

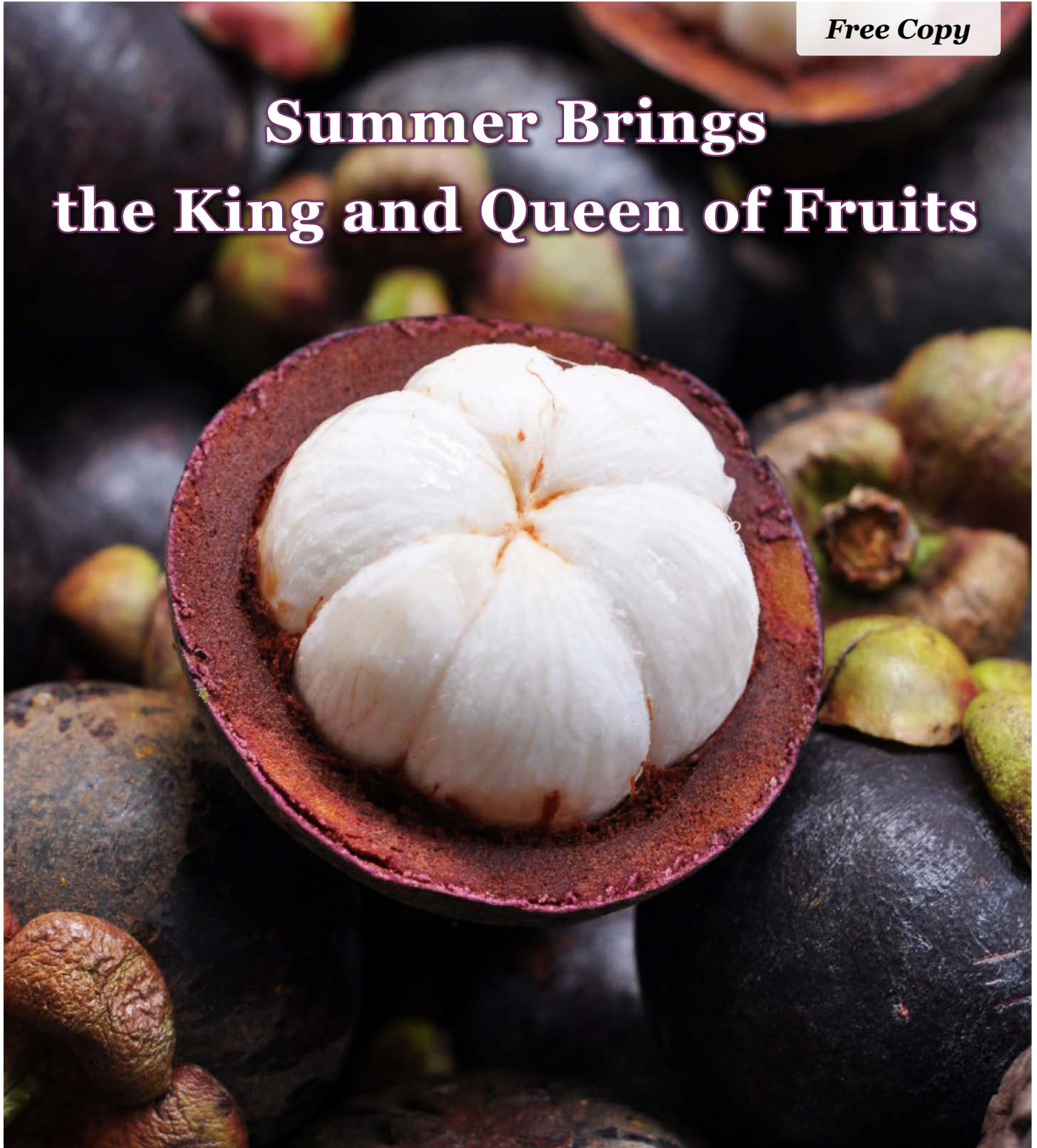
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## LONG LIVE THE KING

The Management and Staff of  
Bangkok Media House  
Company Limited  
convey our heartfelt felicitations to  
His Majesty the King  
on the auspicious occasion of  
His Majesty's Royal Coronation.

The Management and Staff of  
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## Editor's Letter

From May 4 to 6, the Kingdom witnessed the coronation of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun.

Dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, during the early Sukhothai period, this auspicious ceremony is an ancient ritual for the King to take his place as a crowned monarch. The ceremony comprises a series of intricate procedures and rites that are full of symbolism.

Influenced by ancient Indian traditions and guided by Hindu and Buddhist precepts, the royal ceremony is largely performed by the Royal court's Brahmins and Buddhist monks in the Phra Maha Monthira halls within the inner sanctum of the Emerald Buddha Temple and the Grand Palace.

The ceremony begins with a purification bath and anointment of the King, before the crowning and investiture, in which His Majesty is presented with the royal regalia.

This is followed by the declaration of faith, granting of a Royal audience, the assumption of residence, and a circumambulation of the capital.

The coronation, the first since King Rama IX was crowned in 1950, is of great significance as the Thai monarchy has been at the center of the people's hearts and souls for hundreds of years. The rites are of the utmost sacredness and perfectly display the Kingdom's majestic Royal heritage.

With greatest respect, we offer our heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty the King on the auspicious occasion of his coronation. May His Majesty's reign be long and glorious.

**The Management and Staff of  
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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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**Swisa Ariyaprichya** 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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The Royal Regalia

# Royal Regalia

## The Symbols of Sovereignty

BY NAAM SOMBATANANTAKORN

**T**he Royal Coronation Ceremony is an ancient rite marking a Thai king's ascension. During the proceedings, the chief Brahmin – Phra Maha Ratcha Khru – presents the king with the Phra Suphannabat, a golden plaque inscribed with the official title of the newly crowned king, and the royal regalia. The regalia are items that signify the monarchy and represent the different roles the king plays in the country.

The five principle items of the royal regalia are:

### **The Nine-Tiered Umbrella of State**

Much like the crown jewels in the West, the Nine-Tiered Umbrella of State, or the “Nophadon Maha Saweta Chatra”, is one of the most important items in the royal regalia. Previously, these umbrellas only had six tiers representing the six levels of heaven, but now the tiers have been increased to nine to represent the king’s responsibility in looking after his people in all nine directions – the North, South, West, East, Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, Southeast and the heavens, as a Thai king is believed to be an avatar of the Hindu god Indra – the ruler of the heavens.

Each tier of the umbrella is made of three layers of white cloth trimmed with gold, and the umbrella is topped with a finial. Since the umbrella symbolizes the king’s exalted status and his supremacy in the country, the umbrella used to go wherever the king went. Now, however, these umbrellas are only displayed in the throne halls and palaces.

