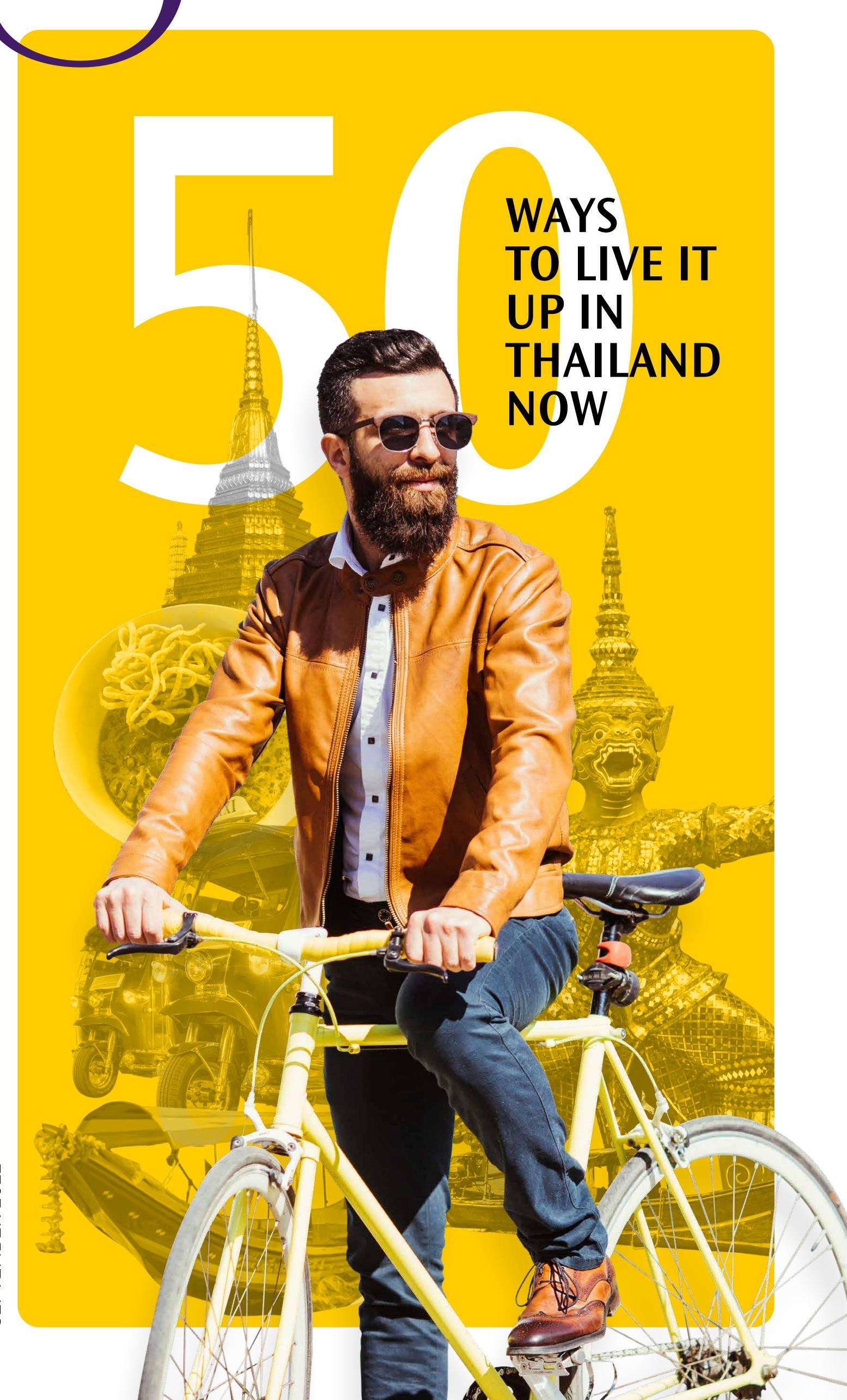


## AWASDEE





elcome to the new Sawasdee,
Thai Airways' travel and
lifestyle content hub, where
you'll find a world of travel
inspiration from across our network.

At <u>Sawasdee.thaiairways.com</u>, fresh dispatches and insider guides on your favorite destinations — written by a global community of travel experts — drop every week. Every month, we curate stories into a downloadable e-magazine for a more focused reading experience — anywhere, any time.

For the e-magazine's inaugural issue, we celebrate the return of leisure travel with a spotlight on our own kingdom. As one of the most searched countries for post-pandemic holiday travel, we know you don't need more reasons to fly to Thailand, so instead we're sharing just some of the ways you can enjoy yourself when you arrive. It's a whole new and exciting world of travel, and we're looking forward to sharing the journey with you. •



#### SEPTEMBER 2022

#### **EDITORIAL**

Launch Editor **Tara FT Sering**Digital Editor **Parisa Pichitmarn**Art Director **Marlon Espino** 

SALES

Commercial Head **Lynn Ashlee** lynn.ashlee@ink-global.com



Chief Executive Officers

Michael Keating, Simon Leslie

Chief Operating and Financial Officer

Jim Campbell

Managing Director, APAC Ric Stockfis

www.ink-global.com

Creative Director, APAC Alexandra Karplus

#### IN THIS ISSUE

There are hundreds of ways to live it up in Thailand right now, but think of these as your Starting 50.

AMAZING THAI-INSPIRED COCKTAILS  A flight of 5 craft sips in Bangkok	>
COOL NEW CAFÉS IN THE CAPITAL 7 recaffeinating hotspots in the city	
THE HOTTEST NEW RESTAURANTS 6 of Bangkok's most sought-after tables right now	>
CHIANG MAI'S BEST BOWLS OF KHAO SOI Get ready to be bowled over at these 6 spots	>
SUIT UP IN STYLE Check out Bangkok's amazing tailoring scene	>
WHERE TO GO DANCING IN BANGKOK Break out your moves at these 5 night spots	>
ITALY ALONG THE RIVER OF KINGS One incredible, cross-cultural cruise	>
RIVERSIDE REVIVAL: A HOTEL STORY 2 luxury urban resorts to check into	>
OFF-THE-GRID ISLAND ADVENTURES 7 underrated destinations in Thailand	
GLAMP OUT IN A LUXE TENTED CAMP 4 ultra-special luxury camps around the country	>
CHIANG RAI'S BEST DAY HIKES  5 trails to explore on your next visit	>
NORTH BY NORTHEAST One special weekend in Ubon Ratchathani	>

# Amazing Thai-inspired cocktails

There's a lot of the traditional and modern Thai spirit — pun intended — in these cocktails, available at some of Bangkok's most acclaimed bars

BY CHERYL TIU

or a while, getting together for drinks in Bangkok meant nights out at a trendy rooftop bar overlooking the city — with 360-degree views that sometimes proved more memorable than the cocktails. The past few years, however, have seen a booming craft cocktail scene, and now the locavore concept — celebrating Thai culture, flavors and ingredients — is proudly showcased at some of the city's most popular bars. Here's a list of some of our favorite Thai-inspired cocktails to sip on your next night in Bangkok.



Where to have it: Vesper is a sleek bar that's currently at number 19 in the Asia's 50 Best Bars list.

What's in it: For starters, the drink contains 11 Tigers spices, an all-natural dried herbal bar traditionally used in Thailand in the preparation of herbal liquor. "It has properties that improve blood circulation and gives you energy," says owner Choti Leenutaphong. "We infuse this with vodka until the dried spices are dissolved, and then mix in the ginger syrup, lychee juice, lime juice, and finally, egg white to give the drink a smooth, fluffy texture. We shake all the ingredients together with ice and serve in a coupe glass." Its real tribute to the Thai capital can be read on the edible custom-made sheet garnish, emblazoned with the words 'Bangkok, City of Life'. This old slogan was used by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Leenutaphong adds, "Bangkok is a city full

of life and energy, constantly on the move and never really sleeps. The 11 Tiger Spices is supposed to give you energy, so we think it's a fitting ingredient to this cocktail." Just the kind of pick-me-up we like.

VESPER 10/15 CONVENT ROAD, SILOM



Where to get it: Tep Bar is a three-minute walk from the Golden Buddha. The bar was conceptualized by co-founder Asawin Rojmethatawee to showcase Thai spirits, ingredients and flavors.

What's in it: Songkran features ya dong or Thai moonshine — made from a local Thai white spirit infused with 20 kinds of local herbs — mixed with passionfruit, lemon and homemade syrup. "It's refreshing, sweet and sour with the aromatic kick of Thai herbs,"

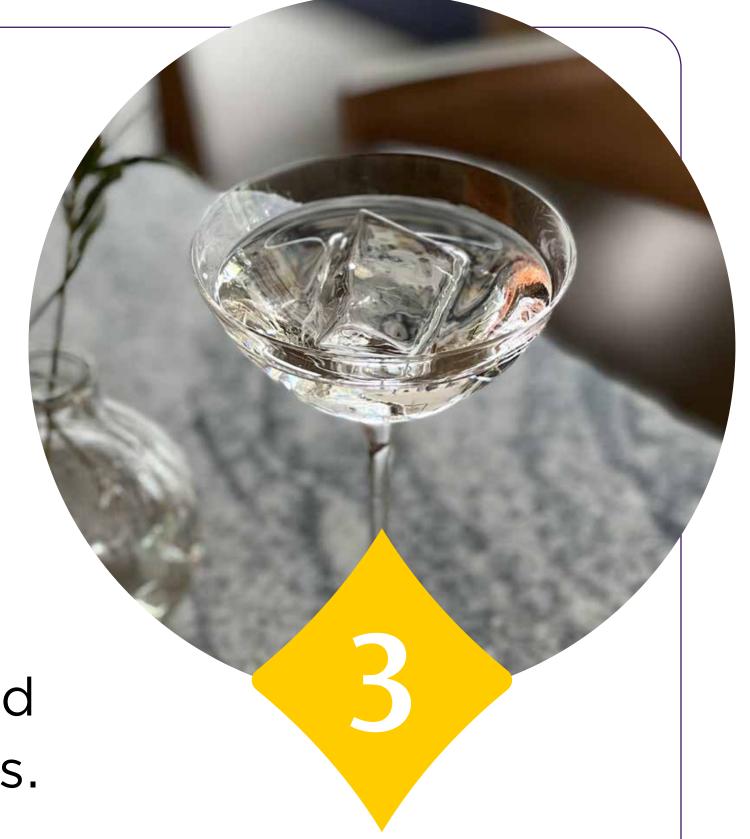
says Rojmethatawee. Also inspired by the rambunctious Thai water festival, Songkran is served in a traditional hand-hammered aluminum water bowl.

**TEP BAR** 69, 71 YI SIP SONG KARAKADAKHOM 4 ALLEY, POM PRAP, POM PRAP SATTRU PHAI

## Milk, Tea & Coco

#### Where to have it:

The brand-new Villa Frantzén Cocktail Bar, which opened in June 2022, serves Nordic and Asian-inspired cocktails.



What's in it: This cocktail's ingredients include Chalong Bay rum, aged Akvavit, arrack, coconut milk, Ceylon tea and lavender. Bar manager Gabriel Valdés says, "The base of this drink constitutes rum from a highly respected rum producer from Phuket. We then used the clarification technique to bring the smooth and silky finish to the end-texture of the drink in order to let the coconut milk stand out."

VILLA FRANTZÉN COCKTAIL BAR 7 SOI YEN AKAT 3, KHWAENG CHONG NONSI, KHET YANNAWA



#### Issan Coco

Where to have it: Asia Today is little sister to Teens of Thailand. From the name to the menu, the bar is owner Niks Anuman-Rajadhon's way of celebrating presentday Asia — its enduring traditions, evolving tastes, local ingredients — and of supporting farmers and local producers by changing the perception that local ingredients are somehow of lesser value.

What's in it: "It's a classic local drink made with Issan Rum (distilled from fresh sugarcane juice in Nongkhai province) mixed with fresh coconut water," says Anuman-Rajadhon. Simple, straightforward, and so good.

