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# Bangkok and beyond: Hot spots to visit in the Thai capital

by Fiona Harper



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Bangkok is no shrinking violet when it comes to showing visitors a good time. Travel writer Fiona Harper checks out some of



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passed, the 'City of Angels' remains a much-loved destination for Australian travellers.

Here are some of the best places to visit in the Thai capital and the nearby beach town of Hua Hin.

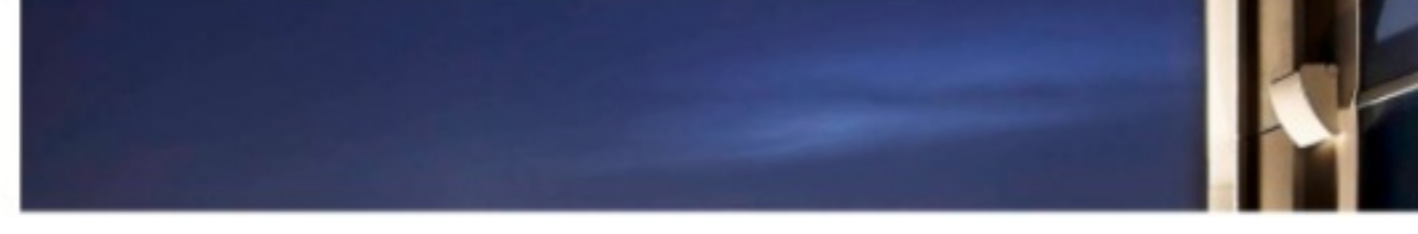
## Sukhumvit Road: Downtown Bangkok's main artery

With no shortage of rooftop bars, restaurants, shopping malls and entertainment venues, Sukhumvit Road branches out from the heart of Bangkok. It's one of the city's main arteries with public parks, elegant shopping malls and chic boutiques clamouring for space alongside shopfront laneways and market stalls.

Cross town Skytrain and subway systems are cheap and efficient. A haven of tranquillity, Sofitel Bangkok Sukhumvit sits smack bang in the centre of it all, a refreshing retreat from Bangkok's bustle.

### Rooftop Bars

Don't miss the stunning rooftop restaurant and alfresco bar for dreamy 'Thailand meets Paris' views over the city. L'Appart is designed in the style of an elegant French abode and recreates the ambience of a luxurious apartment owned by a wealthy Parisian used for decadent parties.



The Speakeasy is another alfresco rooftop hotspot for the hip crowd in the know. Accessed via a 'secret door' behind an oversized painting from the 24th floor of Hotel Muse, The Speakeasy channels the prohibition era of 1920's Chicago.

Kick back on low slung sofas on The Lawn beneath the stars or prop yourself on a bar stool at the Long Bar while soaking up the glitz and glamour of one of Bangkok's best-kept secrets.

### Where to shop

Bangkok and shopping are as inseparable as Thelma and Louise. Even if shopping is not your thing Bangkok bargains are hard to resist. Many shopping malls are more like monstrous air-conditioned entertainment centres so you're sure to find something that presses your button.

Pantip Plaza is electronic heaven for gadget geeks. A five story shopping mall dedicated to electronics, computers and technology, there's also software sellers and repair shops doing a roaring trade repairing cracked smartphone screens for a fraction of the price in Australia.

Chatuchak Weekend Market rocks the socks off any other marketplace in Bangkok. Claiming to be the world's largest market, it's indisputably Thailand's largest, covering a staggering 27 acres with approximately 15,000 (no-one really knows how many) market stalls.

MBK Shopping Mall is more upmarket than Chatuchak (and with a more convenient downtown location) with eight air-conditioned levels of bargain brand names. Keep an eye on the time. A whole day could easily slip by at MBK.

### Where to eat

No self-respecting visit to Thailand is complete without lashings of superb Thai food. Save your appetite before hitting the market stalls at Chatuchak as there are a gazillion cheap and cheerful streetfood vendors. Thai favourites are seasoned green papaya salad or a spicy shrimp soup.

Wonton addicts should head straight to Din Tai Fung at Central World for world famous succulent wontons filled with delicious pork or shrimp broth. The service is snappy and their Xiao long bao wontons are a screaming bargain.

