

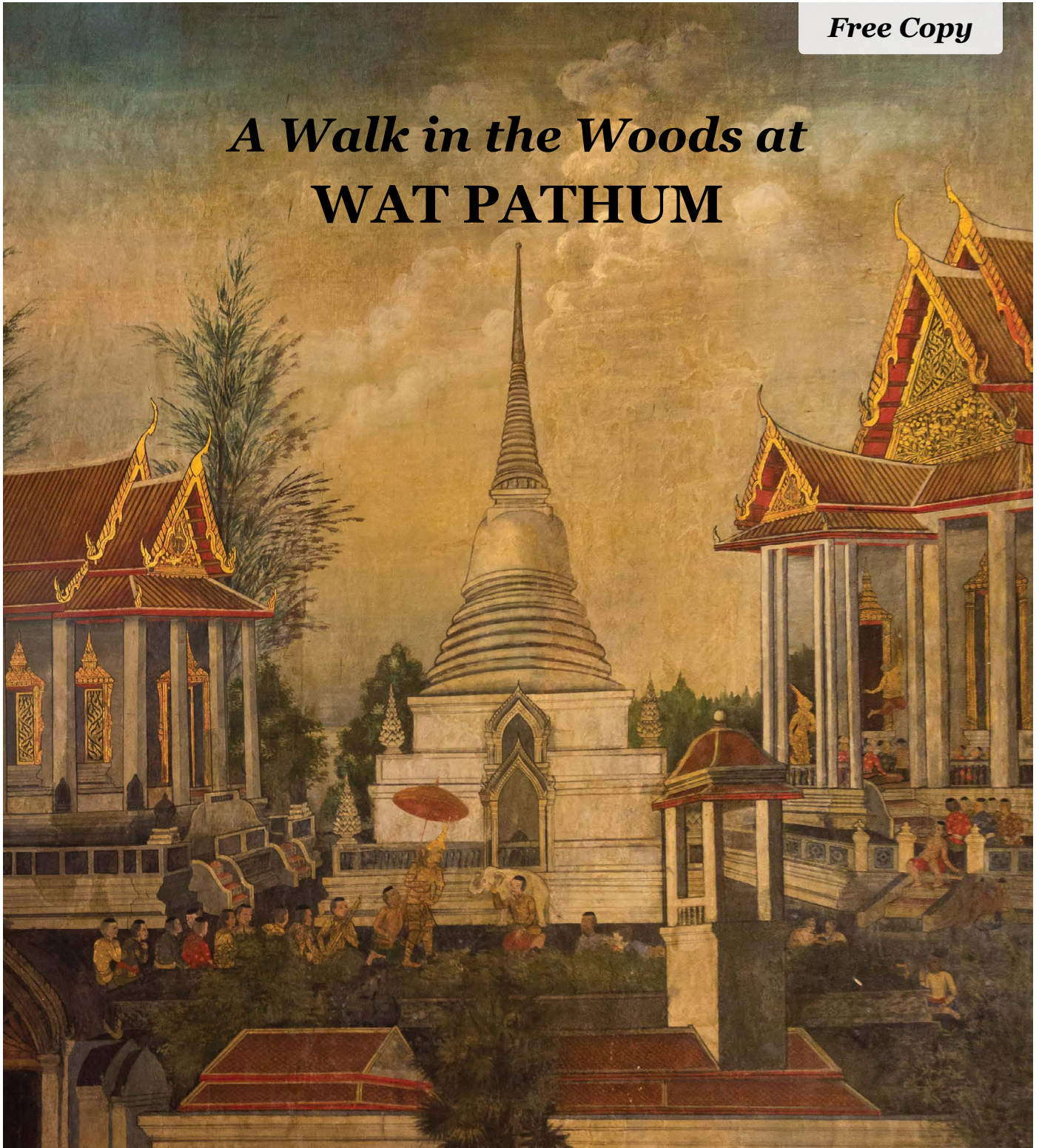
URBAN AFFAIRS

B A N G K O K

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Free Copy

A Walk in the Woods at **WAT PATHUM**



Dining with the Stars

The Michelin Guide: See who's who
in Bangkok's culinary scene

Bangkok's Hidden Gem

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for a great nostalgic experience

Law of Attraction

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& Happy New Year

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Editor's Letter

Happy New Year 2018!!

Hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and is now ready to hit the ground running in 2018.

It is always great to start a new year with a fresh slate, and that's why in Thailand we are proud of having a couple of New Years – the Chinese one in February and the Thai in April – to start life anew. It's also a time to make resolutions, ones that give us hope for new possibilities in changing and improving our lives. Even though research data shows less than 10% of the resolutions are kept, it's still worthwhile to have them handy to give us that extra push to start off on the right foot in the new year.

One of my New Year's resolutions this year – and actually for a third consecutive year, to be honest – is to exercise more and bring back my six-pack. I also want to give back more to communities – be they SMEs, non-profit organizations or even those in need. In the following months, we are looking to experiment with a couple of ways of giving back, using *Urban Affairs* as a platform to do so. We'll see how it goes and keep you in the loop as, ultimately, we'll need your engagement and support to make our New Year's resolution a reality.

So, for the New Year issue, we kick off by introducing a Thai e-commerce SME producing homemade soaps for sale online. We'll then take you on a day trip to a little forest monastery located smack in the heart of Bangkok between Siam Paragon and CentralWorld. Then, check into The Cabochon Hotel, a hidden gem on Sukhumvit Road, for some indulgent new year pampering. Our relationship expert continues to perk us up with her handy tips on coping with heartbreak. Meanwhile, as one of our contributors admits, regardless of the sheer joy of reading, making a choice between a print book and an e-book can be a delicate balancing act.

With the cool season in full swing, our fashion editor recommends what to wear in the chilly New Year. And in case you're heading overseas, never forget that the embassies here could be your best friend. We'll have to give a shout-out to those restaurants acknowledged by the first *Michelin Guide Bangkok*. This issue wraps up with a writer's ruminations on the Law of Attraction plus where Thais (and many foreigners) can go visit for good luck and positivity boosters to start off the New Year.

We hope you'll enjoy the ride together and we wish you a very Happy New Year 2018!

