

# LUXURIOUS PLEASURES THAILAND





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## What is true luxury?

It is not simply outlets of conspicuous consumption. There are havens of such extravagance all over the world: posh clubs that only allow entry to the highest bidders, harbors crammed with oversized yachts, and arms races of complicated and rare tourbillions, yet we propose that true luxury does not exist solely in such games of one-upmanship.

Along with envious tropical climes and breathtaking natural splendor, Thailand has its fair share of pampering escapes. Five-star accommodation here ranges from plush bungalows on pristine beaches to elegant mountain retreats to riverside legends. Stylish fine dining restaurants serve the world's most extraordinary dishes, including the best examples of coveted Thai cuisine. And for those looking to go on a sky's-the-limit shopping expedition, there is a galaxy of prestigious name brand goods available to the most voracious of platinum card couriers searching for amazing fashion, jewelry, and decor. But these are not the only factors that set Thailand apart from every other marquee luxury destinations.

More often than not, luxurious and expensive do go hand in hand, yet that which is pricey does not necessarily gratify automatically. In the Land of Smiles, great cultural pride exists in welcoming all visitors while meeting lofty expectations of meticulous and courteous service. Those who have worked hard to earn the respect and means for top-flight living are drawn to Thailand for its uncanny ability to make someone feel like they have discovered an unbelievably attainable paradise, while having the right to enjoy it fully and guilt-free. Here, you can definitely have your cake and really savor it too.

This exclusive guide is especially compiled for travelers with discerning tastes, searching for a richer, more illuminating experience of true luxury. Let Thailand greet you with a graceful, reverential *wai*...and welcome you with open arms to the good life.

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Printed in Thailand by Promotional Material Production Division

Marketing Services Department

Tourism Authority of Thailand for free distribution.

[www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org) E/OCT 2010

The contents of this publication are subject to change without notice.

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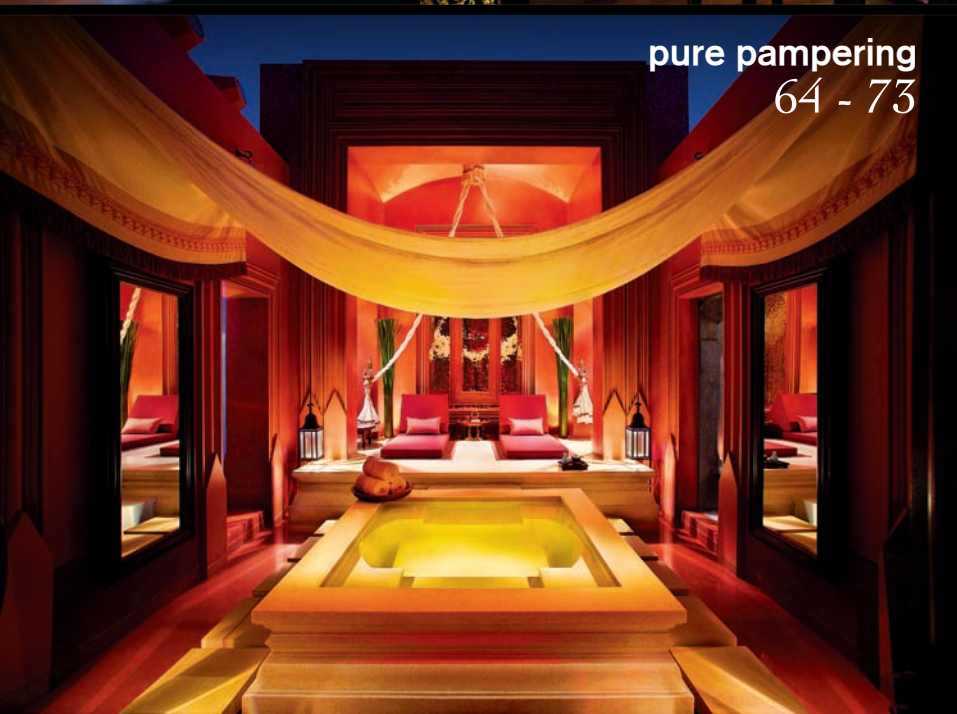


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luxurious stay





Thailand has long been known for the most attentive and pampering hospitality. This is often reflected in the very luxurious and lavish as well as chic and trendy accommodation found in Bangkok as well as in the lush, verdant mountains of the north and the shimmering coastline and islands of the Thai Gulf and Andaman Sea.



The Chao Phraya, or River of Kings, has served since the beginning of time immemorial as the lifeblood for the Thai kingdom and its culture. So, we begin our journey on the banks in Bangkok, or The City of Angles. For more than 100 years, **Mandarin Oriental, Bangkok** ([www.mandarinoriental.com/bangkok](http://www.mandarinoriental.com/bangkok)) and its Royal Oriental Suite has served as a paragon for service and luxury. Hosting royalty and heads of state, this two-bedroom penthouse suite embodies





the quintessence of elegance and comfort with its very sumptuous décor. A little further north on the opposite bank, and we can see the Jewel in the Crown of **The Peninsula Bangkok** tower ([www.peninsula.com/Bangkok](http://www.peninsula.com/Bangkok)), the Peninsula Suite. Once you step into this 34th-floor, rooftop residence, while the décor itself is exquisite, the panoramic vistas of Bangkok metropolis and the Chao Phraya are unrivaled. The living room, featuring rich woodwork and Persian rugs that compliment the traditional furnishings upholstered in hues of golden silks, is ideal for entertaining. Meanwhile, formal and private dining rooms and a private study provide a fine selection of options for more intimate or official gatherings. Step back in time at **The Siam** ([www.the-siam.com](http://www.the-siam.com))



The Peninsula Bangkok

siamhotel.com), to experience the allure of Bangkok's riverside at the turn of the 20th century when King Chulalongkorn reigned. Featuring 39 spacious suites set on 2.8 acres of Chao Phraya frontage, this brand new boutique gem boasts the capital's premier private Pool Villas (including Connie's Thai Cottage), a stylish Art Deco main residence replete with antiques, a seductive spa as well as a signature Thai restaurant and cooking school set in ancient teakwood homes transported to Bangkok from Ayutthaya by silk-tycoon, Jim Thompson, and fellow curio collector, Connie Mangskau. Herein, they entertained such notables as Jacqueline Kennedy, Henry Ford, John Rockefeller and Roger Moore. Designed and landscaped by Bill Bensley, named in 2009 by Architectural Digest as one of the "Top 100 Designers and Most Creative People", The Siam offers a harmonious blend of colonial grandeur and modern luxury in a setting of serene, verdant charm. Opening August 2011.





Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok

## luxurious stay

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Other noteworthy havens of luxury along the Chao Phraya River include the heavenly Shangri-La Hotel ([www.shangrila.com/bangkok](http://www.shangrila.com/bangkok)), the stately Millennium Hilton ([www.hilton.com](http://www.hilton.com)), and the inviting Royal Orchid Sheraton ([www.royalorchidsheraton.com](http://www.royalorchidsheraton.com)).

From the river, we move to the cosmopolitan city center and **Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok's** Presidential Suite ([www.bangkok.grand.hyatt.com](http://www.bangkok.grand.hyatt.com)) that has played second home to world dignitaries and diplomats. A décor that plush contemporary and traditional Thai including polished teak parquet floors, the suite features every modern amenity, particularly those to help release all your tension and rejuvenate such as a massage treatment room, marble baths, sauna, deep soaking spa pool and whirlpool. In addition to private concierge service, a butler is always on duty to cater to guests' specific needs as well.



Swissôtel Nai Lert Park

In the same vicinity, nestled amidst a lush and colorful tropical eight-acre garden in the same vicinity is **Swissôtel Nai Lert Park** ([www.swissotel.com](http://www.swissotel.com)). This verdant sanctuary offers a host of accommodations, including its Presidential Suite that features very private balconies that open to the gardens and their fragrances as well as the symphony of sounds created by the songs of birds, the caress of breezes and patter of rainfall on the swaying palms and dense flora. One more hotel in the city center offering unrivaled luxury is **Ma Du Zi Hotel**, Bangkok ([www.maduzihotel.com](http://www.maduzihotel.com)), particularly if you reserve 79 Suite. The room's Japanese minimalist-style décor is a blend of exquisite woodwork, including floors, doors of built-in closets and sculpted furnishings, and ultramodern ergonomic seating and an extra expansive 8 x 6.5-foot bed with posturepedic mattress to ensure the most rejuvenating sleep. Another newly opened **Siam Kempinski Hotel** ([www.kempinski.com/en/bangkok](http://www.kempinski.com/en/bangkok)) can claim to be a luxurious oasis in the heart of the capital.