**ASIA TODAY** 35 SOI RAMMAITREE, RAMA IV ROAD, POM PRAB

## After Kaprao Highball by Wasteland



Where to have it: You'll have to make this one at home, following the recipe by Wasteland, the zero-waste cocktail concept by Dharath Hoonchamlong (Tot), Kitibordee Chortubtim (Gov) and Suchada Sopajaree (Fahbeer).

What's in it: "When making Pad Kaprao, one of the beloved dishes in Thailand, you only really use the leaves of holy basil and the stems are left out," explains Tot. "This is a highball that mixes the usual staple ingredients in the Thai pantry. But it's also not your usual highball — it's very aromatic and makes a great digestif after all the intense flavors or heat from the meal."



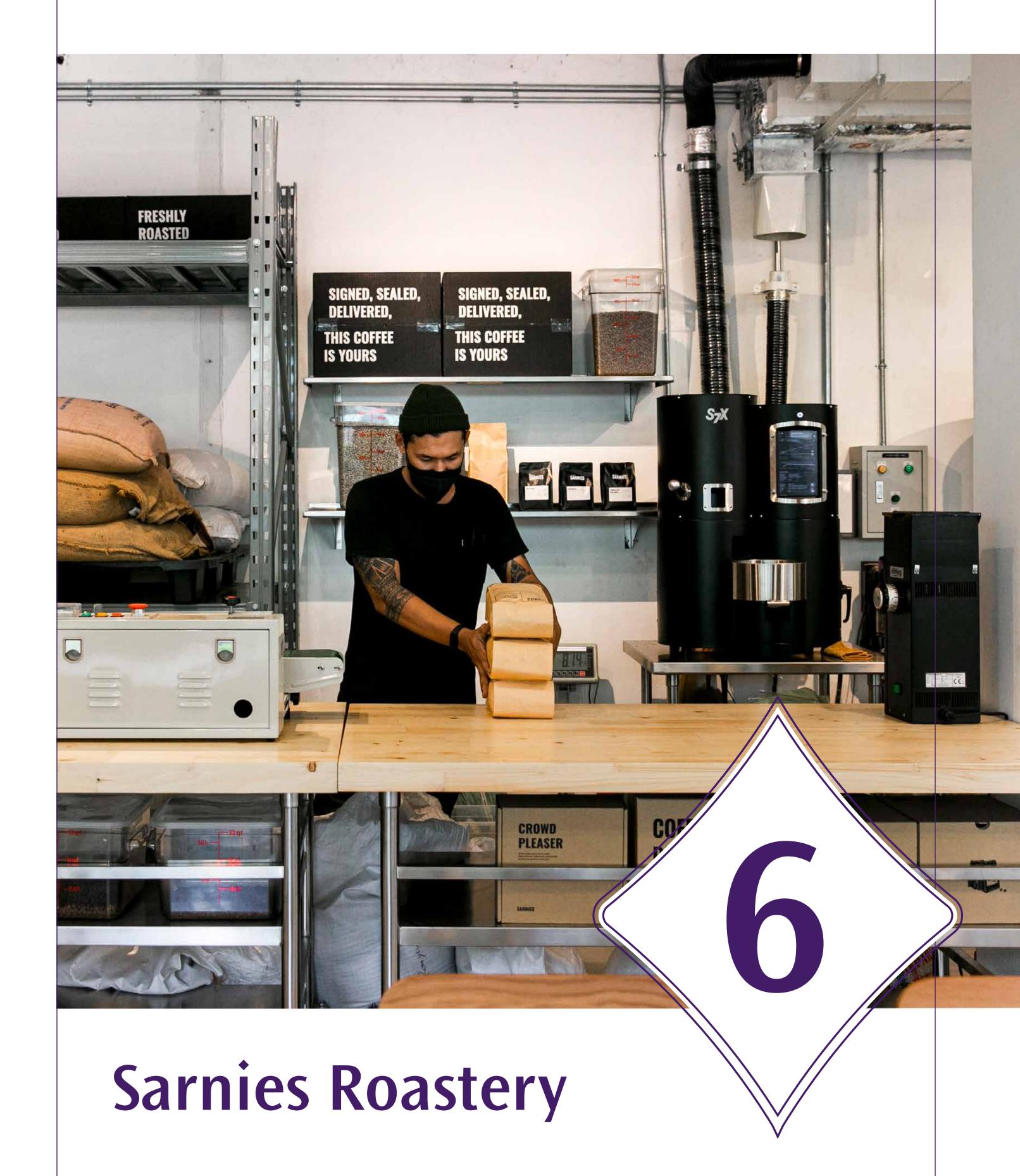
go to sawasdee.thaiairways.com

## Cool new cafés across the capital

A handy list of the latest coffee (and tea) shops to pop up all over Bangkok

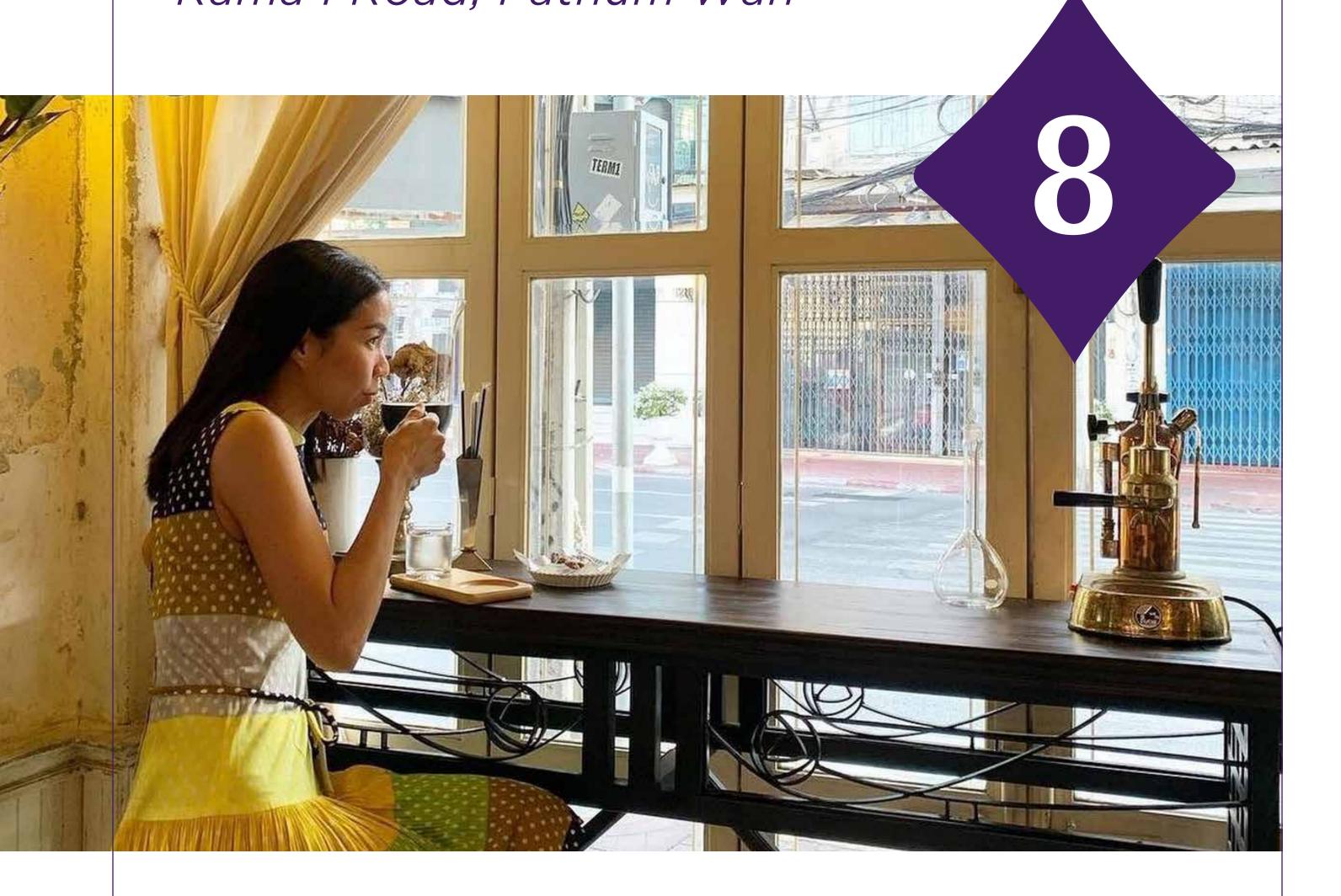
BY RC OWEN

decade ago it was hard to find coffee in Bangkok that wasn't a) 40% evaporated milk, or b) bearing a green mermaid logo. Happily, and rather caffeinatedly, all that has changed, and it feels as if the Thai capital is entering a golden age of coffee culture. Here are seven new cafes, of countless more, that have cropped up across Bangkok over the last several months.



Earlier in 2022, Sarnies, a beloved Singaporean brand, opened its second outlet on Bangkok soil, this time in the commercial hub of Ploenchit. A revamped townhouse five minutes' walk from Chitlom BTS station, the airy, industrial-style venue offers Sarnies' tried-and-true combo of hearty brunch-style dining and onsite-roasted, single-origin beans. A trendy spot for your latte and lunch, it's got the lofty prices to match — but that's just part of the territory this close to embassy row. 34 1 Soi Ton Son, Lumphini, Pathum Wan

Launched in late 2021, CDGRE BKK is a hybrid bistro-streetwear store launched by a collab of Bangkok's culinary bigwigs — just one reason this mall café deserves a mention. Another is that both the coffee and the food (like the crispy German pork knuckle and literally all of the pastries) are genuinely chef's-kiss delicious, as you would expect from Gaggan Anand and the famed brothers Sühring. Dine downstairs, then hit the little mezzanine and browse cheeky CDGRE merch by local streetwear purveyor Carnival. G15, G Floor, Siam Paragon, 991 Rama I Road, Pathum Wan



## Pompano Roasted

Eclectic shophouse-chic meets latte art at this tiny café opposite Hua Lamphong train station. It's perfectly situated for your presightseeing espresso, your midday pick-meup, or your afternoon sugar hit (hot croffle, anyone?). Located at the doorstep of the Chinatown tourist zone, there's a ton of action — come for the refreshments, stay for the buzzing atmosphere. 482 Maitri Chit Road, Pom Prap, Pom Prap Sattru Phai



## 9 Million Taste

Serious coffee with a whimsical twist, Million Taste has something no other newcomer can boast: a rooftop terrace. Halfway between Phrom Phong and Thonglor BTS stations, it's worth the walk for its diverse selection of caffeinated drinks alongside mid-Sukhumvit views. The space-age minimalist design is good for a few Insta-shots and if you find yourself suddenly hankering for a bagel, Bartels Bangkok is mere steps away. 762 14 Sukhumvit Road, Khlong Tan, Khlong Toei



Serious coffee with a whimsical twist, Million Taste has something no other newcomer can boast: a rooftop terrace.



