## Smile Sthat ANASDEE

# { City Guide } THIS IS



Thailand



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## CURATOR'S NOTE

ew year, new take on our pocket guides – in 2023, each edition will feature travel experts and local voices sharing insider intel on the most intriguing picks a city has to offer. And we're delighted to kick off the series with Thai Airways' vibrant home and headquarters.

The breadth of Bangkok is fascinating – there's always something in the city, a tonguein-cheek dash of *sanook* or fun, to intrigue even the most savvy traveler. Once a city gilded in gold and resplendent with *kanok* patterns, Bangkok has embraced an enthralling duality. Here, cosmopolitan glitz thrives in old-school quarters, and the rich Thai heritage lends magic to the work of amazing modern Thai creatives and artisans. In our selection of where to dine and drink, you'll see how Bangkok is home to Michelinstarred eats and to decades-old street food legends housed in quaint shophouses, as exclusively recommended by ML Kwantip Devakula, a legend of royal Thai cuisine. Also in this guide, celebrated Thai movers and shakers give us their two baht on this beloved city: designer Matina Sukhahuta tells us what to shop for and take home from BKK, and Thailand's leading movie critic, Kong Rithdee,

waxes lyrical on why the Chao Phraya River makes this city so great. It's barely scratching the surface of such a vibrant place so visit <u>sawasdee.thaiairways.com</u> for more. Sawasdee and have a heavenly time in the City of Angels.

- Parisa Pichitmarn



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## IN THIS ISSUE

We've mapped out a few starting points – that lead to a string of unforgettable adventures – in the City of Angels.

## FOOD & DRINK

First order of business in Bangkok? The city's top sips and eats

## SHOPPING & WELLNESS

It's the perfect city for serious retail therapy, and then some real relaxation



A creative revival flows through Bangkok's storied thoroughfare and its main river

## WHERE TO STAY

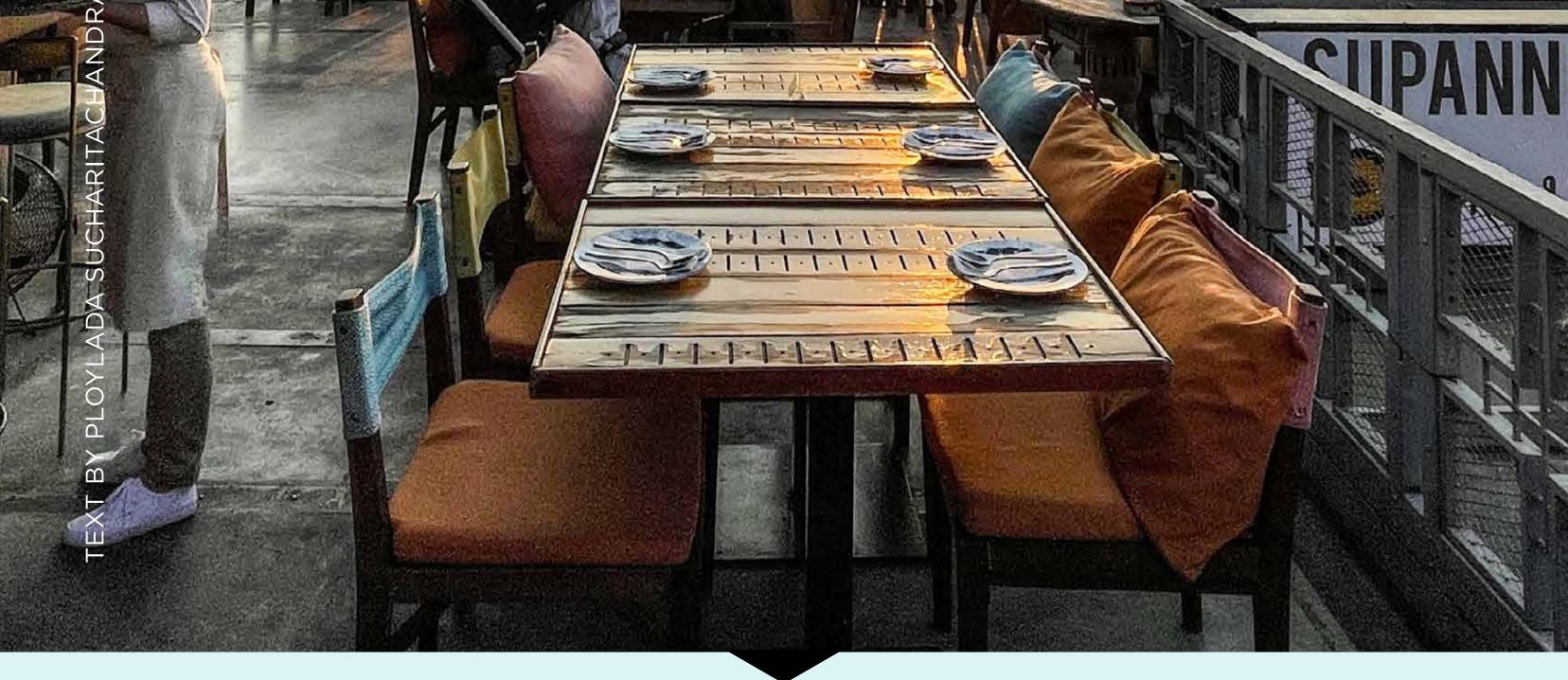
Few other capitals do luxury hotels as gracefully as Bangkok





