

# URBAN AFFAIRS

B A N G K O K

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## *How to 'Really' Celebrate* SONGKRAN

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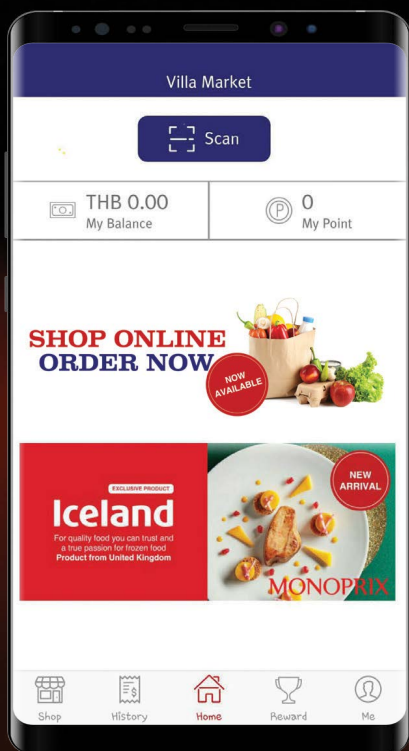
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# BACK TO VILLA FOR FRESHEST

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### Australian Angus

<b>TOMAHAWK</b>	<b>1,290/KG.</b>
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## THAI FRENCH

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STRIPLOIN STEAK  
RIBEYE STEAK  
SIRLOIN STEAK

SIRLOIN TIP STEAK  
TOP ROUND STEAK  
CHUCK ROLL STEAK  
SHORT RIB STEAK

SHANK SOUP BONE  
SHANK STEW BEEF  
CHUCK STEW BEEF  
TOP ROUND STEW BEEF  
GROUND ROUND  
GROUND BEEF  
OX TAIL  
OX TONGUE  
HANGING TENDER

FLANK STEAK  
SKIRT STEAK  
TAIL OF T-BONE STEAK

SIRLOIN SLICED  
SIRLOIN TIP SLICED  
TOP ROUND SLICED (ROLLAO)  
CHUCK ROLL SLICED  
CHUCK TENDER SLICED  
TOP BLADE SLICED  
BRISKET SLICED  
SHORT RIB SLICED

### ROAST BEEF

SIRLOIN TIP ROAST  
TOP ROUND ROAST  
CHUCK ROLL ROAST  
SHORT RIB ROAST  
BRISKET ROAST  
RIBEYE ROAST  
PRIME RIB ROAST

### STORE LOCATIONS

SUKHUMVIT 33 SUKHUMVIT 49 THONGLOR AMBASSADOR PLOENCHIT SILOM K VILLAGE SENA FEST PARADISE PARK SAMMAKORN AREE PHAHOLYOTHIN RATCHAYOTHIN KASET-NAWAMIN NICHADA GRAND CANEL CHAENGWATTANA RATCHAPRUEK PASEO RAMKHAMHAENG PASEO LADKRABANG PASEO KANCHANAPISEK GRAND RAMA 9 THE UP RAMA 3 PATTAYA HUA HIN PHUKET CHALONG PHUKET LAGUNA PHUKET BOAT LAGOON HUAHIN INDEX LIVING MALL THE CIRCLE RATCHAPRUEK UD TOWN RAMINTRA LITTLE WALK BANGNA

## Editor's Letter

**T**he common question we normally ask each other before the long Songkran holidays is: "Are you going anywhere or staying in Bangkok for Songkran?" For those who have joined the mass exodus to the country during this water festival – or any other long holiday in Thailand – will know quite well that outbound traffic during the start of the traditional Thai new year and inbound at the end are hellish. The cars crawl along bumper to bumper for miles, with people everywhere and long queues for everything, from restaurants and restrooms to places to stay.

Luckily all my family members are here in Bangkok, so I've been hanging out in the capital during Songkran for almost a decade now. Those who choose to stay on in the capital will know that Bangkok during Songkran becomes a totally different city indeed with a laid-back charm: quieter, less crowded and, most importantly, much less traffic.

Every year, while driving into downtown to drop by a place for a meal or two with family and friends, I'll wonder to myself why Bangkok can't always be like this. I get to make three or four stops in one day, which is impossible during the normal rush on bustling working days. You can easily find a parking space anywhere you go and people tend to be calmer and happier with a good long break after a few months of working.

Isn't life much better, or we can say "richer", when we slow down a bit and spare some time to enjoy the finer things in life? When was the last time you had a coffee (or tea, depending on your preferences) and just watch people walking in and out, going by doing whatever they need to do? Or when was the last time you listened to the sound of the trees rustling in the breeze or watched the sun setting over the horizon? When was the last time you were curled up on your favorite sofa, either at home or elsewhere, to enjoy a good book (or rather, er, a good free magazine) and forget about your life a bit and indulge in someone else's?

I, myself, haven't and I can't wait to do just that during this mid-April break. And when it comes to enjoying life, no one said it better than Albert Einstein himself. During a trip to Tokyo in 1922, he once left a note in German on a piece of hotel stationery for a courier instead of a tip that read: "A calm and modest life brings more happiness than the pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness."

So, if you're here with me in Bangkok, enjoy the calm and modest life, and see if it brings more happiness to you than the restlessness that comes with the pursuit of what we think is success in life.

Have a safe and happy Songkran!

- VT

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**Swisa Ariyaprachya** was born in Switzerland and spent her childhood growing up in Belgium, Poland, Thailand and the USA. She is multilingual and speaks four languages. Apart from her work as a central banker, she began her lifestyle blog *Having "Me" Time* in 2010 and has since continued to write in her spare time. She is also co-founder of Booster Education Co., Ltd. and Booster Analytics Co., Ltd.

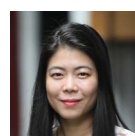
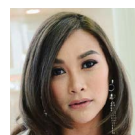
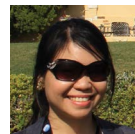
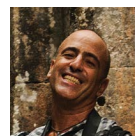
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# A New Year, A New Beginning

BY NAAM SOMBATANANTAKORN



1

When it comes to New Year's Day in Thailand, most Thais will ask, "Which one?" There are three remarkable occasions for the so-called New Year's celebrations in Thailand: international New Year's Day on January 1, Chinese New Year's around February, and Thai New Year's, or Songkran, usually spanning April 13 to 15.

Songkran is marked by "water-splashing", or a nationwide water fight over three days. The heat in the afternoon gives people an instant excuse to go on a splashing spree to cool down during long, hot summer days. Thais and foreign tourists consider Songkran to be a rare opportunity to gang up on fellow water warriors, armed with high-pressure water pistols and buckets of iced cold water.