– VT

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Based in Bangkok, **Ploylada Sirachadapong** started her writing career as a food critic, and after eight years of visiting restaurants around Bangkok she now expands her writing genre to include travel, fashion and architecture.

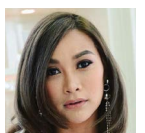
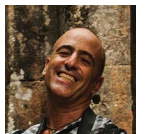
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Born and based in Bangkok, **Naam Sombatanantakorn** is one of the co-founders of Viajente, a travel agency that offers various natural and cultural travel programs. She is a lifelong learner and loves to travel.

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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.



A Little Forest in the City

BY NAAM SOMBATANANTAKORN

PHOTOGRAPH: TEERAT YAEMNGAMLUEA



1

When it comes to a business area where people are crazy busy, the traffic is horrible, Siam Square would easily come to mind. The shopping paradise in Pathumwan district has remained Bangkok's hippest neighborhood for decades. But not many people know that there's a quiet little forest hidden in the heart of Siam Square on a patch of insanely valuable real estate nestled between Siam Paragon and CentralWorld.

Shopping aside, the area is steeped in history. Take a quick trip back in time to 1857, and you'll find this area was a vast empty field on the eastern fringes of the city, part of the lush green countryside owned not only by villagers or farmers, but members of the Royal Family as well. In that same year, King Mongkut (Rama IV) decided to build a summer villa farther away from the Grand Palace as it was getting crowded and noisy.

Much to his delight, he found out this area was a perfect fit. The project began with the enlargement of the existing pond and by planting several kinds of trees and flowering plants, including water lilies and lotuses in the pond. The King also wanted to have a temple built near his summer home, so a monastery was founded and aptly named by himself Wat Pathumwanaram Ratchaworawihan, aka Wat Pathum, or the temple of lotuses.

The King was deeply involved in the temple's construction, with his personal preferences carefully integrated into the temple's design. There is a pagoda located between the ordination and

Buddha image halls in which three beautiful, northern-style Buddha images are enshrined. The former hall houses Phra Sai, while the latter building features Phra Serm and Phra Saen.

These Buddha images were brought to Siam from Lan Chang when this province of Laos came under Siamese rule and many Lao people from the province settled in Bangkok, especially Pathumwan district. By moving the sacred images to Bangkok, the king hoped his new subjects would be able to feel more at home.

These sacred Buddha images are believed to have supernatural powers. Whenever the country was hit by drought, Phra Serm would be brought outdoors to form a part of the rainmaking rituals.

The ordination hall is considered the most sacred area in a Buddhist temple, and normally designated by boundary markers called Sema stones. The boundary stones surrounding Wat Pathum's ordination hall are placed in a double-layer configuration.

Contrary to conventional design of other temples that has a single tier of carved Sema stone slabs to mark the boundary, Wat Pathum uses Sema-style capitals installed at the corners of the boundary's first, or outer layer, and then has the ordination hall's outer ring of columns encrusted with Sema slabs at their bases to create the second or inner layer.



2



PHOTOGRAPHS: TEERARAT YAEMNGAMLUEA

1 Wat Pathum's meditation center
 2 Phra Serm (the principal image)
 and Phra Saen (the smaller one
 seen in the lower tier)
 3 Phra Sai in the ordination hall

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4 Sema slabs encrusted on the ordination hall's columns and a Sema-style capital on the outer layer of the boundary

5 Wat Pathum's classic portico

6 - 7 Wat Pathum with Siam Paragon in the background

The wooden door panel of the entrance features exquisite bas-relief artwork in gold leaf and colored glass, depicting the rustic charms of village life around the temple in years gone by such as farming and a small-scale freshwater fishery.

The murals of this building are also interesting. Normally, most temples would have Buddhist art portraying scenes from the Ten Jatakas of the Buddha (the ten birth tales of the Buddha). But here the mural paintings highlight episodes from the Thai folkloric tale "Srithanonchai" about a cunning, yet intelligent trickster who thrives on performing cons.

Inside the temple compound there are several smaller buildings for various purposes. Of especial interest to visitors is a small building to the southeast of the ordination hall, its pediment bearing a royal insignia which indicates that this building was once used as a dismantling hall for the King

If you proceed to the west, toward Siam Paragon, you'll see the House of Mahidol Memorial, a small monument to the royal Mahidol clan. King Rama VIII and King Rama IX, both from the Mahidol family lineage, inherited a vast tract of land in Pathumwan district on which to build their residence, or Sra Pathum Palace (literally "Lotus Pond Palace"), located near the temple.

Usually when a member of the royal family passes away, their remains would be kept at the royal cemetery or within the Grand Palace. But the Mahidol family chose to have a monument close to their residence so it'd be easier for their descendants to pay their respects to their ancestors. This monument enshrines the remains of family members such as Queen Savang Vadhana's tooth (Rama VIII and Rama IX's grandmother), ashes of HRH Prince Mahidol of Songkhla (Rama VIII and Rama IX's father), ashes of King Rama VIII, the hip-bone of HRH Princess Mother Srinagarindra, and the hair and tooth of HRH Princess Galyani Vadhana (Rama VIII and Rama IX's elder sister).



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The trees, planted at that time, are still standing after more than a century. These towering full-grown trees provide a small tranquil oasis so conducive to meditation practice. The entrance to the meditation center is located to the northeast of the ordination hall and covered with dense green foliage that can be seen from afar. This pocket of greenery, a little forest if you like, is a place where you can find peace of mind amid the neighborhood's total chaos.

However, there is no sign of the lotus pond anymore. During the reign of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), the pond was filled up to pave the way for a road. Though the symbol of the temple has disappeared, the temple and its name, Wat Pathum, live on.

From now until the end of March, Sra Pathum Palace – the official home of the Mahidols – is opening its doors to visitors, with access from behind the Siam Kempinski Hotel. A royal exhibition is currently underway at the Queen Savang Vadhana Museum (inside the palace compound) and has two parts. The first part – set in the exhibition hall – displays interesting facts about Queen Savang Vadhana (King Rama V's consort and the grandmother of King Bhumibol Adulyadej), the history of Sra Pathum Palace, and the Queen's previous works.

The second part of the exhibition – at Phra Tamnak Yai, the main building of Sra Pathum Palace and once the home of Queen Savang Vadhana – highlights the architectural wonders of the palace, its furniture and utensils. The exhibition also zooms in on the life and times of the Queen before and after the return of Prince Mahidol with his wife and three children from Cambridge, Boston.