### **The Great Crown of Victory**

The Great Crown of Victory or the “Phra Maha Phichai Mongkut” is 66 centimeters high and weighs 7.3 kilograms. Originally ordered by King Buddha Yod Fa Chulaloke (Rama I), the crown is made of gold and inlaid with diamonds. Later, King Mongkut (Rama IV) added a large diamond to the top of the crown. The dazzling jewel, from the Indian city of Calcutta, is called the “Phra Maha Wichian Mani” or the Great Diamond.

During previous coronation ceremonies, the monarch only accepted the crown before placing it down next to himself. However, King Rama IV changed this tradition by placing the crown upon his head during his coronation and also while meeting foreign diplomats. Since then, every Thai king has followed suit, and has had the crown placed on his head during the coronation.

### **The Sword of Victory**

Known as “Phra Saeng Khan Chai Sri”, the sword symbolizes the king’s wisdom and strength as protector of the Kingdom. The blade is 64.5 centimeters long with a 25.4-centimeter hilt. When placed in its scabbard, the sword is 101 centimeters long and weighs 1.9 kilograms.

According to an inscription in Sukhothai’s Sri Chum temple, the sword originally belonged to the ruler of the Khmer kingdom of Angkor Thom. He gave the sword and his daughter to the Pho Khun Pha Mueang – the ruler of Srisatchanalai in the Sukhothai Kingdom – so as to strengthen bonds between their two cities.

Pho Khun Pha Mueang later gave the sword to his friend Pho Khun Si Intharith, the ruler of Sukhothai, and the sword remained part of the royal regalia until the fall of Ayutthaya in April 1767, when it disappeared after the Burmese sacked the ancient capital.

In 1784, a Cambodian fisherman cast a net in the Tonlé Sap lake and hauled up an old sword inlaid with precious gems. Knowing that it was not an ordinary weapon, he delivered it to Chao Phraya Aphaiphubet (Baen), the governor of Siemmarat province (now Siem Reap), which was then part of Thailand. Chao Phraya Aphaiphubet reported the finding to King Rama I who then had a royal official collect the sword. In 1785, the king ordered a new scabbard for the sword and had the hilt and blade restored to its old glory and to its place in the royal regalia, where it has remained ever since.

### **The Royal Scepter**

The original scepter, created during the reign of King Rama I, was made of Javanese cassia wood, with an iron hilt and a golden finial shaped as a trident. Its original name was the “Than Phra Kon Ratchaphruek”, or the “royal staff made of Javanese cassia”.

Later, King Rama IV had this wooden scepter replaced with one made from gold. It was designed so it could hide a sword and had the figure of a deity on its finial. This scepter was called the “Phra Saeng Sanao” or “Than Phra Kon Thewarup”, or the “royal staff with a deity”. However, King Vajiravudh (Rama VI), an avid admirer of Thai heritage and culture, chose to use the original scepter in his coronation ceremony.

### **The Royal Fan and Fly Whisk**

The Royal Fan was introduced during the reign of King Rama I. It was made from a palm leaf trimmed with gold which branches from a handle made of enameled gold. The fan was originally known as the “Phatchani Fak Makham” or the “fan with a tamarind-pod shape handle”, which was also referred to as the “Walawichani”.

King Rama IV later pointed out that in the Pali language the word “Walawichani” stands for a whisk-like item made from yak’s hair. In Pali, the word “Wala” stands for the hair of a bovine animal that Thais call the “chammari”. So, King Rama IV ordered that a fly whisk be made with yak’s hair and be included in the royal regalia.

Later, the yak hair was replaced with hair from a white elephant’s tail and its name was changed to the “white elephant fly whisk”. Both the fan and fly whisk together are called the “Walawichani”.

### **The Royal Slippers**

The Royal Slippers, made of enameled gold and inlaid with diamonds, were ordered by King Rama I. They were named the “Chalong Phrabat Choeng Ngon” or “royal slippers with a curved tip”.

Following an ancient Hindu belief, the slippers symbolize the land at the foot of the mythical Mount Sumeru, where the king’s subjects live. During the Coronation Ceremony, the chief Brahmin ends the presentation of the royal regalia by placing these slippers on the feet of the newly crowned monarch.

# Snooping Around Bangkok

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

Experiential travel is fast becoming a top trend among travelers, with more folks looking for a deeper immersion in the places they visit, beyond just “hanging out in a resort” or “visiting the temple” as used to be the norm. On a recent outing with GoSnoop, a Bangkok exploration tour that turns historic parts of town into a detective adventure, I learned just how much fun it can be to “experience” old familiar sights in a brand-new way, all the while having a blast.

GoSnoop is a detective game suitable for youngsters, families, singletons and even large groups who want a fun and unique team-building experience while doing a bit of sightseeing. Set in Rattanakosin Island, each action-packed mystery game takes place in some of Bangkok’s oldest, historic neighborhoods, pitting combatants against each other and against the clock. Participants start off by meeting the “game master”, who then splits them into teams. Each team is given a bag containing a map, a variety of clues and a booklet explaining the tasks at hand and the route they will be following. They have just three hours to solve the mystery.

The mystery I helped solve was the one about a certain Mr. Somsak, who has gone missing with his family. With few witnesses and few clues in the hands of the police, our job was to solve the crime and beat the other teams in doing so.

The first site the investigation took us to was Wat Saket or the Golden Mount, where we were provided with a hint on how to open a locked coin purse that was in our bag of clues, as well as directions on what might come next. All the while, we got to take in one of Bangkok’s best views, learned a bit of history about the neighborhood (the booklet is filled with historical tidbits about the different

places teams visit) and got to do a bit of exercise climbing the stairs to the top.

After that we proceeded to Baan Bat (*Baan* as in community, and *Bat* as in alms bowl) – a historical community where locals have been making alms bowls for monks since the 1700s. The trail of clues then took us to the heart of Sao Ching-Cha or the Giant Swing



in the old part of the city, where some of Bangkok’s best street food can be found. Little eateries set in century-old shophouses in this area have earned a name for themselves for specializing in one or two dishes.

This would be a perfect way for visitors to be introduced to Bangkok’s off-the-track attractions, such as Phraeng

Phuton – a square full of neo-classical shophouses dating back to the Rama V era in the early 1900s. This is perhaps one of Bangkok’s best-preserved heritage neighborhoods.

