

## DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

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# DRINKING & NIGHTLIFE

Disregard the tired cliché of Bangkok's nightlife as a one-trick pony. The infamous girlie-bar scene may still be going just as strong as it has been for the last 30 years but, despite what your uncle told you, having a good time in Bangkok doesn't have to involve ping-pong balls or bar fines. Just like any other big international city, Bangkok's drinking and partying scene ranges from points classy to trashy, and touches on just about everything in between.

The powers that be, however, take a slightly different view on fun, and would seemingly rather have us watching traditional dance performances and tucked into bed by 9pm. Since 2004 the vast majority of Bangkok's bars and clubs have been ordered to close by 1am. A complicated zoning system sees venues in designated 'entertainment areas', including RCA (Royal City Avenue), Th Silom, and parts of Th Sukhumvit, open until 2am, but even these are subject to police whimsy. Despite the resulting financial losses and negative impact on tourism (not to mention Bangkok's reputation), the policy has been popular among Thais, and there's little chance of seeing any changes in the near future.

The good news is that everything old is new again. Th Khao San, that former outpost of foreigner frugality, has undergone something of an upscale renaissance and is now more popular with the locals than ever. And RCA, a suburban nightclub zone previously associated with gum-snapping Thai teenagers, has finally graduated from high school and is drawing in dancers and drinkers of all ages and races.

## DRINKS FRUIT DRINKS

With the abundance of fruit growing in Thailand, the variety of juices and shakes available in markets, street stalls and restaurants is extensive. The all-purpose term for fruit juice is *nám phôn-lá-mái*. When a blender or extractor is used, you've got *nám khán* (squeezed juice), hence *nám sàppàrót khán* is freshly squeezed pineapple juice. *Nám áwy* (sugarcane juice) is a Thai favourite and a very refreshing accompaniment to *kaeng* dishes. A similar juice from the sugar palm, *nám taan sòt*, is also very good, and both are full of vitamins and minerals. Mixed fruit blended with ice is *nám pan* (literally 'mixed juice'), as in *nám málákaw pan*, a papaya shake.

## BEER

Advertised with such slogans as '*pràthênt rao, bia rao*' ('our land, our beer'), the Singha label is considered the quintessential Thai beer by *faràng* (Westerners) and locals alike. Pronounced *sing*, this pilsner claims about half the domestic market. Singha's original recipe was formulated in 1934 by Thai nobleman Phya Bhirom Bhakdi, the first Thai to earn a brewmaster's diploma in Germany. The barley for Singha is grown in Thailand, the hops are imported from Germany and the alcohol content is a heady 6%. It is sold

in brown glass bottles (330ml and 660ml) with a shiny gold lion on the label, as well as in cans (330ml). It is available on tap as *bia sòt* (draught beer) – much tastier than either bottled or canned brew – in many Bangkok pubs and restaurants.

Singha's biggest rival, Beer Chang, pumps the alcohol content up to 7%. Beer Chang has managed to gain an impressive following mainly because it retails at a significantly lower price than Singha and thus offers more bang per baht.

Boon Rawd (the makers of Singha) responded with its own cheaper brand, Leo. Sporting a black-and-red leopard label, Leo costs only slightly more than Beer Chang but is similarly high in alcohol.

Dutch-licensed but Thailand-brewed Heineken comes third after Singha and Chang in sales rankings. Similar 'domestic imports' include Asahi and San Miguel. Other Thai-brewed beers, all at the lower end of the price spectrum, include Cheers and Beer Thai. More variation in Thai beer brands is likely in the coming years as manufacturers scramble to command market share by offering a variety of flavours and prices.

## RICE WHISKY

Rice whisky is a favourite of the working class in Bangkok, since it's more affordable than beer. It has a sharp, sweet taste not unlike rum, with an alcohol content of 35%. The most

famous brand for many years was Mekong (pronounced 'mee kong'), but currently the most popular brand is the slightly more expensive Sang Som. Both come in 750ml bottles called *krom* or in 375ml flask-shaped bottles called *baen*. Thais normally drink whisky with ice and plenty of soda water.

More-expensive Thai whiskies produced from barley and appealing to the can't-afford-Johnnie-Walker-yet set include Blue Eagle, 100 Pipers and Spey Royal, each with a 40% alcohol content. These come dressed up in shiny boxes, much like the expensive imported whiskies they're imitating.

## DRINKING

Bangkok's watering holes cover the spectrum from English-style pubs where you can comfortably sit with a pint and the paper, to chic dens where the fair and beautiful go to be seen, not to imbibe. A laundry list of beverages is available, though alcohol prices are relatively more than, say, cab rides or street food.

Because food is so integral to any Thai outing, most bars have tasty dishes that are absent-mindedly nibbled between toasts. Bars don't have cover charges, but they do strictly enforce closing time at 1am, sometimes earlier if they suspect trouble from the cops.

### BACCHUS WINE BAR Map pp98–9 Wine Bar

☎ 0 2650 8986; [www.bacchus.tv](http://www.bacchus.tv), [info@bacchus.tv](mailto:info@bacchus.tv); 20/6-7 Soi Ruam Rudi, Ploenchit; ☎ 5pm-1am; 📍 Ploenchit

Wine bars are still a new and relatively uncommon concept in Bangkok. Bacchus was among the first, and still sets the aesthetic standard with exposed brick walls, floating stairs and sculpture seating. Despite the slightly upscale setting, it's a friendly enough place to down a glass or two of one of the 400 varieties of wine, or cop a nibble from the lengthy menu of tapas and appetisers.

### BARBICAN BAR Map pp108–9 Bar

☎ 0 2234 3590; [www.greatbritishpub.com](http://www.greatbritishpub.com); 9/4-5 Soi Thaniya, Th Silom; ☎ 6pm-1am; 📍 Sala Daeng, 📍 Silom

Decked out in slate-grey and blonde wood, this upscale-ish pub is an oasis of subdued cool in a strip consisting mostly of Japanese-frequented massage parlours. Where else could you suck down a few cocktails with friends from Thailand, Singapore and

Norway, and then stumble out to find a line of Thai women dressed like cheap prom dates reciting 'Hello, massage' in faulty Japanese?