Ma Du Zi Hotel

It is unbelievable how quickly you can get away from Bangkok's concrete caverns and hectic lifestyles to be in the middle of the verdant undulating terrain of Khao Yai, where the timber grows tall,



the pace is slow within a symphony of natural sounds. Perched on a hilltop is the ultra-luxurious boutique **Sala Khaoyai** ([www.salaresorts.com/khaoyai](http://www.salaresorts.com/khaoyai)) and its Sala Pool Villa Suites that blend Thai traditional with contemporary designs using native woods, leather and local hand-woven fabrics. Each with its own private swimming pool and fireplaces, one on the rooftop deck and a second inside, they can accommodate your every wish no matter the season or time of day. A quintessential mountain romance retreat is **Muthi Maya** Forest Pool Villa Resort ([www.muthimaya.com](http://www.muthimaya.com)), which has been aptly described as a 'luscious oasis of serenity'. Recently selected as one of the world's ten top most romantic resorts in the world, by renowned resort reviewers, Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Muthi Maya offers you liberation from illusion. The highlight of the resort is its Orient-inspired open-air architecture using natural materials carefully selected to blend with the surroundings. Each Pool Villa, nestled at different heights on the hillsides, boasts amenities that include a private pool, large Jacuzzi and sundeck served by a 24-hour Romanceologist (romance butler) available on request.

Traveling to Thailand's northern region, our first stop is mountainous Mae Hong Son and the riverside town of Pai that has evolved into a hip, café cultured



Muthi Maya



Sala Khaoyai





Montis Deluxe



Pai Island



retreat. And while the town retains its northern Thai charm, **Montis Deluxe** ([www.montisresort.com](http://www.montisresort.com)) villas also offer an escape into the mesmerizing fascination of Africa. Clustered together like an African tribal village around a tranquil lagoon nestled below a ranges of jungle-clad peaks, each thatched-roofed, dome-shaped, stone villa offers a slightly different motif based on a wild animal of Africa. The interiors are a blend of terracotta tile and plank floors, blond wood furnishings and hues from maroon and saffron to dark browns and light creams. They also come with fireplaces that can provide warmth as well as an interlude of romance on nights with a northern chill. A second resort that has adopted the safari-inspired theme is **Pai Island** ([www.paiisland.com](http://www.paiisland.com)), which also features a raw artistic allure set on a cascading stream in the serene alpine valley. With only ten villas, each guest's privacy is virtually assured. While lush and colorful gardens are dotted with beautiful sculptures, each of the villas seems like a private gallery in itself, decorated with the carved exotic wood furniture and masterpieces of celebrated Thai artists.

Taking the twisting and undulating mountain highway to the east brings you to Chiang Mai, the former capital of the northern Lanna kingdom with its ancient walls, temples and spires. But not all the stupas are old and historical; there is one that blends northern Thai nostalgia with Asian minimalism, **The Chedi Chiang Mai** ([www.ghmhotels.com](http://www.ghmhotels.com)), a Zen-like retreat set on the banks of the Ping River, featuring the Chedi Club Suites with their own private courtyards and balconies geared for discerning guests with a penchant for discreet service, whether dining indoors or al fresco. Their décor is understated, almost like a zen-do, using teak and terrazo, rattan, cottons and silks in primary blacks and browns with contrasting tones of taupe and fawn.





A recreation of Lanna splendor is **Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai** ([www.mandarinoriental.com/chiangmai](http://www.mandarinoriental.com/chiangmai)) and its Royal Residence, inspired



Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai



Veranda Chiang Mai - The High Resort



The Chedi Chiang Mai



Veranda Chiang Mai - The High Resort



by the Buddhist mythical Himmaphan forest with its canopy formed by rain trees, a shimmering lotus pond and fragrant frangipani. Interspersed and connected in this luxurious palace setting are six private sleeping pavilions as well as open-air salas, three gorgeous swimming pools, private Jacuzzis and saunas. Each high ceiling sala features handcrafted details, plush furnishings and rare artifacts in different color schemes that range from vibrant reds and shimmering golds to ebony blacks and rich silvers to complete the priceless ambience.

Outside Bangkok, in the mountainous northern reaches of Chiang Mai, Veranda Chiang Mai - The High Resort ([www.verandaresortandspa.com/chiangmai](http://www.verandaresortandspa.com/chiangmai)) is a total Zen experience in a five-star setting from the moment of arrival. In Chiang Mai's fertile Mae Rim Valley, In contrast, **Four Seasons Resort, Chiang Mai** ([www.fourseasons.com/chiangmai](http://www.fourseasons.com/chiangmai)) features three- and four-story palatial Resident Villas, recreations of traditional Thai-Burmese architecture, each with gabled buttresses and polished teak floors, the 3- and 4-bedroom homes feature open-plan living and dining spaces with a fireplace and wine cellar, as well as private pool, sun decks and verandas.



Meanwhile, for those who want to feel closer to their surroundings, further to the east, Chiang Rai, the sister hotel of the Four Seasons Resort, Chiang Mai, **Four Seasons Tented Camp, Golden Triangle** ([www.fourseasons.com/goldentriangle](http://www.fourseasons.com/goldentriangle)) is ideal. Set amid exotic bamboo groves, guests are treated to an echo of the romantic spirit of the 19-century explorers, and with just 15 accommodations, spaced at comfortable distances from each other on a trail overlooking the Ruak River in Myanmar, guests feel as if they are out there alone, protected by the majestic peaks. Each tent has been designed as an open space that flows into the large exterior wooden deck. Furnish-



Four Seasons Resort, Chiang Mai



## luxurious stay

ings are all handcrafted including a hand-hammered copper bathtub reminiscent of the past. Dining and drinks, including house wines and spirits is all part of the package that includes mahout training and elephant trekking.







From the north, we travel south to the acclaimed pristine Thai beaches, beginning at the eastern tip of the Thai Gulf coast. Here, tucked away on an isolated island is **Soneva Kiri by Six Senses** ([www.sixsenses.com/soneva-kiri](http://www.sixsenses.com/soneva-kiri)). After an hour's flight on a private plane from Bangkok to the island's airport, guests are met by their Mr. (or Ms.) Friday and then whisked away on a five-minute Aquaesense powerboat crossing to this luxury retreat. Described as 'Intelligent Luxury' and 'guilt-free hedonism', the resort's goal is to help you return your body and mind to the 'slow life'. Simple, yet sophisticated, the resort stresses ecological sustainable design concepts using local materials as much as possible to protect and preserve this tropical haven as well as our planet.

Much closer to Bangkok is the Royal beachside resort of Hua Hin, which came to notice in 1926, when King Rama VI





constructed his golden teak Royal residence, Klai Kangwon. **V Villas Hua Hin** ([www.v-villashuahin.com](http://www.v-villashuahin.com)) marks another era in the beachside town's evolution. Inspired by terraced rice paddy patterns and European villazzos, V Villas offers a sophisticated, contemporary holiday lifestyle. The finest of its accommodations is the visually intriguing two-story Presidential Beachfront Villa. Within its symmetry of bold lines and natural elements, guests are left alone to bask in contemporary and luxurious comforts. The airy living and dining areas open to a spacious terrace with private swimming pool enshrouded by lush tropical vegetation with the white beach and aqua seas just beyond. **InterContinental Hua Hin Resort** ([www.intercontinental.com/huahin](http://www.intercontinental.com/huahin)) has gone one step further in opulent beachfront private sanctuaries with its La Residence Royale Hua Hin. Influenced by the 19th century designs of the Hua Hin Summer Palace built by King Rama VI, this Thai home and enclave is a stunning testament to Thailand's Royal heritage and unsurpassed luxury. Set on half an acre personifying seclusion and regal living, the home features two lavish bedrooms with en suite marble bathrooms as well as spacious living and



Rest Detail Hotel Hua Hin



Villa Maroc



Asara Villa and Suite



InterContinental Hua Hin Resort



dining areas, a lush garden, infinity pool and full-time, live-in butler. For those who love to be pampered, The Grand Rest Pavilion packages offered at **Rest Detail Hotel** ([www.restdetailhotel.com](http://www.restdetailhotel.com)) are an indulgent hedonist delight. While enjoying the luxuries of an expansive 4-bedroom beachfront home with oversized living and dining areas, a private swimming pool and waterfall, guests are also treated to daily champagne breakfasts as well as a selection of hors d'oeuvres served daily the Pavilion Master as well as evening seafood barbecue. One Hua Hin resort that has received such accolades as Gold Nugget Award Winner for Best Architectural Design 2008, Gold Class Winner for Green Hotel 2009 and most recently, the 8th Thailand Tourism Awards 2010 is **Asara Villa and Suite** ([www.asaravillaandsuite.com](http://www.asaravillaandsuite.com)), featuring its one-of-a-kind master beachside retreat, The Presidential Villa. Fronting its own private beach area with its signature floating daybed where guests love to wile away the hours, the villa contains three separate sumptuous pavilions including a master bedroom pavilion, a family/guest room pavilion, and an open-air



Alcenta



Aleenta



Morocco. Its Royal suite, inspired by the world's most expensive and exotic spice, the Villa Za'faran affords a sumptuous décor with saffron hues Arabic motif. The in-villa swing sets the mood for relaxation and rejuvenation, while one flight up is the master bedroom that seems fit for a sultan with its sun-splashed terrace and open-air Jacuzzi and bathroom that all offer dramatic views of the ivory powder beach and azure Thai Gulf.