## Citizen Tea, Canteen of Nowhere

Not a fan of coffee? Then this café might be for you. From Citizen of Nowhere, purveyor of handcrafted Thai items, Citizen Tea is an artsy kopi-teahouse-style space that serves a curation of tasty Thai milk teas and hot signature blends, while doubling as a showroom for the brand's artisan wares. It's the definition of a hidden gem — located down a narrow laneway within the labyrinth of one of Bangkok's oldest neighborhoods. Think of it as a good excuse to get lost in the hippest historic area of the city. 764 Soi Wanit 2, Talat Noi, Samphanthawong



Without a doubt, there's a significant overlap between coffee aficionados and film nerds, but you don't actually have to be either to love FICS, a Film-Inspired Cafe/Concept Store/Community Space. Themed like an arthouse cinema, and awash in movie memorabilia, it's one of Bangkok's quirkiest places to get buzzed, with coffee from Northern Thailand and more than 50



types of craft beer. To properly soak up the ambience, time your visit during the week to avoid the weekend crush. 245, 11 Sukhumvit 31, Khlong Tan Nuea, Watthana



A little ways along the Sukhumvit BTS line, and a short walk from On Nut station, you'll find The Wood Land, a kid- and petfriendly outdoor café. Garden dining is hard to come by in the middle of Bangkok, so this is somewhat of a gem, a city glade where your kid/s can touch grass while you recaffeinate in the shade. Aside from coffee, there's the usual lineup of sweet, iced beverages, some wines, light meals, and a generous array of croffles. With bean bags and scattered seating you can enjoy plenty of personal space — another rare find in a city like this. 17 Sukhumvit 52 Alley, Phra Khanong ◆

## The hottest new restaurants in Bangkok

With numerous internationally acclaimed dining spots peppered across town, Bangkok's restaurant scene has always been buzzy. And it just got even better

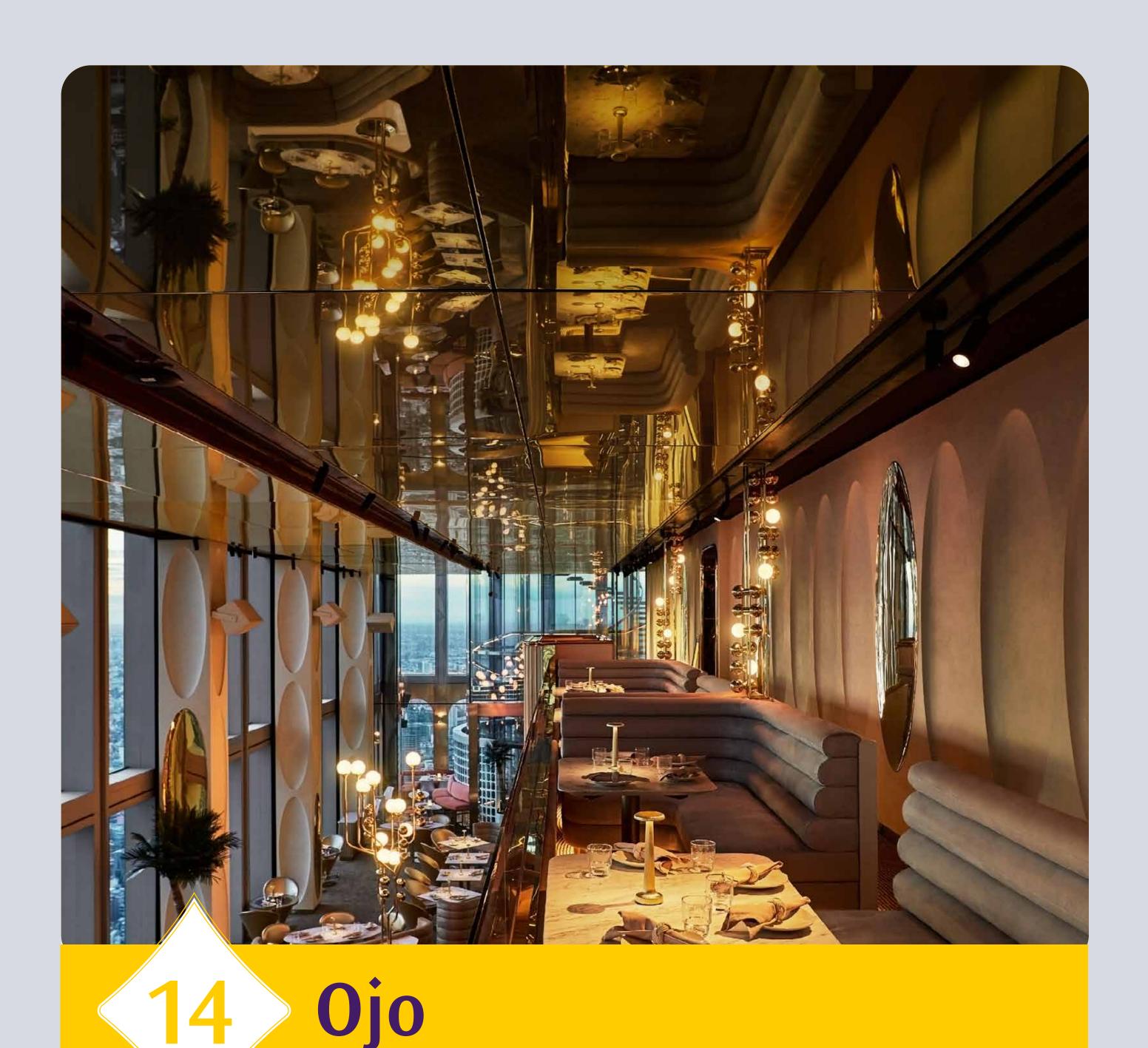


BY RC OWEN

f New York is the city that never sleeps,
Bangkok is the city that never stops eating.
From your humble street-food stalls to
your bougie fine-diners, the scene in the
Thai capital is always on and always changing
— it's hard to keep up. With restaurants able
to fully operate again after years of lockdown,
fresh Michelin stars have been awarded and new
players have entered the game. Here are some of
the hottest restaurants in Bangkok 2022.

## 13 Ruay Mitr Sathorn

Sathorn continues to draw a cool collection of restaurant operators, and now Supanigga group's new branch of Ruay Mitr has been added to the mix. Like the original in Thong Lo, it offers *khao tom kui* (rice congee with savory sides), along with a selection of classic soups, salads, and stir-fries. Restaurant interiors serve up a refreshing hit of color, leaning into nostalgia with shabby-chic antiques, Chinese-style custom plates, and eclectic artworks. Expect a full and noisy house and book ahead on weekends. *28 N S Sathon Road, Silom, Bang Rak; Mains: THB 150-THB 220* 



This glitzy 76th-floor restaurant is a mustvisit for its sky-high views alone — the fact that it's the first of five new outlets belonging to The Standard Bangkok Mahanakhon only intensifies its hotspot status. Formerly Mahanakhon Sky Bar, Ojo features a sexy, retro-futuristic refurb in beige, gold, and pink. The menu is a lighter take on Mexican cuisine, it was crafted by executive chef Francisco "Paco" Ruano, whose restaurant in Mexico, Alcalde, is a regular in the Latin America's 50 Best Restaurants list. After dinner, head upstairs to Sky Beach, The Standard's funky rooftop bar and observation deck. 114 Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra Road, Silom, Bang Rak; Mains: THB 1,300-THB 4,500



### Villa Frantzén

That the group behind three-Michelin-star Frantzén in Stockholm and similarly starred Zén in Singapore have opened a restaurant in Bangkok is in itself buzzworthy. Villa Frantzén is located in a beautiful garden mansion in Yennakart. Under head chef Martin Enström, the restaurant delivers on its promise of fresh, haute-but-casual dining with a five-course menu of modern Nordic cuisine. Artistic plating, cozy interiors and friendly service have helped win this newcomer early rave reviews. 7 Soi Yen Akat 3, Khwaeng Chong Nonsi, Khet Yan Nawa; Five-course menu: THB 3,500 net pp; Wine pairing: THB 2,200 pp



This latest offering from David Thompson takes up a small but character-filled space on the fifth floor of a shophouse in Charoen Krung. Aksorn opened during the pandemic and has lately returned to the spotlight as a 2022 recipient of a Michelin star. The prixfixe menu, inspired by recipes from David's collection of vintage Thai cookbooks, changes every couple of months. Mains are served all at once, family-style, on flowery plates, with optional wine pairing. The celebrity restaurateur himself is often on hand to chat with diners and oversee his hipster-looking crew in the open kitchen. At one of the most reasonable price points for upscale Thai dining in Bangkok, Aksorn is a great place to host overseas visitors looking for old-school-with-a-twist local flavors. 1266 Charoen Krung Road, Khwaeng Bang Rak, Bang Rak; THB 2,800 pp



## Gaggan Anand

One of the many casualties of Bangkok's pandemic lockdowns, Gaggan Anand (the two-Michelin-star restaurant) shut during the Delta wave of 2021. Gaggan Anand (the chef) then left Thailand for nine months but is now back and taking reservations for his 14-seater dining room in Sukhumvit 31, scheduled to reopen in August 2022. As of press time, no one can be sure what exactly will be featured on the new menu, though the new Gaggan Experience is almost bound to include a theatrical, drunken and irreverent three-hour flavor journey unlike any you've had before. 68 Sukhumvit 31, Khlong Tan Nuea, Watthana; THB 12,000 pp •



Fans of modern LatAm cuisine will fall in love with this 45-seater potential datenight spot that oozes with Latin swagger, from indulgent dishes (check out the menu of mouth-watering charcoal grilled meats hello, grade 4 Wagyu ribeye) to decadent cocktails and party shots. The new Carlos Rodriguez-helmed restaurant and bar at the Anantara Siam offers a culinary journey throughout an entire continent, and then some: the Peruvian options come with a Nikkei twist, as in the ceviche in leche de tigre, the tuna acevichado roll or the salmon served with broccolini, wasabi yoghurt and soy-ginger dressing. Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel, 155 Rajadamri Road; Mains from THB 500

## Best bowls of khao soi in Chiang Mai

A glutton's guide to northern Thailand's favorite noodle dish



BY RACHNA SACHASINH

hao soi — a fragrant and fiery coconut curry and noodle soup served with fermented pickles, fresh shallots and a dollop of crushed, roasted chilies — is not indigenous to Chiang Mai, but that doesn't stop the Thai city from laying claim to it.

Khao soi is believed to have originated among Chinese Muslim communities in southern China. The dish crossed the border into Myanmar, where Shan communities adapted the recipe oh no khao swe. Like the original dish, the Shan version uses rice noodles — in fact, khao swe means "cut rice". Northern Thailand got its first taste of the noodle curry around the 19th century, and the dish adapted yet again. Handmade boiled egg noodles replaced rice noodles, and local red curry paste gave the coconut base a spicy kick. With its piquant and hearty flavors and quick preparation, Chiang Mai khao soi quickly took off as the city's go-to breakfast and lunch dish.



A typical bowl starts with a pile of hand-cut, boiled egg noodles. A light, creamy coconut and red curry paste broth is ladled on top, along with your choice of stewed chicken or beef (because of its roots, pork is rarely used). The bowl is garnished with fried egg noodles and accompanied by small plates of pickled onions, fresh shallots, lime and roasted chillies.

Cruising the city in search of the best bowl is a pastime among locals and visitors alike. We've rounded up six of our favorites (one for every day of your weeklong Chiang Mai holiday), but we also recommend you be adventurous — this dish is always evolving, and the best bowls are often in low-profile, humble, family-run spots.





The slightly upscale spot burst onto the scene mid-pandemic, and its Japanese-inspired khao soi is worth lining up for. The Thai owners elevate the dish with handcrafted, top-shelf ingredients, not to mention impeccable presentation. Bowls with braised beef are a big hit, as is the non-traditional and intriguing 'fried khao soy', served without the broth. 430/1 Charoen Rat Road; +66 61 515 4529

## Soi Prince

The torchbearer for the original, this joint tops many lists. The slightly watery coconut broth crackles with chilies and dried spices. Tangy and fragrant on its own, but better if you add the pickled mustard greens and lime zest. Both beef and chicken versions are available at Khao Soi Prince. Off Route 1367; +66 89 435 3991







## Khao Soy Lung Prakit Kad Kom

Known affectionately as "Khao Soi Netflix", this 40-year-old spot shot to fame following an appearance on the streaming service. Michelin Guide Thailand pegged its creamy coconut broth, firm noodles and crisp toppings as near perfect. 53 Suriyawong 5 Road, Hai Ya

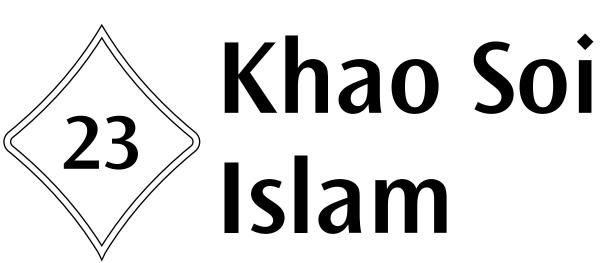


## Khao Soi Lamduan Fa-Ham

Locals contend this spot serves Chiang Mai's best khao soi — long before it scored a Michelin Guide mention. The soup at Khao Soi Lamduan Fa-Ham is bright yellow and laced with piquant, eye-watering red curry, and comes with your choice of beef or chicken. 352/22 Thanon Charoenrat







Tucked in a small alley practically under the minarets of Masjid Hidayatul near the Night Bazaar, this halal shop peddles a mild and lightly seasoned version that resembles the Burmese oh no khao swe. Soi 1, Thanon Charoen Prathet



The chefs in Khao Soi Mae Manee — a homey kitchen — assemble bowls of beef khao soi at lightning speed, keeping the hungry lines moving. It's consistently good, with the creamy coconut broth perfectly calibrated for heat level and tanginess. 18 Soi 24 Chotana Road







## Goodsouls Kitchen

Vegetarians need not miss out on khao soi. Plant-based Goodsouls Kitchen favors a style with strong Burmese culinary influences, with tofu and potatoes standing in for the chicken. 52/2 Singharat Road ◆



# How to suit up in style in Bangkok

Looking smart and spiffy is serious business in the Thai capital



mong savvy business travelers, nothing else from Bangkok has had the universal acceptance as the suit. It might not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of The Big Mango — golden buddhas, bucket cocktails and street food tend to dominate. However, commute from Sathorn to the suburbs of Sukhumvit on the BTS in summer (or rainy season), and the importance of your choice of attire will be clear.