GoSnoop games also include local residents, which makes the experience even more enjoyable. For instance, one of the clues is a coupon that earns you a free scoop of ice cream at Natthaporn – a shop that has been serving homemade coconut and mango ice cream for close to 60 years. This game certainly makes sightseeing thrilling, as you start seeing the city with fresh eyes while you run around trying to solve the puzzle.

The creators of GoSnoop, a Thai-French duo, say they want to offer a memorable experience, filled with fun stories that people can take back home with them.

Since Bangkok is known for its diversity, rich history, tradition and a fun-loving atmosphere, the creators chose it as the perfect city for GoSnoop to flourish – and they appear to have succeeded on all counts. Participants who follow the clues through different neighborhoods find more than just the city’s hidden history unveiled before their eyes. One task, for instance, is finding out when the famous dessert shop Mont Nomsod was first set up. This task takes you to a half-a-century old shop, where you get to learn its stories and even sample its wares, before you are given that crucial date – which later helps you decipher the riddle.

Once the tour is over, participants meet at a local café, where the scores are tallied and each team’s theory about what might have happened to Mr. Somsak and his family are shared. Obviously, the team with the highest points wins, but if the mystery is not solved, the game master lets the cat out of the bag.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF GOSNOOP

Apart from giving visitors a new insight into Bangkok, GoSnoop also helps test their powers of deduction and reasoning, making this a great team-building exercise for companies.

My only regret that day was that we all got so wrapped up in trying to solve the crime, we sometimes didn't have enough time to linger at the sites. But then, this a good excuse to go back and visit the different sites again.

So, if you have a few hours to spare, I highly recommend joining a mystery hunt. You'll get to see Bangkok through fresh eyes.

#### **GoSnoop**

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# Suan Santiphap Park of Peace

BY CHRISTOPHER SCOTT DIXON

**T**here are several larger and more famous parks in Bangkok, but what Suan Santiphap (or Peace Park) lacks in size it more than makes up for in beauty. This hidden oasis spreads over 20 *rais* (about eight acres) between Ratchawithi and Rang Nam roads, just a few minutes from Victory Monument BTS station.

It was named “Peace Park” for a variety of reasons. For instance, it was opened to the public on August 16, 1998 – 53 years to the day since World War II ended. Birds and tranquility are the dominant theme here – with a statue of the Picasso-inspired dove of peace placed in the park’s central pond. In line with the peace theme, the entrance sign is a facsimile of the much-revered Buddhadasa Bhikku’s handwriting. Buddhadasa Bhikku was known for his philosophy of peace.

I first visited the park several years ago, and today it retains much of its charm. It’s a delight for ornithologists, with many species of birds filling the air with their unique song. Sightings of more than 30 species have been recorded over the years, ranging from magpies and turtle doves to warblers and mynas. The lush peaceful surroundings offer an instant getaway

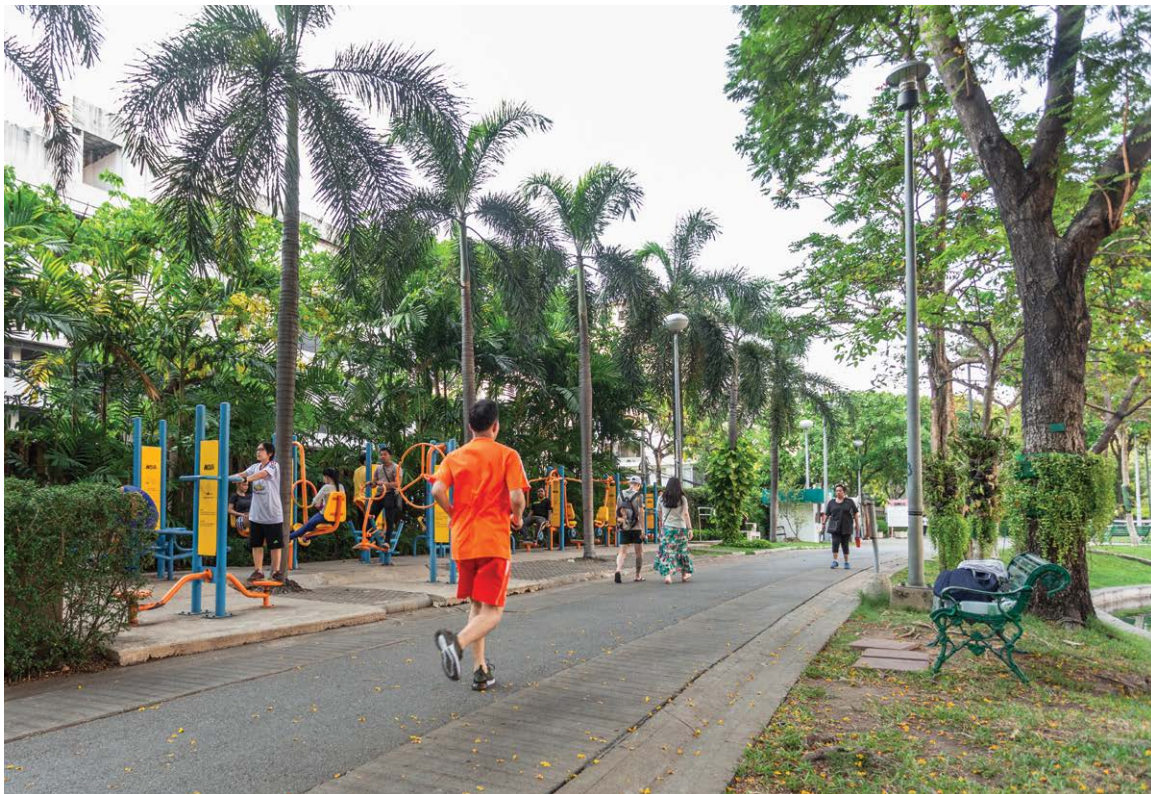
from the traffic and pollution that awaits Bangkokians a just few yards from the gate.

No park is complete without flowerbeds, and Suan Santiphap boasts of a lotus pond, a beautiful display of orchids, manicured lawns, an elaborate fountain, decorative gardens, cute statues, and a gazebo.