# HEREFOR THE FOOD

The fabulous restaurants, bars and food stalls to check out in the city





## Aksorn

Culinary storyteller David Thompson draws inspiration from his own collection of Thai

cookbooks from the 1940s to the 1970s at his Bangkok restaurant, Aksorn. The result is a regularly changing tasting menu that offers diners delectable time-traveling flavors from the past. Watch the open kitchen in action in its cozy, 40-seat dining room.



## **Baan Phraya**

Set in a historical house by the Chao Phraya River, Baan Phraya is Mandarin Oriental Bangkok's latest Thai fine dining restaurant. The building has had a few lives; once a private compound, it then became the country's first Thai cooking school. Today it's where chef Pom Patchara lends a unique touch to heritage dishes, keeping the spirit of the property as a place of culinary innovation alive. Expect gracious hospitality by the Michelin Guiderecognized front-of-house team.



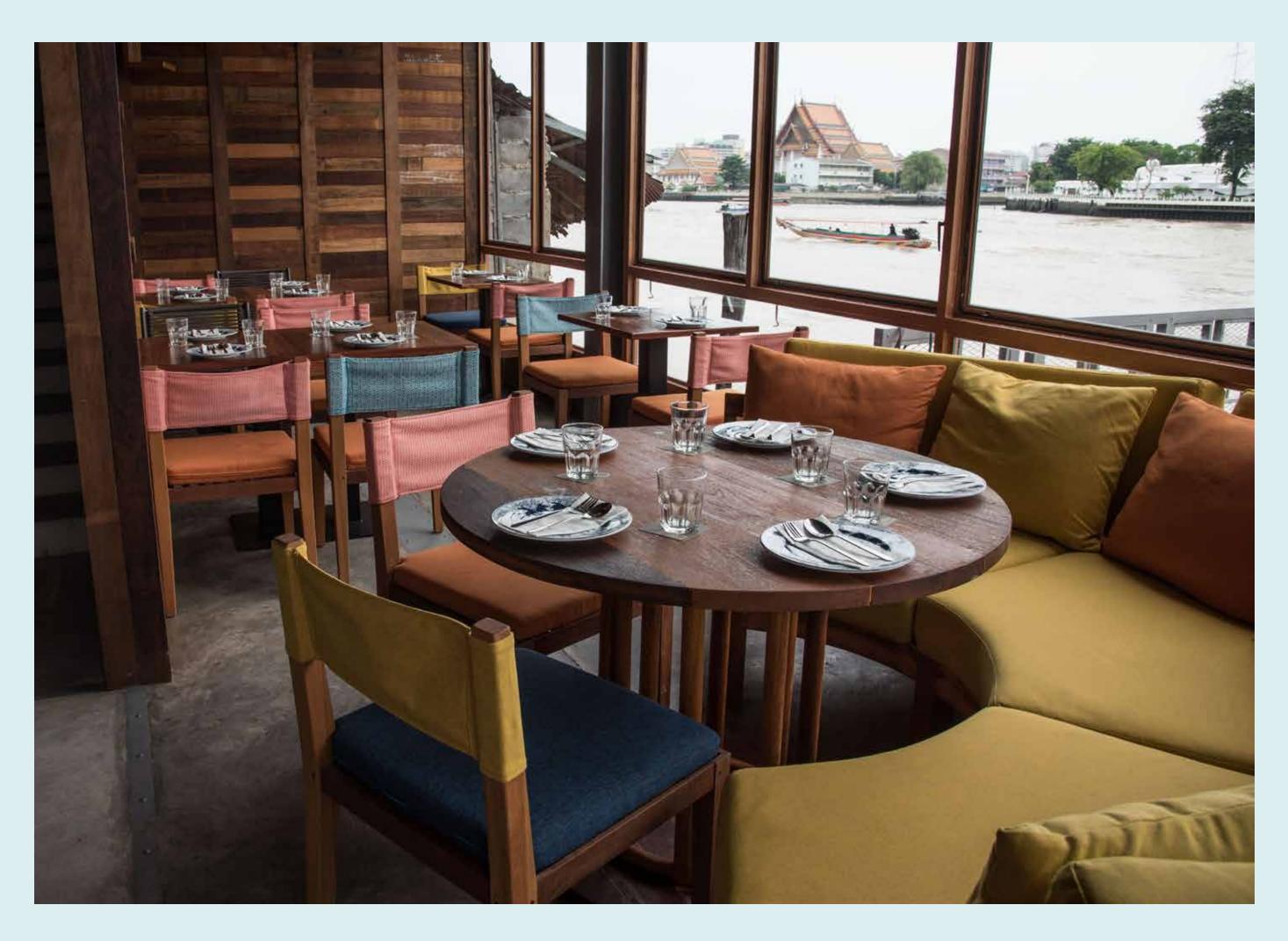
## **Baan Tepa**

Led by chef-owner Chudaree 'Tam' Debhakam,

Baan Tepa presents a creative approach to Thai cuisine with a philosophy deeply rooted in sustainability. Enjoy reimagined historic flavors highlighting seasonal ingredients from local farmers and fishermen they work closely with, as well as the restaurant's very own organic garden.

## Sorn

Two-Michelin-starred Sorn serves Southern Thai cuisine inspired by the region's tropical forests. A marriage of modern cooking techniques and local culinary wisdom, its 22-course menu champions sustainable ingredients from local farmers and fishermen. Dubbed the most difficult restaurant to secure seats at in Thailand, booking rounds and details are announced via their social media accounts.



