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DESTINATION ASIA

THE PERFECT 10

PANORAMIC BANGKOK

Hit the heights

The best vantage points for memorable city and river views

1. ALL THAT GLITTERS: The Golden Mount was, until the 1950s, Bangkok’s highest spot. Part of the Wat Saket compound, this temple with its whitewashed, battlement-style walls and dazzling golden spire was built on the ruins of a collapsed stupa. Its highest point is more than 100m above the surrounding area, but the views in all directions are from a terrace 50m up reached by 349 steps. It provides an instant impression of just how vertical Bangkok has become, and how contrasting its skyscrapers are to the old stupa bases at the temple’s base. More at tourismthailand.com.

2. TO CROWN A PHRASE: Wat Arun is Bangkok’s most recognizable landmark, even appearing on the 20-baht coin. Its under renovation at the moment, but its ornate, terracotta-colored towers and gold spires shimmer in the morning sun. Get a good vantage point for the daily 11am bell strike and the dinner show. More at wat-arun.com.

3. NEW KID ON THE BLOCK: The newest sky bar in town is Altitude, on the 28th floor of the AVANI Riverside Bangkok. The hotel is on a bend in the Chao Phraya River downstream from the Golden Mountain, opposite the bustling Anantara Riverside and its giant ferris wheel. The bar has indoor and outdoor areas and cocktails that are cheaper than at most rooftop bars. Try the sandalwood and grapefruit cocktail, or the Vietnamese coffee with condensed milk. More at avani-hotels.com.

4. SHOP ’N’ DROP: Sukhumvit Road is Bangkok’s premier shopping and business drag, and the Mandarin Oriental’s Chao Phraya Bar is its first really sky-high drinking spot. There are three levels starting at 47 floors up, with staggering views, particularly from the highest point with its 360-degree vista. It’s a flashy sexy spot, with an island bar lit in bright light when the sun sets, and bartenders who do the full juggling cocktail thing. The fusion food is very good, with plenty of mocktails to help the Thai cocktails and similar nonalcohols slip down. More at mandarin oriental.com.

5. ZOOM AND PLEASURE: The newly refurbished Sky Bar at the Sirocco, on the 68th floor of the Baiyoke Tower II, offers stunning views of the city. The drinks are expensive but well worth it, and the food is also top-notch. More at siroccobangkok.com.

6. TOP OF THE TREE: The 64th-floor Sky Bar at the Mandarin Oriental is the highest in the city. The panoramic views of the city are absolutely stunning, and the cocktails are some of the best in town. More at mandarin oriental.com.

7. SHOP ’N’ DROP: The Saigon Cafe is a great spot for a quick bite, with its unique French architecture and delicious food. The rooftop terrace offers stunning views of the city. More at saigoncafe.com.

8. 10 SPECTACULAR: Bangkok’s main green space, Lumphini Park, spreads like an exotic carpet over the Lego city, with its many parks and gardens. There’s also a huge, sprawling shopping mall, Siam Paragon, with many of the city’s best restaurants and bars. The shopping is a must-do, and the park is a great place to relax and take in the sights. More at lumphinipark.com.

9. UP A LAZY RIVER: If you’re a bird-watching enthusiast, you can’t miss the chance to see the magnificent kingfisher, the national bird of Thailand, as well as other species like the Asian openbill stork and the oriental white-eye. More at bangkokbirdwatching.com.

10. BEST BEDS: The Mandarin Oriental, as mentioned above, offers some of the best accommodation in the city. The service is exceptional, the rooms are spacious and comfortable, and the views are stunning. More at mandarinoriental.com.

GARY WALSH

Checklist

THAI Airways International flies daily to Bangkok from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. More at thaiairways.com

ALAMY

The view of the Grand Palace complex on the opposite bank of the river is sublime, especially at sunset, somewhat counterintuitively given Wat Arun is known as the Temple of the Dawn. The temple itself is brilliantly lit after dark.

More at tourismthailand.com.

UP A LAZY RIVER: If we’re talking bird’s-eye views, it’s only fair to consider the sight of say, a flock of bunting happily hopping in the Chao Phraya. There are countless ways to enjoy a panorama of Bangkok, but the ground-level view from the river, especially at night, is simply gorgeous. River ferries and longtail boats stop around sunset, so don’t write off the city’s best way to see it as it lights up. Manuforia Cruises has been plying the river in converted rice barges for years, serving excellent Thai food while gently chugging along in the cool of the evening. The Grand Palace and Wat Arun look especially alluring at night. More at manuforia.com.


GARY WALSH was an agent of THAI Airways International, Tourism Authority of Thailand and Accor Hotels.

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