### BLACK SWAN Map pp118–19 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2626 0257; [www.blackswanbkk.com](http://www.blackswanbkk.com); 326/8-9 Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 9-1am; 📍 Asoke, 📍 Sukhumvit  
Liable to bring a tear to the eye of a homesick Brit, the combination of supping mates, dining families and bad décor make the Black Swan the most authentic of Bangkok's numerous English pubs. Come on Friday when you can enjoy your draught bitter with fresh fish flown directly from Scotland.

### BULL'S HEAD & ANGUS STEAKHOUSE

Map pp118–19 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2259 4444; [www.greatbritishpub.com](http://www.greatbritishpub.com); 595/10-11 Soi 33/1, Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 6pm-midnight; 📍 Phrom Phong

Worn wood panelling, imported draught beer and admirable pub grub take the Bull's Head just beyond the realm of the 'theme' pub. With friendly management and staff, and more events and activities than a summer camp, this is a good place to meet people, particularly those of the British persuasion.

### CAFÉ TRIO Map pp98–9 Bar

☎ 0 2252 6572; 36/11-12 Soi Lang Suan, Th Ploenchit; ☎ 6pm-1am, closed 2nd & 4th Sun of month; 📍 Chitlom

This jazz bar/art gallery also offers live music on an irregular basis – it's best to check ahead. The real highlights are the laid-back local atmosphere and the proprietor, Patti, whose artwork graces the walls and whose laughter and boisterous conversation have the ability to render music redundant.

### CHEAP CHARLIE'S Map pp118–19 Bar

Soi 11, Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 6pm-1am Mon-Sat; 📍 Nana

You're bound to have a mighty difficult time convincing your Thai friends to go to Th Sukhumvit only to sit at an outdoor wooden shack decorated with buffalo skulls and wagon wheels. Fittingly, Charlie's draws a staunchly foreign crowd who don't mind a bit of kitsch and sweat with their Singha.

## THANON KHAO SAN & THANON RAMBUTRI

Not just for foreigners any more, in recent years Th Khao San has become an acceptable destination among Thai fun-seekers, and correspondingly, the scene has diversified. You can still sit directly on the street and watch the freak show while nursing the cheapest beer in town, but if you fancy a martini and a soundtrack, such things can be arranged.

A visible sigh can be heard as people cross to quieter Th Rambutri. Slightly more upscale in places, and thus more popular with Thais, there's still a bar to suit every taste.

Here is a brief cross-section of what's available.

- **Buddy Bar** (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2629 4477; Th Khao San, Banglamphu) Clean and cool colonial-themed bar for folks who find Bangkok too dirty.
- **Bua Sa-ad** (Map pp68–9; Th Rambutri, Banglamphu) Named after the elegant house that contains it, this street-side bar is one of the few in the area serving imported beers.
- **deep** (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2629 3360; 329/1-2 Th Rambutri, Banglamphu) If you're willing to wait out the perpetual queue, inside you'll find a dark den packed to the gills with young Thai hipsters.
- **Hippie de Bar** (Map pp68–9; Th Khao San, Banglamphu) Retro décor, pool tables and chill DJs.
- **Lava Club** (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2281 6565; 249 Th Khao San, Banglamphu) Moody basement lounge spinning all genres of electronica.
- **Molly Bar** (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2629 4074; 108 Th Rambutri, Banglamphu) Mellow sidewalk beer garden for audible conversations.
- **Roof Bar** (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2629 2300; 3rd fl, Th Khao San, Banglamphu) Although the live acoustic soundtrack is hit-and-miss, the views are solid from this rooftop pub. Next to Khao San Palace Hotel.
- **Shamrock Irish Pub** (Map pp68–9; 2nd fl, Khao San Centre, Th Khao San, Banglamphu) Loud live bands and cheap Guinness.
- **Silk Bar** (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2281 9981; 129-131 Th Khao San, Banglamphu) An open-air cocktail bar for the visiting Sukhumvit entourage crowd.
- **Susie Pub** (Map pp68–9; ☎ 0 2282 4459; 108/5-9 Th Rambutri, Banglamphu) Before Khao San was a hip place for Thais to hang out, Susie was a local outpost for university students to play pool and drink in candy pop music.

Th Khao San and Th Rambutri run parallel to each other between Th Chakraphong and Th Tanao, north of Th Ratchadamnoen Klang. Take the river ferry to Tha Phra Athit, air-con bus 511 or 512, or ordinary bus 15, 30 or 65.

### COSMIC CAFÉ

Map pp124–5 Bar

☎ 0 2641 5619; Zone C Royal City Ave, off Th Phra Ram IX, Greater Bangkok; admission free; ☎ 7pm-2am; 🍷 Rama IX

Cosmic calls itself a café and looks like a club but in reality is more of a bar... Despite the slight identity crisis, this is a fun place to drink and meet Thai-style. Come on Wednesday night when the DJ spins Thai music from the '80s.

### COYOTE ON CONVENT

Map pp108–9 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2631 2325; www.coyoteonconvent.com; 1/2 Convent Rd, Th Silom; ☎ 11-1am; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Lumpini

Coyote serves decent but pricey Mexican nosh with a relatively light dose of kitsch. But what really keeps people coming, in particular Bangkok's female half, are the 75+ varieties of margaritas. Come Wednesday evening the icy drinks are distributed free to all women who pass through the door. On other days the frosty drinks are buy-one-get-one-free from 3pm to 7pm.

### JOOL'S BAR & RESTAURANT

Map pp118–19 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2252 6413; Soi 4 (Soi Nana Tai), Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 11am-midnight; 🍷 Nana

With the walls virtually covered with pictures of the bar's regulars, you'll feel like part of the crowd even if you're drinking alone. When things are buzzing, lots of Nana Plaza girly-bar vets take a breather here for a good-natured romp with beer buddies.

### MOLLY MALONE'S

Map pp108–9 Pub

☎ 0 2266 7160; www.mollymalonesbangkok.com; 1/5-6 Convent Rd, Th Silom; ☎ 11-1am; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Silom

The third and, we hope, final reincarnation of this Bangkok Irish staple has retained much of the faux-shamrock charm of its predecessor. Like most of its countryfolk, Molly's is equal parts game for a quiet pint alone or a rowdy night out with your friends.