## Supanniga Eating Room, Tha Tian

A panoramic spinoff of the Supanniga Eating Room family of casual restaurants, the Tha Tian branch serves the same homespun Thai cuisine –

but with a front-row view of the iconic Wat Arun on the other side of the Chao Phraya River. For the best sunset experience, make sure to book the rooftop in advance.



ML Kwantip Devakula – fondly known as Chef Pom – is a wellrecognized cooking show personality, culinary consultant and cookbook author. Raised at the historical Devavesm Palace, her expertise lies in royal Thai cuisine. Exclusively for Sawasdee readers, Chef Pom names her street food gems across the city.

Horm Dee Mhee Giaw (หอมดีหมี่เ กี้ยว)

Specialty: Egg noodles; shrimp wontons; roasted pork; crispy pork belly; fried rice Where: Mittraphan Road Chef Pom's Guay Tiew Ped Buay Pochana (กวยเดียวเป็ดบ<sup>้</sup>วย โภชนา)

Specialty: Slow-cooked duck in clay pot Where: Bantadthong Road Chef Pom's Favorites: Noodles with slow-cooked duck in clay pot; stewed duck and entrails in clay pot Kord Kaprao by Tiew Bang Baan (โคตรกะเพรา by เดี๋ยวบางบาล)

Specialty: Pad kaprao (basil stir-fry dishes) Where: Phuttamonthon Sai 3 Road Chef Pom's Favorites: Any pad kaprao

*Favorites:* The chef sticks to the eatery's time-honored noodle dish and fried rice

#### (basil stir-fry) dish

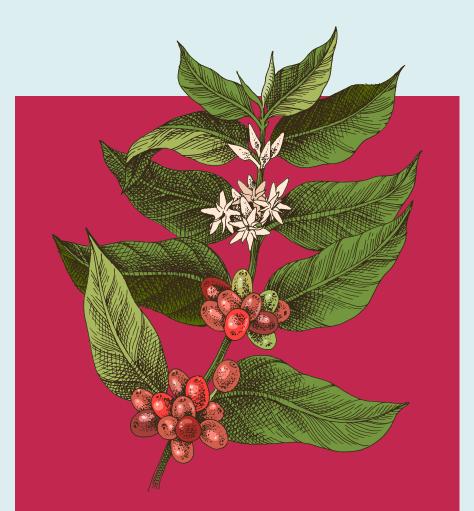


## The ones to watch

The Thai chefs bringing Thai cooking to the next level



**Chudaree 'Tam' Debhakam**, Top Chef Thailand's first winner and mastermind behind the freshly Michelin-starred restaurant Baan Tepa, is a champion of Thai cuisine and an advocate of food waste reduction and sustainability. At her restaurant, she reimagines historical recipes using seasonal ingredients from local farmers and fishermen, as well as the compound's organic garden.



