamphu; ☎ 9am–6pm; 🚗 air-con 508, ordinary 5, 35 & 56, khlong taxi Tha Phan Fah

Easily the largest and most impressive religious shop in an area of impressive religious shops. The workshop at the back produces gigantic bronze Buddha images for wáts all over Thailand. You might be unlikely to buy a life-sized Buddha, but looking is fun and who knows when you might need to do a great deal of merit making.

CHINATOWN

The Phahurat and Chinatown districts have interconnected markets selling fabrics, clothes and household wares, as well as wholesale shops for every imaginable bulk item. There are a few places selling gems and jewellery.

JOHNNY'S GEMS Map p84 Gemstones

☎ 0 2224 4065; 199 Th Fuang Nakhon, Chinatown; ☎ 9.30am–6pm Mon–Sat; 🚗 air-con 508

A long-time favourite of Bangkok expats, Johnny's Gems is a reliable name in an unreliable business. The namesake founder

has since passed away, but his son carries on the spic-and-span reputation, primarily in rubies and emeralds from fun to serious.

PHAHURAT MARKET

Map p84 Outdoor Market

Th Phahurat & Th Triphet, across from Old Siam Plaza, Phahurat; ☎ 9am–6pm; 🚗 air-con 73, 🏠 Tha Saphan Phut

If it sparkles, then this market has it. Phahurat proffers boisterous Bollywood-coloured textiles, traditional Thai dance costumes, tiaras, sequins, wigs and other accessories to make you look like a cross-dresser, a *mǎw lam* (Thai country music) performer, or both. This is cloth city, and amid the colour spectacle are also good deals on machine-made Thai textiles and children's clothes.

SAMPENG LANE

Map p84 Outdoor Market

Soi Wanit 1, Th Ratchawong, Chinatown; ☎ 8am–6pm; 🚗 air-con 4, 49, 73 & 507, ordinary 40, 49, 73, 85 & 159, 🏠 Tha Ratchawong

Sampeng Lane is a narrow artery running parallel to Th Yaowarat and bisecting the commercial areas of Chinatown and Phahurat. The Chinatown portion of Sampeng is lined with wholesale shops of hair accessories, pens, stickers, household wares and beeping, flashing knick-knacks. Near Th Chakrawat, gem and jewellery shops

BANGLAMPHU

The spectrum of goods available in this district ranges from backpacker staples along Th Khao San to delicious Thai curry pastes and high-quality handicrafts in the more traditional areas nearby. In recent years the twain have met, and Th Khao San has expanded into the silver business with souvenir-grade baubles sold in bulk to importers.

IT'S HAPPENED TO BE A CLOSET

Map pp68–9 Clothing

☎ 0 2629 5271; 32 Th Khao San, Banglamphu; ☎ 1–11pm; 🚗 air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65, 🏠 Tha Phra Athit

Hidden in the same courtyard as Tom Yam Kung restaurant, the only kinship this

abound. Weekends are horribly crowded, and it takes a gymnast's flexibility to squeeze past the pushcarts, motorcycles and other roadblocks.

SAPHAN PHUT NIGHT BAZAAR

Map p84 Outdoor Market

Th Saphan Phut, Chinatown; ☎ 8pm-midnight Tue-Sun; 🚗 air-con 60, 73 & 512, ordinary 5 & 8, 📍 Tha Saphan Phut

On either side of the Memorial Bridge (Saphan Phut), this night market has bucket loads of cheap clothes, late-night snacking and a lot of people-watching. As **Chatuchak Weekend Market** (p140) becomes more design oriented, Saphan Phut has filled the closets of the fashion-forward, baht-challenged teenagers.

PAK KHLONG MARKET

Map p84 Plants & Flowers

Th Chakkaphet & Th Atsadang, Chinatown; ☎ 24hr; 🚗 air-con 60, 73 & 512, ordinary 5 & 8, 📍 Tha Saphan Phut

This sprawling wholesale flower market has become a tourist attraction in its own right. The endless piles of delicate orchids, rows of roses and stacks of button carnations are a sight to be seen, and the shirtless porters wheeling blazing piles of colour set the place in motion. The best time to come is late at night, when the goods arrive from upcountry.

During the morning Pak Khlong Market is also one of the city's largest wholesale vegetable markets.

SIAM SQUARE, PRATUNAM & PLOENCHIT

If you like your retail upscale and air-conditioned, head directly for the centre of town. Bangkok's ever-expanding repertoire

of luxury malls is a major draw for tourists from Asia and the Middle East, and can be found near the intersection of Th Phra Ram I and Th Phayathai, and further east at Th Ratchadamri.

If you're looking for something a bit more homegrown, designs by Thailand's emerging fashion designers are available at shops in and around Siam Sq.

For penny-pinchers and/or wholesalers the ultimate destination is Pratunam district, where a daily open-air bazaar fuels both locally made and cheap import goods.

Keep an eye out for end of season and pay-day sales, as well as the citywide sales spree in June.

PANTIP PLAZA

Map pp98-9 Computer Equipment

☎ 0 2656 5030; 604 Th Phetburi, Pratunam; ☎ 10am-10pm; 📍 Phayathai

If you can tolerate the crowds and annoying pornography vendors ('DVD sex? DVD sex?') Pantip, a multistorey computer and electronics warehouse, might just be your kinda paradise. Shiny new hardware isn't really Pantip's speciality, but grey market goods are. Technorati will find pirated software and music, gear for hobbyists to enhance their machines, flea market-style peripherals and other odds and ends. Up on the 6th floor is **IT City** (☎ 0 2656 5030), a reliable computer megastore that gives VAT refund forms for tourists.