Asara Villa and Suite



Villa Maroc





Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui



Mai Samui



Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui



Hansar Samui

About 700 kilometers south of Bangkok is Thailand's third largest island Ko Samui, offering a host of luxurious pleasures. At the apex of getaways is Sanctuary Pool Villa at **Banyan Tree Samui** ([www.banyantree.com/en/samui](http://www.banyantree.com/en/samui)) that combines the best elements of a tropical retreat. A stunning central Thai-style sala serves as the hub for two one-bedroom bungalows, each with private pool. The spaces flow from indoors to outdoors with a natural grace, and the décor reflects fun and relaxation with a delightful blend of mod-cons and traditional Thai elements, using rattan and bamboo furnishings along with brightly hued silks. Another of the island's extraordinary accommodations is the Four-Bedroom Residence Villa at **Four Seasons Resort Koh Samui** ([www.fourseasons.com/kohsamui](http://www.fourseasons.com/kohsamui)). While the interior is exquisite, guests usually indulge in the luxuries of the expansive deck with private bar and sunken Japanese-style dining table under a thatched canopy as well as two infinity-edge pools





surrounded by daybeds and sun lounges. Set at the crest of the hillside resort, it enjoys a constant performance of aquamarine seas lapping the white powdery beach with a backdrop of indigo skies and puffy white clouds by day and star-studded ebony heavens by night. A veritable oasis in the heart of Samui's bustling Chaweng Beach is The **Library** ([www.library.com](http://www.library.com)), a hip, chic, boutique resort with panache. What first grabs everyone's attention is the dramatic blood red swimming pool, voted one of the ten most amazing hotel pools in the world. One is also struck by the two Don't Disturb signs, one of a person sleeping and another of a couple doing just the opposite, perfect statements for the resort's ambience and minimalist design. Another Chaweng escape is **Muang Samui Spa Resort** ([www.muangsamui.com](http://www.muangsamui.com)), particularly its luxuriously appointed contemporary Thai Royal Suite, featuring very private garden terraces with personal Jacuzzi, giving guests the choice of inside or outside enveloped in lush greenery with glimpse of the aqua sea just beyond. While well secluded, **Mai Samui Beach Resort & Spa** ([www.maisamui.com](http://www.maisamui.com)) enjoys an

exceptional location on the 3-kilometer powdery white Laem Yai Beach, ranked number 2 for beauty, and number 1 for tranquility. The Pool Villa with Ocean Front offers this as well as very stylish amenities like Thai cotton bed linens and duvets, relaxing spa tub en suite with the master bedroom and a spacious balcony always filled with fresh colorful flowers providing breathtaking panoramic ocean vistas. The Thai-style **Melati Beach Resort and Spa** ([www.melatiresort.com](http://www.melatiresort.com)) Presidential Suites with their harmonized blend of chic and Feng Shui elements surpass all expectations. A perfect harmony has been created between the pristine seaside, manicured tropical gardens and luxurious décor, particularly with the master bedroom enjoying direct access to the Jacuzzi swimming pool, deck and sala as well as two outdoor tubs nestled into the lush greenery. And when the sounds and scenes of nature's performance aren't enough, there is a state-of-the-art home theater for your entertainment. **Pavilion Samui Boutique Resort** ([www.pavilionsamui.com](http://www.pavilionsamui.com)) has been designed to accommodate everyone's tastes when it comes to relaxing, rejuvenating or playing in different waters. Among the various luxurious Modern Thai accommodations are one that come with an exclusive Jacuzzi spa with or without plunge pool, or there are the Hydro Pool Villas secluded in thick tropical flora and beachfront Grand Pool Villas with a private infin-



The Library





Muang Samui Spa Resort

## luxurious stay

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Mai Samui



Mai Samui

ity pool immediately outside the door and the ivory sands of Lamai Beach and aquamarine seas just a few steps further away. Set on the island's most beautiful stone beach, Laem Nan, **Silavadee Pool Spa Resort** ([www.silavadeeresort.com](http://www.silavadeeresort.com)) which literally means "Beautiful Rock" is becoming one of Samui's most exclusive hideaways. With each villa providing such indulgent amenities as a private pool with an Aqua Jet Massage Bed, it should come as no surprise that this resort has already received numerous honors and accolades such as the 2010 Traveler's Choice Award and the Dream Resort Thailand Award and World Luxury Hotel Award in 2009. Located in Bo Phut, every accommodation at **Hansar Samui** ([www.hansarsamui.com](http://www.hansarsamui.com)) is treated to the most spectacular world famous sunsets and views of the sea and neighboring Koh Pha Ngam. Simple yet sumptuous, the rooms oversized and designed with an open floor plan, feature original custom hand-made furnishings that include a delicious feather bed with down comforter and pillows as well as freestanding bathtubs and full-size walk-in rain showers that harmonize perfectly with the beach and lush tropical surroundings. Another

exclusive resort on Lamai beach is **the Langham Place Samui at Lamai Beach** ([www.kohsamui.langhamplace-hotels.com](http://www.kohsamui.langhamplace-hotels.com)) that combines local Thai aesthetics with high-end amenities that begin with a walkway of waterfalls and the serenade of 'cool vibes' set by the resident DJ. Nestled on the beachfront amidst lush and fragrant foliage, the lavish accommodations include a variety of woods, soft silks and natural cottons. Meanwhile, for a contrast from the tropical delights, the premier Ocean View Pool Villas feature Tivoli music systems and in addition to beachfront pools. Completing a circuit of the island and we come to **Napasai** ([www.napasai.com](http://www.napasai.com)) set in a grove of cashew trees on the north coast. Preeminent among the resort's selection of luxury accommodations is its private Maenam Beach front Pool Residence. Built into the cliff side, this large Thai contemporary multi-level home includes its own swimming pool with poolside sala (Thai pavilion). Each bedroom with en suite bathroom also enjoys its own entrance from a main stairway leading to and from the beach.

Just across a causeway to the south is the island of Phuket, often referred to as the "Pearl of the Andaman. Once known for its tin mining, **Indigo Pearl** ([www.indigo-pearl.com](http://www.indigo-pearl.com)) and its Bill Bensley Shell Suite pays homage to both the island's rich history and natural resources in addition to the world-renowned architect and designer. The accommodation is a bold statement in raw sensuality and industrial chic mixing rough timber and rivets with shimmering silks, punctuated by striking objects d'art, some framing the private pool. Nestled on a lush hillside halfway down the island's west coast fringing Pan-sea Beach we find **Amanpuri Phuket** ([www.amanresorts.com/amanpuri](http://www.amanresorts.com/amanpuri)) and its much raved about beachfront Pavilion 105. Aman in Sanskrit means peace and this spectacular Thai contemporary



Pavilion Samui Boutique Resort



Langham Place Samui at Lamai Beach



Melati Beach Resort and Spa



Renaissance Phuket



Phulay Bay, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve



Silavadee Pool Spa Resort

home resonates with the sounds of soothing tranquility with the sea, sand, sun and breezes. Its very comforting decor incorporates golden teak woodwork and furniture with stone, marble and natural fabrics, creating an ambience of serene elegance for a perfect haven. At the southern-eastern tip of the island we find **Sri Panwa Phuket** ([www.sripanwa.com](http://www.sripanwa.com)) perched atop Cape Panwa and commanding breathtaking views of the Aqua and indigo Andaman and its many priceless emerald and ivory islands. Voted as one of the 100 Luxury Hotels around the globe by Best Hotels magazine and an Overnight Sensations 2010 by Kiwi Collection as Well as Best Resort in the Most Natural Environment by Art Travel Volume II, the very private accommodations nestled amidst the 40 acres of island greenery offer an oasis of calm amidst the infinite horizons.

There is no shortage of extraordinary hotels in and near Phuket, including **Banyan Tree Phuket** ([www.banyantree.com/phuket](http://www.banyantree.com/phuket)) with its sumptuous Double-pool Villas, Twinpalms ([www.twinpalms-phuket.com](http://www.twinpalms-phuket.com)) and their tony private yacht and a short boat ride to the exquisite **Six Senses Yao Noi** ([www.sixsenses.com/SixSensesYaoNoi](http://www.sixsenses.com/SixSensesYaoNoi)). Well-heeled travelers occasionally decide to invest in a holiday home in Phuket, enjoying all the comforts of a five-star resorts. They can buy homes or properties that can be leased and managed in their absence, such as the aforementioned Amanpuri and **Baan Yamu** ([www.banyamu.com](http://www.banyamu.com)) by the brains behind Twinpalms.

Across the mountainous isthmus is the Andaman coast and the province of Phang-nga with its lofty jungle clad peaks surrounding 11-kilometer pearl white Khao Lak beach where The **Sarojin** ([www.sarojin.com](http://www.sarojin.com)) is ensconced in tropical flora, ideal for a romantic interlude, which is just what this resort caters to. Each residence includes an intimate couple's bath and rain shower in a private garden with sala and terrace. With the aid of an "imagineer", ultimate personal concierge, lovers can delight in creating 'just for two' bespoke adventures cruising the sea or exploring the jungle.