### MOON BAR AT VERTIGO

Map p112 Bar

☎ 0 2679 1200; www.banyantree.com; Banyan Tree Hotel, 21/100 Th Sathon Tai, Silom; ☎ 6.30-11pm, weather permitting; 🍷 Lumpini Bangkok is one of the few big cities in the world where nobody seems to mind if you set up the odd restaurant or bar on the top of a skyscraper. Now nearly forgotten, the restaurant Vertigo and the attached Moon Bar started the trend. Come dressed up and grab a coveted seat to the right of the bar for impressive views at sunset.

### NANG NUAL RIVERSIDE PUB

Map p84 Pub

☎ 0 2223 7686; Trok Krai, Th Mahachak, Chintown; ☎ 4pm-midnight; 🍷 air-con 60, 73 & 512, ordinary 5 & 8, 🍷 Tha Saphan Phut In the best Thai tradition, this riverside deck blurs the lines between a restaurant and a bar. Groups of friends gather around the whisky set and plates of *kâp klâem* (drinking food) to watch the river and the night flow by. At certain times, the bar's blaring pop music competes for valuable air space with the Muslim call to prayer from the temple across the river.

### NEST

Map pp118–19 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2255 0638; www.nestbangkok.com; Rooftop, Le Fenix Hotel, 33/33 Soi 11, Th Sukhumvit; admission free; ☎ 5pm-2am; 🍷 Nana Perched on the roof of the Le Fenix Hotel, Nest is a chic maze of cleverly concealed sofas and inviting daybeds. A DJ soundtrack and one of the most interesting pub grub menus in town bring things back down to ground level.

### OPERA RISERVA WINETHEQUE

Map pp118–19 Wine Bar

☎ 0 2258 5601; www.operariserva.com; 53 Soi 39, Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 5.30pm-1am; 🍷 Phrom Phong Decked out in leather and wood and sporting a speakeasy feel, Opera's wine bar is more for the discreet conversationalist than the sensationalist. You're more than likely to find something you'll fancy from the week's wine pics, and an attractive and extensive menu of wine-friendly Italian-style meals and snacks is also available.

### PHRANAKORN BAR

Map pp68–9 Bar

☎ 0 2282 7507; 58/2 Soi Damnoen Klang Tai, Banglamphu; ☎ 6pm-midnight; 🍷 air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65, 🍷 Tha Phra Athit

It must have taken a true visionary to transform this characterless multilevel building into a warm, fun destination for a night out. Students and arty types make Phranakorn Bar a home away from hovel with eclectic décor, gallery exhibits and, the real draw, a rooftop terrace for beholding the old district's majesty.

### RAIN DOGS BAR & GALLERY

Map p112 Bar

☎ 0817 206 989; 16 Soi Phraya Phiren, off Soi Sawan Sawat, off Phra Ram IV; Lumpini; ☎ 7pm-1am; 🍷 Klongtoei

Tucked away down a dead-end street, you'd never find Rain Dogs unless you knew about it. Run by and for local and expat artists, photographers and journalists, it feels refreshingly grungy in increasingly slick Bangkok. Rain Dogs has regular events, but can also be empty, so call ahead to see what's on. To get there, walk from Klongtoei Metro (cross under the freeway, turn left down the small lane to the dead end) or get a taxi driver to call for the address.

### SHIP INN

Map pp118–19 Bar

9/1 Soi 23, Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 11am-midnight; 🍷 Asoke

Only steps away from Soi Cowboy but a world away in ambience, Ship Inn provides a mature embrace for a quiet drinking crowd. The mock-Tudor bar is as well stocked as a ship captain's quarters, and the music is gracefully at conversational volume.

### SIROCCO

Map pp108–9 Bar

☎ 0 2624 9555; The Dome at State Tower, 1055 Th Silom; ☎ 5pm-1am; 🍷 Saphan Taksin

Yet another of Bangkok's rooftop bars, the Sky Bar at Sirocco provides heart-stopping views over the Chao Phraya River, not to mention much of Bangkok. Come here for a drink and the view, not the overpriced cuisine.

### TAKSURA

Map pp68–9 Bar

☎ 0 2622 0708; 156/1 Th Tanao, Banglamphu; ☎ 5pm-1am; 🍷 air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65, 🍷 Tha Phra Athit

There are no signs to lead you to this seemingly abandoned 93-year-old mansion in the heart of old Bangkok, which is all the better according to the cool uni-artsy

## NIGHTLIFE ANTHROPOLOGIST

Honestly, Bangkok's nightlife is never going to measure up to that of the world-class cities, but Bangkok's nightcrawling characters are a lot easier to gain access to than those in New York City's exclusive clubs.

The nightspots and night owls that a foreigner might encounter can be divided into three genres: hi-so, *dèk naew* (trendy child) and lo-so. The high society types split their time between Bangkok and Europe and have pioneered Bangkok's fascination with wine, London lounge, mid-century minimalism and international cuisine – the usual tastes of the rich and famous. You'll find them snacking at **Bacchus** (p175) or nodding to live jazz at the **Living Room** (p181).

Younger and more fashion-fearless are *dèk naew*. This scene can range from arty and creative to pop and parodying. Bakery Music (p32) and other alternative labels were funded by the buying power of *dèk naew*, and the '80s fashion revival sprouted amid Siam Sq's hipsters before it hit the equivalent neighbourhoods in San Francisco. *Dèk naew* who choose not to stray far from their Siam stomping grounds go to **To Sit** (below), while others trudge over to Banglamphu for **Taksura** (p177) or to Ekamai for **Nang Len** (p183).

At the bottom of the feeding chain are the lo-sos ('low society'), the ordinary middle class who prefer Thai rock to international electronica and drink whisky sets instead of gin and tonics. Lat Phrao, Pattanakan and other suburban neighbourhoods are where the 'real' Thais live and party. Places like **Tawan Daeng German Brewhouse** (p182) and **Water Bar** (below) attract average Thais doing average Thai things.

Foreigners are somehow exempt from this spectrum and can be found anywhere, from trendy dens such as **Barbican Bar** (p175) or **Opera Riserva Winethèque** (p177), to fun dives such as **Wong's** (below) or **Cheap Charlie's** (p175).

crowd who frequent the place. Take a seat outside to soak up the breeze, and go Thai by ordering some spicy nibbles with your drinks.