UTHAI'S GEMS

Map pp98-9 Gems & Jewellery

☎ 0 2253 8582; 28/7 Soi Ruam Rudi, Th Ploenchit, Ploenchit; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat; 📍 Ploenchit With 40 years in the business, Uthai's fixed prices and good service, including a money-back guarantee, make him a popular choice among expats. The showroom boasts a huge stock, and gems can be custom-cut to order.

FROM NYMPH TO JUMBO

In your home town, you may be considered average or even petite, but based on the Thai measuring stick you're an extra large, clearly marked in the tag as 'LL' or, worse still, 'XL'. If that batters the body image, then skip the street markets, where you'll bust the seams from the waist up – if you can squirm that far into the openings. Only street vendors on Th Khao San accommodate foreign women's natural endowments in the shoulders, bust and hips. If you're larger than a US size 10 or an Australian size 12, you strike out altogether. Men will find that they exceed Thai clothes in length and shoulder width, as well as shoe sizes. For formal wear, many expats turn to custom orders through tailors. For ready-to-wear, many of the vendors at **Pratunam Market** (opposite), and several stalls on the 7th floor of **MBK** (p134) stock the larger sizes.

HOT ON THE TRAIL

Walk into a store, any store, in Bangkok and you'll be followed by a sales assistant from rack to rack. They smile, you smile. 'Would you like to look, madame?' They open up the display case, remark 'how lovely', then follow you to the next shiny object. This is the definition of service in a Thai store, not an anti-shop-lifting measure. A sales assistant who doesn't stay glued to a customer's elbow isn't doing a good job. Even the Western-style department stores are over-staffed with such attention. You can politely decline help, which will gain you a few feet of breathing room.

PRATUNAM MARKET

Map pp98-9 Outdoor Market

Cnr Th Phetburi & Th Ratchaprarop, Pratunam; ☎ 9am-midnight; klong taxi Tha Pratunam, 📍 Chitlom

The emphasis here is on clothes, in particular T-shirts, and the Baiyoke Garment Center, the immense open-air market that comprises much of the area, is the best place in town to buy that black Iron Maiden T-shirt you've had your eye on.

The greater market area occupies the neighbourhood behind the shopfronts on the corner of Th Phetburi and Th Ratchaprarop, and also includes several like-minded malls, such as: **Indra Square**, which carries mostly women's clothing; **Pratunam Centre**, featuring a decent selection of Thai handicrafts and silver; **City Complex** and **Krung Thong Plaza**, two nearly identical wholesale clothing malls; and across the street, the five-storey **Platinum Fashion Mall** sports the latest in no-brand couture, including a base-level **Jeans Zone**, featuring 100 shops.

CENTRAL CHIDLOM

Map pp98-9 Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2793 7777; www.central.co.th; 1027 Th Ploenchit, Ploenchit; ☎ 10am-10pm; 📍 Chidlom Central is a modern Western-style department store with locations throughout the city. This flagship store, Thailand's largest, is the snazziest of all the branches.

The ground floor carries all the big names in cosmetics, with eager perfume spritzers and the token ladyboy sales agent who pulls off blush better than those born with the double-X chromosomes.

Foreigner-sized clothing is one of the shop's strengths. The helpful sales staff

will bluntly steer you to slimming colours and relatively huge sizes to fit your sturdy frame.

A decent selection of English-language books and magazines, not to mention stationery and music, is available at B2S on the 7th floor.

CENTRAL WORLD PLAZA

Map pp98-9 Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2635 1111; www.centralworld.co.th; cnr Th Ploenchit & Th Ratchadamri, Ploenchit; ☎ 10am-10pm; 📍 Chitlom

Once one of the city's dying shopping centres, this is now the latest in a line of Queer Eye for the Straight Guy-type makeovers, boasting seven floors of unadulterated commercial bliss. We fancy the concrete-floored F section that features cool domestic brands with barely pronounceable names such as Playground! Manga, Qconceptstore and Flynow III.

Up on the 8th floor, the **Thai Knowledge Park** (TK Park; ☎ 0 2250 7620; www.tkpark.or.th) is part of a government initiative to cultivate reading and learning habits in children. The centre features various libraries, including a fun music library and a children's reading area, and heaps of computers for internet access.

ERAWAN BANGKOK

Map pp98-9 Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2250 7777; www.erawanbangkok.com; 494 Th Ploenchit, Ploenchit; ☎ 10.30am-8.30pm; 📍 Chitlom

Bangkok's chi-chi crowd has a new stomping ground: the shopping wing of the Erawan Hotel. Luxury matrons occupy the 1st floor, while street-smarts chill on the 2nd floor, fusing the generation gap with a shared closet. The top floor is a dedicated wellness centre, should conspicuous consumption prove hazardous to your health. The ladies who lunch can often be found in the basement-level **Urban Kitchen** or the 2nd-floor **Erawan Tea Room**.

