

THE AUTHOR

Dave Stamboulis is a Greek-American who has called Bangkok home for the past 15 years. A professional photographer and travel writer, he is an avid globetrotter, mountain trekker, and is noted for his award-winning book, *Odysseus' Last Stand*, detailing his seven-year and 45,000-kilometre bicycle ride around the world.

A lover of craft beer, well-mixed cocktails, and ethnic cuisine, Dave can be found checking out the latest rooftop bars and speakeasies that seem to spring up by the day in Bangkok, looking for the most authentic hole-in-the-wall street eateries, or finding hidden gems like Bang Krachao, Bangkok's 'lung' and largest green space, where the average visitor, or even resident, doesn't get to.

Dave hopes that this guidebook will enable visitors to explore the less visited and more atmospheric sides of Bangkok, the old neighbourhoods that are slowly disappearing, where the slow-paced and easy going Thai friendliness is still on display, and the big modern metropolis is still held at bay.

In making this Luster guide a reality, Dave owes a debt of gratitude to his partner, Raquel Mogado, for helping with photo choices and guidance, going on long explorations throughout the bowels of the city to get the latest information, and putting up with endless evenings spent slaving over the computer. Also, a big thanks goes out to his editor, Dettie Luyten, who made the writing and proofing process as smooth and easy as could be possible.

BANGKOK

overview



The 5 most UNUSUAL places to sleep

- 406 **PHRANAKORN-NORNLEN** Super funky boutique guesthouse with rooms turned by the artist owner into colourful, almost psychedelic experiences, with large vibrant wall murals. Her paintings also adorn all the hallways, and the large open space downstairs has recreated a traditional Thai community, and oozes plenty of charm.
- 46 Thewet Soi 1
Dusit ⑩
+66 (0)2 628 8188
www.phranakorn-nornlen.com
- 407 **SOOK STATION** At this novel hostel, you're given convict pyjamas, and your inmate number serves in place of a key. Your room also has iron bars, as this Shawshank Redemption-inspired place really does resemble a prison. Don't sweat it too much though, there is a hot tub on the roof should you need to escape.
- 45-49 Sukhumvit Soi 101/2
Eastern Bangkok ⑩
+66 (0)86 332 0555
www.sookstation.com
- 408 **SHANGHAI MANSION** Located right in the heart of Chinatown, Shanghai Mansion looks like something right out of 1930s Shanghai. The design is Chinese Art Deco, and rooms are filled with warm colours, old photographs, and giant claw tubs. There's also a vintage jazz bar upstairs, accessed via an iron spiral staircase.
- 479-481 Yaowarat Road
Chinatown ④
+66 (0)2 221 2121
www.shanghai-mansion.com

- 409 **PRAYA PALAZZO**
757/1 Somdej
Prapinklae Soi 2
Thonburi ⑤⑨
+66 (0)2 883 2998
www.prayapalazzo.com

This unique hotel is a former Italian mansion that has become a hidden boutique property. You can only get here by boat, although the hotel does have its own private ferry for guests and gives everyone a cell phone to use. Rooms feature Italian antiques and wooden floors, and there are only 17 rooms. Kids under 12 are not allowed.

- 410 **BANGKOK TREEHOUSE**
60 Moo 1, Petch Cha
Hueng Road, Phra
Pradaeng, Samut
Prakarn
Southern Bangkok ⑩
+66 (0)82 995 1150
www.bangkok-treehouse.com

Bangkok Treehouse is one of a kind. The eco-friendly boutique hotel sits on a bicycle path in Bang Krachao, the green 'lungs' of the city, located across the Chao Phraya River. You can come here by boat or cycle in. Try the 'View With a Room' which features a bed with mosquito netting out on an open bamboo deck.



288 KOH KRET ISLAND



287 SALA CHALERM THANI

289 TALING CHAN



288 KOH KRET ISLAND

Nonthaburi
Northern Bangkok ①

Koh Kret is an island in the north of Bangkok, both car-free and small enough to walk and cycle around. It is noted for its Mon temples and traditional pottery, and there is even a micro-brewery here to chill out at and watch the river go by.

289 TALING CHAN

Soi Chak Phra 17,
Taling Chan
Thonburi ⑤

Far more local and realistic than touristy Damnoen Saduak, this is a great option to take part in a Thai floating market. The market takes place on weekends and features canal-side boats that sell freshly grilled seafood. You can also go on boat tours to check out traditional canal life.

290 PAK KLONG TALAD BY NIGHT

Chak Phet Road
Rattanakosin Island ③

Bangkok's flower market is subdued by day, as not much is going on then, but it becomes a hive of working class activity at 2 to 3 in the morning, when massive deliveries of flowers are made by both boat and truck, all very colourful and atmospheric.