While Bangkok might not have the same storied history as London's Savile Row or Florence's Pitti Uomo, high-quality tailoring and bespoke suits have been part of the city's fabric (excuse the pun) for hundreds of years. Today Bangkok's tailoring scene is flourishing with players such as Vvon Sugunnasil, Pinky Tailor, Narin Couture, Amit Fashion and The Decorum, a menswear specialist that brings artisan-made items from around the world to Bangkok. ◆



#### Ready to look sharp?

Read the full story at sawasdee.thaiairways.com

# Where to go dancing, any kind of dancing, in Bangkok

We've mapped out the essential stops for a lively night on the town — not to mention a bonus workout. It's time to whip out your dancing shoes

BY PARISA PICHITMARN



s the city slowly comes back to life, tiptoeing towards full swing, we can all let out a collective sigh of relief as our favorite dance floors start reopening. Whether you like bopping to K-Pop or want to show off your Charleston steps, there's a venue for all sorts of dancing in Bangkok. Here are some of the hottest spots to shimmy the night away.



The Hop was founded in 2012 by swing dance teacher Oat Naviroj, who established his Bangkok Swing community in a discreet shophouse on Silom Road. The Hop offers classes on the various styles of swing dancing that were popular from the 1920 to 1940s, such as Lindy Hop, Charleston, Blues and Authentic Jazz Dance. At this vintage studio with red walls and wooden dance floors, Social Dances are held every Saturday night, starting at 8pm. The THB 200 entrance fee includes a 30-minute open class for beginners; then at 8.30pm, the floor opens for all to get into the swing of things. Bring out your bow ties and swirling skirts, because part of the fun at The Hop is checking out other people's retro outfits.

**The Hop** 252 8 Si Lom, Suriya Wong, Bang Rak; Saturdays, 8pm to 11pm



## **BEAM**

The cool crowd and beautiful citizens of Thong Lo go clubbing at the luxe industrial BEAM. Although the space looks like an empty warehouse, don't be fooled: it's fitted with cutting-edge light, sound and visual equipment that make for trippy lasers and bangin' beats. Inside the main room is a "body kinetic" dance floor that provides vibration — it means you'll feel the music's rhythm pulsing under your feet as you dance. Currently, a lot of hip-hop is played by the live DJs, but keep an eye out for their upcoming lineup of events, because this venue is also a temple of deep house, trance and techno. It's usually a packed experience at BEAM, and tables are scarce, so we highly recommend booking in advance.

**BEAM** 72 Courtyard, 1 Fl, 72 Sukhumvit 55 Thong Lo; Friday to Saturday, 9pm to 2am



## **OVERSEOUL BKK**

If you want to see people break into an impressively synced flash dance mob to hit K-Pop tunes, this is the place to be. Overseoul is a cute, neon-splashed space with lots of Instagramworthy photo ops. There's even a huge projected screen that plays videos so you can follow along iconic dance moves — although the university and first-jobber crowd here is already on point with their dance covers. A hangout for fans of all things Korean, stans love this spot for their Blackpink playlist, variety of soju drinks and comfort Korean dishes, such as fried chicken and giant flower kimbaps.

**Overseoul** 1029/12 Phahonyothin Road, Samsen Nai, Phaya Thai; every day from 6pm to 12am



## Havana Social

Inspired by pre-revolution 1940s Cuba, cocktail bar and cigar lounge Havana Social takes you back to a time when Havana was the 'Las Vegas of the Caribbean'. To get inside, you'll have to press the right code into their phone booth first. Alongside a time warp to the colonial capital, you'll also be greeted by a mix of Latino, Cuban, Salsa and Reggaeton music. A fun detail is the bar's array of straw fedoras guests can pop on to look the part. Salsa Sundays are now back and start at 8pm. Every week, you can learn a new Latin American dance style for free — from Salsa, Bachata, Merengue, Cha Cha to Reggaeton. A large international crowd loves this classy and entertaining spot for its live Latin band and tequila cocktails.

Havana Social 41, 3 Sukhumvit Road, Khlong Toei Nuea, Watthana; every day from 6pm to 12am (Saturdays until 2am)



## House of Heals

Even if you don't fall under the LGBTQIA+ group, there's no need to feel shy about visiting House of Heals — everyone is welcome to check their worries at the door and feel the joyful vibe at this drag show bar. Founded by renowned drag queen and Drag Race Thailand host Pangina Heals (Pan Pan Narkprasert), this is where some of the finest drag talents from all over Thailand perform. On any given night, it's likely you'll come across a handful of Drag Race Thailand alums dancing or strutting their stuff for a runway show. Belt out your favorite diva tunes and dance the night away at this high-energy spot, charmingly equipped with a pole and decorated with a display of stilettos from Thai superstars like Chompoo Araya A. Hargate.

**House of Heals** 518, 8 Phloen Chit Road, Lumphini, Khet Pathum Wan; every day except Tuesdays, from 8pm to 2am

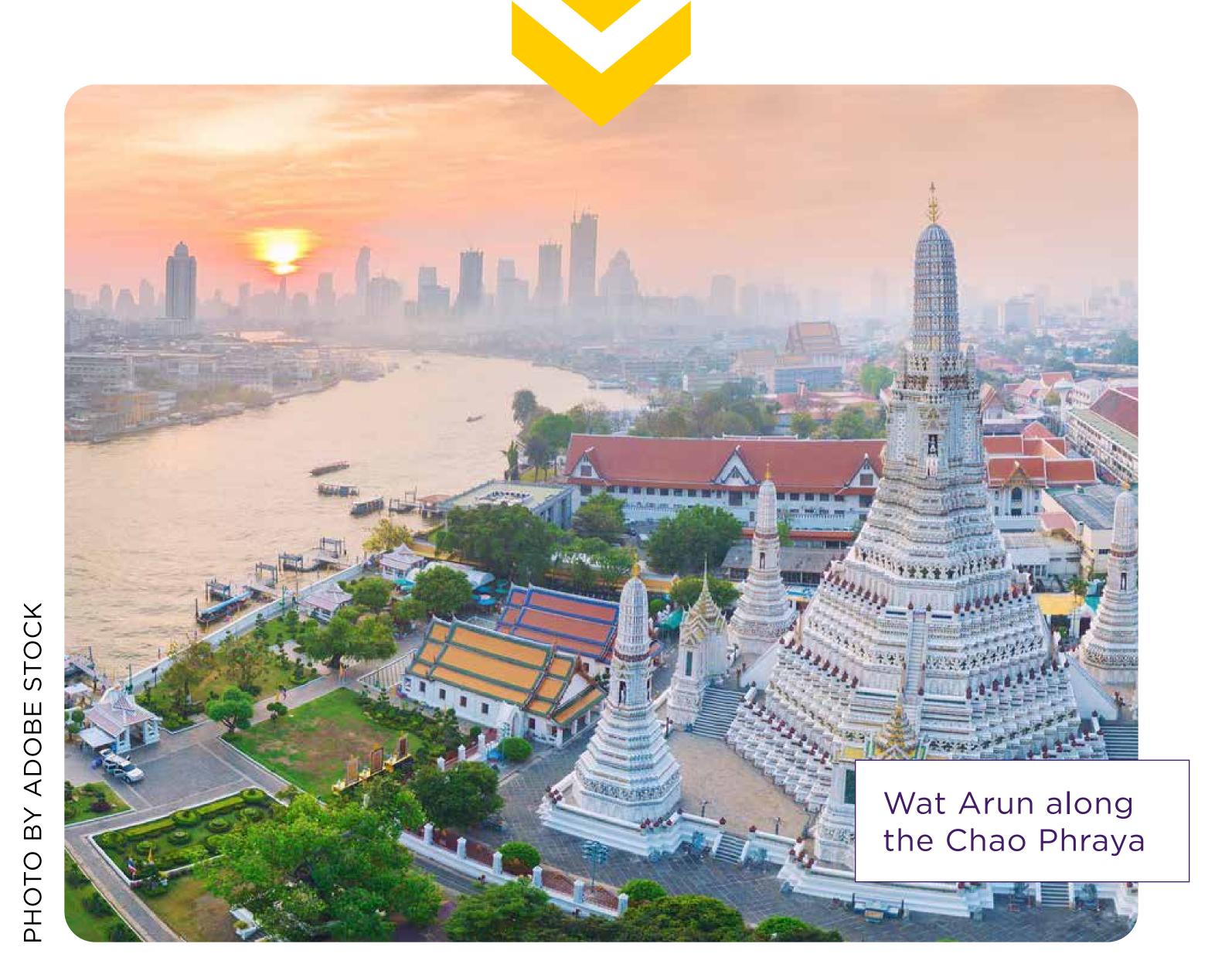


# The Italian-themed architectural treasures along the Chao Phraya

On your next cruise down
Bangkok's River of Kings, keep
your eyes peeled for these grand
and storied buildings

BY ANA KALAW





ing Chulalongkorn or Rama V, who ruled Thailand (then called Siam) at the cusp of the 20th century, was known as the modernizing monarch; a man ahead of his time. Under his reign, Italian-influenced architecture was at its zenith in the kingdom, and resulted in Bangkok being dubbed as the Venice of the East.

At the time, the lives of Bangkok's residents were mostly centered along the Chao Phraya River. Rama V and his successors employed and commissioned Italian architects to build grandiose public buildings and stately residences along the banks of the city's main waterway — structures that still stand to this day.

If you take a boat along the river, you'll see the Italian influence unfold in buildings that bear the mark of Renaissance and Neoclassical styles. The stuccoed façades and dramatic columns carry the legacy of a visionary king. Here's a quick sampling of what you can expect on the cruise.



The stately and elegant Bang Khun Phrom Palace was built in 1906 for Prince Paribatra Sukhumbandhu, King Rama V's 33rd child. Its intricately carved stucco façade, arched windows and majestic staircase are considered to be some of the most beautiful representations of Neo-Baroque architecture in Thailand. The palace was Turin native Mario Tamagno's first project in Thailand, an impressive feat that prompted

further commissions from the royal family, including the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall and the Hua Lamphong Railway Station.

Prince Paribatra lived in the palace until 1932, when the Thai monarchy was overthrown in a revolution and the royal had to flee to Indonesia along with his family. The majestic home was then used for multiple purposes until it was rented out to Bank of Thailand in 1993. Today, the palace's main mansion houses the bank's museum, displaying the history of money in Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia, from ancient currencies to coins to bank notes. But one room remains dedicated to its former resident, and features an exhibit on the prince's life and works.