But since when have people taken to splashing water on one another and called this practice the norm during Songkran?

I have to admit that I haven't got a clue. What I was told in my younger days was that Songkran was celebrated quite differently from what it is today.

Back in the days, Songkran would start on April 12, generally observed as a big cleaning day reserved specifically for housework. Thais spent the day cleaning their houses by scrubbing the floor, washing curtains, mosquito nets, bed sheets, and clothes thoroughly. They would get out Buddha images from the altar to dust them off for a bathing rite before placing them back with fresh flowers and other offerings. The elderly would spruce themselves up by cutting and washing their hair, and the ladies would go out to do some grocery shopping as they were in charge of preparing food for the next day.

On the early morning of April 13 or "Maha Songkran Day" (Big Songkran Day), people would be busy in the kitchen preparing

food before sunrise. The freshly made traditional delicacies would be offered to monks on their morning alms rounds. Then they would get washed up and put on new clothes. The elders of the family would be particularly in high spirits on the day as they anticipated a series of visits by their children, grandchildren, and relatives. Thais would pay respect to their elders by offering a bowl of scented water along with flowers and presents, and ask them for blessings of good health, good fortune, and prosperity. In return, the elders would hand them their presents, such as home-made candies, embroidered cloth, or some money to be kept in reserve or for good luck.

In the afternoon, people would visit a temple for merit-making rites. Traditional temple activities included the "kor kong sai" or "kor phra chedi sai" (sand chedi building). This activity saw the coming together of local people as they took part

PHOTOGRAPH: NAAM SOMBATANANTAKORN



2

in the extraction of sand on the banks of a nearby canal or river. The sand was then brought to the local temple where it was used to build small replicas of famous pagodas. According to local customs, at the end of the pagoda-building activity, it was considered auspicious to return home with sand from the temple grounds still stuck to their shoes.

So at the start of every New Year, it was customary for people to bring sand to temples. Some temples encouraged this custom by organizing a sand pagoda building competition to find the prettiest pagoda design. It is believed that this tradition, still in practice these days, is rooted in the need to improve the flow of water in canals and rivers in preparation for the rainy season after the long summer. Then, Buddhist monks thought up an ingenious scheme to get villagers together to dredge irrigation canals and rivers that had been silted up with sand.

Every temple would organize an outdoor Buddha image-bathing ceremony in which worshippers poured or sprinkled scented water onto the image and made a wish for a prosperous year ahead. At the temple, the abbot would give a long sermon and blessings, people would release fish or birds into their natural habits before enjoying traditional temple amusements such as a funfair and an outdoor market, hence the name “*ngan wat*” (temple fair) for the rest of the day.

The next day (April 14) was observed as Ancestor’s Day. Similar to Chinese Ancestor’s Day (Ching Ming Festival), Thais would join merit-making events to give blessings to their ancestors. In 1989, the government designated April 14 as Family Day, so the day in its humble beginnings usually involved family gatherings over a meal. Then they would rest and get ready for the new year ahead.

These traditional Songkran festivities from the recent past are still kept alive mostly in the Thai countryside and the suburbs of Bangkok. It is important to preserve these cultural traditions that are based on respect for social and family values that are increasingly taken for granted these days. So before you grab a water pistol, make sure you spend some time with your family, visit the nearest temple to experience traditional Songkran festivities and keep this beautiful culture alive for the next generation.

1 Shoot to thrill: A boy takes aim at another reveler.

2 The sand chedi building tradition can be found at temples throughout Thailand.

3 Siam Square attracts large crowds during the Thai water festival.

PHOTOGRAPH: TEERAT YAEMNGAMLUEA



3

# Falls of Plenty

BY MANOJ TRIPATHI



1

Summer's upon us, but many Thais are not really dreaming of glorious sunshine or hitting the great outdoors. With the horrid Bangkok heat so unbearable amid a layer of thick smog, thousands of weekenders are flocking to popular beaches east and south of Bangkok.

However, in many of these places, a private weekend getaway on the beach is often prone to hitting snags. Scenes of bedlam like the private fiefdoms of sunloungers hosting rowdy picnickers on the beach are facts of life, as are gangs of pickup trucks blasting mega-decibels of *lookthoong* dance music into the balmy afternoon breeze.

But it's possible to go for a dip elsewhere without having to worry about beach mayhem. Go off the beaten track a bit and you'll find waterfalls along with wild natural beauty and plenty of shade trees forming well-preserved tropical rainforests inside Thailand's national parks only a few hours' drive from the capital.

These cascades are magnets that draw throngs of local and foreign tourists wanting to cool off every weekend. But don't fret: strict regulations are in place to weed out

individuals triggering disturbances that are fairly common at major beach paradises like loud music, uproarious parties and public intoxication.

Despite the apparent orderliness of life imposed by national parks, these waterfalls are the best natural spots to bathe and swim with deep pools of crystal-clear water, natural fish, and fresh air. A visit to a national park is generously rewarded with a rare chance to spend time communing with nature and the positive effects of having a good cool soak in a natural pool.

It refreshes tired feet after a long day on foot, tightens the body, reduces redness, and calms a racing pulse. It leaves one feeling totally cleansed of the negative emotions.

One is spoiled for choice when looking for where to go for a two-day and one-night drive trip. When it comes to waterfalls, it's possible to drive east, west or north from Bangkok. The nearest waterfalls to the south usually run dry in summer.

Going north, you'll find one large waterfall plus a few smaller ones located nearby. So the trip can be as short as an overnight stay.

If you have more time, it's wise to explore other attractions set in national parks that lie further afield.

People think of Kanchanaburi when it comes to relaxing near a waterfall. Well, many large waterfalls there are easily accessed by car within an hour or two from Bangkok and thus packed out at weekends. But it's a good idea to stay away from the crowds and explore other options that are off the tourist trail.

Going east, you encounter about three major cascades that are quite far apart but equally scenic. As the hot season is in full swing, don't expect too much water at some of these cascades. Don't go to Khao Soi Dao Waterfall (dry at the moment), for instance, or Khao Yai (where swimming is prohibited). But the big ones in the east have water flowing all year round. So make sure you spend a few nights so that you have a good rest before driving back to Bangkok.

Here's a selection of waterfalls worthy of a weekend getaway or a three-day and two-night drive trip. According to park officials, all the waterfalls listed here still have flowing water this month.



