

# Maloney

In August of this year, Paul Maloney Public Relations accompanied leading Australian fashion media from Russh Magazine and the Sydney Morning Herald to Thailand to view the upcoming collections from Sretsis and Disaya and experience the depth of the Bangkok fashion industry first-hand at Biff and Bil. They were immediately blown away by the exquisiteness of Thai fashion and walked away from the experience with a newfound esteem and respect for the magnitude of talent coming out of Bangkok.

Here are just a few thoughts from *Russh* editor-in-chief Natalie Shukur:

*“On visiting Bangkok for the first time in August and seeing the huge array of designers both at Biff & Bil and in the stores I was truly blown away by the talent on show.*

*What I feel is the strong point of these designers is their grasp of and flair for branding and concept – for example Sretsis – who have everything so beautifully detailed from the garments themselves to their boutique, to the packaging, graphic design and logo of their brand. It is clear these fashion labels are nurtured by the Thai fashion industry and it is these qualities that I’m sure will help make them such a great success in overseas markets.*

*We really enjoyed meeting with many designers at Biff & Bil – from the young labels like Patpuk who are doing really interesting and fresh things, to the local leather makers and the very talented and inventive jewellery designers – another of my favourite aspects of Thai fashion.*

*The heritage and expertise of Thai production – from the beautiful silks to the finishing on fabrics and intricate moldings on the jewellery pieces is another advantage and point of difference Thai fashion designers have. It is exciting to see young fashion labels with such a great sense of craftsmanship and good quality production behind them.*

*It was such a great pleasure to come and experience Bangkok as a fashion city. The shopping destinations, the bars and restaurants and the people were some of the most stylish I have experienced.*

*We look forward to featuring Bangkok and designers showcased at Bif & Bil in issues of Russh to come.”*



# One night in Bangkok



*Russh took a trip to the heady city of Bangkok where we ate, drank and shopped to our heart's content. With a little help from our Thai fashion friends, here's our insiders guide to a city that never sleeps...*



**T**hey don't call it the land of a thousand smiles for nothing. After our second day in Bangkok we had face ache from all the tooth exposure. The colours, the sounds, the sights, and especially the people – there is an uplifting vibe in this city that is positively infectious. Maybe it had something to do with Thailand being a predominantly Buddhist country, or perhaps it's the fact that we had just bought a whole hunk of fresh juicy pineapple off the street for 20 baht; either way we were two happy travellers.

For Australians, Bangkok is notorious for being a gap-year destination, but don't let your adolescent experiments taint it. For every Alex Garland-style experience, there is another more sophisticated trip on offer. For those seeking fashion, food, culture and a little luxury, Bangkok should be on your radar.

## CHA-CHING!

While it seems like a crime to spend any time in a shopping mall when visiting an exotic locale, who are we kidding? Bangkok's cavernous temples to fashion are like Disneyland for girls with credit cards and are not to be missed. Chloé, Balenciaga, Pucci or Prada – you want it, they've got it. And while prices are akin to Australia (that's to say more expensive than

New York or Hong Kong) there's a wide range of product on offer, lots of sale promotions, and you can claim seven per cent VAT back on your way home – just be sure to fill out the form at the time of purchase. Another tip is to check with the information desk at the mall or the cash register at the store, as most places offer a small tourist discount.

The contrast of plush, air-conditioned malls and the hectic hum of the streets is a bizarre paradox. On the must-visit list is **Siam Paragon** – a grown-up playground if there ever was one. We could spend a whole afternoon in the Club 21 boutique alone, filled as it is with accessories from YSL, Givenchy and Pierre Hardy. The underground level houses an aquarium and the top floor boasts Ferraris. Be sure to stick around for lunch here, as the food court is mind-blowing and don't leave without checking out the colossal stationary section at the department store. **Gaysorn** shopping mall – one stop along from Siam Paragon on the BTS skytrain – has a more boutique vibe, where you will find local design stars like Sretsis, Disaya, Senada Theory, Greyhound and Matina Amanita's newly opened jewellery store, as well as local lifestyle boutiques like Myth and Cloud 9, which stocks one of Bangkok's most exciting new labels, Boyy bags. Other shopping destinations worth

visiting are **Emporium** (Phrom Phong station) and **CentralWorld**, next door to Gaysorn.