GAYSORN PLAZA

Map pp98-9 Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2656 1149; www.gaysorn.com; cnr Th Ploenchit & Th Ratchadamri, Ploenchit; ☎ 10am-10pm; 📍 Chitlom

A *haute couture* catwalk, Gaysorn has spiraling staircases, all-white halls and mouthfuls of top-name designers. The 2nd floor 'Urban Street Chic' zone is a crash course

top picks

LOCAL BUYS

Right, you've got gems, silks and elephants on your Bangkok shopping list, but there are loads of local buys that won't make your home look like a beachfront souvenir shop. Add some class to your space with these local products.

- **Zebra Stainless Steel Kitchenware** This 40-year-old company based in Rayong scooped out a market niche with its high-quality Chinese soup spoons. It has since expanded into nesting bowls, Thai-style lunchboxes and soup pots that would cost a fortune for comparable quality back home. Available at department stores and housewares markets.
- **Harnn & Thann** Smell good enough to eat with these botanical-based spa products: lavender massage lotion, rice bran soap, and jasmine compresses. Products are all natural, rooted in Thai traditional medicine, and stylish enough to share space with brand-name beauty. Available at [Gaysorn](#) (p133).
- **Niwat Cutlery** Born out of the ancient sword-making traditions of Ayuthaya province, the NV Aranyik company, a family-owned business, produces distinctively Thai cutlery. Available at [Gaysorn](#) (p133).
- **Mr P Lamp** Thai designer Chaiyut Plypetch dreamed up Propaganda's signature character, devilish Mr P who appears in anatomically correct cartoon lamps and other products. Available at [Siam Discovery Center](#) (opposite) and [Emporium](#) (p138).
- **Beyond Living** Colourful and textured woven rugs, cushions and handbags draw inspiration from natural Thai materials and handicraft traditions with a distinctly modern flair. Available at [Gaysorn](#) (p133).

in the local fashion industry. Start chronologically with [Fly Now](#) and [Senada Theory](#), and then visit the young fabric wizards, like the bouclair-inspired flouncers of [Stretis](#) and a little bit of everything at [Fashion Society](#), an umbrella store for smaller domestic labels.

Stores on the 3rd floor offer the same level of sophistication for your home. The open-air [D&O Shop](#) is the first retail venture of an organisation created to encourage awareness of Thai design abroad. [Triumph](#) has mock Sukhothai-era ceramics, lacquerware scripture chests and other high-quality Asian reproductions.

MAHBOONKRONG (MBK)

Map pp98-9

Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2620 9111; www.mbk-center.com; cnr Th Phra Ram I & Th Phayathai, Siam Sq; ☎ 10am-10pm; 📍 National Stadium

This unbelievably immense shopping mall is quickly becoming one of Bangkok's top attractions. Half of the city filters through the glass doors on weekends, stutter-stepping on the escalators, stuffing themselves with junk food or making stabs at individualism by accessorising their mundane school uniforms with high slits or torturous heels. You can buy everything you need here: cellphones, accessories, shoes, name brands, wallets, handbags, T-shirts. The middle-class Tokyu department store also sells good-quality kitchenware.

The 4th floor resembles something of a digital produce market. A confusing maze of stalls sell all the components to send you into the land of cellular – a new phone, a new number and a SIM card. Even if you'd rather keep yourself out of reach, do a walk through to observe the chaos and the mania over phone numbers. Computer print-outs displaying all the available numbers for sale turn the phone numbers game into a commodities market. The luckier the phone number, the higher the price; upwards of thousands of dollars have been paid for numbers composed entirely of nines, considered lucky in honour of the current king, Rama IX, and because the Thai word for 'nine' is similar to the word for 'progress'.

MBK is also one of the more convenient one-stop shopping destinations for photo equipment. [Foto File](#), on the ground floor, has a good selection of used gear, although be sure to inspect the quality closely. The shop's sister venture, [Photo Thailand](#), stocks all manner of new photo-related gear on the 3rd floor. [Sunny Camera](#) on the 3rd floor contains shelves of gleaming new Nikon and Mamiya equipment.

PROMENADE ARCADE

Map pp98-9

Shopping Centre

Nai Lert Park, Th Withayu, Ploenchit; ☎ 10am-6pm; khlong taxi Tha Withayu, 📍 Ploenchit

A low-key but noteworthy stop, Promenade Arcade shelters several of Bangkok's influential décor designers. On the 2nd floor, [Gub](#) features the creations of ML Chiratorn Chirapravati and Kongpat Sakdapitak; the pair, along with other like-minded design-

ers, have created a bright, irreverent world of lamps, chandeliers and paintings, and their showroom is like a thrift store on acid. Sakul Intakul, the acclaimed floral designer, displays his flower vessels (that's a 'vase', kiddo) that bring couture to home arrangements. His floral sculptures can also be seen in the [Sukhothai Hotel](#) (p215).

SIAM CENTER & SIAM DISCOVERY CENTER

Map pp98-9

Shopping Centre

Cnr Th Phra Ram I & Th Phayathai, Siam Sq;

☎ 10am-10pm; 📍 National Stadium & Siam

These linked shopping malls are surprisingly subdued, almost comatose compared with frenetic MBK. Thailand's first shopping centre, Siam Center was built in 1976 but, since a recent nip and tuck, hardly shows its age. Its 3rd floor is one of the best locations to check out local labels such as [Fly Now](#), [Senada Theory](#) and [Tango](#).