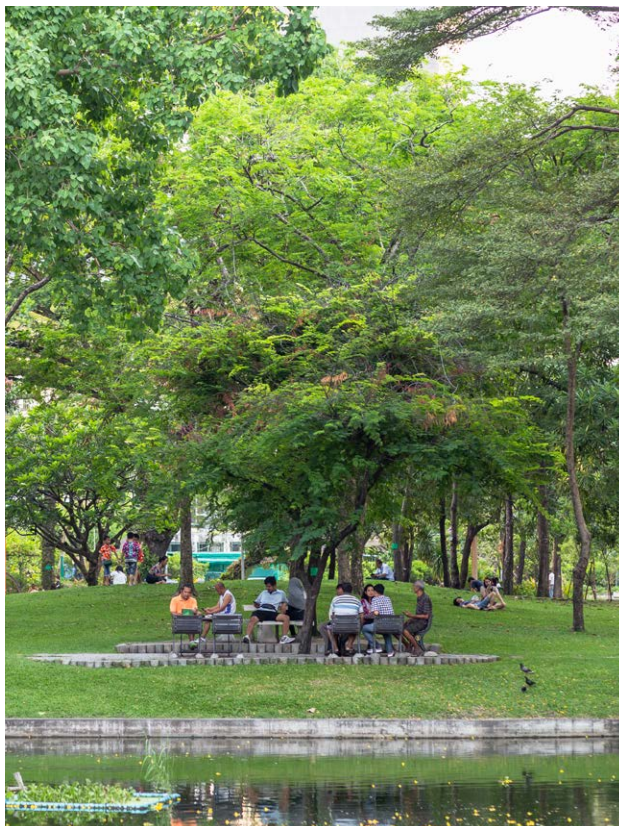
There are plenty of benches under welcome shade to escape the searing heat and contemplate the slow life. Better yet, you can always bring along a blanket to spread out on the grass for a picnic. Alternatively, you can take a stroll down one of the many paths and breathe in the serenity.

For the energetic, there are plenty of exercise facilities and play areas for children. You can take a few laps round the 700-meter jogging track, participate in a free aerobics class or join Tai-Chi practice.

Fish food is available if you feel like feeding the inhabitants of the two small lakes, though when it comes to human food and drink, it’s probably best to buy some from the many street stalls near the park, as there are limited facilities inside.



PHOTOGRAPHS: TEERARAT YAEMNGAMLUEA



PHOTOGRAPHS: TEERAT YAEMNGAMLU EA

Suan Santiphap also has a laid-back community ambience, with local residents flocking to the green lawns in the late afternoons. Visit then and you're likely to hear jazz or traditional music playing softly as people relax in the verdant surroundings.

There is also an area with books and magazines on shelves in a small, wooden-shaped house, where people can actually peruse print on paper, instead of browsing the net on their smartphones.

If you're in need of rejuvenation before heading back to the urban grind, this is certainly the place to be. As the American writer Marty Rubin once said, "Parks and playgrounds are the soul of a city," Bangkok's little park of peace is as soulful as they come.

### **Suan Santiphap**

Between Ratchawithi 1-3, Phayathai  
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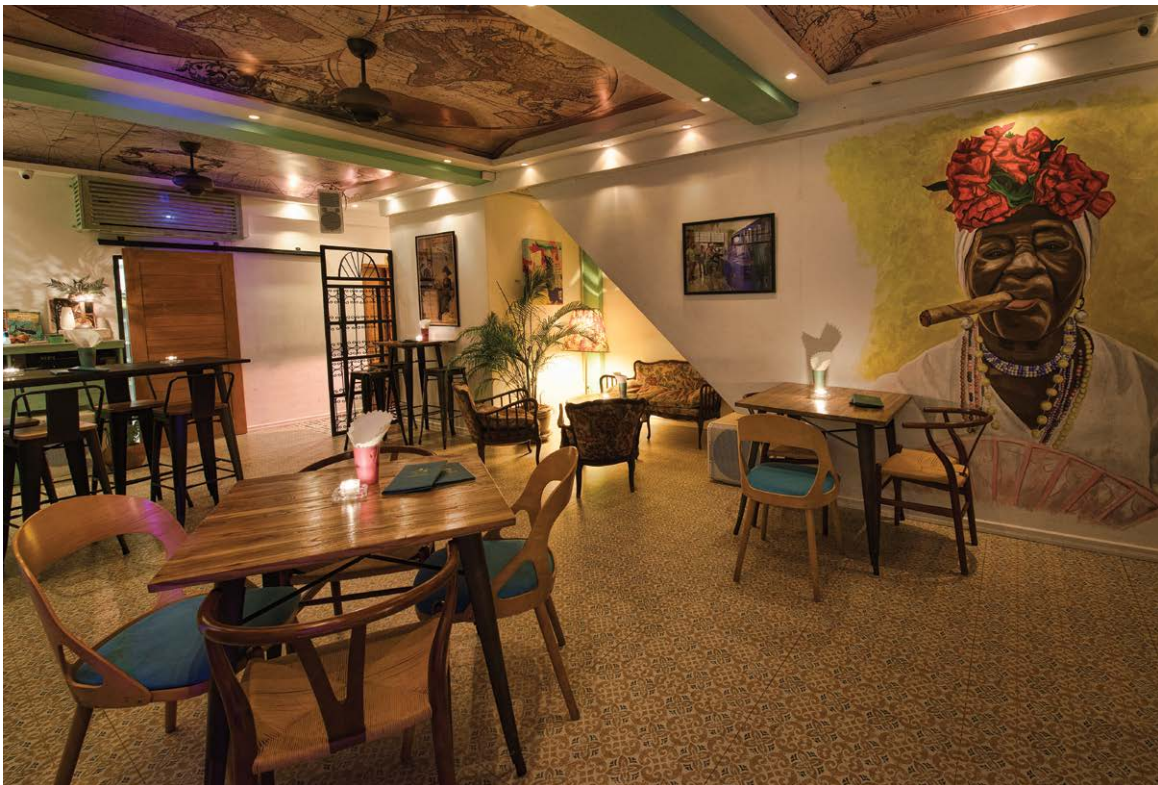
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- 1 The Polynesian-themed tiki bar with parrots and flowers adorning the walls.  
 2 Portuguese tiled floors, vintage furnishings and an intriguing painting on the wall.

PHOTOGRAPHS: DAVE STAMBOULIS

# Tropic City

## Bangkok's Ode to Don the Beachcomber

BY DAVE STAMBOULIS

Over the past decade or so, Bangkok has become one of Southeast Asia's premier destinations for those interested in a tippie. From theme bars to some of the best mixologists, you're never going to go thirsty in this city. Yet, for all its great watering holes, it's challenging to find one that offers everything – from great drinks to music to atmosphere. But Tropic City bucks this trend, delivering a punch on all fronts.

Themed as an inviting Polynesian tiki bar, Tropic City welcomes its patrons into a beautiful old house with parrots and flowers adorning brightly painted walls, a captivating wall painting of an old woman smoking a cigar, vintage furnishings, and Portuguese tiled floors. You can lounge in the main space, which feels like a comfy family living room, make a nest at the mood-lit bar counter to watch all the goings-on, or else bask in the candlelight at a patio table. Afro beats, soul, disco tunes, and house music throb from the DJ's mix-desk for a wickedly relaxed vibe – which is just what you need to appreciate the drinks here.