### COFFEE, PLEASE

In Thailand's coffee-growing northern regions, communitybased social farms sprung from the Thai Royal Projects grow, process and roast sustainable coffee. Social enterprises like Akha Ama Coffee, founded by Lee Ayu Chuepa, work with hill tribes and small farms to produce specialty coffee. Lee, who is Akha a tribe native to Thailand, Myanmar, Laos and Yunan – founded the brand in 2010, converting his small village of Maejantai into kilometer zero for a brand that now has several coffee shops



Pichaya 'Pam' Utharntharm, who made the Forbes 30 Under 30 list 2018, pushes boundaries in the local culinary scene. Her progressive Thai-Chinese restaurant, Potong, recently won Michelin Guide Thailand's Opening of the Year award along with a star. With her partner, Boonpiti Soontornyanakij, she also owns multiple other restaurants and bars across the city.



Thitid 'Ton' Tassanakajohn may not be a fresh face in the industry but he's still making waves. While his awardwinning fine dining restaurant, Le Du, maintains its recognition, he continues to put Thai cuisine on the global stage with more F&B ventures such as Baan, Nusara, Mayrai and Samut. across Chiang Mai and one in Tokyo. The next time you're in a Bangkok coffee shop, ask for coffee brewed from beans grown in Chiang Mai or Chiang Rai.

More at <u>Sawasdee.</u> thaiairways.com

## Tipple town

From shiny showcases to small, hidden affairs, there's no shortage of interesting cocktail bars in Bangkok. Here's where to stop for a sip the next time you're in the Thai capital

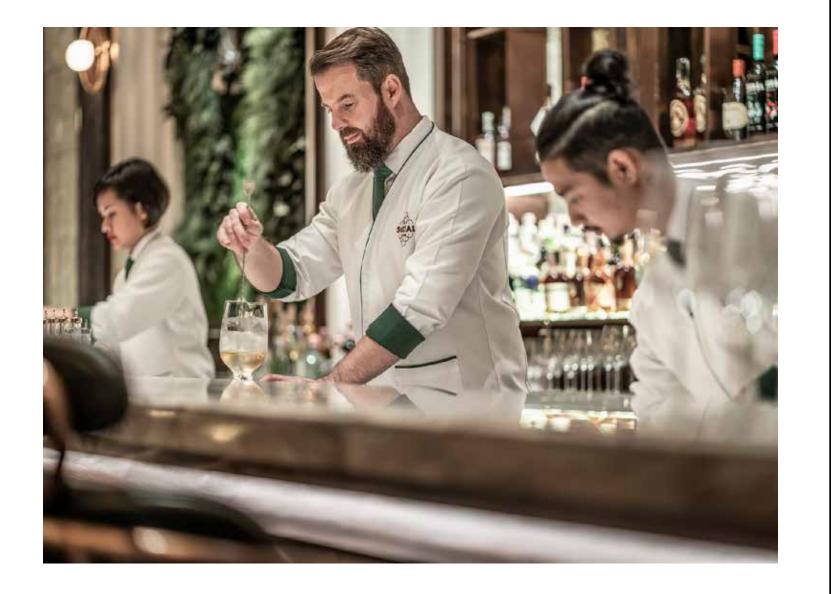


**008** Bar



"Bangkok stands out as one of the culinary capitals of the world, with amazing cuisines from various types of dining establishments – be it fine dining restaurants, trendy eateries or street food hawkers. **The city is a very unique gastronomy destination** [that]

Spending time in Thong Lo? Give 008 Bar a shot. Nestled on the 11th floor of the Muu Bangkok hotel, this handsomely dressed speakeasy shakes up classic cocktails as well as crafty concoctions. Open every night from 6pm to midnight.