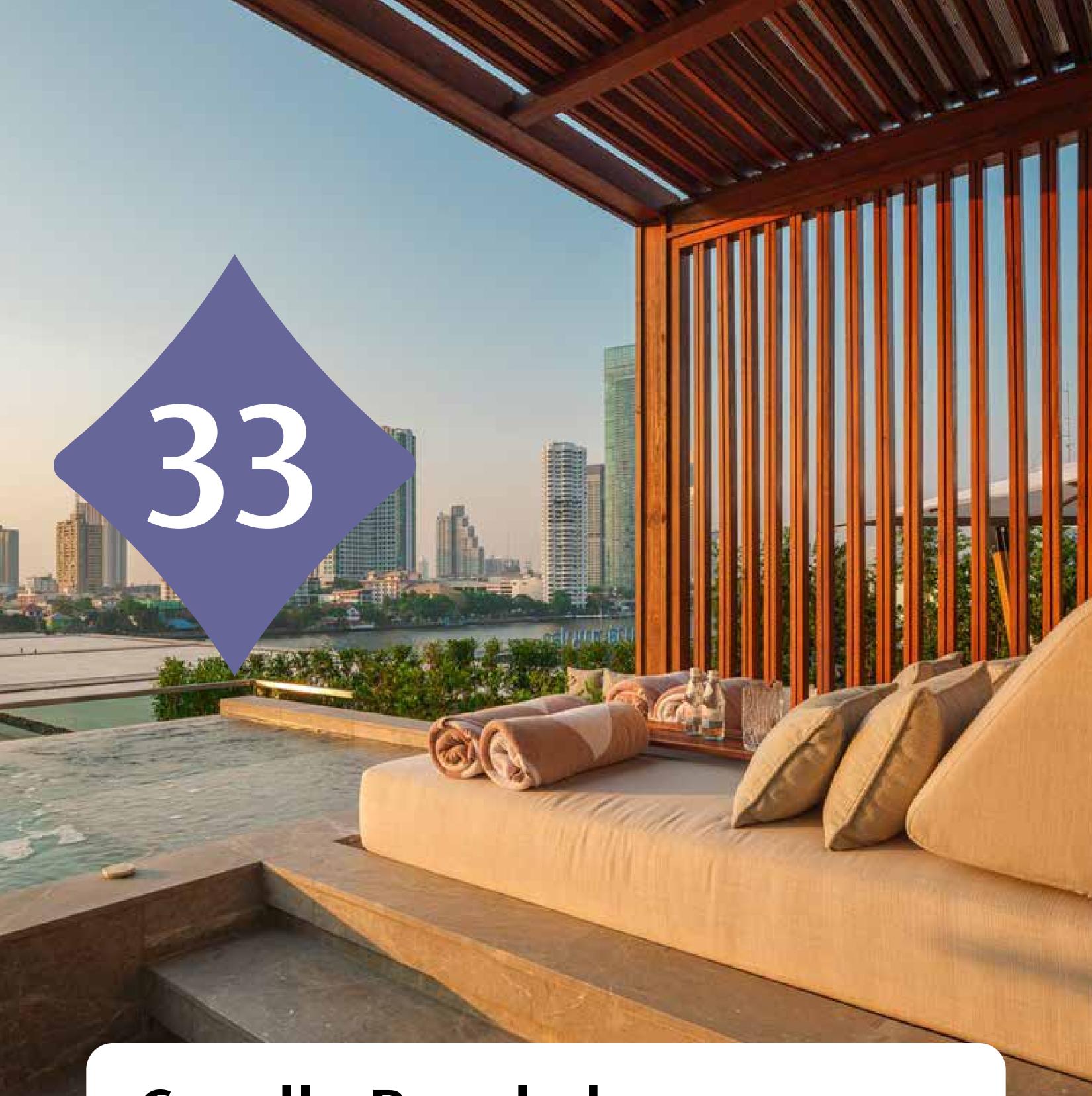
A river cruise is always a great idea.

Read the full story at sawasdee.thaiairways.com



Two luxury urban resorts became local waterside attractions during the global travel pause. Now, along with the rest of Bangkok, they're ready to welcome the rest of the world

BY TARA FT SERING



# Capella Bangkok

certain ease and sense of intimacy pervades the Capella in Bangkok, as if all they really set out to do was build a home — albeit a fabulous one — on prime riverside real estate, in one of the coolest, most historic neighborhoods in town. And that somehow, through elegant curation and good taste, they've ended up with a glamorous urban resort. Capella Bangkok opened in the midst of a pandemic, and while borders remained shut quickly became a favorite among the local hotelloving staycation set.



# Four Season Hotel Bangkok on Chao Phraya River

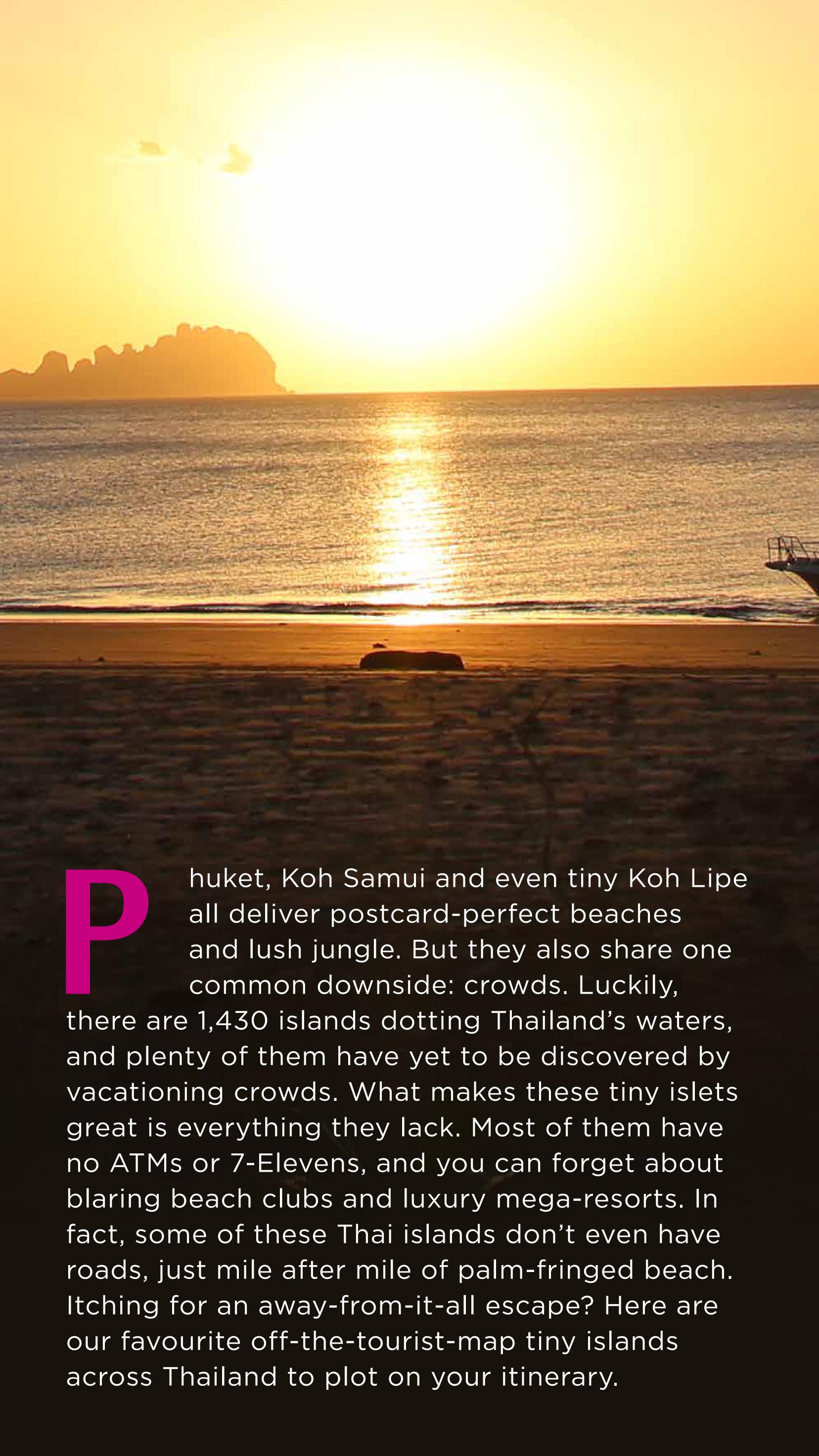
alk about making a riverside splash — the Four Seasons, which returned to Bangkok in late 2020, this time along a 200m stretch of the Chao Phraya, is bound to keep you riveted with nearly every leisure holiday fantasy: from rooms with a view of the river, to sun-drenched and palm-shaded alfresco dining areas, to a spread of wading and swimming pools ready for your next Slim Aarons-inspired vacation snaps.

### Up for a stylish stay?

Visit sawasdee.thaiairways.com for more details



BY CHRIS SCHALKX

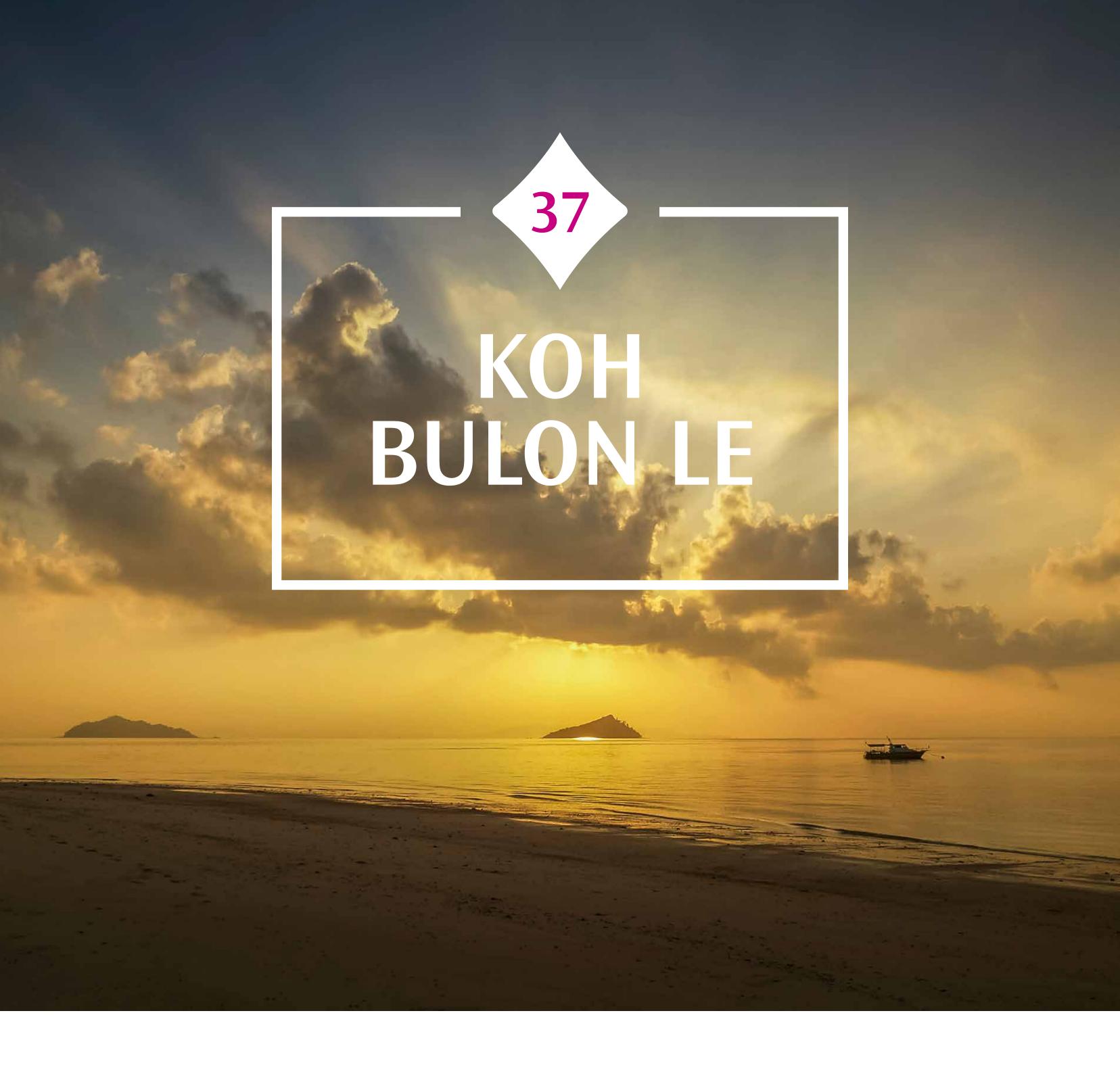




Technically part of Krabi, but easier to reach via its neighboring islands in the Trang archipelago, Koh Ngai looks almost Photoshopped. The water is a surreal shade of aquamarine, the sand honeyblonde, and any sign of urban infrastructure seems neatly airbrushed out of sight (because, well, there isn't any). Aside from lolling on the almost two-kilometer-long beach and snorkeling in the coral-rich waters just offshore, there isn't much to do, but that's what makes this tiny islet so seductive. There are no ATMs and its remote location results in above-average hotel rates and restaurant prices, so be sure to bring plenty of baht.