Tropic City is the dream come true for Swedish bartenders Sebastian De La Cruz and Philip Stefanescu, who earned a name for themselves crafting superb cocktails at Thonglor bars U.N.C.L.E. and Touche Hombre. Realizing the City of Angels was missing a proper tropical rum-based joint, the duo decided to open a place of their own.

Though captivated by Polynesian culture, De La Cruz points out that Tropic City is not a bona-fide tiki bar (“Tiki bars have rules and we didn't want rules”). But it does pay fulsome homage to tiki cocktails, with enough spice-infused rum and fresh juices laced with lip-smacking syrups to wow the most discerning drinker.

Tiki culture first came to the world's attention when American servicemen returned from WWII with memories and mementos from the South Pacific. In Hollywood, a fellow by the name of Donn Beach started mixing juices and syrups with rum in his tropics themed “Don the Beachcomber” restaurant, attracting legends like Frank Sinatra and Howard Hughes to indulge in creative Zombie and

Mai Tai drinks. This was followed by the opening of Trader Vic's, which brought Polynesian-themed dining and drinking to the masses.

Though restaurants and bars have remained, much of the culture has been lost as signature recipes were copied and stolen, and purveyors of fine drinks began jealously guarding their secret recipes. However, tiki culture has enjoyed a resurgence over the past decade, with more young bartenders developing an appreciation for the unique drinks and wealth of mixology knowledge held by the old tiki masters.

De La Cruz and Stefanescu continue the tradition, and to witness them at work and taste the results is akin to watching master magicians. Take the deceptively simple Tropicopop milk punch, a clear drink that looks about as tropical as a glass of water. In fact, it is one of Tropic City's most enticing concoctions, a blend of two rums – Bacardi Carta Blanca rum and Diplomatico Planas – with lychee, lemon, coconut water, and believe-it-or-not goat's milk, all of which yield one taste-bud tantalizing elixir.

Then there is the wildly popular Welcome to the Jungle, the most ordered drink at Tropic City and indeed an ode to tiki and tropical. Plantation Dark and Carta Blanca rum are mixed with apricot, pineapple, orange, the allspice scented Pimento Dram liqueur, and vanilla, all poured into a carved-out pineapple, fitted with a paper beach umbrella and sipped through a straw.

Gin and vodka lovers need not despair. The Skywalker again shows off the artistry of the mixologists, combining the horsepower of bark-infused vodka with Falernum cordial (a tropical drink staple, made from a citrus, spice, and sugar infusion), the herbal allspice liqueur Pimento Dram, honey, lime, pineapple, all topped off with beetroot foam, a touch courtesy of the bartenders' Swedish roots.

Fruits, vegetables, spices and herbs appear to be fair game at Tropic City. Bombay Sapphire gin is infused with Thai parsley, tequila is flavored with charred red bell peppers, and friends can even get "cocktail flasks", meant for sharing between three to six people.

You're also in good hands when it comes to nibbles. The Michelin Plate-awarded 80/20, located just down the street, initially wanted to use this space for a smokehouse, but decided to set up Tropic City when the residents objected.

So now, they serve up tapas-size bites at Tropic City, offered in an ever-changing menu. The night we showed up, the offerings included Chinese *bao* dumplings and the Canadian Quebecois favorite, *poutine* – French fries topped with cheese and gravy.

For all the Thonglor crowd, it's well worth making the trek across town to get here – it's actually just a 10-minute walk from Hualamphong MRT station. As De La Cruz jokes, "We're the perfect stop for anyone wanting to do a bar crawl from Chinatown to Silom."

Head over here on the next steamy Bangkok evening, you'll quickly find yourself most refreshed.

### Tropic City

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3 Sebastian De La Cruz in action.

4 Welcome to the Jungle

5 The Skywalker



3



4



5

# Durian: The King of Fruits

BY SWISA ARIYAPRUCHYA

In the past month or so you may have walked pass some durians or at least been caught off guard by its strong smell. Though available all year round, the durian season starts around April as it tastes best before the rains come, or at least that's what folk wisdom says.

Durians are not unique to Thailand and can be found in many Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore. For the un-accustomed, you may think that a fruit would be eaten much the same way everywhere, but did you know that culturally that is not so? Each country has developed its own culture for eating durians.

Before we go into details, let's recap what exactly are these durians. Durian is a tropical fruit that has an outer shell covered in spikes. Its flesh is yellow and custard-like with a distinctive odor. The smell has often times been likened to that of a rotten egg mixed with moldy cheese. It smells of sulfur and the odor is so strong that it is banned from hotels, airlines, MRT and BTS systems.

But the smell of durian also evokes emotions. For durian lovers, its smell would bring up memories of its wonderfully creamy and delicious taste. For non-lovers though, the smell is unbearable and unrelenting. My husband abhors the smell and will not eat it. I, on the other hand, treat it as a delicacy and a special treat. Thoughts of having durian spark joy in me, much like candy would for a child.

Durian is undoubtedly a unique fruit and has been appropriately named the

"King of Fruits". If you haven't tried it before, you should try it at least once in your life. The first human to have eaten it clearly discovered gold.

How do you eat durian? Well, I grew up eating them with a fork, knife and spoon. It has a texture which somewhat resembles a runny cheese like Mont D'Or or that of a creamy custard. To prevent my hands from getting dirty, my parents had us use cutlery. When you're a child, you grow up thinking that's the way everyone eats it. Little did you know that you were the odd one out.



I learnt that fact one afternoon in an apartment with my university friends in Philadelphia. A group of Indonesians, Malaysians and Thais had gathered together for a durian party. We had bought a frozen durian and together we cut it open. My friends dug in and began eating it with their hands. That's when I learned that durian is most typically eaten with hands across Southeast Asia.

How we treat the outer shell also differs. In Thailand, once you cut open

the durian, the outer shell is typically thrown away and discarded. However, I learnt that in Indonesia, the outer shell and husk has its uses. If you put water in the husk and use it to wash your hands, the smell of durian dissipates.

My Indonesian friend also told me that they drink water from the husk to "cool" down. Much like yin and yang, we believe durian to be a "hot" fruit, which necessitates having something "cool" to counter it. In Thailand, this is achieved by eating the "Queen of Fruits" or mangosteens, a purple colored fruit with white fleshy pulp inside. Usually out during the same time as durians, you will often see them placed side by side in Thai supermarkets.

