



Photo: Getty Images

NIGHT & DAY

As a city that can only be described as organised chaos, Bangkok can be hard to navigate. Here is an itinerary to experience its bustling and zen sides in a stopover

Words: Rebecca Haddad

BANGKOK

7.30 am

Land at **Suvarnabhumi Airport** (www.suvarnabhumi.airport.com) and head straight into Bangkok's peak-hour rush as you make your way to **Anantara Bangkok Riverside Resort & Spa** (257/1-3 Charoennakorn Rd). Set on the banks of the grand Chao Phraya River, the resort boasts 4.4 hectares of tropical gardens, creating a great oasis from the bustle just beyond the gates.

9.30 am

After freshening up in your Premier Suite and fuelling up with some dumplings, stir fry vegetables and rice at the hotel's breakfast spot, **The Market**, ease into your stay with a dose of Zen. Hop in a taxi or board a boat at the resort's dock for a leisurely cruise upriver to Wat Phra Kaew, more commonly known as the **Temple of the Emerald Buddha** (Na Phra Lan Rd), regarded as the most sacred Buddhist temple in Thailand. While no monks reside here — this is a private place of worship for the royal family as it sits within the boundary of the **Grand Palace** — it is no less serene. Gaze upon the statue of Buddha, carved from a single block of jade, then wander around the courtyards and admire the architecture and the peace before the crowds descend.

11 am

Homage paid, hop back on a boat and cruise downriver again to **Mandarin Oriental Bangkok** (48 Oriental Ave; +66 2 659 9000; www.mandarinoriental.com) where your pre-booked appointment at the **Oriental Spa** awaits. The Spa Suites come with their own Jacuzzi and steam room — the perfect setting to unwind with a 90-minute Oriental Signature Treatment, combining acupressure, stretching, and a shoulder and spinal compress of fresh Thai herbs such as lemongrass, turmeric and plai.

12 pm

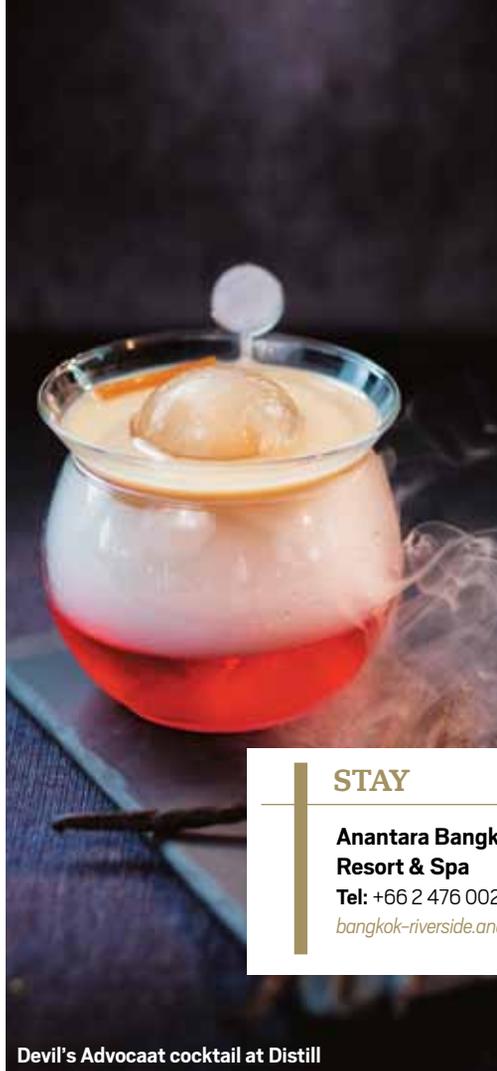
Feeling invigorated (and smelling fabulous), it's time to continue your discovery of Thai flavours with some taste-testing. From street food to high-end establishments, Bangkok is one of the world's best places to eat. If you're feeling brave, place your trust in a tuktuk driver as you wind your way through traffic to **Nahm** in the **Hotel Metropolitan by Como** (27 South Sathorn Rd; +66 2 625 3388; www.comohotels.com). It was voted this year's best restaurant in Asia and is headed up by Australian chef David Thompson. It's evident he has as much knowledge of local cuisine as any native chef, exemplified in dishes



Anantara Bangkok Riverside Resort & Spa



W Bangkok



STAY

**Anantara Bangkok Riverside
Resort & Spa**

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Devil's Advocaat cocktail at Distill

such as light rice noodles with prawns and shredded herb sauce with pickled banana blossom, and a jungle curry of chicken with wild ginger, green peppercorns, madan and Thai basil. While it is hard to stop on the main courses, leave room for the dessert of lychees in scented syrup.

1.30 pm

The only sensible way to burn off all that food is with some retail therapy at some of Bangkok's high-end sartorial hotspots. One of the newest kids on the block is **Central Embassy**, which opened earlier this year in an iconic wave-shaped building erected on the grounds of the former British embassy (546/4 Phloen Chit; www.centralembassy.com). The high-end sartorial offerings continue next door at **Siam Paragon** (www.siamparagon.co.th), where you'll find the likes of Bulgari, Chanel, Miu Miu and Pucci, as well as an impressive portfolio of Swiss watch brands.

3 pm

Of course, being a city of stark contrasts, Bangkok's premier shopping experiences aren't limited to the confines of gleaming malls. Head back to Anantara to drop off your shopping bags and pick up your bargaining game face as you embark on a **private market tour** lead by the hotel's Streetwise Guru and head concierge, Chettha. His local know-how means you'll visit the best food stops, spice stands and flower stalls, or anything else that piques your interest. Hydrate yourself with a fresh coconut juice along the way, husked and opened for you on the spot.

7 pm

Despite the endless bounty of street food you've undoubtedly sampled at the markets, you'll be surprised at how big of an appetite you've developed once you're back at the hotel. Shower and change into something

cocktail-hour appropriate before catching another cab back across the river to **W Bangkok** (106 North Sathorn Rd; +66 2 344 4000; www.starwoodhotels.com) on Embassy Row. Sip a few pre-dinner cocktails in **Woobar** and mingle with the city's see-and-be-seen crowd as the resident DJ spins some tunes.

8.30 pm

It's certainly tempting to make a night of it at the W, but to experience as much as possible, head over to **The St. Regis Bangkok** (159 Rajadamri Rd; +66 2 207 7777; www.starwoodhotels.com) for a final meal at **Zuma**. The izakaya-style menu means plates are perfect for sharing — the signature spicy beef tenderloin and black cod marinated in saiko miso are musts.

11 pm

Bangkok at night is a sight to behold. To see it all from the top, tourists head to **Sky Bar** at Lebua (1055/42 Silom Rd; +66 2 624 9555; www.lebua.com) but go one level higher to **Distill**. There, you can still enjoy great city views (without the cattle crowds) on the cigar terrace with an Ice Cocktail from resident mixologist, Ron Ramirez. The flavours are frozen in water at just under two degrees, so as the cocktail melts the flavours are released slowly, so the drink stays enjoyable until the last sip.

12.30 am

No VIP experience in Bangkok ends without a stop at party strip, **Sukhumvit Soi 11**. There, you'll find mainstay **Levels Club and Lounge** (11 Sukhumvit Rd; +66 82 308 3246; www.levelsclub.com), where you'll be assigned a personal waiter at your VIP table to ensure you're looked after. End your night here or keep the party going, Bangkok-style — after all, sleep can wait until the flight home. ■