2

### ***Khlonglan Waterfall, Kamphaengphet***

Khlonglan is 370 km from Bangkok and easily accessed via Highway 1 and routes 1242 and 1072. By far the most spectacular waterfall in Kamphaengphet, Khlonglan has its source in the mountains of Khun Khlong Lan with the highest peak perched 1,439 meters above sea level. The waterfall is made up of five streams that plunge 100 meters down the cliff to a large pool at the bottom where it's safe for kids and adults to have a good swim. It's worth spending a day or two in this national park to explore other nearby waterfalls or attractions like Chong Yen (Cool Channel) in nearby Mae Wong National Park where you can find rare species of birds that live at high altitudes. Near the waterfall is a nature trail, a one-km trek to explore flora and fauna. It's a favorite with bird watchers, too. This month, the waterfall has not much water, but the pool has enough water up to chest level, so it's OK to have a good dip, according to a park official.

Tel. 088 407 9915



3

### ***Klong Nam Lai Waterfall, Kamphaengphet***

This medium-sized waterfall with many levels, 25 km from Khlonglan Waterfall, is worth checking out if you're already based at Khlonglan and want to explore other attractions nearby. Its pool is about three meters wide, so it's suitable for a good soak, but the pool is often a favorite with teenagers while adults sit around taking in the views instead. The multi-tier waterfall still has plenty of water flowing this month.

Tel. 088 407 9915

### ***Huay Maekhamin Waterfall, Kanchanaburi***

Huay Maekhamin, 280 km from Bangkok, is one of Thailand's most beautiful waterfalls. The source of this limestone waterfall is a brook called Huay Maekhamin that cascades down seven tiers from the top of the mountain. Adventurous hikers can attempt the hour-long climb to the seventh level called Romklaow, which is 2,270 meters from the first level. Each level has its own nature trail for visitors who want to explore the park's dense forest. Amazingly the waterfall has fresh water flowing all year round.

Tel. 062 325 5498

1 - 3 Khlonglan is a tall cascade surrounded by lush jungle.

4 Huay Maekhamin is by far the most beautiful waterfall in Kanchanaburi with different levels.



PHOTOGRAPHS: MANOJ TRIPATHI

4



5

### ***Jok Ka Din Waterfall, Kanchanaburi***

This waterfall is 138 km from Huay Maekhamin via a dirt road that rises and dips through the hills, or 241 km from that waterfall via a lengthy detour on a well-paved road. You're advised to take the latter route unless it's an off-road vehicle you're driving. Located not far from Ban Itong village on the Myanmar border (famed for Andaman crabs imported from Myanmar), Jok Ka Din is a real unspoiled gem and is well worth a stop if you're planning to visit that quaint, sleepy border village that exudes a laid-back charm. The waterfall is surrounded by lush forest and off the tourist trail, so it's ideal for having a good long soak on your way back to Kanchanaburi city. This month the waterfall has plenty of water.

Tel. 098 252 0359

### ***Plew Waterfall, Chanthaburi***

This waterfall is 240 km from Bangkok and easily accessed via Highway 3. Its stunning scenery is a magnet that has drawn both local people and VIP visitors from afar for many centuries. Among them was King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) who fell in love with Plew with a number of visits between 1847 and 1854. For the king, it was more beautiful than any other he'd seen in Penang or Koh Chang. The green pool provides a rich habitat for a million fish, and you're allowed to have a good swim in it. Once here, you wouldn't want to leave.

Tel. 039 434 528

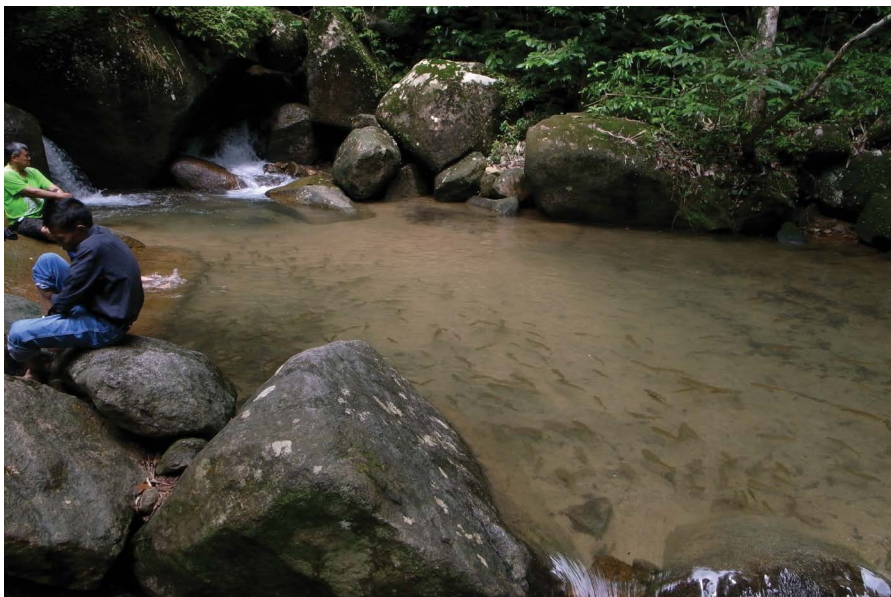


6

### ***Krathing Waterfall, Chanthaburi***

Set inside Khao Khitchakut National Park and 230 km from Bangkok, Krathing Waterfall is a tall cascade with 13 levels. It's possible to trek up to level eight. The last five levels are off limits to visitors. People come to this national park for camping in its vast patches of greenery, with plenty of flowing water available all year round. For visitors, taking a dip in the large pool at the bottom of the waterfall is the best way to battle the heat. It's worth having an overnight stay to commune with nature or explore nature trails.

Tel. 081 945 0049



PHOTOGRAPHS: MANOJ TRIPATHI

7

# Optimal Travel Apps

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

In some of my recent travel trends pieces, I've discussed how our style of travel has changed. Our journeys are no longer as spontaneous as they used to be, partly due to stricter travel requirements these days, but also due to the technology. 10-20 years ago, if you just showed up at a hotel, it was most likely they had a place for you, as outside of phone call or travel agent bookings, you couldn't just press a button from halfway across the globe and reserve a room.

These days, if you don't reserve in advance, especially in high season, you are probably going to be left out in the cold. While our spontaneity might be a bit lost, the plus side is that we are now able to concentrate on the sights and sounds a bit more due to a collection of handy apps that we store on our phones and make travelling far easier.

Here's a collection of some of the better ones that make leaving home that much easier, not to mention can even be used at home for your staycations or getting around.

