Sport and Leisure

1. Thai Boxing
Muay Thai (Thai boxing) has enjoyed an explosion of popularity of late, particularly among young Westerners, and many spend their holidays in Thailand practising this demanding sport in camps. For less active visitors to the kingdom, attending an evening of bouts at the Ratchadamnoen Boxing Stadium (see p45) is as much a cultural as a sporting experience.

2. Horse Racing
There are a couple of race courses in Bangkok – the Royal Turf Club (RTC) in Dusit and the Royal Bangkok Sports Club (RBSC). Races are held fortnightly at each course, on alternate Sundays at RBSC (see p82) and RTC. The minimum bet is B50. The Saphan Taksin line of the Skytrain provides a bird’s-eye view of the RBSC. RTC: Phitsanulok Road • Map F2 • (02) 280 0020–9 • Adm

3. Takraw
Best described as volleyball played with the feet, Takraw is visually exciting, with the players performing acrobatic feats to kick the ball over the net. Games are played in Sanam Luang (see p63), public parks, or any small open space in Bangkok.

4. Golf
This game is very popular among visitors to Bangkok for a variety of reasons – courses are generally of a high international standard, with scenic landscaping, very competitive equipment rental and green fees, and attentive and friendly service. There are several golf courses within easy reach of Bangkok.

5. Bowling
A great way of spending a fun afternoon or evening with friends is to go bowling. It offers a sporting challenge without too much exertion. Most of Bangkok’s shopping malls have a bowling alley on the top floor, some of which are equipped with karaoke facilities and disco lighting.

6. Tennis
Following the success of Thai tennis hero Paradorn Srichaphan (see p35), tennis has become very popular among Thais. It is advisable to play early in the morning or late in the afternoon to avoid the searing heat. Major hotels have private tennis courts; public courts are at the National Stadium and in Lumphini Park (see p80). National Stadium: 154 Rama I Rd • Map N2 • (02) 214 0120

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Top 10 Thai Sporting Events

1. **International Kite Festival**
   Both individual and team events are held and unusual kites are on show. 💡 Hua Hin • Mar

2. **Chiang Mai Cricket Sixes**
   A fun event with big names turning up occasionally. 🏏 Apr

3. **Koh Samui Regatta**
   One of the highlights of the Asian sailing circuit. 🛥 May/Jun

4. **Phuket Marathon**
   This marathon attracts thousands of entries each year. 🏃 Jun

5. **International Mountain Bike Competition**
   Riders traverse the hills around the Bhumibol Dam. 🏋️& Aug

6. **Thailand Tennis Open**
   A very popular and prestigious tennis tournament. 🏛 Bangkok • Sep

7. **King’s Cup Elephant Polo Tournament**
   Unusual event in which elephants and mahouts (elephant keeper and driver) chase a ball around a field. 🦄 Golden Triangle • Sep

8. **Chonburi Buffalo Races**
   Farmers ride their buffaloes bareback in this annual pageant. 🐄 Oct

9. **Laguna Phuket Triathlon**
   A gruelling challenge for athletes in a sport that tests their swimming, cycling, and running skills. 🏊 Dec

10. **King’s Cup Regatta**
    Since its inception in 1987, this has become Asia’s premier international sailing event, with prizes for many classes of yacht. 🛥️ Phuket • Dec

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**Ice Skating**
The last thing a visitor can imagine on a tropical holiday are ice rinks, but there are a few on the outskirts of Bangkok. Qualified coaches are on hand to teach beginners how to glide across the ice. 💡 Sub Zero: Esplanade, Ratchadaphisek Road • Map T5 • (02) 354 2134 • Open 11am–midnight daily • Adm

**Swimming**
To cool off, plunge into a pool at a top-end or mid-range hotel. There are public pools at the National Stadium and the sports center at the Chuklalongkorn University (see p82).

**Martial Arts**
It is possible to study and practise all kinds of martial arts in Bangkok, from Thai boxing to tae kwon do, judo, or karate, though probably the most popular is t'ai chi. To join the city’s inhabitants for an impromptu session of t’ai chi or aerobics, head along to Lumpini Park (see p80) at dawn or dusk.

A morning session of t’ai chi

**Snooker**
Since James Wattana joined the world rankings, snooker has become hugely popular in Thailand. There are now thousands of clubs across the country, with hundreds of them in Bangkok. Tables are usually in excellent condition, cues are on hand for borrowing, and hourly rates are very reasonable.