Since this is still officially a functioning palace, visitors need to follow the rules and regulations plus a strict dress code.

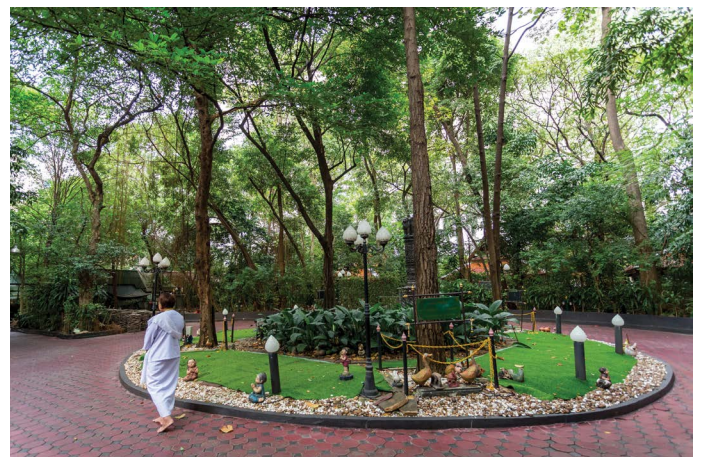
Queen Savang Vadhana Museum

Opening hours: 10 am – 3 pm, Mon – Sat

Entry is by advance reservation only. Tel. 02 252 1965 - 7.



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8 Sra Pathum Palace

9 The House of Mahidol Memorial

10 The dismantling hall with a royal insignia on its pediment

11 The meditation ground of Wat Pathum

Starry Starry Night: Michelin Comes to Bangkok

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

The Bangkok sky got a bit brighter with the close of 2017, as the much anticipated arrival of the *Michelin Guide Bangkok* became a reality, with 17 restaurants being honored with a total of 20 prestigious stars. The awards were celebrated with a gala black tie dinner at the Siam Kempinski Hotel, with a six course dinner being prepared by Michelin-starred chefs from around the world and those in attendance enjoying cutting edge cuisine, fine wines, champagne, and entertainment from the Royal Bangkok Ballet to complete the fete.

Michelin's most coveted prize, the awarding of three stars, is absent in the Bangkok guide, but three restaurants took home two stars. **Gaggan**, the progressive Indian standout run by Chef Gaggan Anand was a two-star winner, as was **Le Normandie**, the classy French restaurant at the Mandarin Oriental, and rounding out this class was **Mezzaluna** at the Lebua Hotel.

Fourteen other restaurants received a single star, with seven Thai dining rooms being honored. **Bo.lan**, noted for its zero carbon footprint efforts and high quality ingredients was a winner, along with high end traditional Thai spots **Nahm**, **Paste**, **Chim by Siam Wisdom**, **Saneh Jaan**, and molecular Thai stalwart **Sra Bua by Kiin Kiin**.

The biggest Thai award surprise of the night though went to **Jay Fai**, the hole-in-the-wall street eatery run by a 70-year-old auntie famed for her *pad kee mao* drunkard's noodles and rad na dishes, making it just the second street food city to get a starred restaurant after Singapore's street hawkers won a couple several years ago.

Rounding out the list were five French and European contemporary dining establishments: **L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon**, **Savelberg**, **Elements**, **J'AI ME** by Jean-Michel Lorain, and **Sühring**, run by German twins Thomas and Mathias Sühring. Along with their European counterparts are **Ginza Sushi-Ichi**, the lone Japanese winner, and the

fusion and craft beer pairing restaurant **Upstairs** at Mikkeller Bangkok, presided over by Korean-born chef Dan Bark.

All the hoopla aside, and in spite of the various critics of the awards who claimed that the inspectors didn't really know the true Thai palate or that only high-end restaurants were honored (Jay Fai may be a simple shophouse eatery, but does charge more than ten times the normal price for a plate of *rad na*), there are positive takeaways from the arrival of the guide in Bangkok.

First of all, and much to Thai Tourism's delight, the awards will bring countless numbers of gastro-tourists and foodies from around the world to Bangkok. As Chef Gaggan remarked, "Bangkok has gone from being the world's street food capital to being the world's gourmet capital."

Additionally, the Michelin awards aren't only about the starred restaurants. There are a total of 98 restaurants listed in the guide, with 28 street food shophouses also getting named (restaurants must have a physical address, so pushcarts or trolleys cannot be listed), continuing Michelin's trend in Hong Kong and Singapore to recognize local culture.

There are also awards for Bib Gourmand, which are restaurants that provide great quality for good price (in Bangkok's case, less than 1000 baht for a full dinner), with all the street eat selections getting a Bib Gourmand, along with 17 other selections like **Soul Food Mahanakorn**, **Krua Aporn** and **Khua Kling Pak Sod**, all noted for excellent Thai cuisine.

Finally, there are also Plate awards, with restaurants like **The House on Sathorn** or **Le Du**, who didn't receive stars, yet highly worthy of a visit, listed here. With all this recognition, you can be sure that the authorities won't be trying any more "let's clean up and get rid of street food" tactics any longer.

In addition to all the food tourist attention that Bangkok will be receiving, the culinary

scene here itself will elevate even more. Young and talented chefs from around the world like to move around, and the opportunity to work in Michelin-starred restaurants looks pretty appealing on a resume, so with all of its official listings, the visiting chef pool should be a continuous upgrade.

Local suppliers will also be in demand. With Michelin restaurants comes greater need for high-end ingredients, whether they be avocados or truffles. Local entrepreneurs will now have further incentive to grow organic produce or fruit, and there will be plenty of buyers.

Most importantly, the *Michelin Guide's* arrival has showcased Bangkok as an incredibly diverse and cosmopolitan city. International Director Michael Ellis said it best when he remarked, "You have a Japanese chef cooking French food in an Italian-named restaurant in Bangkok" (referring to Mezzaluna's Ryuki Kawasaki). And not only are fancy foreign restaurants showcased, but in one night, the number of starred Thai restaurants in the world more than doubled.