## Wi-Fi Map

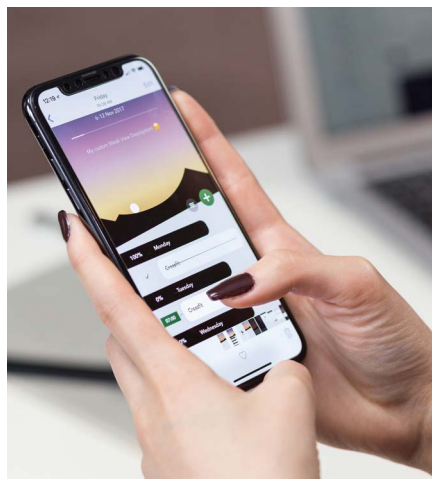
Half your apps will be useless if you can't connect, and finding hotspots to avoid data roaming charges can sometimes be a pain. With Wi-Fi Map you can search out crowdsourced hotspots and get passwords to use them, plus you can download the maps of hotspots for offline use.

## Google Translate

It isn't always perfect (the Galician town of As Pontes in northwestern Spain used it to promote their rapini vegetable festival which ended up as the "clitoris festival") and the Chinese transliterations will have you on the floor at times, but overall, Google remains at the top of the translation heap. You get over 100 different languages, of which more than half can be downloaded even when you don't have a data connection. You can also get menu and other much needed translations via holding your phone's camera over the sign, with access to some 40 languages for this method.

## Airbnb

Already a popular alternative to hotels, the Airbnb app lets you rent homes, find long stay discounts, and have a real local experience sharing someone's home, flat, or other unique properties (teepees, yurts!). It's also become more than just a place-to-stay app, as now you can book Airbnb Experiences, in which local experts will involve you in real local happenings, ranging from bicycle tours and cooking classes to architecture or history tours.



## Xe.com

You'll never get ripped off again, or at least know exactly what and how much you are paying for with the world's top currency app. Xe has exact and updated conversion rates for pretty much every currency on the planet, and you can store currency rates offline, so you don't need a Wi-Fi connection.

## MapsMe

While Google Maps is still the go to map app, you can't use it in China, and the storage space it takes to download offline maps isn't always practical for those who aren't connected. MapsMe is not only free, it also works offline, and gives a tremendous amount of information for being an ad-free app. You can plan a route, and watch second by second progress as you speed along in a *tuk tuk* or taxi while looking for your hotel.

## Skyscanner

If you need a flight out (and these days a hotel and/or car), Skyscanner is a great price-comparing app, as it searches all the top flight booking websites and airlines to give you an array of possibilities, from cheapest on up. You can also easily customize your searches for flight time, number of connections, certain airlines, departure times, and there is even a calendar showing you when the best time to book is for getting the top deals.

## TripIt

For those of you who have your air tickets, hotel confirmation, and travel plans scattered all over the room or for that matter all over your phone, this handy app lets you forward all your confirmation emails and arranges them into a master itinerary with all your plans in one chronologically arranged place. TripIt lets you access your schedule on any device even when offline, and if you are willing to pay for the TripIt Pro (USD 50 per year), you get added features like getting real-time flight alerts and finding out when better seats are available.

## Rebtel

While a Wi-Fi connection is needed to use Skype and Whatsapp, Rebtel accesses local phone lines to find the best calling rates for you to call around the world without the internet. With a subscription you can get unlimited minutes to select numbers, or you can purchase deals like 500 minutes for USD 5.

## Like A Local

Not nearly as well-known as some of the other travel apps, this is a great one for those who really want an in-depth local experience. As their motto says, "Skip the tourist traps and get insider tips and tours by real locals." Picky locals list their favorite cafes, restaurants, bars, parks, and more in over 4,000 cities around the globe, so you're guaranteed to get a very different perspective from the average guidebook or traveler's TripAdvisor review.

Now that you are apped to the teeth, it's time to start planning your next trip!

# Cool Summer Foods

BY SWISA ARIYAPRUCHYA

**Y**ou can tell when summer is here in Bangkok when the wind is full of warm air and the ground beneath you radiates heat. It burns and can be debilitating. When I first moved back roughly 20 years ago and experienced the summer heat, all I wanted to do was stay indoors with the air conditioning on full blast and hibernate in my little cave. I'd have headaches and would feel discomfort all over. After almost two decades, I'm coping much better with the heat. I've learnt how to manage it and what foods to eat.

There are a few commonly known rituals we go through when getting ready for the summer heat such as getting the air conditioner serviced, preparing fans to keep the air moving, having plants around the house and, of course, wearing the right clothes. One area we often don't think much about, however, is food. Food is equally important and Thais, as well as many Asian cultures, believe in the concept of Ying and Yang also known as "heaty" and "cooling" foods.

Ancient Thai wisdom along with many Asian cultures believe that eating too much "heaty" foods can make us ill with symptoms such as indigestion, sore throats, canker sores, nose bleeds and fever. Alternatively, if you consume too much "cool" foods, you'd have symptoms such as cold hands and feet, diarrhea, stomach pains, and sore joints. To keep our bodies in balance, our choice of foods should aim to offset either having too much Yin or Yang. For example, the extremely "heaty" fruit durian is often eaten together with mangosteen which is considered a "cool" fruit. In summer when our bodies heat up, it is believed that eating cooling foods can help relieve some of the heat.

What kinds of foods do we believe cool us down? Here are a few suggested vegetables and fruits. My favorite is the bitter melon (also known as bitter gourd). This can be served as a soup stuffed with minced pork. It can also be stir-fried with egg and cooked in a number of ways. Lotus roots are also a delicious alternative as well as cucumbers and radish. Fruits such as mangosteen, pomelo, star fruit, and melon are some fruit choices for those who want a quick bite. Bael juice and boiled green beans are also refreshing treats and can be served as snacks throughout the year. Many leafy greens are also considered cooling foods.



Although I could not find any scientific evidence to prove that certain foods had more cooling properties relative to other foods, I did find some studies with regards to thermogenesis and thermogenic foods. Fascinatingly, did you know that spicy food also cools you down? The capsaicin, which is the active ingredient in chili, stimulates thermoreceptors in our mouths and causes us to perspire around the forehead and neck in what is called gustatory sweating. Isn't that amazing? Now it makes sense why so many cultures in warmer climates have hot

and spicy foods. All that spiciness serves a function after all, but this is one way of cooling down I will have to bypass. My friends always comment on how "bland" I like my food.