#### **BKK Social Club**

Inspired by the old-time glamour of Buenos Aires, the Philip Bischoff-helmed BKK Social Club at the Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok highlights bespoke cocktails alongside craft spirits, rare Champagnes and the finest cigars in town. Open from Tuesday to Sunday from 5pm to midnight.

offers a wide range of diversity covering all cuisine types, price ranges and dining experiences. Everyone can enjoy local culture reflected in  $\alpha$ bowl of noodles, a great street food lunch, then end with cuttingedge fine dining at some skyscraper for dinner on the same day. Bangkok is a vibrant and resilient city as it proved during the pandemic. Despite the wide challenges posed to the restaurant and hospitality sector, this statement has proven its merit *[in the past two* years], when new restaurants, hotels and other tourismrelated businesses continued to open everywhere. Thailand is also rich in natural resources, which helps



#### Jua

Tucked away in the heart of Bangkok's Creative District, Charoen Krung, Jua is a modern izakaya also specializing in craft cocktails, fizzy highballs as well as natural and fine sake. Expect high-spirited vibes with seriously good food and drinks. Open every night from 6pm to midnight.



#### Ku Bar

Set in a minimalist space behind a sliding wooden door, this Old Town gem serves cocktails that change on a regular basis and spotlights local ingredients. Natural wines from cult wineries are also on offer. Open from Wednesday to Sunday from 6pm to midnight.

entrepreneurs to adapt, to be creative and to engage themselves in new, more sustainable approaches to their cooking, [using] high quality local ingredients that are always available. The Michelin Guide's mission is to recommend restaurants and to highlight new addresses to Thai gourmets and international travelers. With this commitment, the *inspector teams* continue to take great pleasure in discovering the city's culinary treasures."



#### Playroom

Set atop Restaurant Stage in Ekamai, Playroom presents a flirty cocktail den perfect for playful nights out. Think gold accents, red velvet sofas, a black marble bar and sensually-themed drinks. Open every night from

— Gwendal Poullennec, International Director of the



Michelin Guides

#### Check out more afterhours watering holes at <u>Sawasdee.thaiairways.com</u>



# **BANGKOK'S BEST BUYS**

Matina Sukhahuta, the youngest of the three sisters behind Thai fashion house Sretsis (she's in charge of designing jewelry, the children's line and the funky furniture you see at their flagship store), recommends a few seriously fun purchases in the city





Wine & Roses Oil from Erb

"I love the oil's scent and the trace it leaves behind." THB 1,390





#### Nathalie Lete ceramics from Sretsis Parlour

*"I love everything I* have created with Nathalie Lete prints this year. These muchloved illustrations by the French artist on royal porcelain and ceramic pieces, all produced by our very own Thai craftsmen, make me happy." THB 12,600 **Basket from Good Goods** 

Cat Slave Fruit Tray from Citizen of Nowhere

"I love how there is a modern and artistic touch to it — they really shine a new light on Thai crafts."

THB 1,800



"Traditional Thai crafts with a twist! I really admire this brand for working with Thai artisans."

#### **Boon Brooms**

"Brooms that make me want to clean the house!"

Start at THB 560

THB 390

## Spa love

Two homegrown brands have parlayed Thailand's reputation for next-level spa experiences into global businesses of gorgeous rest and relaxation products. Their Bangkok flagship boutiques, both at CentralWorld, are worth a visit.



#### Panpuri

Upscale, refined and a real champion of clean ingredients and sustainability before it was even a buzzword, Panpuri is the real deal when it comes to high quality ingredients and understated elegance. Take home their recently launched Extract Perfume Oil, which uses the highest extract concentration for perfumes (25-30%), and is packaged in a graphic bottle shaped like a Buddhist chedi.



#### Karmakamet

Just stepping into the store, lined with shelves of tantalizing glass candles, body care products, perfume sachets and room diffusers, is an instant mood lift, thanks to its Indo-Chinese old-world charm and beguiling sense of calm. Rooted in the founder's upbringing in Sungai Kolok and his family's Chinese medicine business, the brand packages decades of know-how and history into one of Bangkok's most visually and experientially striking brands.