In the attached Siam Discovery Center, the 4th floor continues to be a primary outpost for the Thai design scene. [Panta](#) creates modern furnishings and *objets d'art* out of uniquely Asian materials, such as water hyacinth and bamboo. Bangkok-based French designer Gilles Caffier and his store, 2 Gilles Caffier, sells hand-beaded vases, palm-wood chopsticks and other Asian-esque decorative objects that have landed his designs in [Alain Ducasse's](#) restaurant. Nearby is a huge branch of [Asia Books](#), which carries a wide selection of design magazines, Thailand fiction titles, and new guidebooks.

Upstairs, [Doi Tung-Mae Fah Luang](#) is a royally funded crafts shop selling handmade cotton and linen from villages formerly involved with poppy production. Check out the beautiful handmade rugs. The only Southeast Asian branch of [Habitat](#), the European décor outlet, is also located on this floor.

DO THE WALK

Bangkokians generally avoid walking as a matter of course, shopping being the main exception to this. In an effort to link the various megamalls in the Siam/Chitlom area, the Sky Walk, an elevated walkway linking Siam and Chitlom BTS stations, was completed in 2006. Now it's possible to walk from Siam Paragon to Central World, Erawan Bangkok and Gaysorn Plaza without having to descend to the commonalities of street level. We're wondering when the moving walkway will be installed.

Siam Discovery Center is also, somewhat incongruously, one of the best places in town to stock up on camping gear. Within tent-pitching distance of each other on the 3rd floor are [Pro Cam-Fis](#), [Equinox Shop](#), [Rockcamp Climbing Shop](#) and the [North Face](#).

SIAM PARAGON

Map pp98-9

Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2690 1000; www.siamparagon.co.th; 991/1 Th Phra Ram I, Siam Sq; ☎ 10am-10pm; 📍 Siam Paragon epitomises the city's fanaticism for the new, the excessive, and the absurd slogans. The 'peerless' venue is the largest mall in Southeast Asia, sprawling over 500,000 sq metres, and is a showcase for luxury retailers, like [Van Cleef & Arpels](#) and [Mikimoto](#), who had not previously had a pedestal in the country. There's a [Lamborghini](#) dealer on the 2nd floor should you need a ride home, and one floor up a [True Urban Park](#) 'lifestyle centre' featuring a café, internet access and a shop selling books, music and camera equipment. Bookworms will fancy [Kinokuniya](#) (3rd fl), the largest bookstore in Thailand, as well as an expansive branch of [Asia Books](#) (2nd fl).

Even more audacious than the retail sections are [Siam Ocean World](#) (p101), a spectacular aquarium and an [IMAX theatre](#). Whew.

SIAM SQUARE

Map pp98-9

Shopping Centre

Th Phra Ram I, near Th Phayathai, Siam Sq;

☎ 11am-9pm; 📍 Siam

It doesn't look like much, just an ageing open-air shopping area divided into 12 *soi* (lanes), but Siam Sq is ground zero for teenage culture. Pop music blares out of tinny speakers, and gangs of hipsters in various costumes ricochet between fast-food restaurants and closet-sized boutiques. [DJ Siam](#) (Soi 4) carries all the Thai indie (like [Modern Dog](#)) and T-pop albums you'll need to speak 'teen'. Small shops peddle pop-hip styles along Soi 2 and Soi 3, but most outfits require a barely-there waist. [Centerpoint](#) (Soi 7) plugs in on weekends with concerts from the latest bands, b-boys (breakdancers) and perky models. And intertwined are fast-food joints, sweets, snacks and drinks.

NARAYANA PHAND

Map pp98-9

Souvenirs

☎ 0 2309 5800; 1st fl, Pratunam Center, Cnr Th Phetburi & Th Ratchaprarop, Pratunam; ☎ 10am-8pm; 📍 Chitlom

Souvenir-quality handicrafts are given fixed prices and comfortable air-conditioning at this government-run facility. You won't

find anything here that you haven't already seen at all of the tourist street markets, but it is a good stop if you're pressed for time or spooked by haggling.

MARCO TAILORS Map pp98–9 Tailor
☎ 0 2251 7633; 430/33 Soi 7, Siam Sq; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Fri; 📍 Siam

Dealing solely in men's suits, this long-standing and reliable tailor has a wide selection of banker-sensibility wools and cottons. Marco requires at least two weeks and two fittings.

RIVERSIDE, SILOM & LUMPHINI

Those looking for a painting by a contemporary Burmese artist, or an Ayuthaya era Buddhist manuscript cabinet will undoubtedly find something interesting in this part of town. Considering the prices, much of what's on sale in this area is better for browsing than buying. However, if petty issues such as budget or luggage weight restrictions aren't obstacles, you're sure to find a shiny new toy at one of the numerous antique shops and art galleries.

HOUSE OF CHAO Map pp108–9 Antiques
☎ 0 2635 7188; 9/1 Th Decho, Silom; ☎ 9am–7pm; 📍 Chong Nonsi, 🚗 air-con 504, 514, 544 & 547, ordinary 15, 76, 115, 162, 163 & 164

This three-storey antique shop, housed, appropriately, in an antique house, has everything necessary to deck out your fantasy colonial-era mansion. Particularly interesting are the various weatherworn doors, doorways, gateways and trellises that can be found in the covered area behind the showroom.