## Hua Hin: Dine on fresh seafood on the beach

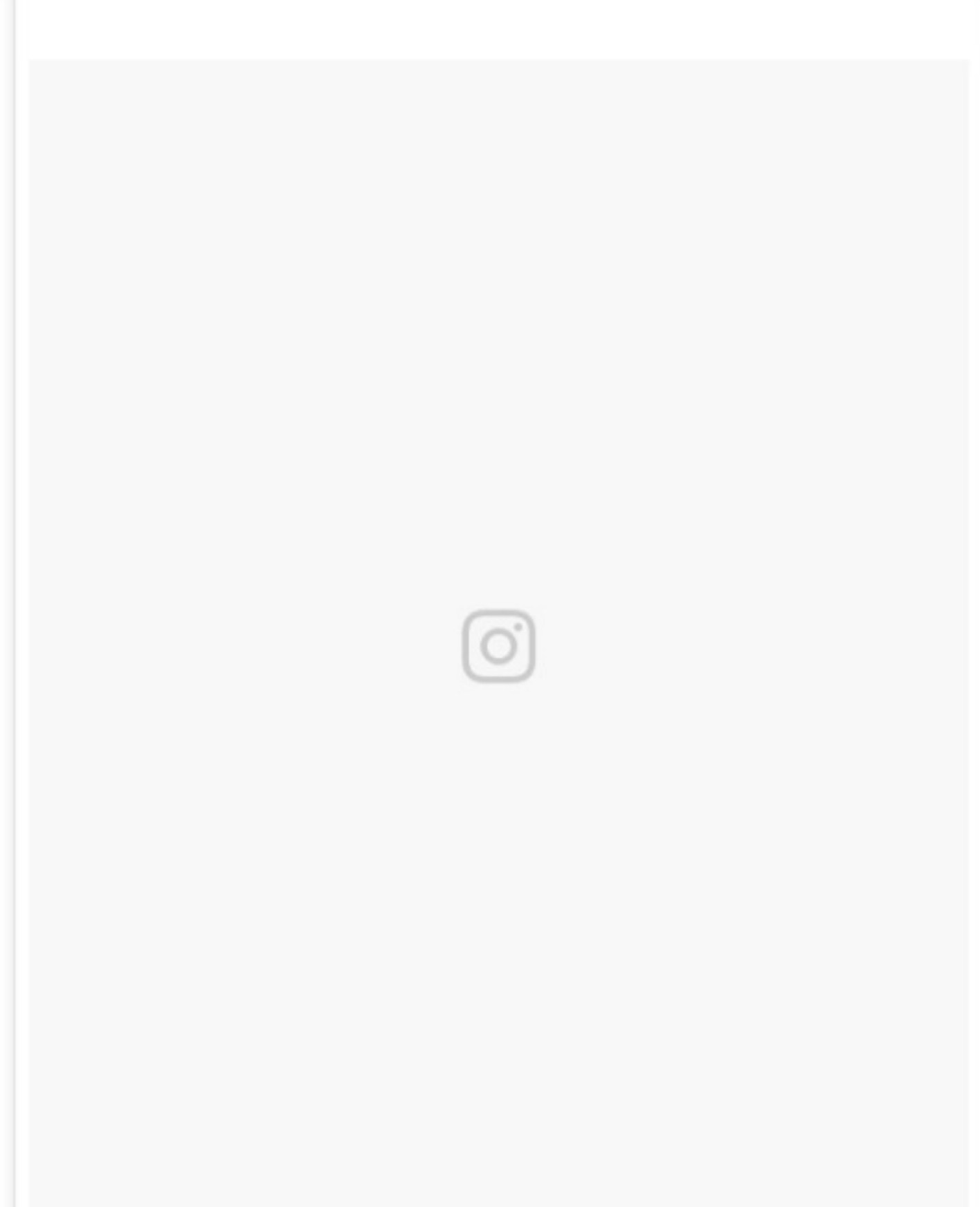
Further afield and with a relaxed beachfront vibe, Hua Hin is a few hours drive from Bangkok but feels a million miles away. At Cha Am fishermen ply their trade on colourful squid boats moored on a glassy sea. At Bang Poo Beach, the boarding point for boats to Khao Sam Roi Yot National Park, open-air restaurants dish up crab meat dipped in chilli sauce, prawn salad and baked fish washed down with chilled coconuts fresh from the tree.

In downtown Hua Hin, market stall vendors display prawns the size of lobsters, basting them with butter, garlic and chilli before grilling them over charcoal while you wait. Yum! Butter-poached Phuket lobster with beetroot risotto bisque is a favourite on the decadent menu at beachfront Villazzo at V Villas Hua Hin.

## Summer palaces and cheeky rabbits

Home to two summer palaces, Hua Hin's Thai name translates into 'palace far from worries'. Discard your holiday woes in one of the colourful rustic beachside cabanas beside the pool at SO Sofitel Hua Hin. Shunning the traditional stuffiness of luxury hotels, SO Sofitel's cheeky design and fun vibe make it feel Alice in Wonderland-like. At first glance it looks a little stark with its modern style and geometric lines. But surprises pop up at every turn as imagination and fun rule. Like the oversized rabbit clutching a clock near the entry. 'It's the last time you'll need to worry about the time', Sebastian says as he checks us in over a teacup filled with chilled Roselle Tea, a classic Thai herbal brew.

Later, rabbits pop up in the most unexpected places. Like the warren of black ones hopping across the lawn or peering over a ledge above bathtubs. An enormous 'diamond' is concealed amongst stone work, a gold 'gift' bow softens a rock wall surrounding the adults pool. White Oven restaurant is an Instagrammer's dream. Despite the quirkiness overload the food is a standout. Allow a couple of hours to make your way through the breakfast buffet before retiring to a poolside cabana for the rest of the day. Then there's sundowners at Beach Society to think about. This is what holidays are all about!



Start your day with a delicious breakfast at our White Oven restaurant! #happyday #SOHuaHin #SOSofitelHuaHin

A photo posted by SO Sofitel Hua Hin (@sosofitelhuaHin) on Feb 24, 2016 at 5:18pm PST

Getting there: Fly to Bangkok (via Singapore) from Australia with Scoot, the low cost airline of Airline. Crewed by fun-loving 'Scooties' onboard the latest Dreamliner aircraft, Scoot makes travel both fun and affordable.

Fiona Harper is a travel writer specialising in cruising, active and soft adventures. Follow her at Travel Boating Lifestyle.

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Love Bangkok. I come here 3 times in past and stay in 1 week. Best Bangkok

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