### TO-SIT Map pp98–9 Bar

☎ 0 2658 4001; [www.tosit.com](http://www.tosit.com); Siam Sq, Soi 3, Th Phra Ram 1; ☎ 6pm–1am; 🍷 Siam  
Lively, loud and sappy music, cheap and spicy food, good friends and cold beer: To-Sit epitomises everything a Thai university student could wish for on a night out. There are branches all over town (check the website), but the Siam Sq location has the advantage of being virtually the only option in an area that's buzzing during the day, but dead at night.

### TUBA Map pp118–19 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2622 0708; 30 Soi 21, Soi 63 (Ekamai), Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 6pm–2am; 🍷 Ekamai  
Used-furniture shop by day, Italian restaurant-bar by night. Oddly enough, this business formula is not entirely unheard of in Bangkok. Pull up a leatherette lounge and take the plunge and buy a whole bottle for once. And don't miss the delicious chicken wings.

### WATER BAR Map pp52–3 Bar

☎ 0 2642 7699; 107/3–4 Soi Rang Nam, Th Phayathai, Ratchathewi; ☎ 5pm–1am; 🍷 Victory Monument  
Every new arrival should learn the whisky-set routine, a drinking tradition more at

home at Thai family gatherings than in flash hotels. At this misnomered bar, a short walk from Victory Monument, the Sang Som set (see p182) still reigns as the tippie of choice. The attentive waiters will keep your glass filled to the right proportions (three fingers whisky, a splash of Coke, the rest soda), after which you should offer up a toast and drain the night away.

### WONG'S PLACE Map p112 Bar

27/3 Soi Sri Bumphen, off Soi Nang Duphli, Th Phra Ram IV, Lumpini; ☎ 8pm–late; 🍷 Lumpini  
An odd choice for an institution if there ever was one, this dusty den is a time warp into the backpacker world of the early 1980s. The namesake owner died several years ago, but a relative removed the padlock and picked up where Wong left off. Wong's works equally well as a destination or a last resort, but don't bother knocking until midnight, keeping in mind that it stays open until the last person crawls out.

## GAY & LESBIAN BANGKOK

Is there a more gay-friendly city on the planet? While stepping off the Western shelf is a gamble for many, Bangkok's male-gay nightlife is out and open with bars, discos and *kàthoey* cabarets. Night spots for Thai lesbians (*tom-dee*) aren't as prominent or as segregated.

The city's most stylish gays mix with the beautiful people at whatever watering hole is elite enough for their attention (**Eat Me** (p161) is a gracious dinner date). Most gay foreign men find themselves at one of the bars or dance clubs that line Soi 2 and Soi 4 (**Map pp108–9**), off Th Silom. A more local crowd of students hangs out on the *sois* (lanes) around Ramkhamhaeng University on Th Ramkhamhaeng (**Map pp124–5**) near the Lamsalek intersection, or on Th Kamphaeng Phet (**Map pp124–5**), across from Chatuchak Weekend Market. The strip of bars along Th Sarasin (**Map p112**) has also become a popular destination among young gay Thais. **Bed Supperclub** (p165) hosts a hugely popular 'pink' night on Sunday, and other posh locales play host to weekend-long 'circuit parties' (visit [www.gcircuit.com](http://www.gcircuit.com) to find out when and where the next one is).

The city's lesbian entertainment scene is still rather new, and limited to a handful of dedicated venues: **Lesla**, **Shela** and **Zeta**. For comprehensive lesbian-specific information online, visit **Bangkok Lesbian** ([www.bangkoklesbian.com](http://www.bangkoklesbian.com)), maintained by a New Yorker and her Thai girlfriend.

The *Utopia Guide to Thailand* covers gay-friendly businesses in 18 Thai cities, including Bangkok. Its website, [www.utopia-asia.com](http://www.utopia-asia.com), is also a good, if slightly outdated, source of information. More up-to-date listings and events can be found at [www.fridae.com](http://www.fridae.com). Both gays and lesbians are well advised to visit Bangkok in mid-November, when the city's small but fun **Pride Festival** ([www.bangkokpride.org](http://www.bangkokpride.org)) is in full swing. Dinners, cruises, clubbing and contests are the order of the week.

### BALCONY Map pp108–9 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2235 5891; [www.balconypub.com](http://www.balconypub.com); 86-88 Soi 4, Th Silom; ☎ 5.30pm–2am; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Silom

Instantly recognisable by its perky T-shirt-and-shorts clad staff, Balcony is a lively bar with dancing and karaoke inside and chill-out tables on the terrace.

### DJ STATION Map pp108–9 Bar

☎ 0 2266 4029; [www.dj-station.com](http://www.dj-station.com); 8/6–8 Soi 2, Th Silom; ☎ 10pm–2am; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Silom  
Massively popular with the younger crowd and among the most well-known gay destinations in town, this place has pounding dance music, flamboyant costume parties and *kàthoey* cabaret at 11pm.

### ICK PUB Map pp124–5 Pub

☎ 0 81442 9472; Soi 89/2, Th Ramkhamhaeng, Greater Bangkok; ☎ 8pm–1am; 🍷 Rama IX  
Near the end of the *soi*, ICK is a poster-child for Ramkhamhaeng's gay student hangouts, and is full of bubble-gum pop music and late-night schedules.

### ICY Map pp124–5 Bar

Th Kamphaengphet, Greater Bangkok; ☎ 8pm–1am; 🍷 Kamphaeng Phet  
Located in the jumble of straight and gay bars near Chatuchak Weekend Market, this long-running pub is consistently loud, crowded and very local.

### KLUEN SAEK Map p112 Bar

☎ 0 2254 2962; 297 Th Sarasin, Lumpini; ☎ 6pm–1am; 🍷 Ratchadamri

One of a strip of bars along Th Sarasin that are becoming gayler by the day, Klue Saek is barely able to contain a mixed crowd of ravers in its cool grey grip.

### SA-KE COFFEE PUB Map pp68–9 Bar

☎ 0 2225 6000; Trok Sa-Ke, cnr Trok Sa-Ke & Th Rachadamnoen Tai, Banglamphu; ☎ 8pm–1am; 🍷 air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65, 🍷 Tha Phra Athit

Near the Khok Wuua intersection, 'Sa-gay' is in the middle of a mini gay scene happening just steps from Khao San.