ORCHID PRESS Map pp108–9 Books
☎ 0 2231 3300; www.orchidbooks.com; 4th fl, Silom Complex, 191 Th Silom; ☎ 10am–8pm; 📍 Sala Daeng, 🚗 Silom

The venerable Asiana publisher Orchid Press now has a Bangkok showroom. Titles span the region from academic to glossy art books, as well as a few out of print or rare titles.

NIKS/NAVA IMPORT EXPORT Map pp108–9 Cameras
☎ 0 2235 2929; www.niksthailand.com; 166 Th Silom; ☎ 11am–4pm Mon–Fri; 📍 Chong Nonsi,

🚗 air-con 504, 514, 544 & 547, ordinary 15, 76, 115, 162, 163 & 164

On the northwest corner of Soi 12, Thailand's biggest camera importer sells all types of professional equipment, including Nikon, Mamiya and Rollei. It's also the best place to bring your sick Nikon for a check-up.

SUNNY CAMERA Map pp108–9 Cameras
☎ 0 2236 8365; 144/23 Th Silom; ☎ 10am–6pm Mon–Sat; 📍 Chong Nonsi

Dedicated Nikon-heads should head directly to Sunny Camera to satisfy their gear addiction. There are other branches on the 3rd floor of **MBK** (☎ 0 2620 9293) and on **Th Charoen Krung** (☎ 0 2235 2123; 1267–1267/1 Th Charoen Krung).

TAMNAN MINGMUANG Map pp108–9 Handicrafts
☎ 0 2231 2120; 3rd fl, Thaniya Plaza, Th Silom; ☎ 11am–8pm; 📍 Sala Daeng, 🚗 Silom

As soon as you step through the doors of this museumlike shop, the earthy smell of dried grass and stained wood rush to meet you. Rattan, *yan lipao* (a fern-like vine), water hyacinth woven into silk-like patterns, and coconut shells carved into delicate bowls are among the exquisite pieces that will outlast flashier souvenirs available on the streets.

THAI HOME INDUSTRIES Map pp108–9 Handicrafts
☎ 0 2234 1736; 35 Soi Oriental, Th Charoen Krung, Riverside; ☎ 9am–6.30pm Mon–Sat; 🚗 ordinary 35, 36, 75 & 93, 📍 Tha Oriental

A visit to this templelike building, a former monks' quarters, is like discovering an abandoned attic of Asian booty. On a recent visit, the display cases absentmindedly held cotton farmer shirts, handsome stainless-steel flatware, and delicate mother-of-pearl spoons. Despite the odd assortment of items and lack of order (not to mention the dust), it's heaps more fun than the typically faceless Bangkok handicraft shop.

CHIANG HENG Map pp108–9 Kitchen Supplies
☎ 0 2234 7237; 1466 Th Charoen Krung, Riverside; ☎ 10.30am–7pm; 📍 Saphan Taksin

In need of a handmade stainless-steel wok, old-school enamel-coated crockery, or a manually operated coconut milk strainer? Then we suggest you stop by this third-generation family-run kitchen supply store.

EXTREME WINDOW SHOPPING

Having trouble working the 20B entrance fee for the National Museum into your daily budget? Not a problem: a visit to the Silom area's numerous antique shops and galleries is a poor person's alternative to a trip the museum.

Beginning at **River City** (below), accessible via a free boat from Tha Sathon pier, head directly to the antique shops on the 3rd and 4th floors, bearing in mind that in this 'museum' if you break it, you buy it. Exiting along Soi 30, stop by the various antique shops, keeping your eye open for things you'll buy when you win the lottery. Upon reaching Th Charoen Krung, continue until Soi 38 and stop by **OP (Oriental Plaza) Place** (Map pp108–9; ☎ 0 2266 0186; 30/1 Soi Oriental; ☎ 10.30am–7pm), an upmarket antique mall, and **Thai Home Industries** (opposite), an atmospheric handicraft shop where, if you're willing to forfeit lunch, you might actually be able to afford something.

Continuing until Th Silom, cross the road and enter **Silom Galleria** (p138) and check out the posters in the lobby to see what free exhibitions of contemporary Asian art are on. Crossing Th Silom, enter Th Decho and stop by **House of Chao** (opposite), where you can convince yourself that it really is the size, rather than the price, that's keeping you from buying that beautiful antique teak doorway.

Even if your cabinets are already stocked, a visit here is a glance into the type of specialised, cramped but atmospheric shops that have all but disappeared from Bangkok.

PATPONG NIGHT MARKET Map pp108–9 Outdoor Market

Soi Patpong 1 & Soi Patpong 2, Th Silom; ☎ 6pm–midnight; 📍 Sala Daeng, 🚗 Silom
You'll be faced with the competing distractions of strip-clubbing or shopping on this infamous street. And true to the area's illicit leanings, pirated goods (in particular watches) make a prominent appearance even amid a wholesome crowd of families and straight-laced couples. Bargain with determination, as first-quoted prices tend to be astronomically high.

SOI LALAI SAP Map pp108–9 Outdoor Market
Soi 5, Th Silom; ☎ 9am–8pm; 📍 Sala Daeng, 🚗 Silom

The ideal place to buy an authentic Thai secretary's uniform, this 'money-dissolving soi' has mobs of vendors selling insanely cheap but frumpy clothing, as well as heaps of snacks and housewares.