How we like the flesh also differs. Singaporeans and Malaysians prefer eating durian when it is very ripe and creamy. In Thailand, durian is mostly eaten when it is just beginning to ripen, but still has a soft and bouncy texture. The outer layer must have a bite to it while the inside is soft and creamy.

With social media, the craze for durians has taken off in recent years. You can now order directly from a farm via Instagram and have it delivered to your door. In Thailand, it is also typically eaten with sticky rice and coconut cream, or made into durian ice cream. The choices are endless. More recently, durian seems to have found a new place as an appetizer: durian soup.

I wonder where human creativity will take us, but for now, I prefer durians just the way they are.



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PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE SALIL HOTEL

- 1 The Premier Room with murals of Asian and European flora and fauna.
- 2 The Mariage Frères Tea Room, with wooden floors and paintings on the ceiling.
- 3 The Salil Hotel Sukhumvit 57 - Thonglor's exterior.

# The Salil Hotel

## A Slice of Classical Europe in Thonglor

BY PLOYLADA SIRACHADAPONG



3

**B**angkok is a diverse and multicultural city, where you can experience a world of different cultures in a day if you know where to go. For instance, there's Chinatown in Yaowarat, Koreatown at Sukhumvit Plaza and Little India in Phahurat. But if you're looking for a hangout with an elegant European vibe, then The Salil Hotel Sukhumvit 57 - Thonglor would be the place to go.

Located in the middle of Sukhumvit 57, a mere 10-minute walk from Thonglor BTS, is the eight-story hotel – done up in eye-catching ivory marble studded with gleaming-black window panes. The clever use of black on white makes the building look taller and wider in the tight space. The designers also made use of the limited space very effectively by fitting in an on-site café, meeting room, lobby, working area and a shop – all on the ground floor.

The black and white theme spreads to the interior, giving the hotel a contemporary, spacious and modern feel, while the secret garden offers visitors and residents a perfect place to greet the morning, offering a quiet reprieve with a soft-tone wooden ambiance. Salil's "Concept Living Space" motif divides the hotel into sections where guests can stay, eat, play, work, relax or shop.

Guests have two options for food and beverages in the lobby area. They can enjoy high tea at the Mariage Frères Tea Room, which is artistically cozy with wooden floors and paintings on the ceiling, or tuck into a meal at the Bar Storia del Café, which serves from 6am until midnight in a classy European atmosphere.

The hotel offers three types of rooms: Premier, Deluxe Suite and the Living Suite – each tastefully done up following a classic European aesthetic with oriental touches. Each room is well-appointed with English furniture, and murals based on Asian and European flora and fauna. The friezes give the rooms soft and relaxing touch, bringing in the soothing color of nature.

The "relax" area on the eighth floor comprises the gym and a rooftop pool, where the design is inspired by the classic English garden. The Salil is not just another beautiful hotel, but a place for Bangkokians to escape the bustle of the city.

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### The Salil Hotel Sukhumvit 57 - Thonglor

24 Soi Sukhumvit 57 (Baan Kluy Nua), Klong Ton Nua  
Tel. 02 072 2882-4  
[www.thesalilhotel.com](http://www.thesalilhotel.com)



4



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF THE SALIL HOTEL

5

4 The Secret Garden, a favorite hideaway.

5 The Bar Storia del Café, serving meals from 6am until midnight in a classy European atmosphere.



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# Saving the Water Buffaloes

BY J. PAKCHUEN

PHOTOGRAPH: SASIN TIPCHAI / PIXABAY



Visits to my grandmother's dairy farm in Lopburi province have given me a love of cows. But while I have first-hand experience of cows' kind and loving nature, I also feel passionate towards another gentle animal in the same family (*Bovidae*) – water buffaloes (*kwai* in Thai).

It is heartbreaking to learn that fewer and fewer of these noble creatures are being used to plough the rice fields

in Thailand even though we're an agricultural country. Farmers are resorting to "iron buffaloes" or modern ploughing tractors, while the long-time helpers of Thai farmers are being sent to the slaughterhouse for their meat and hides. The close bond between Thais and the creature they once depended on to cultivate their land is thus being slowly lost, as Thailand's quiet rural beauty is overtaken by the machine-driven modern world.

To better appreciate buffaloes and why they still hold an important place in our hearts, consider a few facts:

### Fun facts

The buffaloes in Thailand are domesticated water buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*). There are two main types of water buffalo: river buffaloes found mostly in India, Pakistan, Egypt, and southern Europe, and the swamp buffaloes found mostly in Southeast Asia including Thailand, China, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

Swamp buffaloes (known in Thai as *kwai pluck*) are strongly built with big hooves. They can't stand the heat which is why we often see them soaking in water or mud to cool down. Mud baths also help to get rid of the insects on their bodies.

Water buffaloes have wide jaws full of teeth. The lower jaw has 20 but the upper has just 12, with a gap where the front teeth should be. This odd arrangement gives them a unique, funny look when they chew their food.

### Usability and its decline

Water buffaloes have assisted humans in farming for centuries, especially in an agricultural country like Thailand. Fairly easy to domesticate, the strong creatures are put to work tilling rice fields and also transporting people, livestock and crops. Up until the late Ayutthaya period 250 years ago, Thais would ride buffaloes into war against enemies from neighboring states. One such historical episode is recounted in the movie "Bang Rachan", which depicts how villagers of Bang Rachan fought hard to stall the advance of the much larger Burmese army.

Due to the rise of modern farming which swapped the beasts of burden for machines, the number of water buffalo in Thailand dropped from more than three million in 1996 to less than 1.24 million in 2011. Many of them were sent illegally to slaughterhouses in neighboring countries where their meat and hides fetched higher prices than in Thailand.

However, in many countries, buffaloes are also kept for their milk, which is consumed as an important source of protein. Buffalo milk is richer in fat and protein than that of dairy cows (7 to 9 percent of fat versus only 3 to 4 percent). Water buffaloes' milk is especially thick in texture, making it ideal to be processed into cheese, such as the high-quality mozzarella made in Italy.

Buffaloes can also be used to manage uncontrolled growth of vegetation in natural wetlands. By grazing, they can help open up closed swamp areas and extend habitats for wetland birds and other wildlife.

### Buffaloes in culture, tourism and preservation

While elephants are the national animal of Thailand, swamp buffaloes or "carabao" are considered an unofficial national symbol of the Philippines. They have been part of the agricultural life there for centuries, just as in Thailand.

In the Philippines, India, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Thailand, one of the most important and popular days on the rural calendar is the water buffalo racing festival. In Thailand, the annual races are held at the end of Buddhist Lent around mid-October, in Chonburi province. The sprints held in flooded rice fields are nothing if not entertaining, but the main purpose of the festival is to promote the preservation of buffaloes as their numbers decline by the year.