Even the winning chefs themselves paid much deserved credit to their staff, with Le Normandie's Arnaud Dunand Sauthier saying, "These awards show that Thais can successfully cook Italian, French, or any other cuisine they set their mind on," and Nahm's David Thompson playfully remarking, "All of our success is created by the staff. I don't do anything except come and pick up awards."

Thai cuisine has long been at the forefront of the world's top gastronomic offerings, so it's nice to see international accreditation and attention being given to it on such a large scale. It's a great time to get out and explore all the wonderful culinary treats that Bangkok has to offer....just don't go over to have a plate of *pad kee mao* at Jay Fai any time soon. As Chef Gaggan quipped at the end of the Michelin award evening, "This will be the last night you'll be able to get a table at Jay Fai for the next few years!"



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- 1 Le Normandie, Mandarin Oriental
- 2 Nahm, COMO Metropolitan Bangkok
- 3 - 4 Fine cuisine served during the awards night
- 5 A Thai dance performance onstage
- 6 Two-star winners, from left, in chef whites, Chef Kawasaki, Chef Gaggan and Chef Sauthier
- 7 The Michelin star recipients



The Cabochon Hotel

Bangkok's Hidden Gem

BY PLOYLADA SRIRACHADAPONG

I used to enjoy my weekend getaway on the beach or hiking somewhere near Bangkok, but as I grew older I couldn't handle a couple of hours' bus ride like I used to, so I started looking for places within the city that I can escape into and find peace without the hassle of traveling too far. Finally I've found a gem called The Cabochon Hotel, polished just like its name and tucked away down Sukhumvit Soi 45.

Designed by renowned Taiwanese designer Eugene Yeh, The Cabochon Hotel is a place for travelers seeking an understated luxury with modern comforts and yet a vintage vibe. Determined to open a small boutique hotel in Bangkok, Yeh has developed a real passion for creating a distinctive hotel experience like no other. The Cabochon Hotel is a 4-storey ivory white colonial-style building that was built in 2012. The exterior design pays tribute to the neo-Parisian and Viennese styles that defined the Shanghai art deco chic of the 1920s when jazz and blues filled the air.

Located at the very end of the soi, the venue has only four suites and four studios to ensure that guests will be able to indulge their craving for a serene calmness while in the proximity of the hotel. Being a very detail-oriented person, Yeh made sure that every inch of this property perfectly offers tantalizing glimpses of a bygone era, whether they be antique wooden panels, old windows, French

doors, or even the black and white marble floor. He also shows his lifelong love for travel through all the decorative items and furniture culled from around the world.

One of the most spectacular areas is The Joy Luck Club room. Named after the best-known novel by Amy Tan, this whitewashed mahjong club room houses a library that's decorated with wood paneling and furniture and also serves as the Salon de Thé where guests can enjoy a glass of wine.

The hotel's award-winning Thai Lao Yeh Restaurant serves authentic Thai and Lao food on beautiful blue and white ceramics displaying Thai motifs. The ambience is strictly ancient Siamese, adding to diners' great nostalgia for the old way of life, especially the wood panels using century-old timber and the dark-toned wooden chairs and small round tables, which wonderfully makes the whole place resemble an ancient teahouse.

While the venue's retro vibe is amped up with hardwood flooring, the main lounge celebrates playfulness with a classic model plane hanging from the ceiling and the vivid colors of mismatched sofas underneath. The lounge is enhanced with Parisian touches such as a Louis Vuitton trunk, a stunning contrast to the black window frames and bookshelves.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE CABOCHON HOTEL

When I overnighted here, I immediately fell in love with their 32-square meter Queen Studio, which is decorated with vintage-style furniture and a queen-size bed, all well selected to ensure its cozy and homely feel. The whitewashed walls are softened by the dim glow of lights so carefully set and displayed throughout the room.

I felt totally pampered after pushing through the double-leaved French door to the balcony that affords a garden view and plenty of relaxation. Even with its retro atmosphere, each room is fully equipped with modern amenities such as cable TV entertainment, in-room Wi-Fi, air conditioning and a safety box.

Besides its gorgeous rooms and lounge, the hotel's crown jewel is its rooftop pool. After a walk up through the grey-and-white marble staircase, the 22-meter pool is the perfect place to unwind on a beach chair and enjoy a sweeping view of the city.

Those who love establishments that tell stories from the past would appreciate what Eugene Yeh has done to transport us to another world. The Cabochon Hotel is truly a hidden gem: a perfect place for Bangkokians to relax, hide away, or just drop by for authentic Thai nosh.

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Of Print Books and E-Books

BY SWISA ARIYAPRUCHYA



Last year I finally took the plunge and got myself a Kindle. Being an avid reader and having grown up with paper books I had put off getting myself an e-book for years. I loved the smell of print and the feel of paper beneath my fingers. I love libraries, bookstores, and anything print related. I derive pleasure from browsing through books and visiting unique bookstores around the world.

Being such a fan of paper books, why did I finally succumb to the e-book? Last year, I decided to get one because I found myself traveling regularly for work and I wanted to travel light. My biggest trigger was perhaps my recent discovery that my eyes started to need the larger fonts and getting the larger font version at the bookstore was sometimes a hassle. With an e-book you could adjust the size to your heart's content. Attempting to live more with less, e-books also meant that we didn't need to buy bookshelves.

I fell in love with the Kindle and enjoyed saving 20%-30% off the cover price with books at the touch of my fingertips. I could read anywhere and everywhere and my eyes didn't hurt. It's always with me and allows me to have a quick read whenever I have time. Batteries seemingly last forever and I am reading more than before.

The question then is, do I prefer e-books to paper books? No matter how much I love e-books I have to admit that print books hold a special place in my heart. There is something about them that makes my heart do a little dance. Here are some reasons why I think print books remain so special compared to e-books.

1. Print books offer sensory appeal

Being able to curl up on the couch with a book in your hands, flipping through the pages with a faint smell of paper and ink is indescribably satisfying. If you're somewhere cold, imagine curling up with one by the fireplace. Reading a print book becomes an experience that e-books simply cannot replace.

2. Print books make meaningful gifts

Receiving a print book as a gift is more impressive and meaningful than receiving an e-book as a gift. Some of my most cherished gifts are the books given to me by my family for the experience of reading those books remains forever with me. Seeing them on the bookshelves also bring back memories and smiles to my face.