Sandwiched between the more popular Koh Chang and Koh Kood in the Gulf of Thailand, little Koh Mak is an oft-overlooked gem. It's haloed by long beaches tufted with skinny palms, while most of its inland is bedecked in a patchwork of coconut groves and rubber plantations. Inthe-know tourists have been coming here for years, so there's plenty to choose from in terms of accommodation — from simple bamboo bungalows to villas with infinity pools — as well as restaurants, and even a smidge of nightlife. You can easily fill a few days cycling the flat roads to Buddhist temples, hidden coves and an overgrown sculpture park by local artist Khun Somchai. Got some more time on your hands? Venture out to the surrounding islets on an islandhopping trip by long-tail boat.



Most island-hoppers visiting southern Thailand's Satun province make a beeline for Koh Lipe, leaving the jungly speck of Koh Bulon Le to only the most intrepid travelers. And that's a win, because this disarmingly low-key island remains one of the most Crusoesque settings in the country. In the 20 minutes it takes to cross the island on foot, you'll encounter a few hilltop viewpoints, tangled mangroves, and a curl of alabaster sand you'll likely have all to yourself. The island is home to Muslim fishing families and a small community of Chao Lay sea gypsies who operate a handful of basic bungalow resorts and homestays. Don't expect the usual creature comforts, though: electricity, all solar-powered, rarely kicks in before the evening, and the WiFi connection is spotty at the best of times.



Picture the perfect beach retreat, and you'll likely conjure up an image resembling Koh Kradan. This islet in the Trang archipelago is blessed with all the Thai holiday hallmarks: a long, gold-hued beach, a jungly spine criss-crossed by hiking trails, and a gorgeous chain of karst formations on the horizon. A handful of resorts with thatchroofed bungalows hide in the jungle fringe, but the rest of the island has remained blissfully free of developments. Most of Koh Kradan is part of the Hat Chao Mai National Park, which helps keep the island largely clean from litter and keeps tabs on the local inhabitants, including the occasional dugong family grazing off the coast.

# KOH RACHA YAI & KOH RACHA NOI



These twin islands sit just a 20-minute speedboat drive from Phuket's southern tip but feel like a wholly different region. Racha Yai, the larger of the two, is a sleepy, coral-fringed honeypot for scuba divers drawn by the gin-clear and bathwarm waters surrounding it. A trio of talcumwhite bays line its northern coast and have a set of quaint fishermen's villages and some elegant villa resorts wedged in between. Rocky Racha Noi, 10 kilometers south, lacks any noteworthy beaches but has excellent diving sites frequented by whale sharks and manta rays.



While Koh Jum, just off Krabi's mainland, isn't as small as the other islands on this list, it still retains a distinctly tiny-island feel. With water that sometimes runs murky and beaches that are more sand-colored than sugar-white, it isn't the postcard-perfect paradise you'll find elsewhere in the south, but the colorful mix of onion-domed mosques, Thai-Chinese shrines, and fishing settlements on stilts delivers a fascinating peek into Southern Thai island life. Ramshackle beach bars and family-friendly resorts concentrate along its western coast, while its north (which locals, rather confusingly, refer to as Koh Pu) is home to a few away-from-it-all bungalows.

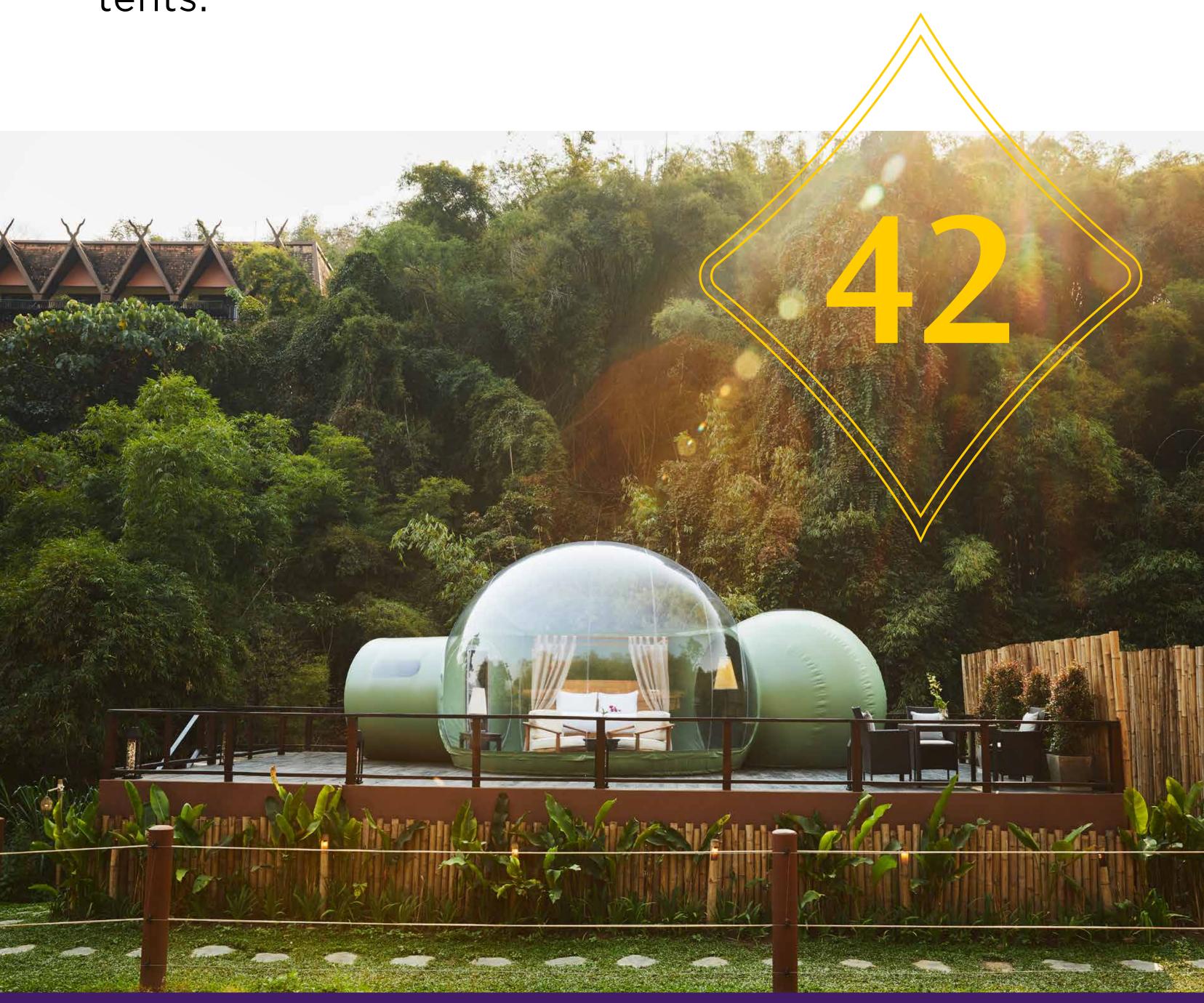


Mostly flat as a pancake and covered in rice fields, rubber plantations, and watermelon farms, this rural island on the southernmost end of the Trang province rarely welcomes tourists. Instead, its small Muslim population lives off farming and fishing, and only a few basic resorts hug the island's western tip. As the beaches aren't particularly pretty in the conventional sense — they're grayish and rocky, and the water isn't clear — this is a great spot for island explorations by scooter or bicycle. A paved road connects most corners of the island and makes it easy to reach the island's harborfront seafood joints and viewpoint on top of the hard-to-miss hill at the island's heart. •

Wandering elephants and 300-thread count sheets? Glamping at one of Thailand's luxe tented camps means having the best of both worlds — wild nature and ultra-modern amenities — all in one holiday

BY CHRIS SCHALKX

hailand's jungle-clad mountains and palm-fringed islands make for brilliant backdrops for a camping adventure. For those with a taste for glamping — enjoying the thrill of sleeping under canvas with five-star creature comforts such as airconditioning, plush mattresses, and bathrooms with all the bells and whistles — we've rounded up Thailand's most scenic locations with five-star tents.



# Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp

Nosy neighbors are the last thing you'd want scurrying around your tent after midnight, but for Anantara Golden Triangle Elephant Camp and

Resort that's exactly the point. This luxurious lodge in northern Thailand's wild border region with Laos and Myanmar has pitched a set of transparent 'bubble tents' near the grazing grounds of its resident elephants and allows guests to spend the night observing the afterdark affairs of these gentle giants. But there's plenty going on during the day, too: activities range from trips around the countryside in a Royal Enfield sidecar, to guided jungle walks and mud-bathing sessions with the elephants — all of whom have been rescued from abusive owners and unethical camps around Thailand.

**Getting there:** Fly into Chiang Rai International Airport, then travel by land to the resort.





# Soneva Kiri

43

The journey to this dreamy island retreat on Southern Thailand's Koh Kut is an adventure in itself: guests arrive via the resort's eight-seater turboprop from Bangkok to an uninhabited island in the Gulf of Thailand, from where a speedboat whisks them to Soneva Kiri's talcum-white private beach. Overnight options range from breezy, canvas-roofed villas with walls from bamboo and reclaimed wood, to five-bedroom estates with a treehouse bedroom for kids, open-air bathrooms, and a private pool with water slides. And despite the modern mod-cons, the resort keeps its environmental footprint admirably small: menus in the restaurants draw on local produce, the kids club has an extensive program of eco-educational activities, and two percent of room revenue goes to offsetting the carbon emissions of guests' plane travel.

**Getting there:** Fly into Suvarnabhumi International Airport, then travel by the resort's private plane.



# Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle

44

Opened more than a decade ago, the Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle was hotshot hotel designer Bill Bensley's first foray into tented camps and has served as a blueprint for some of his most iconic projects — including Shinta Mani Wild in Cambodia and Capella Ubud in Bali. But this rustic camp, built on a jungled ridge overlooking the chocolate milk-brown Ruak river that snakes between Myanmar and northern Thailand, remains an all-time classic. Reached via a long-tail boat, the camp is a copper-hued mixture of tropical Thai with a pinch of African safari: expect headboards adorned with faux elephant tusks alongside deer-antler chandeliers and elephant statues carved from teak. Come sunset, make your way to the hilltop Burma Bar, where the lemongrass martinis are as dazzling as the views over the Golden Triangle's undulating hinterland.

**Getting there:** Four Seasons Tented Camp Golden Triangle is approximately 60 kilometers from Chiang Rai International Airport.