Another way in which we can cool ourselves down is to have warm drinks such as warm tea or to have hot noodle soups. According to a paper published in 2012 by Associate Professor in Thermoregulatory Physiology Dr. Ollie Jay at the University of Sydney, it was found that drinking warm drinks following exercise lowered the overall body heat storage when compared to cooler drinks. Our bodies compensate for the internal heat gain by increasing our sweat levels and the more we sweat, the less heat is stored in our bodies. However, as the study was conducted in conditions that allowed sweat to completely evaporate, in hot and humid climates such as Thailand, drinking cold drinks may be helpful and help us stay hydrated. In another paper, Dr. Ollie's team asked people to consume room temperature fluid or ice during exercise. It was found that ice reduced heat loss and was therefore not as effective. However, he mentions that in hot and humid environments, iced drinks should be beneficial.

I find all this quite fascinating and there is definitely much to learn from listening to ancient wisdoms and beliefs. What works in cooling us down depends a lot upon the environment in which we live. That said, to remain cool in Thailand's hot summer, have spicy foods as well as cooling foods. I hope these tips help you survive the hot weather and that you'd venture out of the cool air-conditioned cave and explore the sights.

Wishing you all a cool core. Happy summer!



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1

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF PARK VENTURES ECOPLEX



2

# Going Green at Park Ventures

BY PLOYLADA SIRACHADAPONG

Nowadays you can see impressive, new skyscrapers popping up like mushrooms all over the world. While some constantly strive for becoming the tallest in the world, others claim they are the biggest or have the most unique design. The high competition has created new buildings with exotic designs showcasing the designers' creativity and many new perspectives on art; but there's one building in Bangkok that stands out from the crowd, not only because of its particular design but because this building is designed to ensure that every aspect of it is environmentally friendly.

Park Ventures Ecoplex, located on Witthayu Road, is a new energy-saving building, 34 stories high with a column-free design that amazingly increases the usable space to over 81,000 square meters. The design of Park Ventures was inspired by the shape of the *wai*, or the Thai way of pressing the palms together as a greeting that symbolizes a lotus bud. While reflecting the beauty of Thai culture, this traditional imagery blends well with the modern architecture of the tower.

Besides its creative design, this new landmark is one of the first eco-friendly complexes in Thailand. In the early stages of design, the design team, themselves representing a range of institutes worldwide, called upon experts from Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) to be their consultants so that all aspects of the building – from design and construction methods to materials – are as eco-friendly as possible.

The building's energy-saving windows have three layers of laminated, insulated glass and low-emissivity (also called Low-E) coatings to minimize penetration of ultraviolet and infrared light. The air between each layer of glass provides a buffer against external sound, sunlight, and Bangkok's heat. This special material lowers the temperature

inside the building but allows abundant natural light to shine through, thus reducing power consumption and air-conditioning use.

The building is also equipped with carbon dioxide sensors which automatically activate ventilation fans when the amount of indoor CO<sub>2</sub> exceeds the limit. As a result, guests will be reassured of the most comfortable experience while inside the building. Most of the tenants in Park Ventures are companies that appreciate the importance of saving the environment. Apart from these premium offices, the building houses the five-star, 240-room Okura Prestige Bangkok hotel spanning the eighth through the 22<sup>nd</sup> floor.

Upon entering Park Ventures, guests are greeted with a green space in front of the building. Several gardens thrive on the upper floors, accounting for 25% of the total property space. All the trees are watered by a water recycling system called "Grey Water Reuse". All wastewater from the building is reused, providing substantial benefits for the water supply subsystem by reducing the demand for fresh clean water.

The location of the building in Bangkok's central business district also helps the environment. Park Ventures is conveniently located right next to the Ploenchit BTS station, which promotes the use of public transportation.

Park Ventures Ecoplex has given a new meaning to the word "design", one that's synonymous with excellence in architecture and ecology and that is finding favor among modern skyscrapers. Thanks to the design team's meticulous attention to detail, new urban lifestyles and a marvelous ecosystem blend together impressively to set a new benchmark for new-age buildings that not only house people, but also help make the world a better place. For them, making just another skyscraper is not an option.

<sup>1</sup> From afar, the building looks like a lotus bud.

<sup>2</sup> Park Ventures Ecoplex's gleaming lobby area.



3



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF PARK VENTURES ECOPLEX

4

3 Energy-saving windows with Low-E coatings minimize UV light, heat and noise levels.

4 One of the many green spaces, which account for 25% of the building's space.

# How to Survive the Bangkok Heat

BY J. PAKCHUEN

Many of you who grew up in Thailand may agree that in the past 20-30 years, we feel that temperatures in Thailand have been rising incrementally. Winter these days is nothing compared to the cool breeze just a few decades ago. I remember lining up with other students early in the morning for the national anthem. We all wore thick sweaters or jackets but this didn't really help much.

Nowadays, when it's summertime, it is awfully hot. Especially in Bangkok, summertime can get worse due to several factors, such as pollution and the layout of the city with towering skyscrapers acting like the walls of a preheated oven, and we are stuck in between like roasting meat!

In April, the hottest month of the year, it's common for some places to have temperatures in the 40s. If you work in a high-rise building, you can feel even more uncomfortable due to the fact that after a nice lunch in the heat outside, you have to go back into the office where the temperature can drop to 20°C due to over-usage of air conditioners. Two extreme weathers may get you sick easily.

But life has to move on. I would like to share some tips to survive the heat in Bangkok and hopefully make your life here a bit "cooler".

## **Drink more water**

Stay hydrated at all times. This is a simple key to survive the heat as you tend to sweat more than usual out in the heat. Water can also help cool you down. Juices are great options, too, and juice stalls are easily found in any street corner near your office building. Just watch out for caffeinated drinks and alcohols. I know iced tea or coffee is just almost irresistible but caffeine in it can increase perspiration and alcoholic drinks are also dehydrating and should be avoided at all cost.

## **Wear light clothes and sunblock**

You may remember what your science teacher from high school told you that the darker the color, the hotter the material is. Dark colors, especially black, can absorb heat

much better than white or any lighter color. So not clothes should be light in color, but they should be loose and lighter in weight, too. Recommended fabrics for your outfits are cotton, linen, rayon and silk. Lightweight clothes are important for ventilation and you can opt for this option even when you have to wear a long-sleeved shirt and tie.

If you are new to Bangkok, don't be surprised when you see Thai office workers wearing light long-sleeved shirts, carrying an umbrella while walking in broad daylight. The heat is just almost unbearable to them and long-sleeved shirts can actually perhaps help protect your skin from the sun's harmful rays.