Hansar Samui



Indigo Pearl



Sri Panwa Phuket



Rayavadee



The Sarojin

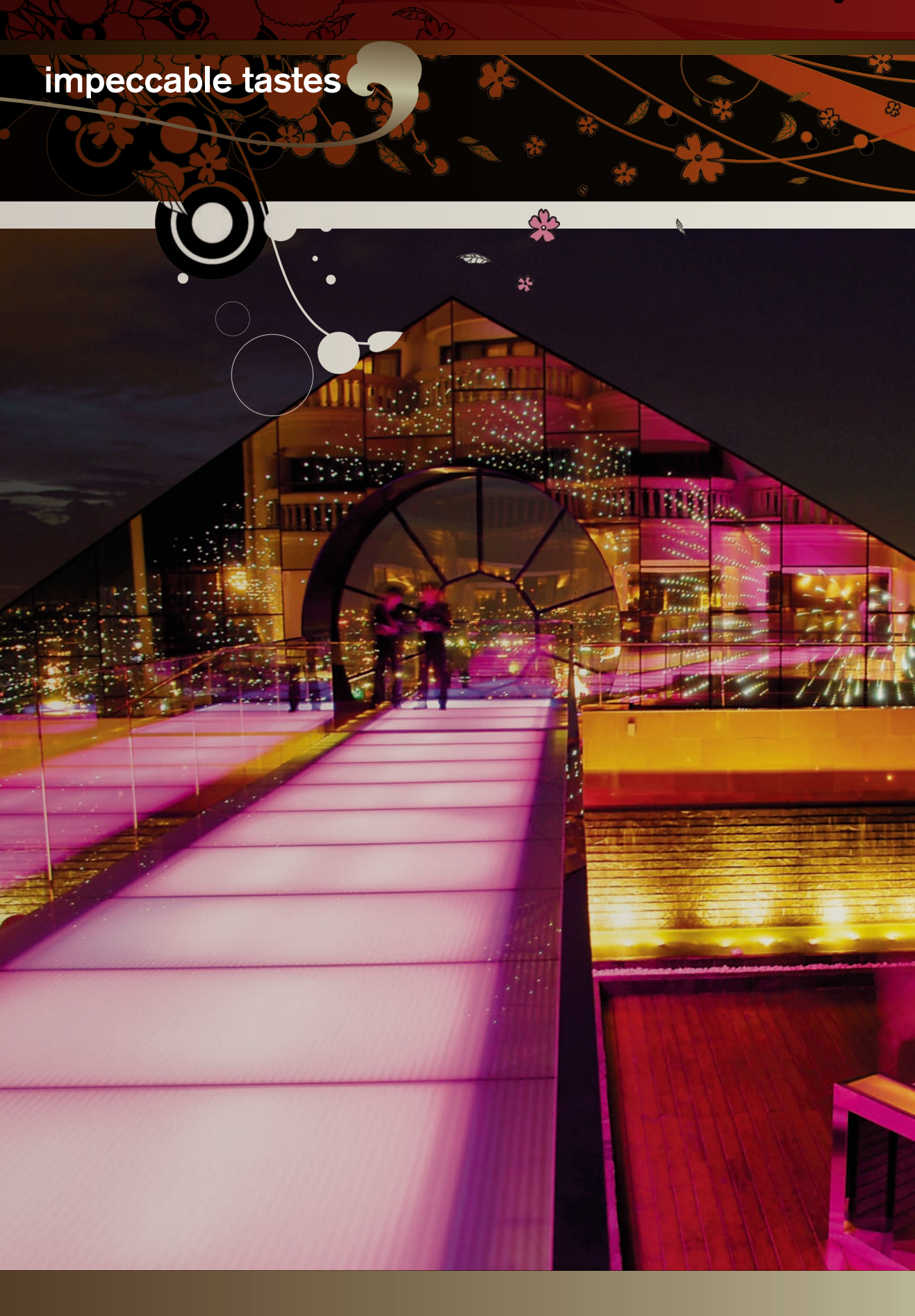


Santhiya Resort &amp; Spa

Just south of Phuket is the province of Krabi, **Phulay Bay, A Ritz-Carlton Reserve** ([http://reserve.ritzcarlton.com/phulay\\_bay](http://reserve.ritzcarlton.com/phulay_bay)), and among its pavilions and villas are the breathtaking Royal Beach Villas, two of which feature outdoor Roman-style bathtubs as well as rainforest showers. Their interiors are airy and immaculate, featuring a lavish, contemporary Thai ambience that evokes a sense of hedonistic indulgence, further enhanced by the private garden with veranda and infinity plunge pool with hydrojets. The bedrooms are just as inviting with their exquisite furnishings including an oversized bed with deep, dense, feather mattresses for dreaming to the serenades of wind and wave. Another of Krabi's gem is the **Rayavadee** ([www.rayavadee.com](http://www.rayavadee.com)), reminiscent of an idyllic southern Thai thatched-roofed village, discreetly set amidst lush tropical gardens below sheer cliffs and dense jungle. The Phranang Villas, considered masterpieces in luxurious beachfront living, have been furnished in rich-grained local woods with beautiful en suite stonewall bathrooms. The living room and dining area, done in local materials and relaxing, demure tones, open out to a fabulous private pool with the sun drenched powdery white sands and aqua seas just a further few steps away.

Just across the channel is the island of Pha-ngan, renowned for its monthly Full Moon Party that draws revelers from both near and afar. But if one is searching for seclusion and the grandeur of the Thai Kingdom during the reign of Rama V, Santhiya Royal Pool Villa Suite at **Santhiya Resort & Spa** ([www.santhiya.com](http://www.santhiya.com)) is like no other. Enveloped by semi-wild lush local flora, this sensuous eco-chic teak hideaway that includes a rock garden and romantic pools resounds silently with its contemporary luxuries and colonial splendors, except for the sounds of wind, waves and the serenade of birds and nature.

impeccable tastes



When it comes to cuisine, there is no place on earth where you can find the combination of variety, value, and excellence that is present in Thailand. The extraordinary cultural treasure of Thai cuisine is available in many interpretations here: classical, modern, and fusion, though you will also find a wealth of fine gastronomic offerings from across the globe. The settings can vary from a charmingly preserved teakwood mansion to the top of a modern skyscraper, located in the heart of the city, overlooking the water, or on the side of a mountain. All of the senses are fully engaged while dining in Thailand, accompanied by the warm and attentive service that is just as widely renowned as the delicious cuisine.



Many food connoisseurs come expressly to enjoy Thai cuisine, and there is no shortage of truly excellent restaurants proudly representing the local gastronomic culture, starting with the regal **Blue Elephant** ([www.blueelephant.com/bangkok](http://www.blueelephant.com/bangkok)) restaurant and cooking school, which sits in a beautifully renovated turn-of-the-century teak building. The decor exudes authentic charm, as Thai cultural dancers in traditional dress entertain guests as they enjoy Royal Thai classical dishes, Northern or Northeastern style favorites, as well as desserts and intricately carved fruits, each beautifully presented in accordance with time-honored Thai gastronomic traditions. While traditional Thai cuisine is usually served family-style, there has been a growing movement to elevate the experience to fine dining. At **bo.lan** ([www.bolan.co.th](http://www.bolan.co.th)), the chefs meticulously comb Thai fresh markets every day for the finest ingredients from around Thailand, and then cook everything on a slow food basis, creating a kaleidoscope of flavors, colors, and textures presented as edible works of art. Try the prix fixe menu for a majestic tasting journey; reservations are highly recommended. Another splendid example of Michelin-starred haute Thai cuisine can be found in Bangkok at the Siam Kempinski, where the team behind Kiin Kiin in Copenhagen, Sweden have opened **Sra Bua** ([www.kempinski.com/en/bangkok](http://www.kempinski.com/en/bangkok)), a stunningly inspired setting with warm woods and the suggestion of a rice paddy. Here, modern interpretations of authentic Thai flavors come to the table in exquisite presentations, such as the 15-course tasting menu which interprets a wide range of regional Thai favorites.

If on the subject of marvelous settings, then **Tables** ([www.bangkok.grand.hyatt.com](http://www.bangkok.grand.hyatt.com)), the brainchild of world renowned designer Tony Chi, must be mentioned, as it has fast become a sought-after dining adventure. The interior décor and gastronomy brings to mind the nostalgia of Classical European Cuisine, with the novelty of Tableside Cooking on five exclusively designed cooking stations. Here, chefs come out of the kitchen and cook at your tableside for a sense of flair and entertainment. Two private dining rooms, decked out in vintage style, are also equipped with their own cooking stations.

For a completely different atmosphere, there is the dining with a view at **Red Sky** ([www.centarahotelsresorts.com](http://www.centarahotelsresorts.com)), on the 55th floor of the Centara Grand Bangkok. The Urban Bistro offerings here range from steak and veal to salmon, lobster and mussels, while the Wine Bar has a massive selection of excellent wines available by the glass. Inside the two-story glass-walled Wine Cellar, a Wine Angel uses a harness to gracefully retrieve bottles ordered by diners. Enjoy a post-dinner cocktail at the Martini Bar, where the view and libations will leave you stirred, not shaken. Another of Bangkok's elevated alfresco dining highlights is **Breeze** ([www.lebua.com](http://www.lebua.com)), appropriately named as it is located sky-high on the 52nd floor of State Tower. Here, award-winning Consultant Chef Sam Leong and Executive Chef James Ho have combined their vast experiences to deliver the finest Asian seafood and barbeque imaginable. At Breeze, is hard to say what is more of a marvel, the perfectly prepared giant scallops and succulent lobsters, or the view from the soaring glass skybridge. Afterwards, stay on for a cocktail or move up to the mesmerizing rooftop Sky Bar at **Sirocco** ([www.lebua.com](http://www.lebua.com)).