SUAN LUM NIGHT BAZAAR Map p112 Outdoor Market

Cnr Th Withayu & Th Rama IV, Silom; ☎ 6pm–midnight; 🚗 Lumphini
Like Chatuchak without the hot weather and crowds, the Night Bazaar specialises in modern Thai souvenirs, clothes and handicrafts. Highlights among the 3700 stalls include handmade jewellery, one-of-a-kind designer T-shirts and a unique furniture and home décor section. If you can find it,

Nancy Chandler's map (p128) outlines interesting shopping at the bazaar. If shopping's not your idea of fun, the central outdoor beer garden is the perfect place to nurse an imported beer while the family is hunting for gifts.

At the time of writing, the bazaar is scheduled to be replaced by, surprise, surprise, a megamall in late 2008, but don't hold your breath – we certainly aren't.

BAAN SILOM Map pp108–9 Shopping Centre
Cnr Soi 19, Th Silom; ☎ 10.30am–7pm; 🚗 air-con 504, 514, 544 & 547, ordinary 15, 76, 115, 162, 163 & 164, 📍 Surasak

This open-air colonial-style shopping centre is the art-school kid brother of Bangkok malls. Changing exhibitions of contemporary art can be taken in at **La Lanta Fine Art**, and ultra-funky Thai-designed necklaces, rings and bracelets are available at **Kit-Ti's Jewellery**. Art and design books are available at a branch of **B2S**.

RIVER CITY Map pp108–9 Shopping Centre
☎ 0 2237 0077; www.rivercity.co.th; 23 Th Yotha, off Th Charoen Krung, Riverside; ☎ 10am–9pm; 🚗 ordinary 35, 36, 75 & 93, 📍 Tha Si Phraya

Near the Royal Orchid Sheraton, this multistorey centre is an all-in-one stop for old-world Asiana, much of it too large to fit in the bag of most travellers. Several high-quality art and antique shops occupy the 3rd and 4th floors, including the **Verandah**, which deals in 'tribal' art from Borneo and abroad, and **Hong Antiques**, with 50 years of experience in decorative pieces. **Acala** is a gallery of unusual Tibetan and Chinese artefacts. And **Old Maps & Prints** proffers one of the best selections of one-of-a-kind,

rare maps and illustrations. As with many antique stores in Bangkok, the vast majority of pieces at River City appear to come from Myanmar (Burma). Many shops are closed on Sunday.

SILOM GALLERIA

Map pp108–9 Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2630 0944; Soi 19, Th Silom; ☎ 10am–8pm; ☎ air-con 504, 514, 544 & 547, ordinary 15, 76, 115, 162, 163 & 164, ☎ Surasak

The only reason to visit this spooky half-deserted mall is for the contemporary Asian art exhibitions hosted by the various galleries inside. To avoid disappointment proceed directly to the back, or alternatively, check the posters in the lobby to see what's on display at the better galleries such as [Thavibu](#) (p193) or [Tang](#) (p193).

JIM THOMPSON

Map pp108–9 Thai Silk

☎ 0 2632 8100; www.jimthompson.com; 9 Th Surawong, Silom; ☎ 9am–6pm; ☎ Sala Daeng, ☎ Silom

The surviving business of the international promoter of Thai silk, the largest Jim Thompson shop sells colourful silk handkerchiefs, placemats, wraps and cushions. The styles and motifs appeal to older, somewhat more conservative tastes. There are also branches at Jim Thompson's House museum (p97), the [Emporium](#) (right), and at a [Factory Outlet](#) (☎ 0 2235 8931; 149/4–6 Th Surawong), just up the road, which sells discontinued patterns at a significant discount.

THANON SUKHUMVIT

Supplies for the recently arrived expat can be found in the shops that line never-ending Th Sukhumvit. Furniture, clothes and household knick-knacks hang out on upper Sukhumvit, while tourist souvenirs are centred around Soi 11. Reputable tailors have low-key presences in this neighbourhood, and Th Thong Lor is home to several of the city's 'lifestyle' malls.

L'ARCADIA

Map pp118–19 Antiques

☎ 0 2259 9595; 12/2 Soi 23, Th Sukhumvit;

☎ 9am–10pm; ☎ Asoke

The buyer at L'Arcadia has a sharp eye for collectables from Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand, including cute red-lacquer containers, Khmer-style sandstone figures and carved wooden temple decorations. If you

simply can't resist that colonial-era lounge chair, the shop can also arrange to have it shipped home for you.

NANDAKWANG

Map pp118–19 Handicrafts

☎ 0 2258 1962; www.nandakwang.com;

108/2–3 Soi 23 (Soi Prasanmit), Th Sukhumvit;

☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Sat & 10am–5pm Sun; ☎ Asoke,

☎ Sukhumvit

A Bangkok satellite of a Chiang Mai-based store, Nandakwang sells a fun and handsome mix of cloth, wood and glass products. The cheery hand-embroidered pillows and bags are particularly attractive. There is also a branch on the 3rd floor of [Siam Discovery Center](#) (p135).

THANON SUKHUMVIT MARKET

Map pp118–19 Outdoor Market

Th Sukhumvit, Soi 3 & Soi 15; ☎ 11am–11pm;

☎ Nana

Leaving on the first flight out tomorrow morning? Never fear about gifts for those back home; the street vendors will find you with faux Fendi handbags, soccer kits, 'art', sunglasses and jewellery, to name a few. You'll also find stacks of nudie DVDs, Chinese throwing stars, penis-shaped lighters and other questionable gifts for your high-school-aged brother.