Water buffaloes have been part of Thai culture for centuries and appear frequently in Thai literature. As a result, there are many idioms or expressions in Thai related to buffaloes. *See saw hai kwai fung* or "to play the fiddle to a water buffalo", is the equivalent of "casting pearls before swine". In other words, offering advice or something valuable to those who don't appreciate it.

It is also offensive to call another person a "*kwai*" or to compare someone's intelligence to that of a buffalo. This implies that buffaloes are not smart animals, but in reality buffaloes are patient and obedient animals, especially with farmers, and so sometimes they seem to be mindless beasts of burden merely following orders without a thought of their own.

To ensure that water buffaloes don't disappear altogether from Thailand, late King Bhumibol Adulyadej set up a Royal Buffalo and Cattle Bank, which has helped preserve their number while aiding poor farmers in rural areas by loaning them animals to help cultivate their fields.

There is also an increasing number of so-called Buffalo Villages, especially in Suphanburi province's Sri Prachan district, where tourists can visit and interact with the creatures while learning more about traditional farming methods. The Buffalo Village in Sri Prachan is open every day offering tourists an unmissable opportunity to try tilling the rice fields with buffaloes.

With strong efforts from non-profit organizations and, hopefully, from the government, Thais and foreign tourists are gradually becoming more aware of how precious our soon-to-be endangered friends are. Perhaps the gentle and noble *kwai* still has a furrow to plough in Thailand's future.

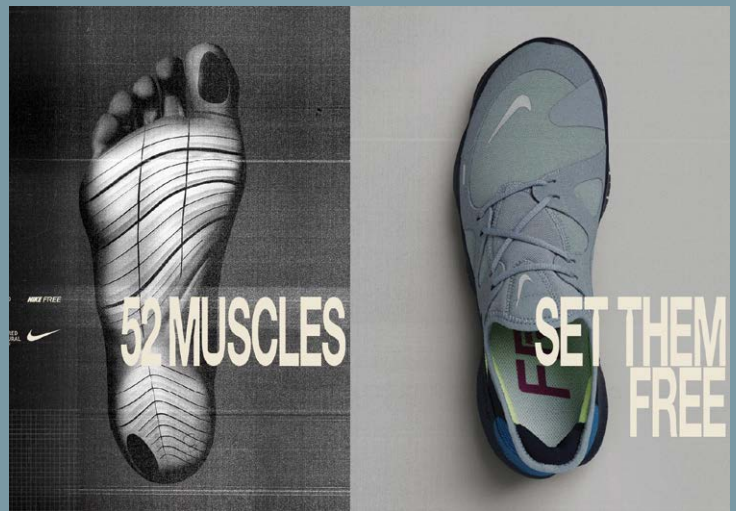
# Moving “freely” with Nike

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

Nike has never stopped evolving, and this time it has come up with newer, better technology to improve performance.

After seeing Stanford University runners cool down barefoot on the grass in 2001, Nike designers decided to research the movement of the human foot. A year later, they created a super-minimal bootie-like prototype of a running shoe featuring a light mesh with silicon pods on the sole. It looked more like a ballet slipper than a running shoe.

They refined this prototype and came up with the 2019 Nike Free Running Collection, that allows the foot to freely flex, splay and move. The Nike Free RN 5.0 and Nike Free RN Flyknit 3.0, which are great for jogging and low-mileage track workouts, go for THB3,600 and THB5,000 respectively. Check them out at Nike stores near you.



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF NIKE

## beet by Pamela

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

Asian-born online fashion brand Pomelo has recently released its first ever cosmetic line, “beet”.

The debut collection comprises 17 versatile products across four categories: Liquid Blush for a healthy, “flush-from-within” finish; Liquid Lipstick that leaves lips soft, but with a matte finish; Lip Gloss that gives your lips a plump effect; and Liquid Shimmer that gives your skin a glow and can also be used as an eyeshadow.

At only THB240 per item, “beet” is available on Pomelo Android and IOS Apps and at [Pomelofashion.com/beet](http://Pomelofashion.com/beet).

PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF POMELO



## HUAWEI P30 Series



## SHUTTERBUGS BUZZING OVER HUAWEI'S P30

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL



**H**uawei's just-launched P30 Series features an AI-powered innovative camera that boasts an unrivalled smartphone photography experience.

The Huawei P30, P30 Pro, and P30 Lite allow users to capture images in the dark with a super sensing Leica Quad Camera and superzoom lens that offers up to 5x optical zoom, 10x hybrid zoom, and 50x digital zoom. The devices also offer dual-view video capture and a super bokeh portrait application.

The smartphone maker partnered with leading fashion brands Tube Gallery and Hook's by Praprakas to launch the series at Bangkok's Waldorf Astoria. The devices come in covetable new colors like Breathing Crystal and Aurora and will cost THB31,990 for a Huawei P30 Pro; THB21,990 for a Huawei P30 and THB10,990 for a Huawei P30 Lite. For more info, visit <https://consumer.huawei.com>.

## Luscious Mango-Filled Afternoons at Le Méridien

BY PEKKY THE ANGEL

**W**hat better way to spend a scorching summer afternoon than literally chilling at one of the capital's top five-star hotels. The Le Méridien Bangkok is offering just that with an afternoon tea featuring the season's favorite fruit – mango – at Latitude 13, washed down with a spa package to rejuvenate yourself at the SPA by Le Méridien.

Tuck into such delights as freshly baked scones slathered with mango-passionfruit jam and clotted cream or roasted scallops daubed with eucalyptus-mango chutney, and then indulge further in the mango mania with an exquisite 45-minute aromatherapy massage with an aromatic blend of mango, peppermint and lavender essential oils.

The Mango Afternoon Tea Set plus 45-minute Summer Oil Body Massage for two goes for THB1,900++, while the Mango Afternoon Tea Set alone costs THB1,000++.

Email [dining.lmbkk@lemeridien.com](mailto:dining.lmbkk@lemeridien.com) or call 02 232 8888.



# May

## Buzzing films at The Hive

Shorties Film Festival, an annual week-long celebration of Asia's most exciting short films, is screening across Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam, from May 7 to 11. The screenings in Bangkok will take place at The Hive Thonglor. For more information, visit [www.shortiesfilmfestival.com](http://www.shortiesfilmfestival.com) or book tickets at [www.ticketmelon.com/thehivebangkok/shortiesfilmfestivalbangkok](http://www.ticketmelon.com/thehivebangkok/shortiesfilmfestivalbangkok).