Blue Elephant



bo.lan



Sra Bua



Tables at Grand Hyatt Erawan



Long Table



The Roof at Siam@Siam



Red Sky at Centara Grand Bangkok

In vivid contrast, there is the achingly stylish **Long Table** ([www.longtablebangkok.com](http://www.longtablebangkok.com)), a haute sky dining destination brought to you by the geniuses behind the world-famous Bed Supperclub. A breezy 25th floor above central Bangkok, the bold and beautiful clientele congregate here around Japanese-style sofas to sip on delectable cocktails and dine on traditional Thai cuisine with a twist. The centerpiece of the restaurant is the eponymous extended dining table, big enough for you and sixty of your closest (and chicest) friends. Another sky-high dining experience in Bangkok is **SkyDine Design on 25** ([www.siamatsiam.com/restaurant](http://www.siamatsiam.com/restaurant)) on the 25th floor of Siam@Siam Design Hotel & Spa, which dazzles with breathtaking 360-degree panoramic views of Bangkok. The restaurants on this floor are La Vue French and Mediterranean Restaurant, The Roof Restaurant and The Roof Champagne and Wine Bar.

Vertiginous feasts can be found in many places around Thailand. One extraordinary experience is on the tropical island of Ko Samui. **Dining on the Rocks** ([www.sixsenses.com/sixsensesamui](http://www.sixsenses.com/sixsensesamui)) offers what might be the most incredible setting for a restaurant anywhere in the world. It is perched on interconnected wooden platforms boldly jutting out high



Tables at Grand Hyatt Erawan



Dining on the Rocks



Dining on the Rocks



Fei Ya



Nikki Beach Club



Fei Ya



Tsu and Nami

over a seaside cliff, as the strains of soft jazz music interplay with the waves crashing into giant boulders far below. Arrive at dusk for the indescribably breathtaking sunset vista, and stay for the whimsically creative flavors of New Asian Cuisine.

Seemingly every style of international fare is well represented in Bangkok, which boasts a plethora of Chinese restaurants. The modern and stylish **Fei Ya** ([www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bkkbr-renaissance-bangkok-ratchaprasong-hotel](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bkkbr-renaissance-bangkok-ratchaprasong-hotel)), has fast become a most preferred venue among aficionados of Chinese cuisine for auspicious gatherings and to entertain special guests. Its name translating to “flying duck,” and the focus here is on crispy, juicy, roasted Peking duck and Cantonese Chinese dishes like tender Char Sui pork. A tea bar stocks more than 30 varieties of the most exquisite and valuable teas anywhere. And for superb Japanese gastronomy, **Tsu** and **Nami** ([www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bkkdt-jw-marriott-hotel-bangkok/](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bkkdt-jw-marriott-hotel-bangkok/)) are actually two stylish restaurants in one on the lower level of the JW Marriott: Tsu offers traditional Japanese cuisine, while Nami is a teppanyaki style establishment where a skilled chef grills food right in front of diners with panache.

There are some excellent French restaurants to choose from in Bangkok, and arguably the finest such purveyor in town is **Bonjour** ([www.bonjourbangkok.com](http://www.bonjourbangkok.com)), housed in a charmingly restored royal mansion. Bonjour prides itself on using authentic French products and recipes. In fact, most of the meticulously selected ingredients are imported from France, under the supervision of owner Xavier Bruzaud-Grille and prepared by executive chef Thierry Enderlin. The menu is not huge, as the focus is on quality preparations, but the wine list is wonderfully wide-ranging.



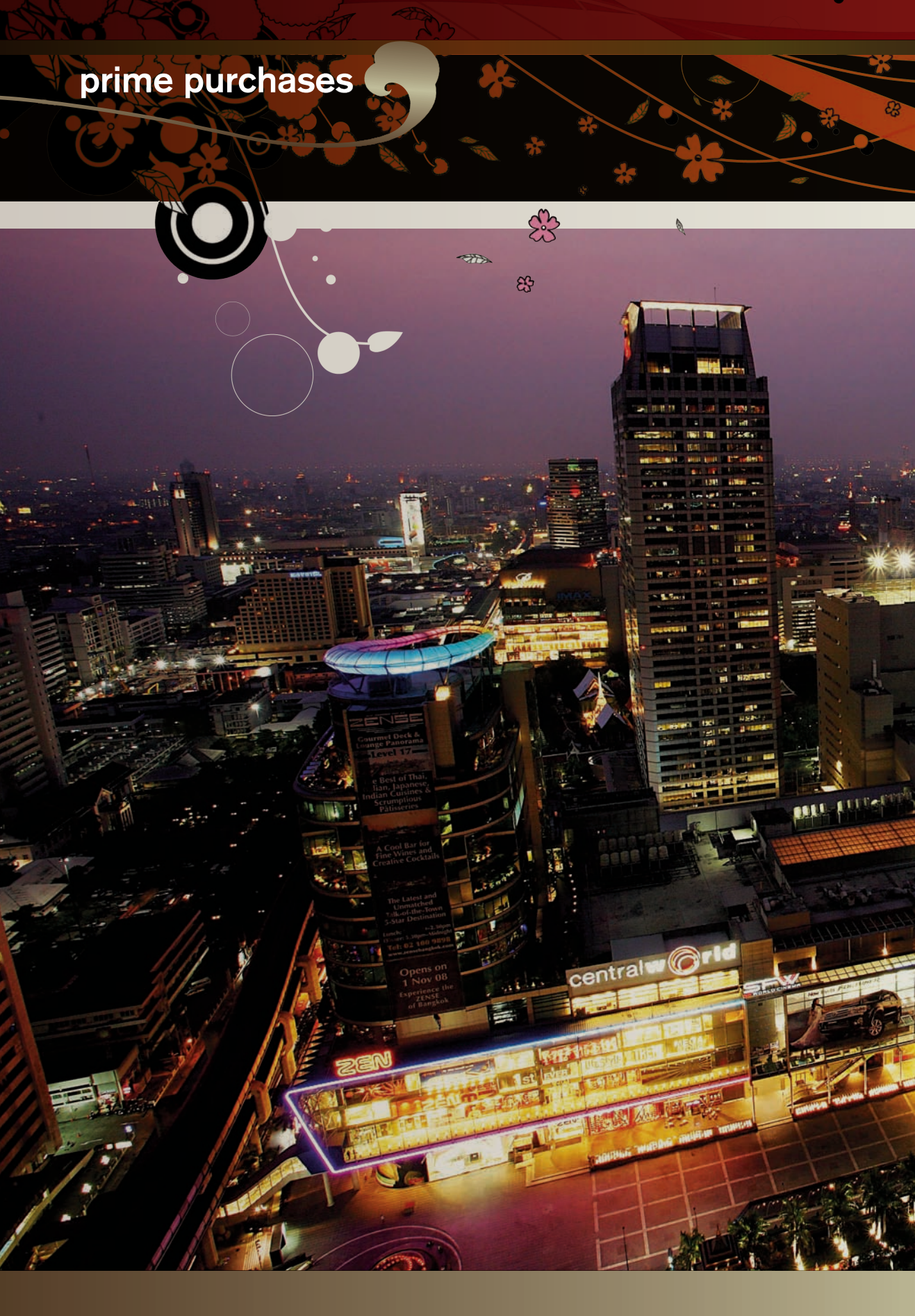
Outside of Bangkok, seemingly another world away within the Lanna-style house in the verdant mountains of Chiang Mai, **Farang Ses** ([www.mandarinoriental.com/chiangmai](http://www.mandarinoriental.com/chiangmai)) offers an elegant incarnation of traditional countryside French dishes such as lamb and rabbit in a sumptuous setting of wrought chandeliers, vaulted ceilings and bronze columns. The wine cellar here boasts over 300 vintages, including the most superb champagnes. Those who wish to enjoy a wondrous mountainous backdrop can opt to dine in the breezy alfresco dining area.

Thailand's culinary attractions greatly contribute to the local tourism industry, and outstanding celebrations have emerged as a result. **The World Gourmet Festival** ([www.fourseasons.com/bangkok/world\\_gourmet\\_festival](http://www.fourseasons.com/bangkok/world_gourmet_festival)), held annually at Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok in September, brings world renowned chefs from across the globe to one venue for an extraordinary week of epicurean inspiration. And for one night each year, the **Bangkok Chefs Charity Gala Dinner & Auction** is one of the most talked-about events in town, a gala dinner with a special menu prepared by executive chefs from leading hotels in Bangkok and Phuket held annually in the Grand Ballroom of the Mandarin Oriental Bangkok. And the best part, all funds raised from this ritzy culinary event go exclusively to charity. Now that's luxury with a heart.





prime purchases



It would be almost criminal for us not to include a guide to some of the extraordinary retail options in Thailand that make it a real treat for shopaholics. You can find virtually everything under the sun here, but if you are looking for luxurious goods to take home, Thailand has an exceptional range of fine goods that you would be hard-pressed to find anywhere else. Local fashion designers who earn rave reviews on catwalks worldwide, treasured one-of-a-kind accessories, and majestic home décor are all at your fingertips in Thailand.