EMPORIUM SHOPPING CENTRE

Map pp118–19 Shopping Centre

☎ 0 2269 1000; www.emporiumthailand.com;

622 Th Sukhumvit, cnr Soi 24; ☎ 10am–10pm;

☎ Phrom Phong

Once Bangkok's most chi-chi shopping centre, Emporium is finally starting to show its age in comparison to its hipper and younger siblings, Siam Paragon and the recently remodelled Central World.

The ground floor is filled with Euro fashion labels, like Prada, Miu Miu and Chanel. The 2nd floor is more casual, with homegrown contenders, such as [Soda](#), which has snipped punk into haute wear, and image-maker [Greyhound](#). Staid [Jim Thompson](#) even gets a face-lift with its branch here. On the 3rd floor, indigenous kitschy-cool gifts and home décor can be found at [Propaganda](#).

Even more impressive than the resident fashionistas is the [Thailand Creative & Design Centre](#) (☎ 0 2664 8448; www.tcdc.or.th; 6th fl), a design museum with an attached gift shop selling cool souvenirs related to the various exhibits, and a design library.

BONDING WITH BOOKS

For new books and magazines, Asia Books, B2S and Bookazine have extensive selections and several branches throughout the city.

Asia Books

[Central World Plaza](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2255 6209; 6th fl, Th Ratchadamri, Siam Sq)

[Emporium Shopping Centre](#) (Map pp118–19; ☎ 0 2664 8545; 3rd fl, cnr Soi 24, Th Sukhumvit)

[Peninsula Plaza](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2253 9786; 2nd fl, Th Ratchadamri, Ploenchit)

[Siam Discovery Center](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2658 0418; 4th fl, Th Phra Ram I, Siam Sq)

[Siam Paragon](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2610 9609; 2nd fl, Th Phra Ram I, Siam Sq)

[Thaniya Plaza](#) (Map pp108–9; ☎ 0 2231 2106; 3rd fl, Soi Thaniya, 52 Th Silom)

[Thanon Sukhumvit](#) (Map pp118–19; ☎ 0 2651 0428; 221 Th Sukhumvit btwn Soi 15 & Soi 17)

[Times Sq](#) (Map pp118–19; ☎ 0 2250 0162; 2nd fl, Times Sq, 221 Th Sukhumvit btwn Soi 12 & Soi 14)

B2S

[Baan Silom](#) (Map pp108–9; ☎ 0 2684 1527; cnr Soi 19, Th Silom, Silom)

[Central Chidlom](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2947 5566; 7th fl, 1027 Th Ploenchit, Ploenchit)

[Central World Plaza](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2646 1270; levels 1–3, Th Ratchadamri, Siam Sq)

Bookazine

[Chitlom \(Bargain Outlet\)](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2256 9304; 3rd fl, Amarin Plaza, 496–502 Th Ploenchit)

[Gaysorn Plaza](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2656 1039; cnr Th Ploenchit & Th Ratchadamri)

[La Villa](#) (Map pp124–5; ☎ 0 2613 0558; 2nd fl, La Villa, 356 Th Phaholyotin, Greater Bangkok)

[Patpong](#) (Map pp108–9; ☎ 0 2231 0016; 1st fl, CP Tower, 313 Th Silom)

[Siam Sq](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2255 3778; 286 Th Phra Ram I, btwn Soi 3 & Soi 4) Opposite Siam Center.

[Silom Complex](#) (Map pp108–9; ☎ 0 2231 3135; 2nd fl, cnr Th Silom & Th Phra Ram IV)

[Thanon Sukhumvit](#) (Map pp118–19; ☎ 0 2655 2383; Nailert Bldg, north side btwn Soi 3 & Soi 5, Ploenchit)

[Wireless](#) (Map pp98–9; ☎ 0 2685 3863; 2nd fl, All Seasons Pl, 87 Th Withayu, Ploenchit)

New titles are also available at [Kinokuniya](#) at Emporium (opposite) and Siam Paragon (p135).

Art books can be found at [Basheer](#) (Map pp118–19; ☎ 0 2391 9815; www.basheergraphic.com; H1, 998 Soi 55, Th Sukhumvit; ☎ Thong Lo) and [Rim Khob Fah](#) (p131). Politicos should trot over to [Suksit Siam](#) (see p131).

Used titles are easy to find in Banglamphu (see p131), but are rare elsewhere. If you're tied to New Bangkok, try [Elite Used Books](#) (Map pp118–19; ☎ 0 2258 0221; 593/5 Soi 33/1, Th Sukhumvit; ☎ Phrom Phong) or [Dasa Book Café](#) (Map pp118–19; ☎ 0 2661 2993; btwn Soi 26 & 28, Th Sukhumvit).

GREATER BANGKOK

Markets really capture the hubbub of Bangkok and the real reason to visit the 'burbs is the world famous [Chatuchak Weekend Market](#) (p140).

AMANTEE

Map pp124–5 Antiques/Art

☎ 0 2982 8694; www.amantee.com; 131/3 Soi 13,

Th Chaeng Wattana, Greater Bangkok; ☎ 9am–8pm; taxi from ☎ Mor Chit

Although well outside of the city centre, this 'repository of Oriental and Tibetan art and antiques' is well worth the trip. Consisting of several interconnecting wooden Thai houses holding a variety of classy items, the peaceful compound also boasts a [café](#) (☎ 9am–5pm), accommodation and occasional cultural events.