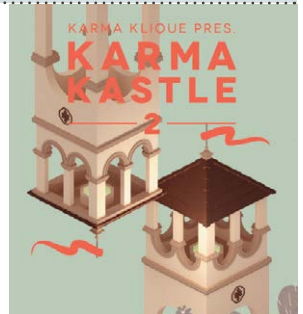


## 'Last Dinosaurs' invade RCA

Australian indie rockers, "Last Dinosaurs", are coming to Bangkok to perform top hits "Zoom", "Apollo", "Honolulu", along with hot tracks like "Sense" and "Happy" from their latest album "Yumeno Garden". They will be stomping the stage at Live RCA on May 15 from 7pm onwards. Tickets start at THB1,600 at [www.ticketmelon.com/very/lastdinosaurs](http://www.ticketmelon.com/very/lastdinosaurs).

## Round two with Karma Kastle

Karma Kastle, packed with a heavyweight electronic lineup created by music lovers for music connoisseurs, returns this year to picture-perfect Khao Yai. Held at the Mirasierra Khao Yai from May 17 - 19, afternoon activities include workshops on Meditation Submersion with Nathaniel, Wine Discovery with NaturalistaVEGAN, and Cooking Workshop with Jibbo. Visit [www.ticketmelon.com/karmaklique/karmakastle2](http://www.ticketmelon.com/karmaklique/karmakastle2) to register and [www.ticketmelon.com/karmaklique/karmakastle2active](http://www.ticketmelon.com/karmaklique/karmakastle2active) to join a workshop.



## Jason Mraz bringing Good Vibes to Bangkok

Singer-songwriter Jason Mraz lands with his "Good Vibes" Tour at Bangkok's Impact Arena, Muang Thong Thani on May 21. The multi-Grammy award winner will be here to win more hearts with hits like "I'm Yours" and "I Won't Give Up". Get tickets at all ThaiTicketMajor outlets or through [www.thaiticketmajor.com/concert/jason-mraz-good-vibes-tour-2019.html](http://www.thaiticketmajor.com/concert/jason-mraz-good-vibes-tour-2019.html).

## Ready to float in a 'Pink Cloud'

The Pink Cloud Festival, a music and art event for lovers of alt-rock, reggae and dream pop, is on May 25 at the Thai Wake Park from 10am to midnight. Jam with a lineup featuring Australian rockers Dune Rats and Hockey Dad, American band Turnover, and our very own Thai bands such as Sirajah Rockers, Wave And So, and Daniel Didyasarini to name a few. Visit [www.pinkcloudfestival.com](http://www.pinkcloudfestival.com) for more info.



## Run for your food!

The Kilorun Bangkok 2019 is a unique running event measured not just in kilometers but also in kilograms. Participants on May 26 can admire local attractions and also sample delicacies at restaurants along the route. The KM Breakfast Run – covering 5.5 to 10 kilometers – takes leisure joggers to iconic cultural attractions, while in the KG Dinner Run offers them a chance to walk or run to sites to sample the city's signature dishes. The 5.5km KM+KG run costs THB1,215, while the 10km version costs THB1,296. Visit [www.eventpop.me/e/5362-kilorunbangkok2019](http://www.eventpop.me/e/5362-kilorunbangkok2019).

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

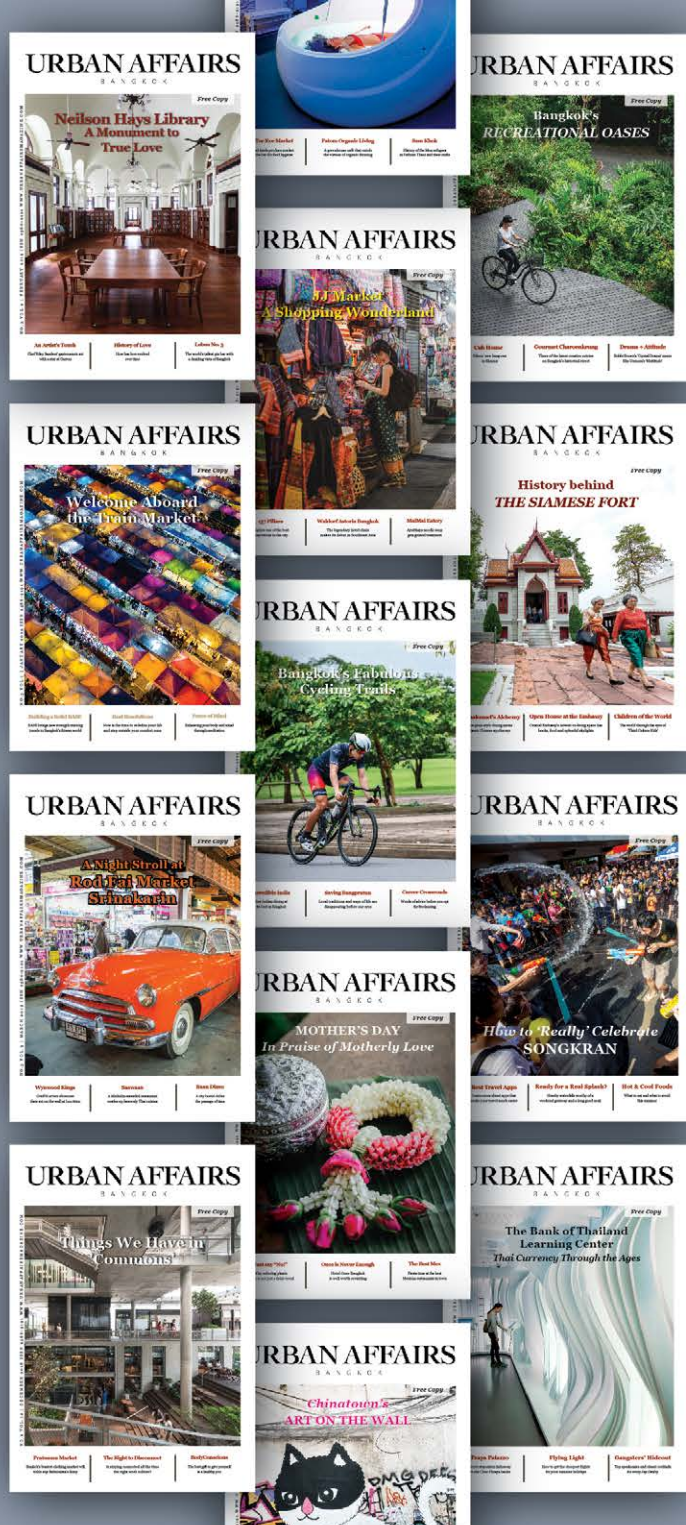
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