3. Print books can be easily shared

Sharing a print book is much easier than sharing e-books. Whenever I read a good

book, I want to share the book with friends and spread the joy. I cannot do this with an e-book and this is something I miss doing.

These qualities I believe are what make print books unique. Many years ago when tablets and e-books first appeared, people worried that the print business would not survive. Now, I think it is safe to say that no matter how convenient technology is, there is still nothing like the old charms of holding a traditional print book in your hands.

It's not surprising that consumer reports and publishing associations in both the US and UK have been reporting that since 2016 sales of print books have been rising and surpassing sales of e-books. A *WSJ* article a few months ago also mentioned how US sales of print books rose five percent while those of e-books plunged by 17 percent in 2016. Many believe this trend will continue and I agree. People and the younger generation are going back to basics and having digital detoxes.

Does this mean I will abandon my e-book? Not anytime soon for its functionality allows me to read while on the go. It's light and convenient. Print books, however, remain my preferred choice and for all my reading. I suppose for now I'd just keep the best of both worlds and keep on buying bookshelves.

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‘Imagine Happiness’ unveiled

The Forestias: where nature plus community equals happiness

BY PLOYLADA SIRACHADAPONG



Combining nature and architecture as a way of creating a happy community is a beautiful concept that real estate giant Magnolia Quality Development Corporation Limited (MQDC) has taken into its heart. The goal is to not only please their clients, but also set an example that a 360-degree sustainability-focused project can become a reality.

“The Forestias”, MQDC’s recently launched project, will integrate all aspects of nature and community into its “Imagine Happiness” concept. Located at Bangna-Trad Road KM7, The Forestias is a 300-rai (119-acre) project that will be comprised of several facilities including residential housing, retail buildings, a health center, a forest pavilion, community space, and a learning center – all under an extensive natural ecosystem and targeting a lifestyle-conscious, multi-generational clientele, from baby boomers to millennials.

MQDC Chief Executive Visit Malaisirirat said: “The Forestias was born from the question ‘What is true happiness in life?’ This is not easy to answer because everyone has a different definition of happiness. But one thing is certain: Happiness affects our body and mind, people around us, and the environment. This is the foundation of ‘sustainable happiness’.”

He further explained: “Our company is committed to developing real estate projects to close the gaps and bring sustainable happiness with the promise of ‘for all well-being’. We want to offer the best and we do that through eco-friendly design, modern innovation and technology, and enhanced space for all four generations: grandparents, parents, children, and great-grandchildren. The whole community can spend time together and interact, ultimately creating a happy society.”

The Imagine Happiness concept has four core elements: living amidst nature, family members of different generations living together, public spaces and facilities in close proximity to allow people to spend more time together, and technology and innovation to drive sustainability.

At the launch event, Kittiphun Ouyamaphun, Senior Vice President – Project Development, was on hand to discuss the designing and implementation process: “We are working with global partners in designing and creating this project to offer sustainable happiness now and in the future. It is in the DNA of MQDC to create a new living concept for today and the future. We have global partners who are experts in their fields. Together, we are creating a living phenomenon in an environment that brings happiness to its residents.”

The Forestias is scheduled to open in 2022. For more information, visit www.theforestias.com.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF MQDC

Moving on after a Loss of a Relationship

BY NIKKI ASSAVATHORN

Happy New Year to all of you! This New Year, I'm committed to writing more engaging column for you guys. My goal, hopefully, is to help you to maneuver your way within the dating scene and provide valuable, unbiased advice so that you can achieve your happiness in your love life.

When I was thinking about the topics I should write for this New Year's issue, I thought, for those who were singles, they might be very excited to start the year and meet new people and get attached in 2018. However, there may be some of you who are not quite ready to start dating again for various reasons. One of them could be due to a recent relationship failure. You may not be able to move on yet, or you're still hurt.

I recently received the following question in my inbox and I want to share this because some of you may be in a similar situation:

"I recently broke up with my ex-boyfriend. I was told that I did not give him space. He ended up meeting someone else behind my back, and was caught red-handed, twice, by me. I had to let him go because I could not accept that he cheated on me.

It bothers me that he said I did not give him space. To me, being with him makes me happy. Am I selfish for wanting to be by his side? I regret loving him so much, because I feel like I am the only one in pain after we broke up.

I want to change for the better, and not be so clingy in my next relationship. What should I do? I've been crying for days, and I want to stop. I don't have any friends to hang out with, as they are busy with their own lives.

This relationship has really scarred me, and I don't know what to do."

This is my reply to her:

"Relationships can be tough. Love can feel like a battlefield at times. There are many people who carry their emotional baggage from a bad past relationship for months, or even years. It's completely normal to still think about why it has happened or even question whether you are the one to blame for the break-up. But it doesn't matter because whatever it is, your ex-boyfriend has already made his decision. No matter what the reason is, there is no excuse for cheating and lying.

He is not the right one for you – and from here onwards, I would like you to focus on yourself.

Take a step back and reassess your priorities. A lot of times in a relationship, we end up being molded into a person that suits our partner, which may not necessarily be our authentic selves. So a breakup is actually a good opportunity to see what's important to you, which may put you on the right path in your next relationship.

Ultimately, being in a relationship is not about making yourself complete – you need to be wholly complete first before getting into a relationship. You can do this by doing

more things that you enjoy doing. Take new classes, go on trips, or embark on activities you have always wanted to try – keep yourself busy.

You can't put a timeline on it. Basically, you need to be honest with yourself – you'll definitely know when you're still mourning over the loss of a relationship, or if you're over it.

When you are ready to date again, do remember that a relationship is built on mutual trust and respect. For

a relationship to work there need to be gives and takes, acceptance, and adjustments. There is no right or wrong answer on being too clingy or needy. What someone thinks is 'being needy', another person may think otherwise. So, in any relationship, there needs to be a compromise from both parties. Having an open and honest communication for you to express how you feel is very important.

Ultimately, if your boyfriend loves you enough, and he wants you to be happy, he would meet you somewhere in the middle. Similarly, you need to be understanding and accommodating enough to meet him halfway, too.

I'm saying this to everyone who has had their heart broken – that you will move on, if you allow yourself time and take small steps forward to heal. It sounds hard, but I assure you that you can get over it and find someone whom you love, and love you back."