Erawan Bangkok



Siam Paragon



CentralWorld



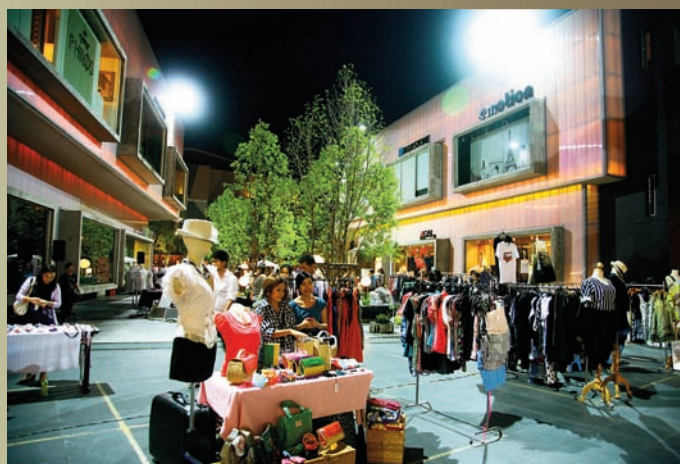
Gaysorn



Emporium



Siam Discovery



Crystal Design Center



Issue

## prime purchases

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Look no further than Thailand for retail heaven. You can find anything you desire in easily accessible climate-controlled comfort, packed with excellent dining outlets to boot. The crown jewel of shopping in Bangkok's Pathumwan and Ratchaprasong areas is **Siam Paragon** ([www.siamparagon.co.th](http://www.siamparagon.co.th)), with all the top luxury brands in a vibrant atmosphere along with local fashion star boutiques like Code Ten, Kai, and Asava. You can find high-end electronics, jewelry, timepieces, home furnishings and even an exotic supercar if that is your penchant. As in many upper-crust shopping centers, if it all seems overwhelming, personal style consultants are available to help you put together a smashing ensemble for an updated new you. Connected to Siam Paragon, you have **Siam Discovery** ([www.siamdiscoverycenter.co.th](http://www.siamdiscoverycenter.co.th)) and **Siam Center** ([www.siamcenter.co.th](http://www.siamcenter.co.th)), the center of trendy, youth-oriented local labels like Greyhound, Kloset, Soda, Senada Theory, Munchu's, and the hip Mob. F boutique. Nearby, **Gaysorn** ([www.gaysorn.com](http://www.gaysorn.com)) and **Erawan Bangkok** ([www.erawanbangkok.com](http://www.erawanbangkok.com)) offer smaller, more sedate high-end shopping experiences, but with excellent selections of name-brand items. And for another gargantuan retail experience, the mammoth **CentralWorld** ([www.centralworld.co.th](http://www.centralworld.co.th)) is perfect for families to explore. Department stores like the **Emporium** ([www.emporiumthailand.com](http://www.emporiumthailand.com)) and **Central Chidlom** ([www.central.co.th](http://www.central.co.th)) are also located along the golden shopping boulevard of Sukhumvit road. Along with the great selection, they also offer personalized service; concierges will collect and deliver the spoils of your shopping spree to your waiting vehicle so your hands are free to shop at leisure. They also have style consultants available to help put together a stylish new look together for you. For home accessories and furnishings, a short drive from the city center brings you to the new **Crystal Design Center** (

crystaldesigncenter.com). Here, you will find an interior decorator's playground and an architect's dream. Over 2,000 interior design brands cover this spacious outdoor mall, which is excellent for browsing. Shopping gems are not limited to greater Bangkok, however. Throughout Thailand you will find unique gift items and treats for yourself.

In northern Chiang Mai, there is **Central Airport Plaza** ([www.centralplaza.co.th](http://www.centralplaza.co.th)), one of the many Central shopping centers around Thailand, and the charming **Kad Suan Kaew** ([www.kadsuankaew.co.th](http://www.kadsuankaew.co.th)). Over on the coast, step off the sandy seaside directly into **Central Festival Pattaya Beach** ([www.central-festival.co.th](http://www.central-festival.co.th)), while the tropical-theme **Jungceylon** ([www.jungceylon.com](http://www.jungceylon.com)) in Phuket is an island hopping shopper's dream.

No matter where you go, you can find incredible bargains and one-of-a-kind statement pieces, most of which are proud to present the local flavor.

The Thai fashion industry has steadily grown in importance on the world stage, having been featured by CNN and in-depth by Time magazine. Start your retail safari with Roj Singhakul, owner and fashion designer of **Issue** ([www.issue.co.th](http://www.issue.co.th)), who is a passionate world traveler. In designing his clothes, Roj puts his knowledge, experience and admiration of fashion all over the world into bringing his legendary clothes for men and women to life. You can literally feel the difference simply walking into his shops, with their quixotic décor and mysterious incense aroma. Meanwhile, fashion-forward Mademoiselles of Bangkok also flock to **Fly Now** ([www.flynnowbangkok.com](http://www.flynnowbangkok.com)), one of Thailand's most successful and internationally recognized fashion labels. For over two decades, director Somchai Song Wattana and designer Chamnan



Central Festival Pattaya



Jungceylon





Central Festival Pattaya



Fly Now

Pakdeesuk have created unforgettable avant garde designs, elegant glamour with a twist. Female designers also thrive in Thailand; timid innocence and youthful sophistication is the name of the game at **Disaya** ([www.disaya.com](http://www.disaya.com)) by acclaimed designer Disaya Sorakraikitikul, a graduate of the prestigious Central St. Martins School of Fashion. Her elegant designs are a staple of the red carpet among fashionable high society ladies in Thailand, and have been worn by celebrities as diverse as Jennifer Lopez, Kelly Osbourne and Amy Winehouse. Her collection of lingerie, Boudoir by Disaya, is also commended for its playful seductiveness.

Another quintessence of the distaff designer scene is **Sretsis** ([www.sretsis.com](http://www.sretsis.com)). Designed by a team of three fashion-obsessed sisters (Sretsis is actually "sisters" spelled backwards), their work is feminine and whimsical, imbued with nostalgic charm that combines girly shapes and frilly Victorian with rock-and-roll and wink-wink kitsch in a manner not unlike a younger, Eastern reincarnation of Vivienne Westwood.



Sretsis



Jim Thompson



Disaya



Beyond Living

Thailand's aesthetic innovations are by no means limited to clothing, as seen with one of the Sretsis sisters who expanded into accessories; **Matina Amanita** ([www.matinaamanita.com](http://www.matinaamanita.com)) is the alias of Central Saint Martins and Parsons-educated Matina Sukhahuta, who blends imagination with glamorous femininity, turning ordinary objects into treasures. For the seriously high end, collectors of luxury accessories and unique art objects have long sought out the von Bueren family's iconic **Lotus Arts de Vivre** ([www.lotusartsdevivre.com](http://www.lotusartsdevivre.com)) for their handcrafted uniquely-styling, exotic materials, and excellent functionality. Another prestigious name, **Jim Thompson** ([www.jimthompson.com](http://www.jimthompson.com)), has become virtually synonymous with Thai silk, not only in Thailand but indeed worldwide. Their incredible reputation of luxury, beautiful detailing, simplicity of design and the use of natural materials is seen in coveted accessories such as men's ties and women's scarves, yet there is also an extensive collection of home furnishings in a rainbow of hues using their world-renowned textiles in contemporary designs inspired by enduring Thai traditions.

On the topic of home furnishings, Thais are just as proud to decorate their homes as themselves. A collaboration of design and fashion gurus inspired by museum-cum-shops in Europe, the household accessories shop **Geo** ([www.geo.co.th](http://www.geo.co.th)) supports up-and-coming young local designers. Along with fashion, the eclectic store also offers house and gardenware, handmade picture frames, and leather binders, many of which are based on the iconic floral photographer of fashion editor Sakchai Guy. For home furnishings and decorative accessories using traditional Thai craftsmanship and material, look no further than **Ayodhya** ([www.ayodhyatrade.com](http://www.ayodhyatrade.com)). Luxurious pieces here are created from simple water hyacinth, hemp and cotton, materials derived from the local eco-system. The items found at Ayodhya

are not just of the finest craftsmanship, but go towards helping local communities earn a supplementary income. As you step into many of the five-star resorts in Thailand, you may admire the colorful, textured handwoven rugs and mats as well as shabby-chic hand-embroidered cushions, all inspired by the patterns and color palettes found in nature. **Beyond Living** ([www.beyond-living.com](http://www.beyond-living.com)) has been supplying these luxurious soft furnishings to some of Thailand and Asia's most prestigious hotels and resorts, and they are now available for your home at their Crystal Design Center showroom. Aside from these, a variety of placemats, wall hangings, and decorative accessories are available to liven up your home.