## 9 Hornbills

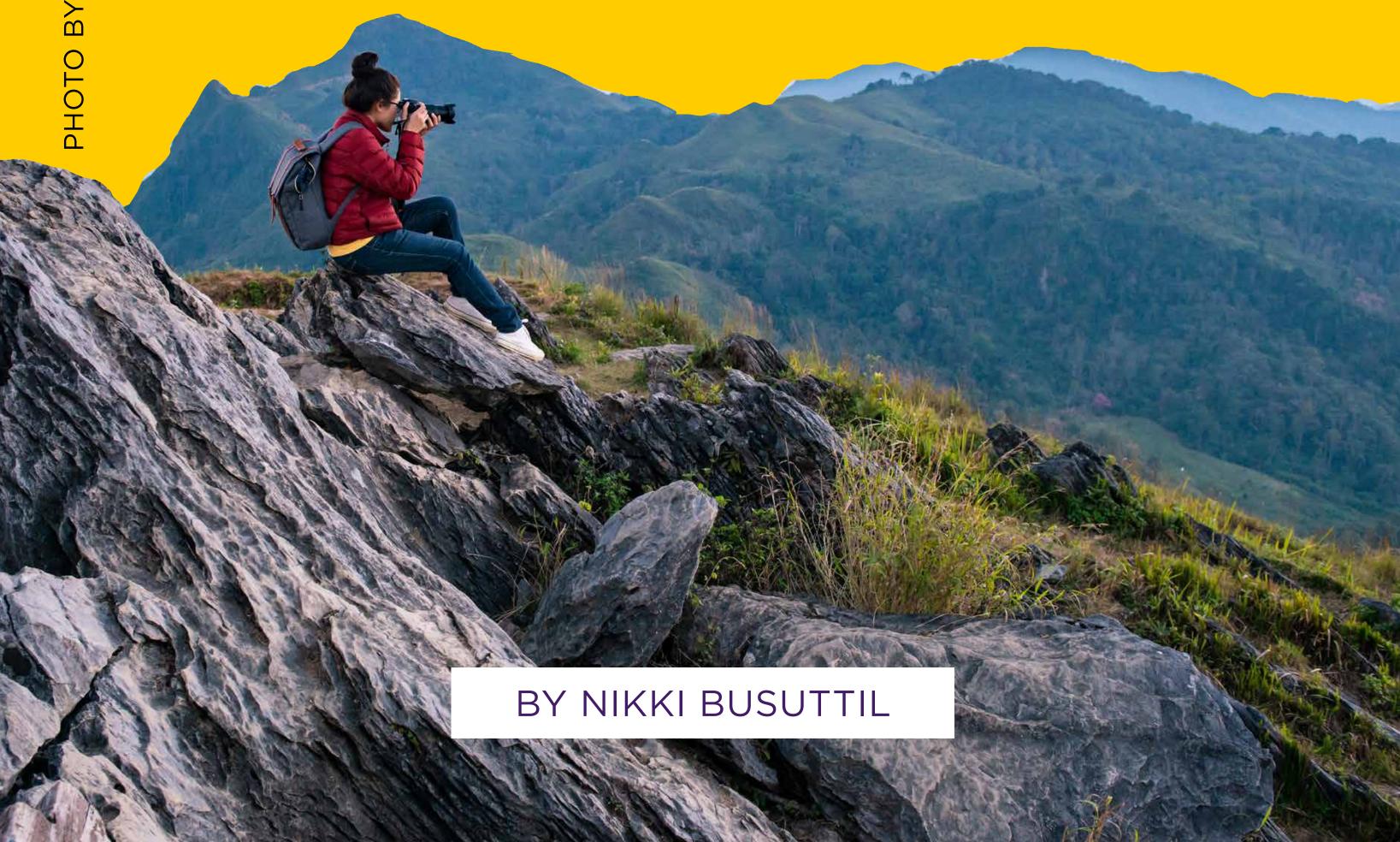
45

Overlooking the dramatic karst formations of Phang Nga Bay, go-slow Koh Yao Noi has no shortage of mesmerizing vantage points. But 9 Hornbills, cascading down a former rubber plantation on one of the island's highest hills, has pitched up on its plummest spot. This luxurious camp comprises 10 tents, each one a safari-chic bolthole with furnishing from rattan and teak, and private infinity pools flanked by fanning Traveler's Palms. A buggy is available to whisk guests to the private beach and Thai restaurant at the sister resort down the hill, and a small army of linenclad butlers can arrange everything from island-hopping tours in a long-tail boat to candlelit BBQ dinners and floating breakfasts and sunrise.

Getting there: Fly into Phuket International Airport, then travel by land to Bangrong Pier where the resort's private long-tail boat will take you to the camp.

# THE BEST DAY-HIKES N CHIANG RAI

From easy treks for the whole family to hardcore hikes for fitness buffs, Chiang Rai province in Northern Thailand is home to some of the best nature trails in the country



hiang Rai Province has often been overlooked in favor of its better-known Northern Thailand cousins, Chiang Mai and Pai, but things are about to change, thanks in part to the growing popularity of hiking. On top of its rich Lanna heritage, Chiang Rai, with a capital city of the same name, just happens to be home to arguably some of the most breathtaking and hikable, forest-draped mountainscapes in Thailand.

Sharing a border with Myanmar to the northwest and Laos to the northeast, no visit to Thailand's northernmost province is complete without getting to grips with at least one (or indeed any number) of its remarkable trails. If you have a day to spare, here are the top hikes around Chiang Rai and what to expect.



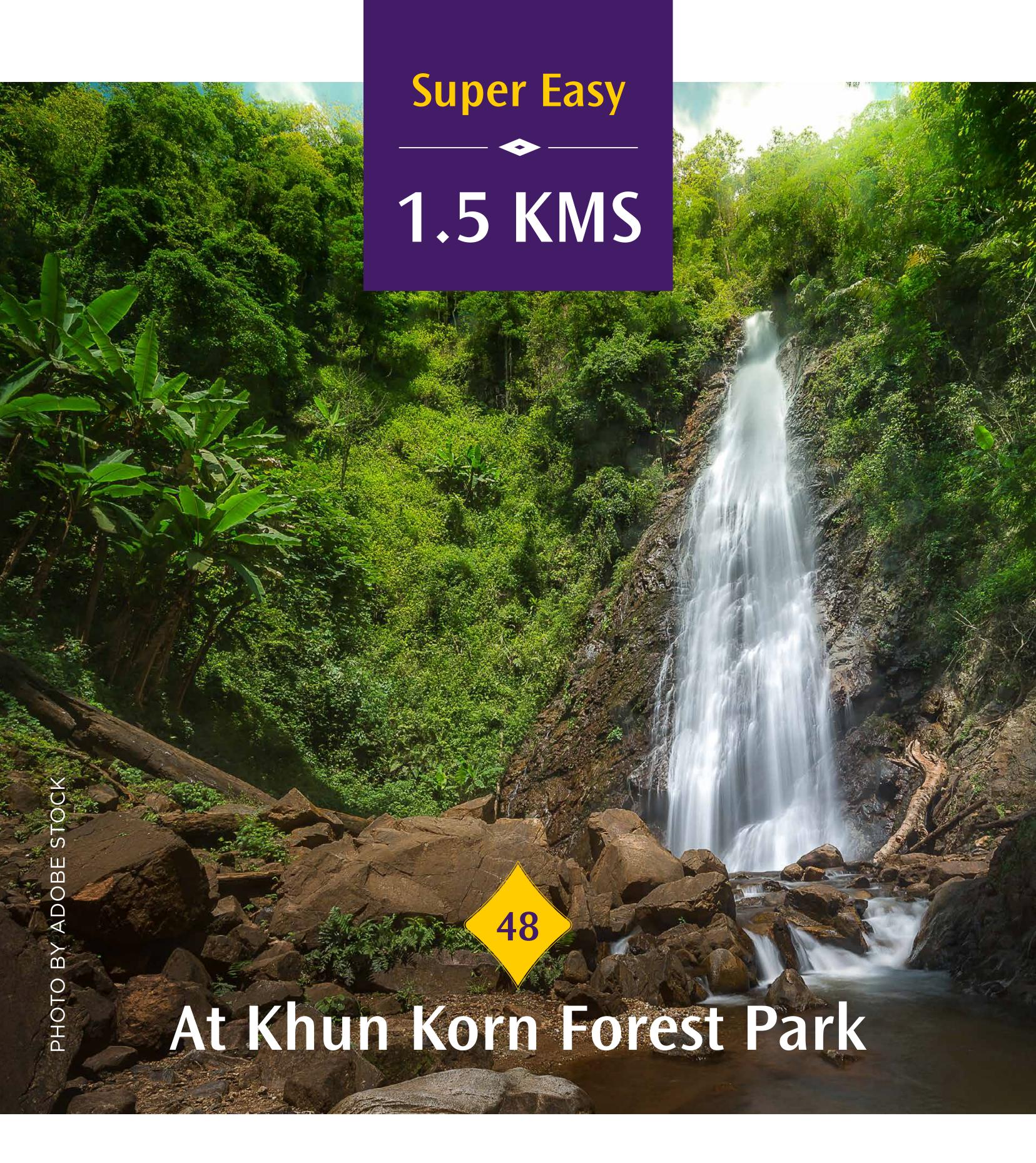


Early-risers should devote one morning to the two-kilometer hike up to the peak at Phu Chi Fah, at the border between Thailand and Laos, in the Doi Pha Mon range. Although the hike is incredibly pretty at any time of day, it's also one of the easier trails and gets fairly busy. To avoid the crowds, get up before dawn and aim to summit in time for the stunning sunrise scene. Depending on your fitness level, you can make it to the top in 20 minutes to 40 minutes. Between the months of November and February, when warm clothing is advised, you could get even luckier with the view: a panoramic vista of an ocean of clouds, as the sun rises up from behind the distant mountains.

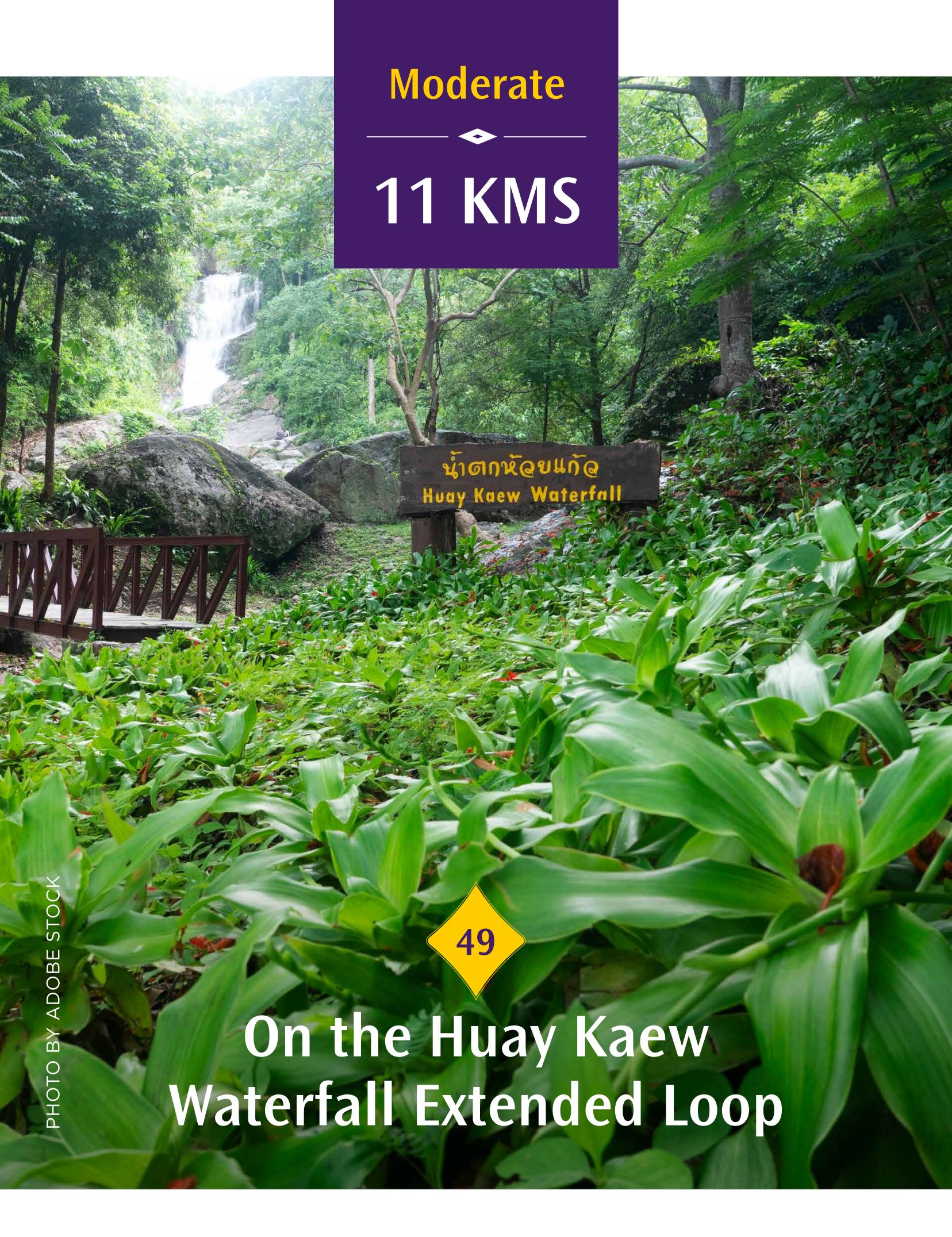
The trail to the peak at Phu Chi Fah links up with various other trails in Doi Pha Mon, so once you've ticked the sunrise viewing off your list, you can extend your hike for several kilometers or even further. Make sure to pack plenty of water and snacks.