### TELEPHONE Map pp108–9 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 2234 3279; [www.telephonepub.com](http://www.telephonepub.com); 114/11–13 Soi 4, Th Silom; ☎ 6pm–1am; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Silom

At 20 years of age, Bangkok's oldest gay bar/restaurant still features telephones so that patrons can 'ring' each other. The café-like seating in front is probably the best place from which to watch the virtual gay-pride parade that is Soi 4.

### ZUP ZIP Map pp124–5 Bar/Restaurant

☎ 0 81734 2759; 674 Soi 101, Th Lat Phrao; ☎ 6pm–2am; 🍷 air-con 172, ordinary 44

This lesbian-owned locale in the northern suburbs features a friendly atmosphere, homey Thai-Chinese fare and sipping tom-dees.

### G.O.D. (GUYS ON DISPLAY)

Map pp108–9 Club  
☎ 0 2632 8032; Soi 2/1, Th Silom; admission 280B; ☎ 7pm–late; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Silom



The former Freeman has been reincarnated as this popular after-hours destination. Open late and, as the name suggests, not averse to a bit of shirtless dancing. Located on the tiny alley between Soi 2 and Soi Thaniya.

### LESIA Map pp124–5 Club

☎ 0 2618 7191; [www.lesia.com](http://www.lesia.com); Chit Chat Club, Soi 85, Soi Choke Chai 4, Th Lad Phrao; admission 200B; ☎ 8pm–1am Sat; taxi from Lad Phrao Bangkok's biggest lesbian group date is held every Saturday at Chit Chat Pub in Bangkok's northern outskirts.

### SHELA Map p112 Club

☎ 0 2254 6463; [www.shelacorner.com](http://www.shelacorner.com); 106/12-13 Soi Lang Suan (cnr Soi Lang Suan & Th Sarasin), Lumpini; admission free; ☎ 7pm–2am; Ratchadamri Owned by the same women who run Zeta, Shela draws a slightly more mature crowd with live music, a pool table and food. Women only.

### ZETA Map pp124–5 Club

☎ 0 2203 0994; [www.zetabangkok.com](http://www.zetabangkok.com); 29 Royal City Ave, off Phra Ram IX, Greater Bangkok; admission free; ☎ 10pm–2am; Rama IX This exceedingly popular lesbian club on the quiet end of RCA is packed to the gills with young *tom-dees* on weekends. It's for women only.

### BABYLON BANGKOK

Map p112 Sauna

☎ 0 2679 7984; [www.babylonbangkok.com](http://www.babylonbangkok.com); 34 Soi Nantha, off Soi 1, Th Sathon, Sathon; ☎ 3–11pm; Lumphini

This four-storey gay sauna has been described as one of the top 10 of its kind in the world. Facilities include a bar, roof garden, gym, massage room, steam and dry saunas, and spa baths. The spacious, well-hidden complex also has accommodation.

### CHAKRAN Map pp124–5 Sauna

☎ 0 2279 1359; [www.utopia-asia.com/chakran](http://www.utopia-asia.com/chakran); 32 Soi 4, Soi Ari, Th Phaholyothin, Greater Bangkok; ☎ noon–11.30pm; Ari

This upmarket multistorey complex comes fully loaded with an indoor pool, large spa, steam, sauna, gym, video room and karaoke areas, as well as a restaurant and pool-side bar. The crowd is generally Thai/Asian, but it's starting to see more *farang* as well.

## LIVE MUSIC

As Thailand's media capital, Bangkok is also the centre of the Thai music industry, packaging and selling pop, crooners, *liuk thung*, and the recent phenomenon of indie bands.

Music is a part of almost every Thai social gathering. The matriarchs and patriarchs like dinner with an easy-listening soundtrack: typically a Filipino band and a synthesizer. Patrons pass their request (on a napkin) up to the stage. An indigenous rock style, *phleng phèua chii-wit* (songs for life), makes appearances at a dying breed of country-and-western bars decorated with buffalo horns and pictures of Native Americans. Several dedicated bars throughout the city feature blues and rock bands, but are quite scant on live indie-scene performances. Up-and-coming garage bands occasionally pop up at free concerts where the kids hang out: Santichaiprakan Park (Th Phra Athit), Th Khao San and Siam Sq. Music festivals like Noise Pop and Fat Festival also feature the new breed.

Some of the steam that fuelled Th Phra Athit's (Map pp68–9) arty resurrection has dissipated, but the street still retains several closet-sized bars where bohemian Thais and university students mix and mingle with whisky sets and acoustic singalongs. The strip clusters around the block starting directly in front of the river ferry pier. The shopfront bars on Th Phra Athit typically feature a squeaky guitar and a solo singer, performing to an audience of young Thai folk who always know all the words.

For a schedule of live shows, check out Eastbound Downers ([www.eastbound-downers.com](http://www.eastbound-downers.com)), a promo site for indie bands, and Bangkok Gig Guide ([www.bangkokgigguide.com](http://www.bangkokgigguide.com)), a comprehensive schedule of shows across the city. For more on the ins and outs of the Thai music scene, see p31.

### AD HERE THE 13TH Map pp68–9 Bar

13 Th Samsen, Banglamphu; ☎ 6pm–midnight; air-con 3, 32 & 49, ordinary 30, 32, 33 & 65, Tha Phra Athit

Please don't blame the drummer if you're accidentally smacked by a stray drumstick; things can get a bit tight in here. Featuring a soulful house band that plays at 10pm nightly, Ad Here is one of those places that somehow manages to be both raucous and intimate.

### AD MAKERS Map pp108–9 Bar

☎ 0 2634 5227; 142 Th Sathon Tai; ☎ 11am–10.30pm; Surasak

Now at new digs on Th Sathon, this live-music staple is going strong after all these years. The house band still puts out heartfelt Thai folk and other classic-rock standards, and an expanded menu means more flavour with your tunes.

### BAMBOO BAR Map pp108–9 Bar

☎ 0 2659 9000; Oriental Hotel, Soi 38 (Oriental), Th Charoen Krung, Riverside; ☎ 11–1am; ordinary 35, 36, 75 & 93, Tha Oriental Rubber-plantation barons and colonial mansions are not exactly part of Bangkok's history, but Bamboo Bar, in the historic Oriental Hotel, exudes oodles of bygone charm. Internationally recognized jazz bands hold court within a brush stroke of the audience to set a mellow lounge mood.