Step outside into **Siam Square**, where pop music is pumped into the air and teenagers gather on corners and you'll find a good selection of youthful, inexpensive stores like Flamingo where you can pick up costume jewellery (something the Thai's do exceptionally well) or a fashion-forward piece like a dramatic, black, full-length jumpsuit.

## MARKET TO MARKET

You haven't done Bangkok justice unless you've visited a market or two. If you're short on time, the definitive one is **Chatuchak**, otherwise known as JJ markets. You really need a whole day, or weekend to fully accomplish this baby, but you won't come away empty handed. Sprawling across 35 acres and boasting 15,000 stalls, this market is a mishmash of old and new, cheap and precious, touristy and unique. From every kind of animal imaginable, to reams of exquisitely dyed Thai silk, to handmade leather sandals and boutique perfumers, there is no end to the goodies on offer. And if you've got a hunter-gatherer attitude, the vintage is out of this world. Rumour has it that many Australian and Japanese vintage stores source from here and it's not hard to see why. Piles



Vintage shopping on the Khao San Rd

upon piles of old-school Levi's, leather biker jackets, 70s band tees, Navajo jewellery, military jackets, leather boots and old Dior and Ray-Ban sunnies are just some of the treasures you will unearth. Don't forget to barter. Look to pay around 250 baht for a leather jacket, 50-100 baht for jeans and tees and up to 1000 baht for something special. There's also a section housing up-and-coming Thai designers like Patpuk and T-Common



Chatuchak Weekend Markets

— many of which are stocked in boutiques, but are better priced at Charuchak. And it goes without saying that there's food stalls galore. On a hot day, coconut ice cream served in the shell, accompanied by a cup of the juice, is the sweetest treat you could wish for.

For souvenirs, homewares and a good foot massage Bangkok's night markets are also worth checking out. Try **Suan Lum Night Bazaar** near Lumpini Park and **Patpong** — the infamous red light district.

## STREET LIFE

When you're in a hot-climate city there's nothing like pulling on your short shorts, sweeping your hair up into a top knot, ditching your possessions and stepping out into the steamy night air to explore. Wherever you happen to be in Bangkok, you only need to walk a few feet in any given direction and you'll stumble upon something to see, buy or eat. The scents in the air will hit you first — a nose turning waft of pungent canal will be soothed by the sweet smell of jasmine blossom, or the ever-present musk of burning incense drifting from the millions of mini shrines to Buddha. Pounding the pavement in Bangkok requires you to have your wits about you — with unfinished roads, soi [street] dogs and what seems like zero traffic laws, it's not the kind of place where you can have your head in the clouds. But why would you want to? The essence of this buzzing city is all about the streets and one of the best ways to experience everyday life in Bangkok is to pull up a chair, order some street food and refresh with a cold Singha beer. Watch out for the busiest stalls frequented



Sretsis boutique, Gaysorn

## Pim from Sretsis' Bangkok Top 10

1. **The food court at Siam Paragon** — yummy food and snacks especially when there is a Japanese food festival.
2. **Happy Monday Restaurant** — the best curry fries, and party with familiar faces.
3. **Chatuchak Weekend Market** — From vintage and antiques to iguanas, owls and puppies, Bangkok has got it all!
4. **Club Culture** — Nightshift Party with DJ Note and his imported bands.
5. **i.sawan spa hotel** — the perfect retreat.
6. **Q Concept Store** — Furniture, cool gifts and gadgets galore...
7. **Chocolate buffet at Sukhothai Hotel.**
8. **Ratchada vintage night market** — the name says it all.
9. **TCDC The Emporium** — a cutting edge library and resource center for design and fashion.
10. **The Minibar Royale** — offers French ambience with delicious champagne cocktails and food the way your mama makes it!