To all the singles out there, I hope you find someone who is right for you this year. Once again, Happy New Year!





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Travel Tools: Embassies Are Your Friend

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

When I travelled as a young man, everyone used guidebooks for getting around. Those on a budget had “the bible,” as it was known then, *Lonely Planet* guides for the “shoestring” traveler, while those looking for more luxurious experiences carried Fodor’s or Frommer’s.

The internet didn’t exist, nor did the mobile phone. These days, the guidebook is slowly turning into a dinosaur. On a recent trip to Laos, I did a boat trip with a group of about 15 young travelers, and asked all of them which guidebook they were carrying and where they sourced their travel information. Only two of them had books, while all the others relied on internet searches, Trip Advisor, and a handful of apps to get all their tips. However, despite all the wealth of online info out there and the tendency to gravitate towards it, a recent experience in Bangkok reminded me of the incredible value a country’s embassy or consulate actually can provide.

While a visit to the U.S. Embassy most certainly isn’t going to result in an invite to come in and peruse tourist brochures, less politically charged and less security-paranoid nations are actually pretty welcoming when it comes to embassy assistance and endeavors. My wife and I are planning a trip to Chile next year, and when I mentioned this to a Chilean friend, she invited us to come along to an event hosted by the Chilean Embassy to help promote their products. “Foods From Chile” is a project that is launching in Thailand, hoping to introduce Thais to the wealth of Chilean seafood, fruit, fine wines, and other products that make Chile one of the top gastronomic markets in the region, as well as worldwide.

Chile leads the world in grapes, blueberries, salmon fillet, and mussel exports, to name but a few, and has recently signed free trade agreements with five countries in Southeast Asia, making it a large and extremely beckoning market. Despite being South America’s second biggest exporting country

(after Brazil), it needs to raise awareness around the world about all it has to offer, especially in places so vastly physically distant like Thailand.

The event took place in the Sofitel So Bangkok’s elegant Park Society restaurant, with Chile’s new Ambassador to Thailand, Christian Rehren Bargetto, on hand to greet everyone and field questions. Ambassador Bargetto has served in Japan, the U.K., as well as Malaysia amongst a long list of distinguished postings. Also present was the Chilean Trade Commissioner, Diego Alonso Osses Caverio, as well as the Ambassador’s sommelier Marcelo Pino, both a member of the Chilean Sommelier Association as well as a professional surfer, who enlightened us not only on the vast array of famed Chilean wines, gave some detailed history on each region of the world’s longest country, highlighting its geography and climate, and in addition to recommending the country’s best wines, gave some outstanding beach directions to boot!

We picked up pamphlets on Patagonia, and then were treated to Chilean Chef Pilar Rodriguez (a Le Cordon Bleu grad who has worked with haute cuisine chef Christian Le Squer in 3-Michelin starred Ledoyen restaurant and has since developed her cuisine around Chilean wines) whipping up an array of salmon, *longaniza*, and other Chilean dishes made with their local products, giving us samples of *rica rica*, a medicinal fragrant herb that grows up on the *altiplano* (high plain) in Chile’s high northern deserts, as well as a few shots of tasty *pisco*, the country’s national spirit, made of highly fermented grape juice.

In addition to all the gastronomic treats, we were able to get firsthand information from an array of diverse Chileans about some of our far away bucket list spots like Patagonia, Torres del Paine National Park, Valparaiso, Easter Island, and Santiago, and return home a bit more knowledgeable and a lot more excited about our impending trip.

As aforementioned, the bigger countries’ embassies may not be so inviting in terms of walking in to engage in some trip planning, but they are still worth checking out, even if online. While they may often issue overcautious travel warnings and advisories, they also have excellent resources and recommendations. A search of the US Embassy and Consulates in Australia website revealed a “Discover America Guide” PDF file that featured the excellent *Travel USA* magazine with a wealth of tips, while the German Embassy in Bangkok’s website features links to Germany’s Tourism Center as well as copies of *Deutschland* Magazine.

While online trip reports and blogs deliver a wide array of information on a place, they are often highly subjective, not to mention not always exactly ethical when it comes to their reasons for selling you on a destination. One ultra-famous travel blogger, whose name I won’t mention here, often expounds on amazing adventure travel destinations, always followed up with glowing recommendations on the need to get a good insurance provider when going to these places. And yet a bit of follow-up searching on the noted provider reveals that they actually are passing travelers off to a U.S. insurance firm which gets report after report of not paying claims or giving anything they promise. Additionally, the famed blogger turns out to be the main spokesman for the provider!

Embassies at least give a depth of solid and well-researched information that can usually be trusted, and can also point you in many valuable directions, so don’t forget to include them in your travel planning. And if you happen to be heading to Chile, check out the Bangkok embassy’s website at www.chile.gob.cl/tailandia/en. It has links to some great travel pages highlighting everything from culture to noted newspaper publications on all things Chilean, and if you’re hungry for more info on fabulous Chilean food and products, check out the “Foods From Chile” page: www.foodsfromchile.org.



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PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVE STAMBOULIS

- 1 Christian Rehren Bargetto,
Chile's Ambassador to Thailand
- 2 Chilean Chef Pilar Rodriguez
- 3 Sommelier Marcelo Pino
- 4 Torres del Paine National Park
- 5 Medicinal fragrant herb rica rica

New Year and the Law of Attraction

BY J. PAKCHUEN

Many of us think the New Year marks an auspicious time to make a fresh start in life for something better. Either mentally or physically, it's always nice to improve ourselves in any way. But with goals to accomplish, we may need a little bit of the mental drive. In the 21st century, nothing is arguably more popular than the trend of "positive thinking" in relation to the "law of attraction".

I've learned about the law of attraction and positive thinking from a book called *The Secret* written by Rhonda Byrne. The author claims that people can achieve what they want or need by believing in an outcome, repeatedly thinking about it, and maintaining positive emotional states to "attract" the desired outcome.

According to Byrne, when people create an image of what they want to accomplish in mind, either by reciting the words again and again or imagining what it would feel like when you achieve it, that could help attract what they want and make it into a reality.