### BRICK BAR Map pp68–9 Bar

☎ 0 2629 4477; basement, Buddy Lodge, 265 Th Khao San, Banglamphu; ☎ 8pm–1am; air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65, Tha Phra Athit Resembling Liverpool's Cavern Club circa 1960, Brick Bar is an underground den that hosts a nightly revolving cast of live music for an almost exclusively Thai crowd. Come before midnight, wedge yourself into a table a few inches from the horn section, and lose it to Teddy Ska, one of the most energetic live acts in town.

### BROWN SUGAR Map p112 Pub

☎ 0 2250 1825; [www.brownsugarbangkok.com](http://www.brownsugarbangkok.com); 231/20 Th Sarasin, Lumpini; ☎ 6pm–1.30am; Ratchadamri

Be careful upon entering Brown Sugar lest you trip over the bass player. With Crescent City informality, Friday and Saturday nights see this perpetually packed pub's house band giving inspired performances that blend soul, jazz, rock and just about everything else.

### GAZEBO Map pp68–9 Pub

☎ 0 2629 0705; [www.gazebobkk.com](http://www.gazebobkk.com); 3rd fl, 44 Th Chakrapong, Banglamphu; ☎ 7pm–late; air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65, Tha Phra Athit Like an oasis above Th Khao San, this vaguely Middle-Eastern themed pub draws backpackers and locals alike with fun cover bands, mist-blowing fans and fez-topped sheesha attendants. Its elevated location

also appears to lend it some leniency with the city's strict closing times.

### LIVING ROOM Map pp118–19 Lounge Bar

☎ 0 2649 8888; [www.sheratongrandesukhumvit.com](http://www.sheratongrandesukhumvit.com); Level 1, Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit, 250 Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 9pm–1am; Asoke, Sukhumvit

Although it's not exactly a smoky den filled with finger-snapping hep cats, every night the Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit's deceptively bland hotel lounge transforms into one of the city's best venues for live jazz. Check ahead of time to see which sax master or hide hitter is currently in town.

### NORIEGA'S Map pp108–9 Bar/Pub

☎ 0 2233 2813; Soi 4, Th Silom; ☎ 6pm–1am; Sala Daeng, Silom

All the way at the end of the *soi*, where the rainbow flag ceases to fly, Noriega's doesn't play the techno game. It prefers the raw noise of rotating bands of every genre, from salsa to Irish. The scene is also the unofficial headquarters of Bangkok's Hash House Harriers ('The drinking club with a running problem').

### PARKING TOYS Map pp124–5 Bar

☎ 0 2907 2228; 17/22 Soi Mayalap, Kaset-Navamin Hwy, Greater Bangkok; ☎ 5pm–1am; taxi from Mor Chit

If you're willing to make the long schlep north of town, this bizarrely named bar is quite possibly Bangkok's best-kept live-music secret. A rambling hall decked out with vintage furniture, Parking Toys hosts an eclectic revolving cast of fun bands ranging in genre from acoustic/classical ensembles to electro-funk jam acts. Get a taxi from Mor Chit BTS station and tell the driver to take you to Th Kaset-Navamin (also locally known as the *sén tát mài*). Turn right at the Kaset intersection and continue until you pass the second stop light. Keep an eye out for the Heineken sign immediately on your left.

### SAXOPHONE PUB & RESTAURANT

Map pp52–3 Pub/Restaurant

☎ 0 2246 5472; [www.saxophonepub.com](http://www.saxophonepub.com); 3/8 Th Phayathai, Ratchathewi; ☎ 6pm–midnight; Victory Monument

Don't leave town without a visit to this venerable music club. Whether you're toasting distance from the band or perched in the

## THE WHISKY SET

Thai beer is generally more miss than hit, so the next time you're out on the town, why not drink like the Thais do and order a bottle of whisky?

Your first step is to choose a brand. For a particularly decadent night out, the industry standard is a bottle of *bláek* (Johnnie Walker Black Label). Those on a budget can go for the cheaper imported labels such as Red Label or Benmore, and a rock-bottom, but fun, night can be had on domestic spirits such as 100 Pipers or Sang Som. And it's not unusual to bring your own bottle to many Thai bars, although some might charge a modest corkage fee.

As any Thai can tell you, your next immediate concern is mixers. These will take the form of several bottles of soda water and a bottle or two of Coke, along with a pail of ice. Most waiters will bring these to you as a matter of course.

Mixing is the easiest step and requires little or no action on your part; your skilled waiter will fill your glass with ice, followed by a shot of whisky, a splash of soda, a top-off of Coke and, finally, a swirl with the ice tongs to bring it all together.

If you can't finish your bottle, shame on you, but don't fret, as it's perfectly normal to keep it at the bar. Simply tell your trusted waiter, who will write your name and the date on the bottle and keep it for your next visit.

2nd-floor alcove, Saxophone's intimate space draws the crowd into the laps of great jazz and blues musicians. The music changes each night – jazz during the week; rock, blues and beyond on weekends. Reggae-fusion workshops define Sunday nights.

## TAWAN DAENG GERMAN

**BREWHOUSE** Map pp124–5 Beer Hall/Pub

☎ 0 2678 1114; www.tawandaeng1999.com; 462/61 Th Narathiwat Ratchanakharin (cnr Th Phra Ram III), Greater Bangkok; ☎ 5pm-midnight; access by taxi

Despite its hangar-like girth, this Thai version of a Bavarian beer hall manages to pack 'em in just about every night. The Thai-German food is tasty, the house-made brews more than potable, and the nightly stage shows make singing along a necessity. Most people come for the Wednesday performance of Fong Nam (see p32). Music starts at 8.30pm.

## THREE SIXTY

Map pp108–9 Bar

☎ 0 2442 2000; 32nd fl, Millennium Hilton, 123 Th Charoen Nakorn, Thonburi; ☎ 5pm-1am; 🚗 Tha Sathon

Feeling frustrated with Bangkok? A set or two of live jazz in this elegant glass-encased perch 32 floors above the city will help you forget some of your troubles, or at the very least, give you a whole new perspective on the city.