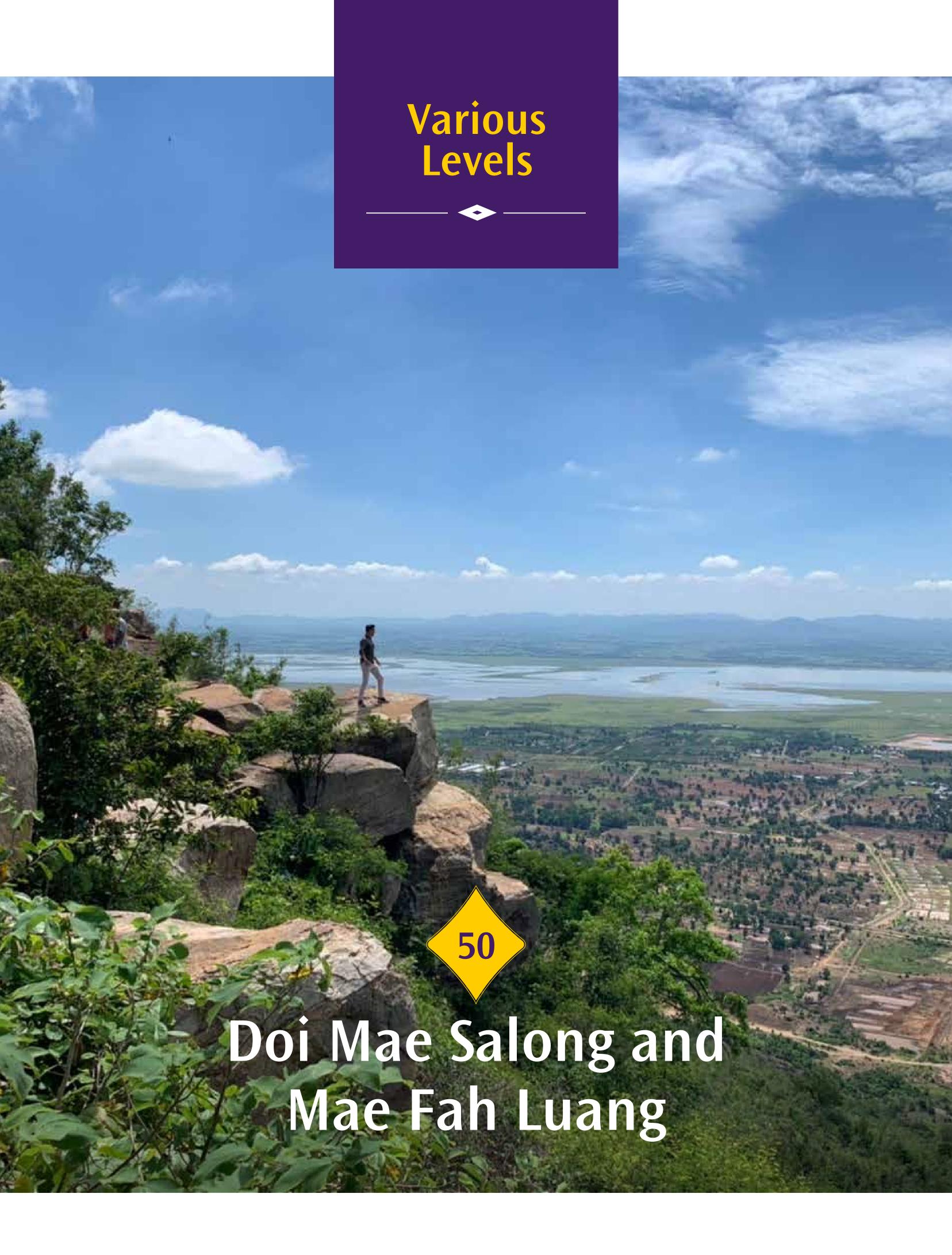
One such extension takes you from Phu Chi Fah to Phu Chi Dao. The hike is approximately 12 kilometers along the mountain ridge, skirting the Thai-Laotian border further northwards and upwards to about 1800 meters — it's certainly more challenging, but also incredibly rewarding. As you leave the gathering crowds of Phu Chi Fah behind and rise above the sea of clouds, the view is even more spectacular, tranquil and breathtaking.



Close to the city of Chiang Rai, Khun Korn Waterfall Trail within the Khun Korn Forest Park, elevating some 1400 meters, is a friendly hike among tropical foliage and bamboo trees. Over here there's plenty to delight the casual birdwatcher. The trail is punctuated by an 87-meter-high cascading waterfall, which offers cooling respite after the 1.5-kilometer hike over. To avoid the smoke from seasonal burning of nearby fields, plan your visit between June and February. There's ample parking at the park entrance, where the trail begins, and entry is permitted from 8.30am to 4.30pm.



If you like chasing waterfalls but need more of a workout, the 11-kilometer Huay Kaew Waterfall Extended Loop, just an hour's drive further north, wends its way blissfully through Lam Nam Kok National Park. Set aside approximately four hours for this moderate trail through thick jungle, waterfalls, rivers, tea plantations and a local village. Birders, don't forget your binoculars, there will be plenty to spot here.



With plenty of hiking options for all levels, Doi Mae Salong is replete with former smuggling trails and remote local villages, while deep valleys, steep terraced tea plantations and rice paddies abound in Mae Fah Luang. If high-end, tailored experiences — complete with English-speaking guides and pack ponies to carry your food and gear — are more your speed, luxury travel company Smiling Albino (smilingalbino.



com) customizes full-day hikes between Doi Mae Salong and the charming Thoed Thai community in Mae Fah Luang. The hike will take you through a mountain range, along coffee and banana plantations, cornfields and tea terraces among a slew of attractions. The actual hiking is generally relaxed, thanks to the four-legged hiking buddies, with no end to the picturesque spots for resting and dining. Daniel Fraser, who founded the travel company in 1999, can't stress it enough: "Hiking in the region provides some of Thailand's most fabulous visuals, and a truly exhilarating hiking experience."

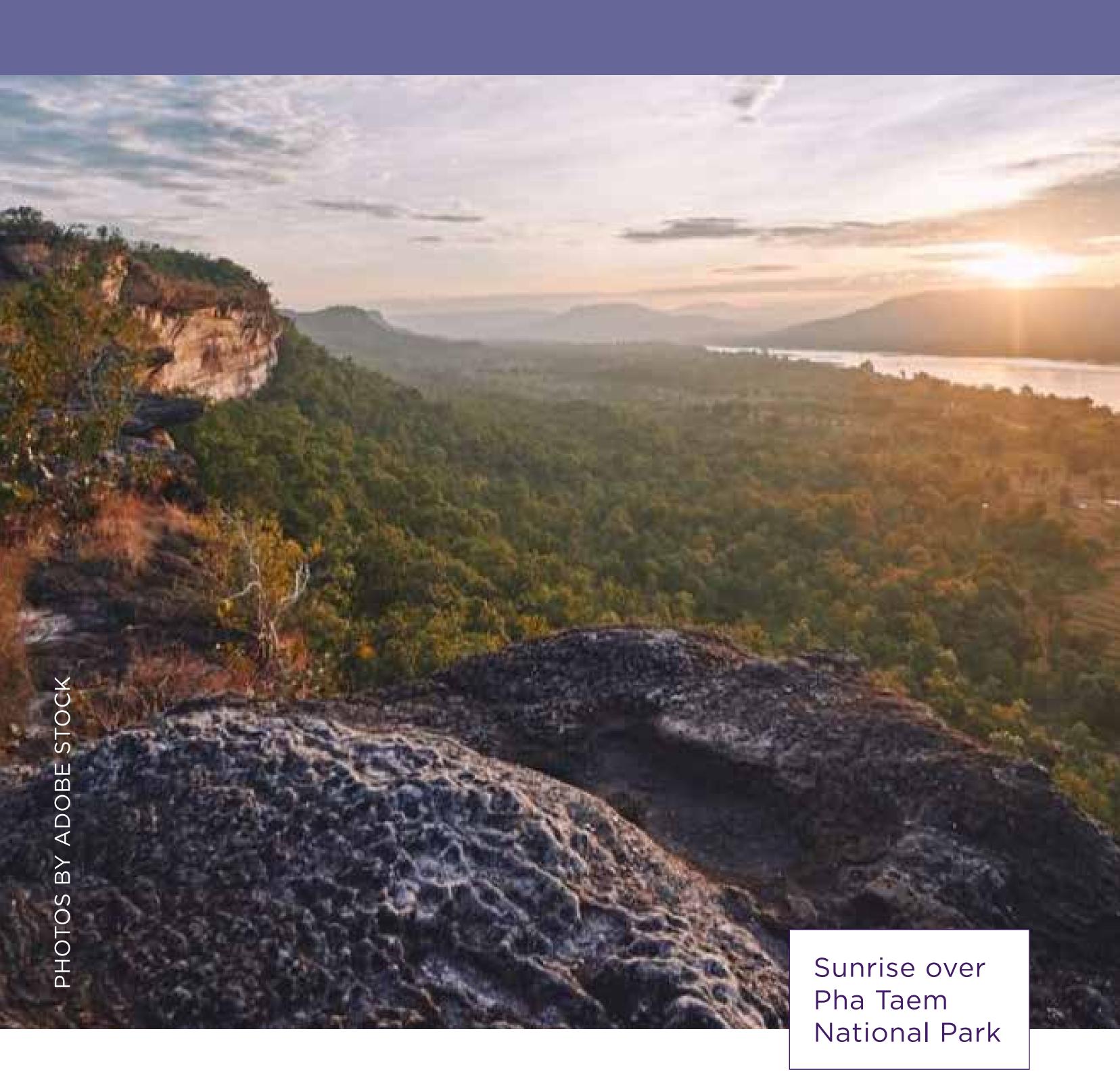
PHOTOS COURTESY OF SMILING ALBIN

# BONUS

# Why you should spend your next weekend break in Ubon Ratchathani

There's something about Isan, or northeastern Thailand, and the only way to fully understand its charms is to experience it for yourself

BY JASON ROLAN



raveling in Isan is always an adventure into the unknown, a surprise-filled journey through a version of Thailand not overly fussed with tourism. The Thailand of our grandparents' generation where heat follows harvest, followed by rains, then the cycle repeats. And the delight of discovering something new at unexpected moments is a big part of Isan's allure.

Ubon Ratchathani is a living pastiche; a crossroads of cultures. The province is nestled in the southeast corner of Thailand's northeastern Isan region, flanked by Laos to the east and Cambodia to the south. An ancient civilization settled this area thousands of years ago, leaving

behind impressive petroglyphs at Pha Taem National Park.

Fast forward to the late 1700s and an aristocratic quarrel with the King of Vientiane caused several Lao nobles to move their entourages to an area on the Mun River, which then became Ubon Ratchathani. The 20th century saw skirmishes with the French, waves of migrants fleeing turmoil in Vietnam, as well as an American air force base that poured money and cement into the city. These influences harmonize, swirl and fuse together into an identity that is truly unique — a sum greater than its parts — like the intricate and unique fibers woven into Ubon Ratchathani's signature and stunning textiles.



From Isan cuisine to temples, there's more to love in Ubon Ratchathani —

find out more at sawasdee.thaiairways.com