Some people think that the law of attraction is more of a pseudo-scientific theory due to its lack of scientific evidence. Nevertheless, I personally find this method helpful. It gives me the power to think that anything is possible if we're focusing on it and working hard enough, which is similar to some religious

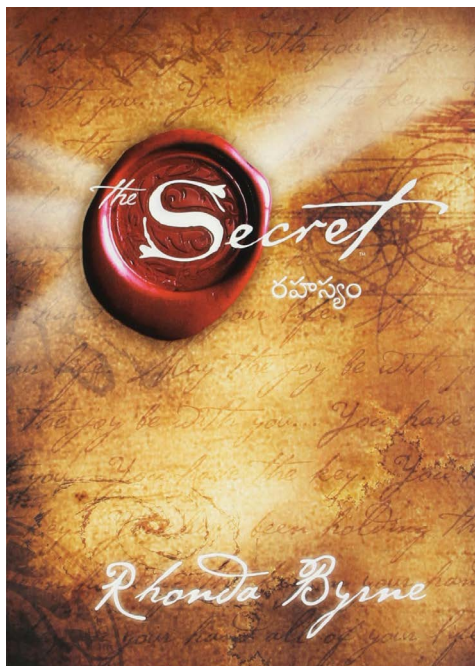
beliefs or even therapeutic methods used widely in the medical field.

The mind is very powerful and there's no shortage of scientific research findings to support that claim. During the Second World War, Henry Beecher, an American anesthetist, had to treat an anxious soldier with serious injuries amid a desperate shortage of morphine. Instead, he ordered a shot of saline to calm him down before the operation. To Beecher's surprise, the saline shot made him calm and seemed to even offer the same amount of pain relief like morphine.

Later studies revealed that the improvement of the symptoms was the result of the personal expectations, rather than the treatment itself. This is called the placebo effect.

Similarly, many psychologists recommend meditation to their patients afflicted with acute anxiety. Meditating is one way to calm oneself, and with months or years of practice, patients can attain higher levels of meditation by focusing on the present and good thoughts.

This alternative treatment coincides with Buddhist teachings. Buddhism's key to peace is by doing good deeds and having a conscious mind. All of these resemble the workings of the law of attraction.



The Secret
By Rhonda Byrne

Available at Asia Books, Kinokuniya and leading bookstores.

As a Thai, when practicing the law of attraction, I tend to meditate and pray in front of a Buddha image because this helps me focus on positive thinking that should help me accomplish my goals. Born and raised in Thailand, a society that blends many cultural beliefs, I occasionally pray at different religious sites, to several gods and goddesses of different religions as well.

These are some of the most popular places around Bangkok to pray for good luck and positivity for the New Year:

1. Wealth and good luck

Wat Thung Setthi, located at Bangna-Trad Road KM8.

This temple houses Thep Thanjai. Thanjai literally means “quickly or fast” and thep “god”. The story of this religious statue is that it was created only in one day. Therefore, it is believed that if you pray to him, you may get your wishes granted as quickly as it was built.

2. Career, success and prosperity

Erawan Shrine, located at the Ratchaprasong Intersection.

If you're heading downtown on BTS Sukhumvit line, right before Chidlom station, look out the window and you can't miss this shrine surrounded by hundreds of devotees all day and night. The shrine is located outside the Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel and houses a statue of Lord Brahma, the Hindu god of creation. He has four faces and four arms holding different symbols. It is recommended to pray to all four sides, starting from the center and walk around in a clockwise direction.

3. Love

Wat Sri Maha Uma Devi (Sri Maha Mariamman Temple or Wat Khaek Silom), located at 2 Pan Road, Silom.

Uma Devi, the Hindu goddess of compassion and gracefulness, is the consort of God Shiva. Believers often pray to her asking for success in love, life and in having children.

Trimurti Shrine, located in front of CentralWorld.

The Trimurti Shrine houses the statues of the Hindu trinity of Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer. It is widely accepted that the best time to pray to ask for a good love life is on every Thursday around 9 - 9.30 pm. But be prepared because you may find yourself among a huge crowd of devotees looking for real love.

4. Children

Chao Por Sua Shrine (Tiger God Shrine), located at 468 Tanao Road, near Sao Ching Cha aka the Giant Swing.

This Chinese shrine has been revered among descendants of the early Chinese immigrants to Thailand thanks to its storied past. Dating to the Third Reign, the shrine attracts throngs of worshippers who want to have children and come to pray here on the most holy day of the year. Check with the temple regarding this special day as the date changes every year.

All in all, it'd be useless to pray to a thousand shrines or temples without taking any positive actions. Perseverance and knowledge would surely bring about success you want. But if you would like some encouragement, praying to these religious sites might be a good starting point to usher in a little positivity and good luck in the New Year.



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1 Erawan Shrine

2 Wat Sri Maha Uma Devi

3 Chao Por Sua Shrine



Soap Star

BY CHRISTOPHER SCOTT DIXON

“One day I got up and thought I will just do it!” Those are the words of Kakkanang Gyte (nickname “Myo”) who runs her own online soap business from home in Bangkok. There could hardly be a greater contrast between that and her full-time occupation as a Political Officer at the European Union (EU) Delegation to Thailand. Employed there since 2014, Kakkanang’s main portfolio covers a wide range of demanding human rights issues in Thailand including civil and political rights.

Born in Surat Thani province, Kakkanang is married and has been operating “Smoothie” since May 2017. “I have never done any business in my life. I didn’t study business; had no idea how to do it. But then I feel I’m still young at 32, and if I’m going to fail, I can fail now and I will still have time to recover from the failure. I chose the name ‘Smoothie’ because of the idea of blending natural ingredients for smooth skin,” explained Kakkanang.

Once she took the step, she researched online and did a one day training course in how to make basic soap. She learned about the different properties of oils in making natural soaps and the techniques of how to blend the various oils to create a solid bar that will not soften or melt quickly after use.

“Then, I went crazy,” she said. “I was reading in my spare time every day, watching so many YouTube videos, practicing all day over the weekends, and when I got home from work using half of our kitchen for my ingredients and equipment.”

Producing handcrafted soap takes time. After making and cutting them, they need to be cured for at least four to six weeks, so they can be expensive. It was a struggle as Kakkanang explains.