## TOKYO JOE'S

Map pp118–19 Bar

☎ 0 2259 6268; www.tokyojoesbkk.com; 25/9 Soi 26, Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 5pm-1am; 🚗 Phrom Phong Recently relocated to something of a residential district – what do the neighbours

think of the noise? Despite the move, the bar's die-hard regulars still file in to witness a revolving cast of jazz, blues and rock. To see what the place is really about, come on Sunday evening, when the infamous Joe's World Famous Blues Jam kicks off at 9.30.

## WINKS

Map pp124–5 Pub

☎ 0 2939 5684; cnr Soi 37, Th Phahonyothin, Greater Bangkok; ☎ 7pm-1am; 🚗 air-con 512 & 524, ordinary 24, 26, 28

Starting to wonder where the Thai people actually hang out? Join wannabe musicians, Kasetsart University students, the odd *dara* (star) and any others who can't be bothered with the Sukhumvit scene at this fun local boozery. The live bands aren't quite as good as they are loud, but after a couple of drinks and some new friends, you'll wish you could take the bar home with you.

## WITCH'S TAVERN

Map pp118–19 Pub

☎ 0 2391 9791; 306/1 Soi 55 (Thong Lor), Th Sukhumvit; ☎ 6pm-1am; 🚗 Thong Lor

This spacious joint claims to be an English pub, but it's closer to a hotel lobby geared toward down-to-earth Thai professionals. Jazz and folk bands start up around 8.30pm, and at 10.30pm the house cover band takes to the stage, accepting requests from the audience. Ballads get the biggest round of applause.

## CLUBBING

Fickleness is the reigning characteristic of the Bangkok club scene, and venues that were pulling in thousands a night just last year are often only vague memories today. What used

to be a rotating cast of hotspots has slowed to a few standards on the *sois* off Sukhumvit, Silom, Ratchadapisek and RCA (Royal City Ave), the city's 'entertainment zones', which qualify for the 2am closing time. Most places don't begin filling up until midnight and cover charges run as high as 600B and usually include a drink. You'll need an ID to prove you're legal (20 years old); they'll card even the grey hairs.

To keep the crowds from growing bored, clubs host weekly theme parties and visiting DJs that ebb and flow in popularity. To get an idea of current happenings around town, check Bangkok Spin (www.bangkokspin.com), BK, the *Bangkok Post's* Friday supplement, Guru, and the Bangkok Recorder's online mag (www.bangkokrecorder.com).

## 70'S BAR

Map p112 Club

☎ 0 2253 4433; 231/16 Th Sarasin, Lumpini; ☎ 6pm-1am; admission free; 🚗 Ratchadamri A tad too small to be a club proper, this retro-themed bar spins all the hits from the Me generation in the ultimate Me city. Like much of the strip, the clientele is mixed, but often verges on the pink side of the fence.

## 808 CLUB

Map pp124–5 Club

www.808bangkok.com; Block C, Royal City Ave, off Th Phra Ram IX, Greater Bangkok; admission 200-400B; 🚗 Rama IX

Named after the infamous beat machine, this club fills the space previously occupied by Astra and looks to follow the tradition of big-name DJs and insanely crowded events.

## BED SUPPERCLUB

Map pp118–19 Club

☎ 0 2651 3537; www.bedsupperclub.com; 26 Soi 11, Th Sukhumvit; admission 500-600B; ☎ 8pm-1am; 🚗 Nana

Bed has basked in the limelight for a few years now, but has yet to lose any of its futuristic charm. Arrive at a decent hour to squeeze in dinner (see p165), or if you've only got dancing on your mind, come on Tuesday for the hugely popular hip-hop night.

## CAFÉ DEMOC

Map pp68–9 Club

☎ 0 2622 2571; www.cafe-democ.com; 78 Th Ratchadamnoen, Banglamphu; admission free; ☎ 8pm-1am Tue-Sun; 🚗 air-con 511 & 512, ordinary 15, 30 & 65

Up-and-coming DJs present their turntable dexterity at this narrow unpretentious

club in Olde Bangkok. Hip-hop, break beat, drum 'n' bass and tribal fill the night roster, but only special events actually fill the floor.

## CLUB CULTURE

Map pp52–3 Club

☎ 0 89497 8422; www.club-culture-bkk.com; Th Sri Ayuthaya (opposite Siam City Hotel), Ratchathewi; admission 250B; ☎ 7pm-late Wed, Fri & Sat; 🚗 Phayathai

Housed in a unique 40-year-old Thai-style building and run by the same folks who ran RCA's popular Astra, Culture is the biggest and quirkiest recent arrival on Bangkok's club scene. Come to enjoy internationally recognised DJs and the best sound system in town.

## DANCE FEVER

Map pp124–5 Club

☎ 0 2247 4295; 71 Th Ratchadaphisek, Greater Bangkok; ☎ 8pm-2am; 🚗 Rama IX

Like taking a time machine back to the previous decade, Dance Fever is a holdover from the days when a night out in Bangkok meant corny live stage shows, wiggling around the whisky set table, and neon, neon, neon.

## GLOW

Map pp118–19 Club

☎ 0 2261 3007; www.glowbkk.com; 96/4-5 Soi 23, Th Sukhumvit; admission 200B; ☎ 6pm-1am; 🚗 Asoke, 🚗 Sukhumvit

Another club reincarnation, the former Faith is a small venue with a big reputation. Boasting a huge variety of vodkas and a recently upgraded sound system, the tunes range from hip-hop (Friday) to electronica (Saturday), and everything in between.

## LUCIFER

Map pp108–9 Club

☎ 0 2234 6902; www.luciferdisko.com; 76/1-3 Soi Patpong 1, Silom; admission 150B; ☎ 9pm-1am; 🚗 Sala Daeng, 🚗 Silom

Meet the Miltonian side of Lucifer: a fun-loving hedonist. Nestled in the heart of Patpong, Lucifer kicks off the night with a few brave travellers who wander in from the night market. By 11pm the crowd shifts to a younger, prettier persuasion with serious dance-floor know-how. Another wave of recruits arrives at hook-up time.

## NANG LEN

Map pp118–19 Club

☎ 0 2711 6564; 217 Soi 63 (Ekamai), Th Sukhumvit; admission free; ☎ 6pm-1am; 🚗 Ekamai Young, loud and Thai; Nang Len (literally 'sit and chill') is a ridiculously popular

## PARTY LIKE A BUTTERFLY

If you're having commitment issues, try these streets for a club buffet.