A Thai-language map for taxi drivers can be downloaded from the website.

KING POWER Map pp52–3 Duty Free

☎ 0 2677 8899; www.kingpower.com; 8 Th Rang Nam, Ratchathewi; 🕒 10am–9pm; 🏛️ Victory Monument

Towering over leafy Soi Rang Nam, this 'sensory extravaganza' has taken duty-free shopping from the airport to the streets of suburban Bangkok. The selection and prices are the same as that of the airport, but occasional discounts and promotions can make it worth the trek. Featuring the largest watch centre in Southeast Asia, the ultramodern complex also includes a hotel, buffet restaurant and, at the King Power Theater, a branch of the [Traditional Thai Puppet Theatre](#) (see p189).

To make duty-free purchases here, bring your passport and flight information and register at the lobby. Purchases of domestic goods can be taken away the same day, while imported goods are picked up at the airport on your day of departure.

King Power even offers a [pick-up service](#) (☎ 0 2205 8888; 🕒 10am–7pm) to and from hotels in the centre of the city.

CHATUCHAK WEEKEND MARKET

Map pp124–5 Market

Th Phahonyothin, Greater Bangkok; 🕒 9am–6pm Sat & Sun; 🏛️ Mo Chit, 🚇 Kamphaeng Phet

Imagine if all the city's markets, with their green shade umbrellas and narrow walkways, were fused together in one great big market-style concentration camp. Now add in a little artistic flair, a climate like a sauna, the energy of bargaining crowds and you've got a rough sketch of Chatuchak (also spelled 'Jatujak' or nicknamed 'JJ'). More than 15,000 stalls cater to hundreds of thousands of visitors during the two days of the week when the market is in full operation (on other days, only certain portions are open).

Everything is sold here, from live chickens and snakes to vintage fans and *mdw lam* CDs. Once you're deep in the bowels, it will seem like there is no order and no escape, but Chatuchak is arranged into sections: crafts, clothing, plants, pets, etc. [Nancy Chandler's map](#) (p128) has a handy breakdown and there are posted maps within the complex. An information centre and several ATMs with foreign-exchange booths are located near the Chatuchak Park offices, towards the northern end of the market's Soi 1, Soi 2 and Soi 3. Come

early to beat the heat and the crowds and watch your valuables carefully as sticky fingers love JJ too.

Clothing dominates most of the market, starting in Section 8 and continuing through the even-numbered sections to 24. Stalls sell the usual ethnic garb, army surplus, and other modest and immodest duds. In section 5, funky secondhand clothes get a minor role, selling grease-monkey work shirts with sewn-on name labels, so that Matthews can become Leroy's. Tourist-sized clothes and textiles are in Sections 10 and 8.

In years past, Chatuchak was more of a working-class market, selling housewares and gravel. But as Bangkok becomes more self-assured, the weekend market has moved more towards boutique. Young designers and artists cut their teeth in these little stalls hoping to graduate to a more permanent space. Section 7 is becoming an arty bastion with little galleries and knick-knack stalls. More-traditional arts and crafts, like musical instruments, hill-tribe crafts, religious amulets and antiques, hang out in Sections 25 and 26. Sections 2 and 3, currently Chatuchak's most valuable real estate, have a variety of shops selling original décor items and trendy clothing.

Across from the southern side of the market on Th Kamphaengphet 2 is a strip of stores selling traditional wood furniture, vintage fans and phonographs and other treasures of yore. Keep an eye out for water-hyacinth rugs, every apartment-dweller's dream accent.

Lots of Thai-style eating and snacking will stave off Chatuchak rage (cranky behaviour brought on by dehydration or hunger). Numerous food stalls set up between Sections 6 and 8, and particularly enticing are [Foon Talop](#) (Section 26, Soi 1), an incredibly popular Isan restaurant, and [Café Ice](#) (Section 7, Soi 3), a Western-Thai fusion joint with tasty fruit shakes. As evening draws near, down a beer at [Viva's](#) (Section 26, Soi 1), a café-bar that features live music and stays open late, or cross Th Kamphaengphet 2 to the cosy whisky bars that keep nocturnal hours.

[Or Tor Kor Market](#) (p171) sets up opposite the south side of Chatuchak Weekend Market, selling an amazing array of fruits and prepared foods.

Considering the current obsession with malls in Bangkok, it was really only a matter of time before [JJ Mall](#), an air-conditioned

Chatuchak wannabe, opened directly north of the market in 2007. A sanitised version of the real thing; its generous air-conditioning is the only justification we can find for making the trudge over.

VESPA MARKET Map pp124–5 Outdoor Market

Cnr Th Rachadaphisek & Th Lat Phrao, Greater Bangkok; 🕒 6–11pm Sat; 🚇 Lad Phrao

Uniting urban cowboys, hip-hoppers, wannabe mods and pissed-off punks, this expansive outdoor market is a virtual melting pot of Bangkok youth subculture. The original emphasis was on vehicles, and you can still find heaps of vintage Vespas and Lambrettas, Volkswagens and Austin Minis for sale or show betwixt quirky T-shirts, used sneakers and modern antiques.

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