But if you find an umbrella or a hat too overwhelming since you are nowhere near the beach or see any rain in sight, do, however, wear sunblock, especially on your face, to protect your skin from UV rays which can cause skin cancer. Just make sure to pick the one that says "UVA, UVB and PA+++" on the label for maximum protection. Sunblock will also help protect you from sunburn. Going home lobstered is definitely not the ideal way to end your day.

## **Use a handheld fan or wet towel**

Another way to cool off instantly is to use a handheld fan, manual or electric which can be found in any convenient store in Bangkok. When I was still an office worker in my younger years, I made sure I kept my body as cool as possible right after I left the office building. Not only I tended to sweat less, but also felt less uncomfortable when returning to a contrasting weather in the office. A damp washcloth kept cool in a freezer or wet with cold water can make a good and easy cooling compress. By placing it on your wrist, other areas of pulse points or even around your neck can cool the blood in your veins and provide some instant relief.

So word of advice during the upcoming Songkran: Don't take the weather too lightly. If your body is not familiar with this type of weather and without any preventive actions, heat stroke might be around the corner and this can be serious. Drink lots of water, dress appropriately, slap some sunblock, and enjoy the city these coming holidays!



# Building Foundations

## What makes the property market in Bangkok both interesting and challenging

BY CHRISTOPHER SCOTT DIXON

Judging by the continually-growing number of real estate developments sprouting up around the city, the rather gloomy economic forecasts seem to have been largely ignored. There is a rush to construct ever bigger and taller living and working properties in the capital. Property developers, in fact, see the sector growing nationwide, particularly in Greater Bangkok and it is expected to remain bullish at least for a few more years.

Demand for homes close to the two mass-transit systems: the BTS and the MRT, is said to be increasing rapidly. The Onnut district tops the appeal table with a target price of around THB 2.5 million per unit. This can rise, however, as high as three to four million baht. The most popular unit size ranges from 35 to 40 sqm.

When choosing where to live, it is vital to consider not only commuting time, but also somewhere that is as stress free as possible, close to shopping malls or markets, and more crucially, maintains a high level of security.

A condo unit is usually part of a larger building which is rented out by a landlord. Facilities are generally superior to an apartment complex, with swimming pools, fitness centers, saunas, etc. With good locations, they provide the extra benefits of longer-term contracts for tenants, utility bills with no added premiums, more personal attention, and a stronger community feel than apartments.

Surprisingly, prices for newly commenced condo projects in Bangkok can be as much as four to five times higher than for older buildings. These are driven not only by location, but also the age, design, specification of the building, and its management and maintenance.

There are significant differences between old and new in a number of prime investment locations in the city such as Sukhumvit, Sathorn and Lumpini. There are several factors which create this striking gap. Historically, the vast majority of condo buyers are Thais and there has been a traditional reluctance to occupy “second hand” properties. Design issues with old properties are often a problem too; even a lack of an attractive lobby area can deter potential buyers.

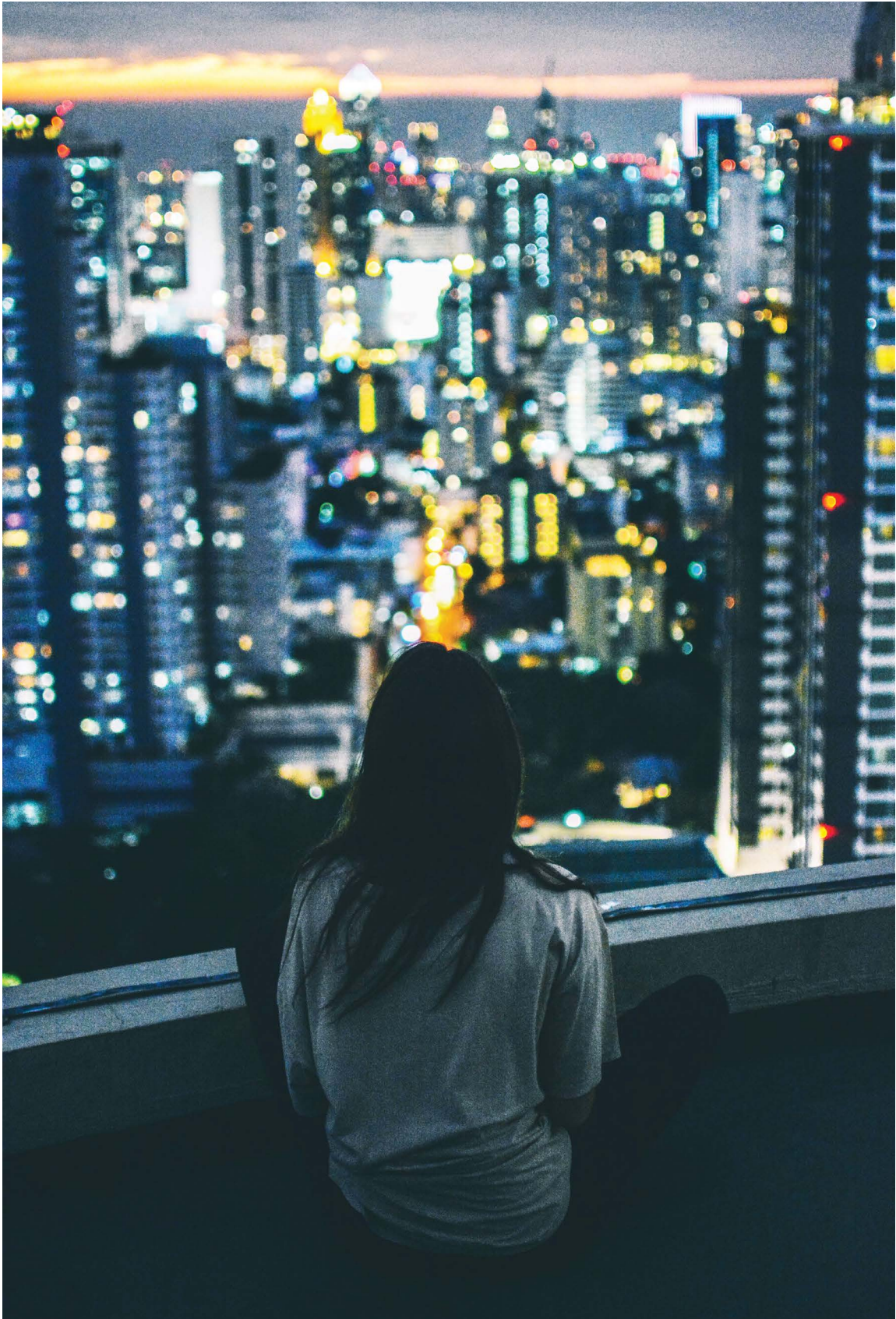
Many older units have ceiling heights which are as low as 2.4m compared to their modern counterparts with heights of three meters. The actual layout of the buildings can be poor, although the sellable area may be more than 300sqm, the fact that some rooms have a column in the middle decreases the utility of the space and is arguably no better than a new 200sqm development.