You might already be there, but **Th Khao San** (p176) has become so diverse lately that you don't really have to leave to get a good dose of Bangkok nightlife.

A young crowd flocks to **RCA** (Map pp124–5; an extension of Phra Ram IX known as Royal City Ave), a district of loud, flashy bars that was once a Thai teen playground but now has something for all danceable ages. **Th Ratchadapisek Soi 4** (Map pp124–5) has sprouted a recent growth of very Thai teenybopper clubs to capitalise on its designation as an entertainment zone.

The party spills out onto the sidewalks of *sois* near Patpong off Th Silom. **Soi 4** (Map pp108–9) is a boisterous carnival of blaring techno, parading drag queens, muscle boys, and a lot of exhibitionism. **Tapas Room** (below) is one of the saner options along the row.

A string of café-bars south of Chatuchak Park on **Th Kampaengphet** (Map pp124–5) wind up at nights as the weekend market winds down.

**Ekamai** and **Thong Lor** (Map pp118–19) epitomise Bangkok cool, but the bars change so frequently it's hard for a clunky guidebook to keep up. Check the nightlife rags for leads.

sardine tin of live music and uni students on popular Th Ekamai. Get in before 10pm or you won't get in at all.

### NARCISSUS Map pp118–19 Club

☎ 0 2261 3991; www.narcissusclubbangkok.com; 112 Soi 23 (Prasanmit), Th Sukhumvit; admission 500B; ☎ 9pm–1am; 🍷 Asoke

Faux-Roman decadence (think gratuitous marble and pillars) makes Narcissus one of Bangkok's most ostentatious clubs. It doesn't see as much action as it did in years past, but the whole city turns up when Paul Oakenfold graces this palace with his presence.

### Q BAR Map pp118–19 Club

☎ 0 2252 3274; www.qbarbangkok.com; 34 Soi 11, Th Sukhumvit; admission 400–500B; ☎ 9am–1am; 🍷 Nana

In club years, Q Bar is fast approaching retirement age, but still rules the techno-rati with slick industrial style. The dance floor is monopolised by working girls and pot-bellied admirers, but Sunday theme parties and celebrity DJs bring in everybody else in town. Q also boasts perhaps Thailand's largest range of drinks – 27 types of vodka and 41 brands of whisky/bourbon.

### SANTIKA Map pp118–19 Club

☎ 0 2711 5887; 235/11 Soi 63 (Ekamai), Th Sukhumvit; admission 200–400B; ☎ 8pm–1am; 🍷 Ekamai

One of several same-same-but-different mega-clubs that line Ekamai, whose crowd comprises a predictable cross-section of Thai jet-setters, children of politicians, and

*lùuk khrueng* models. But even the moneyed Thais like their drinks affordable and their disco music deafening.

### SLIM/FLIX Map pp124–5 Club

☎ 0 2203 0504; 29/22-32 Royal City Avenue, off Th Phra Ram IX, Greater Bangkok; admission free; ☎ 8pm–2am; 🍷 Rama IX

Ideal for the indecisive raver, this immense three-in-one complex dominating one end of RCA features chilled house on one side (Flix), while the other (Slim) does the hip hop/R&B soundtrack found across much of the city. Oh, and there's a restaurant thrown in there somewhere as well. Despite its size, this place is packed on weekends.

### SUPERFLY Map p112 Club

☎ 0 2633 9990; cnr Phra Ram IV & Soi 1, Th Sala Daeng, Lumpini; admission 200B; ☎ 9pm–late; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Lumpini

This gargantuan dance hall is a decent middle ground in the jungle of Bangkok clubs; not too trendy, with music that the majority of us can shake to. As with many places in town, the cover charge gets you one drink.

### TAPAS ROOM Map pp108–9 Club

☎ 0 2234 4737; www.tapasroom.net; 114/17-18 Soi 4, Th Silom; admission 100B; ☎ 9pm–1am; 🍷 Sala Daeng, 🍷 Silom

Although it sits staunchly at the front of Bangkok's pinkest street, this longstanding box manages to bring in just about everybody. Come Thursday to Saturday, when the combination of DJs and live percussion brings the body count to critical level.

### TWISTED REPUBLIC Map pp118–19 Club

☎ 0 2651 0800; www.twistedrepublic.com; 37 Soi 11, Th Sukhumvit; admission 300B; ☎ 8pm–1am; 🍷 Nana

Neighbour to Bed and Q Bar, Twisted truly is the new kid on the block. Promising an 'ultimate interactive clubbing experience', the fresh-faced club boasts an impressive roster of DJs, both domestic and imported.

## GO-GO BARS

Whole neighbourhoods of Bangkok are dedicated to the sex trade, from massage parlours to go-go bars, and tales about these places comprise the majority of English-language literature about the city. Like the sex industry in other parts of the world, issues of exploitation, human trafficking and HIV/AIDS are ever-present.

Looming large in the visitor's imagination is the notorious Patpong district of ping-pong and 'fucky' shows. Along two narrow *soi* (Soi Patpong 1 and Soi Patpong 2, off Th Silom), blaring neon bars with subtle names such as Pussy Collection, Supergirls and Pussy Galore cater mainly to a gawking

public (both male and female) with circus-like sexual exploits.

The gay men's equivalent of Patpong can be found on nearby Soi Pratuchoi and Soi Anuman Ratchathon, where bars feature go-go dancers and live sex shows.

A more direct legacy of the Vietnam R&R days is Soi Cowboy (Map pp118–19), a strip of hostess and go-go bars targeted at the consumer, not the curious.

Nana Entertainment Plaza (Map pp118–19) is a three-storey complex featuring topless dancing and strip shows. The 'female' staff at Casanova consists entirely of Thai transvestites and transsexuals; this is a favourite stop for foreigners visiting Bangkok for sex reassignment surgery.

Asian tourists – primarily Japanese, Taiwanese and Hong Kong males – flock to the Ratchada entertainment strip, part of the Huay Khwang district (Map pp124–5), along wide Th Ratchadaphisek between Th Phra Ram IX and Th Lat Phrao. Lit up like Las Vegas, this stretch of neon boasts huge, male-oriented, massage-snooker-and-karaoke and go-go complexes with names like Caesar's Sauna and Emmanuelle, which are far grander in scale.

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