“Being a new brand with no physical shop, it was hard for people to trust my products. People also usually like to smell soaps before buying, so selling online is quite hard. But all of my soaps are registered and approved by Food and Drug

Administration. I gave away some of the soaps to people I know. Now, most of my clients are from word of mouth.” The target customers are people looking for alternative ways to pamper their skin and want soap made from natural ingredients rather than chemical or commercial soaps. The

aim is to make soaps environmental friendly, look delicious, smell wonderful, and enhance the shower experience.

Kakkanang describes what makes her soaps popular, “You can instantly feel the difference after using them. I have seven different scents and styles which include pure honey, mint chocolate, apricot and creamy latte scrub. All are made from a blend of skin loving oil which is designed for those who have sensitive, dry or oily skin.”

The soap market is highly competitive with a number of companies focusing on cost cutting and cheaper ingredients for mass production. Using natural ingredients does not mean that it is organic.

Natural products are minimally processed and do not contain artificial ingredients; while organic means that it does use toxic herbicides or chemicals in the production. “Many people don’t understand that being natural doesn’t mean organic,” Kakkanang says. “It’s very difficult to break this perception. I can really say not all soaps are born equal.”

With such a young business Kakkanang is taking things slowly. She has a Facebook page and is planning to create a website. At the moment she is concentrating on ensuring that regular clients return by

maintaining the consistent quality of each bar she produces.

What advice does she have for budding entrepreneurs? “Start small, find the right work and life balance. As long as you are learning, even if it fails, you are not at all a failure!”

Visit www.facebook.com/Soap.Smoothie to learn more about “Smoothie” soaps on offer.





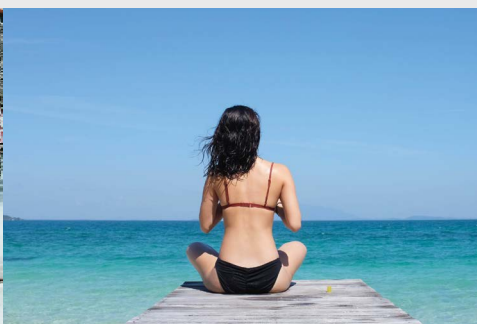
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The "cool" season is here!

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

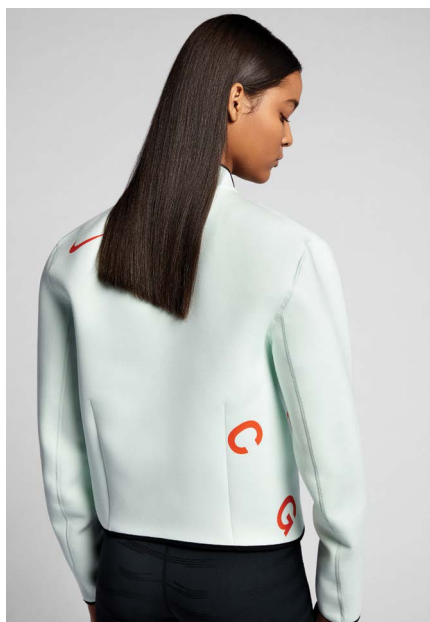
We've got quite a cold spell right from the yearend in Bangkok, which sent me looking for a sweater and jacket to fend off the chill. It's good to give my air conditioner a break after working so hard all year round. But as we all know, the cold here seems short-lived, so bring out your hippest jacket or grab one at Nike's, before dropping by Uniqlo – a really proactive brand, already launching their cool spring/summer collections here. They know our climate too well!

Scheduled to launch on Jan 26, **Uniqlo's U Collection** for spring/summer returns to its core philosophy of creating high-quality clothing with simple designs and comfort in mind. The collection is designed to be slightly oversized for comfort and features nature-inspired tone colors such as sky blue and grass green with stripes and borders.

To fight the chill this winter, NikeLab presents the new **Nike ACG** (All Conditions Gear) 3-in-1 System Coat. The coat features two jackets in one, and can be worn three ways, adapting to different weather conditions. The outer layer offers wind-and-water protection, with a carrying strap for off-shoulder wearing. The detachable internal bomber jacket is designed to be worn on its own or with the outer shell. The jacket's futuristic design will certainly be a magnet for urban fashionistas, regardless of weather conditions.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF UNIQLO



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF NIKE



January



<< KliqueX launched in Samyan

Startups' favorite sharing space KliqueDesk has just opened a new working space called "KliqueX" on the third floor of I'm Park on Chulalongkorn Soi 9 near Chulalongkorn University. There are hot desks to work alone, and private offices and event spaces available for a bigger crowd. Visit www.kliquedesk.com for more information.

Imagine Dragons Live in Bangkok >>

The Grammy Award-winning pop-rock band Imagine Dragons are returning to Bangkok once again for a concert as part of their Evolve World Tour on Jan 11 at the Oasis Outdoor Arena, Show DC. Their hit singles include "Thunder", "Believer" and "Whatever It Takes". Tickets can be booked through www.thaiticketmajor.com and start from THB 2,500.



<< One OK Rock set to electrify Bangkok

One of Japan's most famous J-rock bands, One OK Rock (pronounced "one o'clock") is stopping by Bangkok for a concert on Jan 18 at IMPACT Arena Muang Thong Thani, kicking off the first leg of their "Ambitions Asia Tour". The outfit's infectious hits include "The Beginning", "Nobody's Home" and "Wherever You Are". Tickets start at THB 2,500 and are available at www.thaiticketmajor.com.

Inventive minds at Bangkok Maker Faire >>

The Bangkok Maker Faire is being held from Jan 20-21 at The Street Ratchada. The event brings together innovators, inventors and makers of hi-tech, cutting-edge gadgetry from robots to electric bikes. This is a major platform on which to display their inventions encompassing the STEM fields (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). The event is open to members of the public; admission is free. Find out more at www.bangkokmakerfaire.com.

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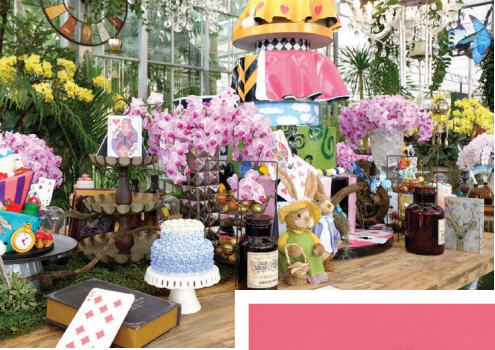
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