Beguiling and bewildering, subtle and brash, spiritual and sensual, Bangkok is one of Asia’s most intriguing cities. Its glittering temples and museums overflow with sumptuous art, and an exploration of the city’s canals and markets reveals the locals’ hospitable nature. Shopping for bargains, dining out, and reveling in the vibrant nightlife should feature high on everyone’s itinerary.

1. **Grand Palace and Wat Phra Kaew**
   This dazzling complex is the pinnacle of perfection in Thai religious art and architecture. An unmissable sight (see pp8–11).

2. **National Museum**
   One of the largest museums in Asia, the National Museum displays priceless exhibits including intricate works of art that clearly document the long and eventful history of Thailand (see pp12–13).

3. **Wat Pho**
   Bangkok’s oldest and biggest temple, and formerly a center for public education, Wat Pho houses a massive Reclining Buddha and a school of Thai massage (see pp14–15).

4. **Bangkok’s Canals**
   Boats were once the city’s main mode of transport. Tour the canals west of the Chao Phraya River to glimpse a vanishing lifestyle (see pp16–17).

5. **Dusit Park**
   Seeming a world away from Bangkok’s bustle, this tranquil park, studded with royal residences and government offices, is ideal for a peaceful stroll and learning about the Thai monarchy (see pp18–19).
The ancient city of Ayutthaya is easily visited in a day. Its huge, crumbling chedi (stupas) and blissful Buddha images give an idea of the splendor of this former capital (see pp28–31).

Wat Arun
With its five distinctive prang (towers), which are often used as a logo of the city, this temple played an important historical role in the development of Bangkok and remains one of its most attractive sights (see pp26–7).

Chinatown
Samphan Thawong

Jim Thompson’s House
Assembled by the man who made Thai silk world-famous, this complex of traditional houses is a fine example of Thai teak architecture. The main house remains as it was during the days of Jim Thompson and the other buildings display items from his art collection (see pp24–5).

Chatuchak Weekend Market
Bangkok’s biggest market is a must-see, for the chance to pick up a unique souvenir and feel the pulse of Thai culture in the maze of stalls (see pp22–3).

Bangkok’s Top 10
7

Wat Arun
With its five distinctive prang (towers), which are often used as a logo of the city, this temple played an important historical role in the development of Bangkok and remains one of its most attractive sights (see pp26–7).

Damnoen Saduak Floating Market
Though designed for tourists, the colorful sights, aromatic smells, and cheerful banter of vendors make a visit to this floating market a delightful experience (see pp20–21).

Ayutthaya
The ancient city of Ayutthaya is easily visited in a day. Its huge, crumbling chedi (stupas) and blissful Buddha images give an idea of the splendor of this former capital (see pp28–31).