And for the bedroom, home fashion designer **Pasaya** ([www.pasaya.com](http://www.pasaya.com)) is a must visit for anyone looking for some of the finest linens. With a showroom shop in Siam Paragon Shopping Center and most major shopping malls and department stores in the city. What makes this particular designer so outstanding is the truly incredible quality of the fabrics. You can purchase bed sheets, duvet and pillow cases up to an amazingly silky 650 thread count. Their Aijin range, while expensive, is exquisite in design and style.

And when it comes to furniture, **Yothaka** ([www.yothaka.com](http://www.yothaka.com)), derived from the ancient Pali word meaning "a need or want regarding shape, smell and taste," creates hand-woven, modern Asian designs mostly using natural fibrous materials available in Thailand. Yothaka innovated the use of water hyacinth and created a Pineapple Paper collection made from locally-produced, eco-friendly pineapple paper fiber.

Alongside notable local brands, a universe of international luxury brands is also available in Thailand, many with special designs tailored to Asia and on sale at attractive prices.



Geo



Ayodhya



Pasaya



Lotus Arts de Vivre



Yothaka



Fine luxury goods, represented by flagship stores of international brands can be found in Bangkok, along with boutiques to fine coveted handbags or to-die-for shoes. Gentlemen need not feel left out, as they can find a smart suit, or suave shoes. For those seeking a fine wristwatch, there is a constellation of luxury timepieces presented with the utmost in attentive service.

Sweetening the retail deal, tourists to Thailand are allowed to claim **VAT refunds** ([www.rd.go.th/vrt](http://www.rd.go.th/vrt)) on purchases made in Thailand before returning home with their treasured haul, the better to save up for another trip to Thailand for your next exhilarating shopping expedition.

While in Thailand one must immerse oneself in the grandeur and whimsy of traditional Thai performing arts. Head to **Aksra Theatre** ([www.aksratheatre.com](http://www.aksratheatre.com)) for a dose of the immortal Ramakien classic saga performed by puppeteers in a state-of-the-art environment. Another world-class performance of Thailand's arts and cultural heritage is **Siam Niramit** ([www.siamniramit.com](http://www.siamniramit.com)), set in the heart of Bangkok. For a taste of Thai-style Broadway spectacle, there is the 1500-seat **Muangthai Rachadalai Theatre** ([www.rachadalai.com](http://www.rachadalai.com)) which features popular travelling stage productions and stirring Thai musicals starring the brightest local stars. **Esplanade Cineplex** ([www.majorcineplex.com/esplanadecineplex](http://www.majorcineplex.com/esplanadecineplex)) is yet another example that for cinephiles, there is no better place to watch a film than Thailand, where reserved seating, plush seats, and premium concessions make for the very best cinema experience. At **Paragon Cineplex** ([www.paragoncineplex.com](http://www.paragoncineplex.com)), the discerning moviegoer can revel in the privacy of reclining lounges at the Nokia Ultra Screens, while the über-exclusive private splendor of the Enigma theatre is fit for high-powered and stylish Hollywood execs.

In the subterranean reaches of Siam Paragon, **Siam Ocean World** ([www.siamoceanworld.co.th](http://www.siamoceanworld.co.th)) takes visitors on a wondrous journey to the deep blue sea,





Aksra Theatre



Siam Niramit

with Southeast Asia's largest aquarium and a chance to dive with some fascinating residents like the hammerhead shark. In nearby Siam Discovery, the world's favorite wax museum **Madame Tussauds** ([www.madametussauds.com/bangkok](http://www.madametussauds.com/bangkok)) opens its 10th worldwide venue in December 2010. This newest attraction of Thailand is home to over 70 wax figures--from A-list celebrities to global sports stars--brimming with interactive experiences that is far more than just a wax museum.

And to fill up on cultural goodness, the annual **Bangkok's International Festival of Dance & Music** ([www.bangkokfestivals.com](http://www.bangkokfestivals.com)) is the foremost performing arts festival in Thailand, taking place in September and October each year. The quality of the programming is excellent, offering an extravaganza of classical concerts, operas, classical/contemporary



Nokia Ultra Screen



Siam Ocean World



Bangkok's International Festival of Dance & Music



Madame Tussauds



Bangkok's International Festival of Dance & Music



ballets, modern and ethnic dances by artists and theatres from all over the world every September, with past performers including the Mariinsky Ballet, Zubin Mehta and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Netherlands Dance Theater, Ballet Flamenco Sara Baras, Novosibirsk State Opera Theatre, Cloud Gate Dance Theatre of Taiwan, and Zurich Ballet.

pure pampering



As early as the third century BC, Indian Brahmins and Buddhist monks brought to Thailand a holistic approach to healing. Over time, local herbal treatments, followed by a cornucopia of wellbeing philosophies and therapies from the East and West have been adopted and adapted at an ever-expanding number of massage and treatment centers, clinics and spas. Among these are a select few that pamper and indulge their clients and guests in the most luxurious and enchanting settings to provide the ultimate in relaxation, rejuvenation and re-beautification.



Beginning in the capital, a winner of the 8th Thailand Tourism Awards 2010 dubbed the “Best Urban Spa”, **the Devarana Spa** at the Dusit Thani Bangkok ([www.devaranaspa.com/spa](http://www.devaranaspa.com/spa)) is best described as a “Garden in Heaven”, just like its name in Thai-Sanskrit implies. Within a chic contemporary Thai décor, guests transcend their everyday lives to bask in an angelic ambience as they are pampered and healed as if they were members of the pantheon of Thai mythology. While located in central Bangkok, **the Mandara Spa** at the Bangkok Marriott Resort & Spa ([www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bkkth-bangkok-marriott-resort-and-spa](http://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/bkkth-bangkok-marriott-resort-and-spa)) is a creation of a tropical retreat accented by Thai decor. Like all the Mandara, it pays homage to the Balinese traditions in healing, which are performed in suites with shimmering waterfalls. The two



Dheva Spa at Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai



Devarana Spa at the Dusit Thani Bangkok



Dheva Spa at Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai



Devarana Spa at the Dusit Thani Bangkok



The Barai at the Hyatt Regency Hua Hin



luxury Mandara suites also include a lush private garden with outdoor rain shower as well as Thai sala where one can relax in a sense of timeliness.

Inspired by an ancient Mandalay palace, **the Dheva Spa at the Mandarin Oriental Dhara Dhevi, Chiang Mai** ([www.mandarinoriental.com/chiang-mai/spa](http://www.mandarinoriental.com/chiang-mai/spa)) offers a holistic approach to wellbeing. Within the confines of golden teak polished walls and floors and below the seven-tiered rooftops that represent the steps on the path to spiritual and physical perfection, specific treatments and therapies are performed as prescribed by Ayurvedic practitioners.

Just a few hours south of Bangkok in the idyllic beachside of Hua Hin is **the Anantara Spa Hua Hin** ([www.spa.anantara.com/huahin](http://www.spa.anantara.com/huahin)), a winner of the 8th Thailand Tourism Awards 2010. Nestled amidst tropical greenery and lagoon pools of the Anantara Hua Hin Resort and Spa created by award-winning landscape architect Bill Bensley, exotic treatments from dosha-balancing colour therapy steam baths to body butter skin nourishing and hydrating facials are performed in spa sites set in individual garden courtyards with dual al fresco rain showers suspended in bronze cages modeled after traditional Thai artifacts. Inspired by Khmer cultural heritage, the winner of the 8th Thailand Tourism Awards 2010, **The Barai** at the Hyatt Regency Hua Hin ([www.thebarai.com](http://www.thebarai.com)) takes you on a journey of serenity. Set on 4.5 beachfront acres, much of it under a cool canopy of flora, this very exclusive retreat is a blend of ancient Cambodian grandeur and Asian tranquility. The “Haven of Life” is how **Chiva-Som** ([www.chivasom.com](http://www.chivasom.com)) is often described. Enveloped by lush tropical gardens that fringe a secluded part of Hua Hin’s powdery white beach, it is dedicated to helping guests achieve a transformation of lifestyle through a holistic approach using a blend of traditional and modern



techniques. Consistently named one of the foremost destination spas in the world, it frequently, very quietly, hosts the rich and famous who are utmost privacy as they enjoy their luxurious accommodations, exceptional facilities and enriching peace and calm to regain their focus and vitality before emerging rested and refreshed.

Further south in the aqua and indigo Thai Gulf, **the Banyan Tree Samui Spa** ([www.banyantree.com/en/samui/spa\\_and\\_rainforest](http://www.banyantree.com/en/samui/spa_and_rainforest)), another winner of the 8th Thailand Tourism Awards 2010, is attracting spa aficionados because of The Rainforest, the island's sole hydrotherapy spa. Here, guests indulge and stimulate their senses, following the hydrothermal circuit of alternating hot and cold thermal cabins offering a series of therapies beginning with a Rain Walk and followed by Steam, Rasul, Sauna, Bucket Drench Shower, Ice Fountain, and Swiss Shower before ending in the Vitality Pool to compliment previous Spa treatments and complete their holistic therapy.