#### More shopping at <u>Sawasdee.thaiairways.com</u>



# THE GEMS OF CHAROEN KRUNG

## A creative revival flows through Bangkok's storied thoroughfare

If you plan to park yourself in the city for a few days, consider finding a spot along or near Charoen Krung Road. Bangkok's first modern paved road is over a hundred years old, and was built in the time of Rama IV at the request of Western expats, a mix of consuls, emissaries and businessmen. The city's new residents, whose numbers were increasing in the time of growing foreign trade liberalization, were aching to get around by horse-drawn carriage (as they did in their home countries) or ride their horses for pleasure, presumably to manage the mental toll of expatriation to the tropics. Up until that point, the city's primary mode of transport was by boat, underscoring the Chao Phraya's importance to Bangkok.

More than a century later, the road, running parallel to the river, powers a different kind of boom, this time of the more cultural kind. Thanks to multiple players that make up the Creative District – from art galleries and exhibition spaces, independent shops, artist collectives and dining



destinations – the areas along Charoen Krung are considered prime cultural spots. This in turn is inspiring plenty of huge investment into the area, with luxury properties making bespoke tours of the neighborhood part of their experiences. Places like ATT19, an art gallery and exhibition space, and Warehouse 30, a 1920s conversion that's home to artisan furniture stores and hip coffee shops, are just two of dozens of must-visit stops in the area.

More at Sawasdee.thaiairways.com



"The Chao Phraya is still a working river – that's why its importance isn't just aesthetic or touristic but also pragmatic, utilitarian, indispensable. Every day you see ferries and commuting boats moving thousands of office workers and students; you see a procession of sand barges trudging downstream like giant turtles; at the Memorial Bridge pier you see kids leaping, diving and glistening like baby otters. The clichéd metaphor that a river is an artery, a vein beneath which blood flows and sustains life – for those of us who grew up along the Chao Phraya, that's not some analogy but a fact, a truth and a reality of our everyday existence."

— Kong Rithdee, film critic



## Bangkok by bike

The best way to tour a city sometimes hobbled by grinding traffic is on two wheels. Co Van Kessel in Bangkok Old Town, named after the Dutchman who pioneered bike tours around Bangkok, offers guided tours around the interesting neighborhoods that have kept the same character and old-timey vibe through decades of sweeping changes in the city. It's an almost intravenous route into the heart of the "real Bangkok" as you pedal up and down sloping roads and bridges

over canals, through alleys built for one and past homes where you catch a passing glimpse into someone's living room. A two- to-threehour morning ride will take you to down Charoen Krung and into Chinatown, stopping at religious spots that provide a sense of the area's historical and cultural diversity, from Buddhist temples to mosques. As a form of social responsibility to the communities with whom they work, the guided tours stop only at mom-andpop shops to help give local businesses a boost.



## My town

There's always something to discover in Bangkok Old Town, an historic area of tight and colorful neighborhoods, narrow roads and shophouses displaying the charming patina of age. Felix Ng, co-founder of design agency Anonymous Bangkok, set up shop here because "there's less traffic, the vibe is more laidback and less frenetic and there's plenty of great street food." It's also where he finds plenty of inspiring creative spaces – from the new Storage Bangkok, a brand-new