Purchasing property is hugely subjective, according to individual needs, agenda, budget, and lifestyle. Many property buyers opt for professional advice and hire a real estate agent. They can save you time, provide professional advice, and will match both listed and unlisted properties for you. Their fees are usually paid by the seller and generally total up to three to eight percent of the purchase price.

Research the property agents carefully, word of mouth recommendations and testimonials are vital. Ask questions and thoroughly test their knowledge of the area you are thinking of living or investing in.

Do your homework, have a well thought-out financial and business plan. Get the correct advice and whether you are living or investing in Bangkok, you will be laying solid foundations for your future!

PHOTOGRAPH: JOSHUA RAWSON / UNSPLASH



# Getting Crafty

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

It's April, which means two things; that we all get a much needed break from work for Songkran, and secondly, that the temperatures have passed boiling point. It's the month to stay hydrated and cool off in more ways than one, and little beats quenching one's thirst than a cool and flavorful craft beer.

While the government hasn't made it any easier for local independent brewers to make their own suds at home, the craft beer movement continues to spread like a wildfire regardless, with new breweries and beers springing up daily. Here's a look at some of the best spots to sample craft beer around town.



## **Mikkeller**

With more than 30 taps and specialized craft selections, Mikkeller retains top dog status when it comes to craft connoisseurship in Bangkok. Originally from Denmark, Mikkeller started as a gypsy brewer and has become one of the most cutting edge craft collaborators in the world, with branches now in Seoul, Taipei, Barcelona, San Francisco, San Diego, Singapore, Reykjavik, and Bangkok.

It isn't only that the beers here sound tantalizing (try an Ich Bin Organic Weisse Passionfruit or Spontanquadrupelraspberry!), but they are totally unique; almost all are hard to find top-notch crafts from around the planet.

When Mikkeller first opened in Bangkok, you had to wonder what they were up to. Their cozy Thai house with a large yard location was buried deep in the sub sois of Ekamai (seriously, you will not find the bar without either a Google Map or by using their website map), a spot which certainly wouldn't attract too many passersby. But Mikkeller planned it this way, wanting only those who cared about making the effort to hunt down truly outstanding beer to show up.

Constantly innovating, they've also expanded from only beer to include the fine dining Upstairs at Mikkeller restaurant above the bar. The restaurant features creative cuisine made by Korean-born chef Dan Bark, who is the former sous chef at Grace, the 3-star Michelin restaurant in Chicago. Upstairs at Mikkeller recently was awarded a star by the *Michelin Guide Bangkok* as well.

## **Mikkeller**

26 Ekamai Soi 10 Yeak 2, Tel. 02 381 9891  
[www.mikkellerbangkok.com](http://www.mikkellerbangkok.com)



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF MIKKELLER

**Pijiu**

Over on the fringes of Chinatown, Soi Nana has become noted for several great retro-style bars and speakeasies. Teens of Thailand is Bangkok's best boutique gin bar, and El Chiringuito's Tapas Bar feels like something right out of Barcelona. Now craft beer has added to the scene, as Pijiu (the Chinese word for beer) combines a retro jazz cafe look and sound with an array of crafts, from local Thai selections such as Happy New Beer to US staples like Stone, Deschutes, and Anderson Valley. The team at Beervana, the craft distributors who helped launch the Thai craft craze here, are behind this funky hole in the wall, so you can guarantee that the beer quality is taken seriously.

**Pijiu**

16 Soi Rammaitree (Nana), Tel. 081 839 2832  
[www.facebook.com/pijiubar/](http://www.facebook.com/pijiubar/)



PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF PIJIU

**Wishbeer Home Bar**

Bangkok expat Frenchman Jérôme Le Louer started Wishbeer basically as a way of being able to get his favorite Belgian beers, which he and his friends lamented not being able to buy here (way back before the whole craft craze started). Since then, Le Louer's operation has grown massively to include a chill out bar set in an old elevator factory warehouse, along with a bottle shop and Thailand's best-selling online beer and alcohol shop, with stocks of over 500 beers from around the world available. They've also got a staggering 37 beers on tap, so chances are there will be at least a few things you like on the long list of crafts.

**Wishbeer Home Bar**

1491 Sukhumvit Soi 67, Tel. 02 392 1403  
[www.wishbeerhomebar.com](http://www.wishbeerhomebar.com)



PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF WISHBEER HOME BAR

**Bottles of Beer**

Feeling a bit more like someone's kitchen than a bar, this small place right near the Thonglor BTS station is basically a few tables that are surrounded by shelves and refrigerators of one very extensive selection of beers. You can find many of the latest Thai crafts here (Lamzing, Triple Pearl, Stonehead), and if you and your friends order six bottles (of any kind), you get almost wholesale discounts, making it one of the more affordable craft hangouts in town. The incredibly cute and well behaved chihuahua that has the run of the shop is an added plus, as is the rotisserie chicken that you can order from outside, served inside along with your beer.

**Bottles of Beer**

2/7 Sukhumvit Soi 34, Tel. 02 040 0473  
[www.bottlesofbeer.co](http://www.bottlesofbeer.co)



PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF BOTTLES OF BEER

# Trunks Fly, Funds Flow

BY PLOYLADA SIRACHADAPONG



1

Initiated in Thailand in 2001 by Anantara Hotels, Resorts & Spas, the annual King's Cup Elephant Polo tournament has now grown into one of the biggest charitable events in Thailand. It's raised USD 950,000 for projects to better the lives of Thailand's elephant population.

The 16th annual King's Cup Elephant Polo tournament was held early last month right on the banks of the Chao Phraya River. The four-day event was a stunning success with lots of fun-filled activities for the guests, such as elephant polo matches, children's education day, "Ladies Day", and a Thai food festival with amazing dishes whipped up by Thailand's "Iron Chefs".

This year's event raised over USD 1.7 million. The funds were donated to several projects to help better the lives of Thailand's wild and domesticated pachyderms. These included the world's first Thai Elephant Assisted Autistic Therapy Project, positive reinforcement elephant training workshops, mahout

community development initiatives and wild elephant conservation projects. Part of the funds also benefited a mobile blood centrifuge and elephant ambulance under the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre (TECC).