5 of the best TAILORS

196 TAILOR ON TEN

93 Sukhumvit Soi 8
Sukhumvit ⑦
+66 (0)84 877 1543
www.tailoronten.com

Owned and operated by two Canadian brothers, this shop is praised for honesty and personal service in a city where tailors can come a scam a dozen. The brothers hand-pick every thread and button, the tailoring is done in-house, and the quality is guaranteed. The assured workmanship brings in every type of traveller and local.

197 NARRY TAILOR

155/22 Sukhumvit
Soi 11/1
Sukhumvit ⑦
+66 (0)81 919 2533
www.narry.com

Bangkok is famed for its Indian tailors, who can make custom-fitted shirts, slacks, suits, and tuxedos at great cost for quality. While you can find cheaper, you tend to get what you pay for here, and Narry is a bespoke tailor who has been receiving accolades for a superior level of workmanship, quality, and service.

198 PINKY TAILOR

AT: MAHATUN PLAZA ARCADE
888/40 Ploenchit Road
Pathumwan ①
+66 (0)2 253 6328
www.pinkytailor.com

Pinky has been around since 1980 and has a legion of local followers. Mr. Pinky and his son serve both men and women, with skirts, shirts, suits, and uniforms just part of their stock. Customers are measured both for each garment and the cloth needed for it to be cut.

199 SIAM EMPORIUM

390/2-3 Sukhumvit Road
Sukhumvit ⑦
+66 (0)2 663 4809
www.siamemporiumtailors.com

This bespoke Indian tailor has been around since 1976, with years of experience in the fashion industry, which sets them apart from the other lineup of tailors that can be found as you walk down the row of shops on lower Sukhumvit. The other tailors tend to have guys outside trying to lure you in, but Siam Emporium relies on their expertise and track record instead.

200 BUTTON UP

113/6 Sukhumvit Soi 55
(near Thonglor Soi 5)
Thonglor ⑧
+66 (0)2 712 6111
www.thebuttonup.com

Rapper Snoop Dogg had his threads done here, plenty of Thai celebrities stop in, and the customised service and fitting is the best in Bangkok. You'll pay high prices here, but you'll get Loro Piana and other fine European fabrics for your suit.



200 BUTTON UP

The 5 QUIRKIEST restaurants

- 51 **KRATON FLYING CHICKEN**
99/1 Bang Na-Trat Road
(opposite BITEC)
Eastern Bangkok ⑫
+66 (0)2 399 5202

At Kraton, your grilled chicken does not cross the road to get to the other side, but instead is set in a catapult, and then vaulted across the restaurant to a waiter who is riding a unicycle and wearing a helmet affixed with a trio of metal skewers! The waiters catch the birds on the fly, and then pedal them up to your table!

- 52 **HAJIME ROBOT**
AT: MONOPOLY PARK,
3RD FLOOR
59/27 Rama III Road
Southern Bangkok ⑬
+66 (0)2 683 1670
www.hajimerobot.com

The *yakiniku* and *shabu shabu* buffet is reason enough to come here for a pig-out, but what makes Hajime stand out is the use of samurai-dressed robots which dance and then deliver food along a track to your table. Yeah, it's a gimmick to draw in clients, but the kids will love it.

- 53 **DINE IN THE DARK**
AT: SHERATON GRANDE
250 Sukhumvit Road
Sukhumvit ⑦
+66 (0)2 649 8358
www.dineinthedarkbangkok.com

Your visually impaired or blind waitress will lead you into a pitch black room (no cell phones or watch lights allowed), and you'll proceed to be served a four-course dinner, all of which you will have to rely on taste and smell as to identify what it is.

- 54 **CABBAGES AND CONDOMS**
10 Sukhumvit Soi 12
Sukhumvit ⑦
+66 (0)2 229 4610
www.cabbagesandcondoms.net

Cabbages and Condoms has won awards for its commitment to safe sex and sexual health, donating part of your bill to community projects. The vast menu has a range of Thai favourites. There are condom-themed characters placed throughout the restaurant, and the motto of the owners is 'our food won't get you pregnant'.

- 55 **FAIKEAW YAOWARAT**
Yaowarat Soi 11
Chinatown ④
+66 (0)97 232 8553

It's worth coming to Chinatown just to witness the chef here perform at this street eatery. Every ten minutes, he stir-fries a bunch of morning glory, known for its flame inducement when sautéed in a wok full of hot oil, producing pyromaniac-worthy fireworks, and plenty of gasps from the audience.