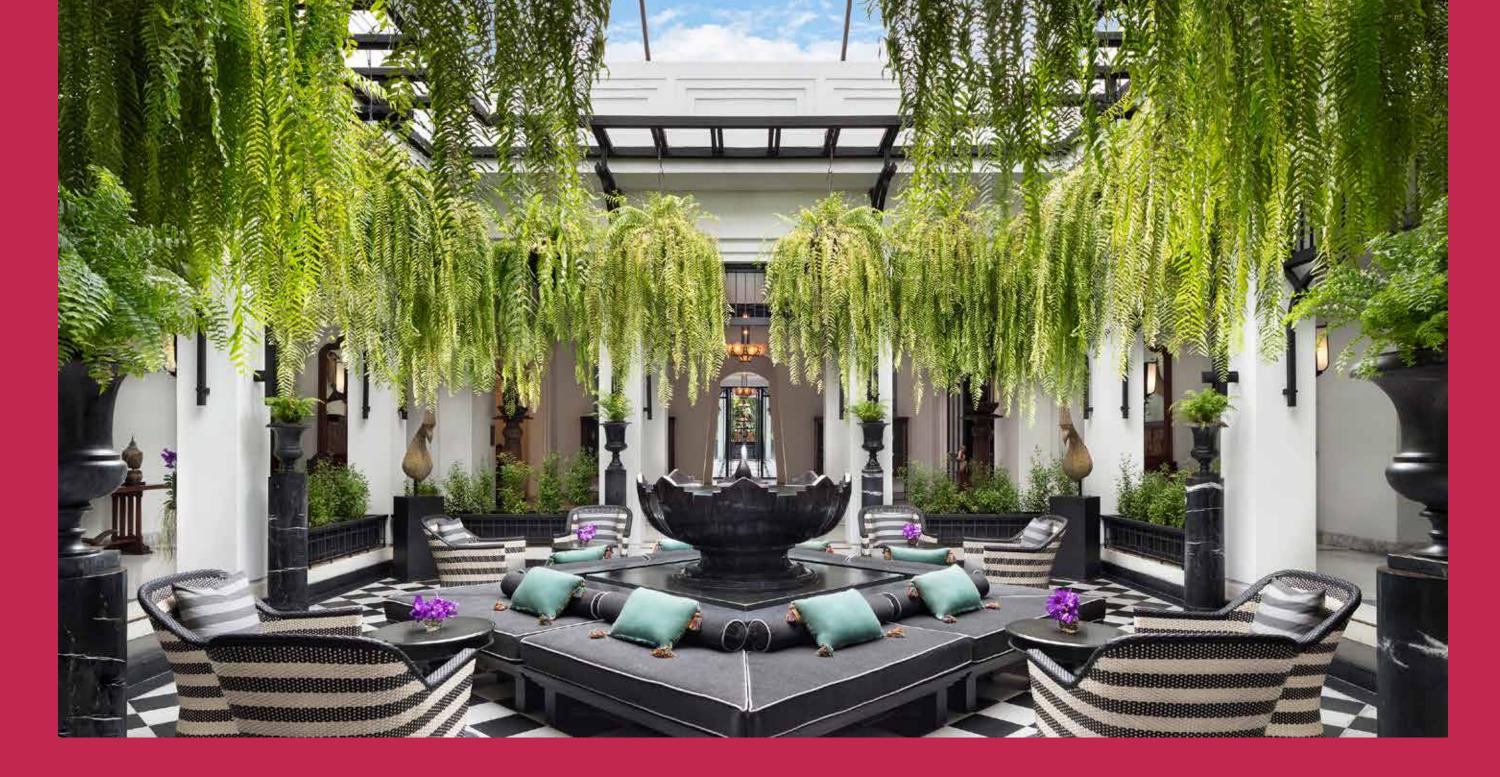
gallery and exhibition space just outside Ku Bar; Arai Arai, a café, bar, photography bookstore and general social space; to Bangkok Citycity Gallery, a minimalist and contemporary art space for local and emerging artists.



# DESIGNED TO AMAZE

The luxury hotel experience has gone from incidental side show to main holiday event. Nowhere is this truer than in Bangkok





## The Siam

Bangkok's showpiece along the Chao Phraya – often described as the city's grand hotel – is an operatic ode to the reign of Rama V, a time of sweeping changes and brisk modernization in the kingdom. The Bill Bensley-designed property with 38 suites and villas feels like a throwback to some golden past, embracing the flamboyance and opulence of the Jazz Age with a black-and-white color scheme, soaring ceilings and an enviable collection of antiques. Yet it feels like an incredibly modern beacon leading luxury stays into the future.

"What I love the most about designing a hotel in Bangkok is the idea of 24/7 accessibility. I can find a battered treasure, lovingly restore it at my studio and install it in the hotel, all in one day. When the hotel opens I feel as if it is an extension to my own home, and entertain there. And years down the road I pop over to make sure everything is looking shipshape as I do at home."

— Bill Bensley, hotel designer



## The Standard MahaNakhon

#### The explosion of color, fluid lines and playful shapes

that make up The Standard, a 155-room hotel in the intriguingly designed MahaNakhon building, made it one of the most highly anticipated openings of 2022. Its lineup of dining and social outlets – from Mott 32 to Sky Beach, the city's highest alfresco bar – is bound to keep it the talk of the town.



## 137 Pillars Suites and Residences Bangkok

Like its acclaimed first property in Chiang Mai, an uber-luxurious boutique hotel built in a restored colonial house from the 1800s, 137 Pillars Bangkok along bustling Sukhumvit is an attraction in itself. One of its two infinity pools, an 18-meter stunner on the 35th floor, is the Bangkok's highest and

## offers 360-degree views of the city.

#### Check out more Bangkok hotel recommendations at <u>Sawasdee.thaiairways.com</u>



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