On the other side of the isthmus, **The Aman Spa** at the Amanpuri Phuket ([www.amanresorts.com/amanpuri](http://www.amanresorts.com/amanpuri)) personifies its name, which means peace. Set in a coconut grove between a verdant forested hillside and turquoise seas fringing the seclude ivory Pansea Beach, this is an idyllic setting for escape and rejuvenation. Treatments, using only pure and natural aromatic essential oils, lotions, creams and wraps, are performed in six, very private, open-air Thai-style wellbeing pavilions constructed of wood and glass. Set on the tiny, isolated island of Naka in picturesque Phang-nga Bay, **the Six Senses Sanctuary Phuket** ([www.sixsenses.com/SixSensesSanctuaryPhuket](http://www.sixsenses.com/SixSensesSanctuaryPhuket)) has



Banyan Tree Samui Spa







S Medical Spa



Apex Profound Beauty

raised their signature spa experience to a seventh sense. This innovative and evocative retreat embraces a blend of Chinese, Indian, Indonesian and Thai inspired designs and philosophies. Feng shui and the four life elements: fire, water, air and earth, have guided the creation of this uplifting village of naturally elegant private pool villas.

For wellness regimens that incorporate a more medical approach, Thailand has some of the finest medical spas in Asia utilizing the latest technology in stunning settings that is worlds away from drab and dreary. **Tria Integrative Medical Institute** ([www.triaintegrativewellness.com](http://www.triaintegrativewellness.com)) a holistic methodology, finding balance in the elemental, structural, and emotional states with a range of physician-supervised programs ranging from detoxification to hypnotherapy to homeopathy consultation, along with a spa for beauty and relaxation, pampered in private suites with Jacuzzi bath and steam room. The eminent Dermatologist and Anti-Aging Physician Dr. Pakpilai Thavisin founded **S Medical Spa** ([www.smedspa.com](http://www.smedspa.com)) sophisticated anti-aging clinic and spa, with beauty and health services (slimming programs and facial skin resurfacing) utilizing the latest technologies (such as non-invasive CO2 lasers) delivered in a sumptuous garden view spa suite (comparable to a five-star resort), accessible via private elevators. At **Apex Profound Beauty** ([www.apex-profoundbeauty.com](http://www.apex-profoundbeauty.com)) the latest in beautification treatments are available. While Thermage remains popular, the next generation of cellulite reduction therapy has arrived, Zeltiq, which uses cold to zap fat cells. For a non-invasive facelift, Ulthera is the headlining treatment, which uses ultrasound toning for immediate results. For painless permanent hair removal, **Dr. Younger Clinic** ([www.doctoryounger.com](http://www.doctoryounger.com)) uses advanced TKS laser. They also offer botox and restylane fillers to eliminate wrinkles and take years off your appearance.

classy carriages



It is said that it's not the destination but the journey that is important. Luxury travelers often plan for where they will arrive, but in Thailand the joys and comforts of the finer things in life extend to the voyage, to the exploration of this amazing land and its treasures. Whether you are riding the roads, rails or seas, Thai luxury awaits.



The long north-to-south peninsular portion of the Kingdom offers two takes on the sea. The Gulf of Thailand is just a short 1.5-hour drive from Bangkok or the luscious Andaman Sea is an even shorter flight to Phuket, Phang-nga or Krabi. Each offers the allure of turquoise seas, mystical islands and an underwater menagerie of color and life. **Ocean Marina Yacht Club** ([www.oceanmarinayachtclub.com](http://www.oceanmarinayachtclub.com)) brings five-star quality to both a hotel and Asia's largest first-class marina located on Jomtien Beach just a short drive from Bangkok. Set sail in catamarans or motor yachts for trips ranging from sunset cruises to multiple-day island hopping adventure. Let the captain and his boat boys find private snorkeling spots, take you on a hunt for squid or teach you to sail.

If the exotic Andaman Sea is more your style, step onto the deck of an **Amancruises** ([www.amanresorts.com/amanpuri/cruises.aspx](http://www.amanresorts.com/amanpuri/cruises.aspx)). Limestone islands – such as the famous James Bond Island of Phang-nga Bay – thrust up from the sea creating a playground for sailing vessels. Short boats or long, powered or wind-driven, the cruise ships offer private suites and shaded comfort. **Twinpalms Cruise** ([www.twinpalms-phuket.com](http://www.twinpalms-phuket.com)) spoils daytrippers with a spacious 76-foot power yacht full of teak wood and leather. Take in the view of the passing islands from the deck as you soak up the tropical sun and ply the waters in a setting to make postcards envious.

Escape to the glory days of train travel with **the Eastern & Orient Express** ([www.orient-express.com](http://www.orient-express.com)). Modernized but with a classic dignity, rail travel leaves aside the rush and allows you to settle in for a more leisurely journey. Smartly uniformed stewards bring you your welcome drink and take care of everything else. In the private comfort of your cabin you can relax and enjoy the view of the lush



Ocean Marina Yacht Club



Amancruises



Amancruises



Amancruises

Twinpalms Cruise



Twinpalms Cruise





countryside of Thailand -- rice paddies, jungle, mountains and fields -- slipping past your suite window. Choose the plush comfort of a state cabin or really go all out and travel like royalty in the presidential suite. Opulence extends from the interiors of your own space to the bar and dining rooms. Trips can last a few days as the train winds its way through the Kingdom stopping for various excursions. Get off to explore local life in I-san villages where you can see handicrafts being made or take part in a spiritual ceremony with village elders. Visit the UNESCO-honored Khao Yai National Park with its mountain views, hundreds of species of birds and even some wild elephants. In fact, you can ride a trained pachyderm at an elephant camp in Chiang Mai. Then at the end of your day's adventures you return to the fine dining and pleasures of the legendary Orient Express.



For longer distances, a helicopter won't do. Air travel has become more and more tiresome with long lines at security, crowded planes and declining service. But you can take to the air on your own terms with **Siam Land Flying's** Executive Wings ([www.aircharterthailand.com](http://www.aircharterthailand.com)), a charter air service. Highly experienced pilots fly 8-seat private planes to destinations around Thailand and Southeast Asia. Chiang Mai, Phnom Penh and Yangon are all within an hour of Bangkok, while Phuket is just a blink away. Relax and travel on your own schedule in the comfort of leather seats and personalized service.



Be a Wild One and take the opportunity to ride the grand daddy of all motorcycles, the Harley-Davidson. The world's most coveted high-end cycle, a Harley brings its gentle thunder to the roadways of Southeast Asia. Feel the sea breeze in your face as you side along the beaches, or taste the mountain air as you explore the Khao Yai area and its national park.

**Harley Tours Thailand** ([www.harley-tours-thailand.com](http://www.harley-tours-thailand.com)) have found the most scenic routes for you and provide packages that include hotel stays in the 3 to 5 star range. Each tour includes two guides: an English-speaking local and an experienced expat Harley rider. Harley Tours Thailand provides tours and rentals through out Thailand.

Climb into the eastern reaches of the Himalayas in the north, or enjoy the rolling landscapes of the Northeastern region. If you prefer to go it alone and explore or prefer a pillion experience that is also possible. **Smiling Albino** ([www.smilingalbino.com](http://www.smilingalbino.com)) offers even more motorcycle touring options. Their weeklong Steel Horses tour takes groups of up to four plus Western and Thai guides and follows paved roads through mountain passes, along the banks of the mighty Mekong River, and through the picturesque rice paddies of the Northeastern region. Alternatively, check out the Golden Triangle, the area around Chiang Rai in Northern Thailand, sandwiched between Myanmar and Laos. The Good Clean Fun tour takes you on a four-day road trip in this less frequented area of Thailand. Follow the Mekong River a bit and navigate the road along the Thai-Myanmar border. If clean is not your style, then try something dirtier. Good Dirty Fun explores the Chiang Rai region but along the dirt trails using off-road bikes for an adventure with a little grit.



Harley Tours Thailand



Smiling Albino





Can't decide where to go and how to tour it? Allow an experienced travel company such as Asian Trails or Diethelm Travel to put together a collection of excursions, day trips, soft adventures and more. **Asian Trails** ([www.asiantrails.net](http://www.asiantrails.net)) provides VIP support service – carrying your equipment, arranging your routes, stays, and meals – and allows you to focus on the invigorating experience of pedal power through the lush jungle landscape, over the rise and fall of the mountainous land. An air-conditioned support vehicle is never far behind and the tours offer both on-road and off-road opportunities with imported bikes and safety equipment. How would the rich and famous arrive? How about a personal helicopter? Let the world rush beneath your feet as you cut through the curving roads and across the undulating waves to arrive in style. Get the bird's eye tour of the coast of Phuket, the islands of Phang-nga, or just beat the Bangkok traffic on your way from the airport to get to your hotel's helipad downtown; **Diethelm Travel** ([www.diethelmtravel.com](http://www.diethelmtravel.com)) provides such an unforgettable VIP service.



# LUXURIOUS PLEASURES THAILAND

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[www.tourismthailand.org](http://www.tourismthailand.org)