Among other organizations benefiting from the fundraiser was the Zoological Parks Organization of Thailand, which supports veterinary and educational projects to improve the well-being of elephants and mahouts in the northeastern province of Surin. The current situation is that ex-street elephants in that province are left stranded without jobs, heavily dependent on humans and cannot fend for themselves in their natural habitat. The money also helped to fund construction work for a watch tower in a village where crops are often prone to raids by elephants so that farmers are better warned of an approaching herb.

Most importantly, the funds will support a government project that trains mahouts to become veterinary

assistants. The project provides first aid and other medical care services to their elephants. The money will also go to community-based Human Elephant Conflict mitigation projects in two Thai national parks and one national park in Tanzania. The funds will also be useful for rangers at a national park in Cambodia that badly needs anti-poaching equipment.

What made the event even more special was the fact that 20 unemployed ex-street elephants were seen receiving full veterinary checks by medical personnel from the Zoological Parks Organization of Thailand under the patronage of His Majesty the King of Thailand and the Department of Livestock Development. All the elephants in the event received essential vitamins, food and care, which are not available to them otherwise. It was indeed a great day of fun for both the jumbo animals and their human friends.

For more information, please visit [www.anantaraelephantpolo.com](http://www.anantaraelephantpolo.com).

PHOTOGRAPH: TEERAT YAEMNGAMLUEA



2

PHOTOGRAPH: COURTESY OF ANANTARA HOTELS, RESORTS & SPAS



3

- 1 Elephants parade the flags of participating teams.
- 2 On the ball: An elephant enjoys the game as much as its riders.
- 3 Children get up close and personal with their new jumbo friend.

# Nine West's

## SPRING/SUMMER 2018 COLLECTION UNVEILED

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL



Nine West has just launched its Spring/Summer Collection that's a throwback to the 1980s. The modern, energetic collection generates plenty of felicity and optimism, as befitting the lavish decade, while empowering women of all styles with a statement wardrobe to brighten the season. The new collection is now available at first-floor CC Shop at Siam Paragon or Nine West counters at leading department stores nationwide.

**For details, please visit:**

[www.facebook.com/NineWestThailand](http://www.facebook.com/NineWestThailand)



## Huawei Y9 *Quad-camera Smartphone*

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL



Huawei recently launched its newest quad-camera smartphone. The "HUAWEI Y9 2018" incorporates a dual camera setup for both front (16 and 2-megapixel resolutions) and rear cameras (13 and 2-megapixel resolutions). Other features include a 5.93-inch full view display with 18:9 aspect ratio, face unlock and fingerprint screen unlock features, dual SIM support, external storage support for up to 256 GB, Kirin 659 Octa-core processor, and Android TM 8.0 operating system with EMUI 8.0 user interface. The smartphone comes in three colors: black, blue and gold.

**For more information, please visit:**

[www.consumer.huawei.com](http://www.consumer.huawei.com)



# Honor's Latest Mid-Range Killer Phones

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

Honor, a leading smartphone e-brand from China, launched the Honor 9Lite and Honor 7X smartphones recently at the Avani Riverside Hotel, marking the young brand's official debut in the Thai market. In addition to winning the top spot as the number-one smartphone e-brand in China, Honor was also recognized as the number-one and number-three e-brand in Finland and Russia, respectively. The company is setting its sights on claiming its place among the top three smartphone brands in Thailand by 2020.

Both the Honor 9Lite and the Honor 7X – costing THB 6,490 and THB 7,490, respectively – offer top-of-the line features and seamless performance at an irresistible price point.

**For more information, please visit:**  
[www.hihonor.com](http://www.hihonor.com)

**BOLD IS  
BEAUTIFUL**

## *Benefit empowers women via local charities*

Benefit Cosmetics' global philanthropy program entitled "The Bold is Beautiful Project" is certainly living up to its name as it steps up its game. Next month, 100% of Benefit's proceeds from brow wax services will go to charities worldwide. Bear in mind: one brow wax can make a huge difference to someone else's life as it can result in a training session in financial literacy and two children enrolled in day camps focused on science, technology, engineering and mathematics. One brow wax can also help Girls Inc. provide weeks' worth of hands-on programming for one girl.

Since its start in 2015, Benefit has raised and donated over USD 11 million, waxing 455,911 brows. For this year, the goal is to raise USD 6 million dollars to give back to local charities in 19 countries.

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL



# April



## Katy Perry to 'Witness' Bangkok

American singer Katy Perry is set to mesmerize Bangkok fans with her concert titled "Katy Perry WITNESS: The Tour 2018 Bangkok" on **April 10**, at IMPACT Arena, Muang Thong Thani. The concert features, among others, hit singles such as the Platinum-certified "Chained to the Rhythm" and "Bon Appétit". Tickets are available at [www.thaiticketmajor.com](http://www.thaiticketmajor.com).



## Best DJs at Vana Nava's Songkran bash

Some of the world's best DJs and Thai spinners are joining forces for a one-day Songkran bash titled "Vana Nava Songkran Hua Hin 2018" on **April 12**, at Vana Nava Hua Hin Water Jungle. DJs spinning the tunes at the party include Yellow Claw, Justin Mylo, Apster, and Skyler, alongside Thai spinners such as 22 Bullets and Joy Lila. Reserve your tickets at [www.thaiticketmajor.com](http://www.thaiticketmajor.com).



## Songkran EDM style at 'PEPSI S20'

The world's wettest party is back! Woody World (of "Woody Talk Show" fame), led by famous talk show host Woody Vuthithorn, is organizing "PEPSI S20", Songkran's official electronic dance music (EDM) festival, from **April 13 - 15** at Live Park, Rama IX. The DJ lineup includes DJ Snake, Oliver Heldens, OOKay, TUR, Tujamo and Vintage Culture. This is one of the biggest music festivals to be held in celebration of Songkran in Bangkok. For more information, please visit [www.s20festival.com](http://www.s20festival.com).



## Mandarin Oriental's 'Tea & Therapy Package'

Treat yourself and someone special to a day of pampering at Spa Studio at the Mandarin Oriental Bangkok. The hotel is offering a "Tea & Therapy" package for a temporary escape from the rigors of everyday life. The package has two parts. The first is a 90-minute "Endermologie" beauty treatment for body and face in the comfort of the spa's luxurious treatment rooms. The second one is a special afternoon tea at the hotel's legendary Authors' Lounge. Package priced at THB 4,600 net per person; the offer is valid until **May 31**. For more detail, call 02 659 9000 ext 7433.

\*Submit news, updates and press releases to: [info@urbanaffairsmagazine.com](mailto:info@urbanaffairsmagazine.com).



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