## Disaya's Bangkok Top 10

1. **Vimanmek Mansion** – once a royal residence, this teak mansion is filled with photographs, artwork, furniture and royal memorabilia.
2. **Chatuchak** – the mother of all markets. A great place for Thai exports.
3. **The Grand Palace** – the official residence of the monarchy, the Palace is one of the most photographed spots in the city and houses the Emerald Buddha.
4. **Sirocco** – one of Bangkok's best live jazz venues.
5. **Aqua** – an open-air dining and cocktail venue situated in the lush gardens of the Four Seasons Hotel.
6. **TCDC Resource Center** – a place for Thai designers, design entrepreneurs and enthusiasts to develop and expand their knowledge and skills.
7. **Kinokuniya bookstore** – the best bookshop in Asia.
8. **Ratchadalai theatre** – the best in Thailand; the atmosphere and technology will take your breath away.
9. **Ratchaprasong** – home to CentralWorld, Gaysorn, Amarin Plaza, Erawan Bangkok, Paragon.
10. **Luxury Hotels** – Bangkok's hotels rival the world's best. Great places to relax and indulge.

by locals, where the perishables are kept on ice and you can see plates being washed with running water, steer clear of the super spicy stuff, and you'll be just fine.

There's many a surreal experience to be had on the streets of Bangkok. One night we sat down in the open air for some fried rice, stir fried prawns, spicy squid salad and chicken curry (a veritable banquet for around the price of your morning coffee and muffin combo) only to look up and see a flat screen TV tied to a telephone pole showing *Fashion TV*. The next second a man walking a baby elephant strolled right past our table. East-meets-west indeed.

**A** must-do after dark experience is the **Khao San Road**. Yes it's home to touts, backpackers, karaoke and fast food joints, but tucked away here and there are some hidden gems like **It's Happened to Be a Closet** – a boutique/bookstore/salon/restaurant that has to be seen to be believed. At the end of the main drag keep an eye out for a character who looks like a Thai version of Johnny Depp in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* and you'll find a sweet selection of vintage wares for sale right on the curb side – most of them bespoke pieces from the 80s, and at bargain prices.

While the hospitality in Bangkok is second to none, there's always the chance that you will be taken for a ride, literally. It's not uncommon

to jump in a taxi and wind up somewhere completely out of the blue, like a random restaurant that's giving the driver a kick back. When hustlers hustle, you've gotta hustle right back. Always know where you're going and state it clearly, make sure the cab has a meter or negotiate the rate before you get in. A tuk tuk is a fun experience, but taxis are much cheaper. Use the BTS (skytrain) where you can, as Bangkok traffic is notoriously clogged and you can end up sitting in it for hours.



## PLAY TIME

Like any major world city, there are countless ways to let your hair down in Bangkok. Bar/restaurant destinations like **Long Table** on the 25th floor of the Column Building at Sukhumvit Soi 16, and **WP Wine Pub** at the Pullman Hotel near Siam Square are full of young, hip Bangkokians sharing local dishes with a contemporary twist and sipping cocktails on the balcony. For an epic evening, make your way to the 63rd floor of the Bangkok State Tower for dinner and drinks at open-air rooftop restaurant **Sirocco**, where the view is breathtaking and the atmosphere enchanted. For a more intimate evening, **Bed Supperclub** at Sukhumvit 11 is currently on the hot list. If you really want your finger on the pulse, try the very newly opened **Mini Bar Royale** – which serves up champagne brunches by day and home cooking by night and is the brainchild of Sretsis' Kly Sukhahura.

After dinner and drinks, head to the **RCA** (Royal City Avenue), home to the hottest clubs in town. Or if you're after something a little

more chilled, the **About Gallery** in Chinatown hosts regular gatherings blending exhibiting artists, poetry readings and music in a house party setting.

To wrap up the whole Bangkok adventure, a spot of pampering is essential. Set aside a whole day if you can and indulge in traditional Thai massage, a mani and pedi and reflexology – your body will thank you for it on the plane ride home. For a true slice of zen only moments away from the craziness of Chatuchak market,

we love **Leelawadee** – a day spa set in what feels like a secret garden, where an hour-long traditional Thai massage using natural ingredients will set you back 500 baht. **Devarana Spa** at the Dusit Thani Hotel and **i.sawan** at the Grand Hyatt Erawan are a high-end indulgence.

## WHERE TO STAY

The best thing about staying in Bangkok is that you get an instant upgrade. For around \$100 to \$200 per night, you can revel in some serious five-star luxury. Most of the big hotel players are here, but we love the welcoming vibe and mod cons (iPod docks, free in-room wireless internet) offered by the boutique hotels. **The Dream Hotel** is rockstar-ready with crisp white sheets and exotic fruit plates, a decked rooftop pool and spa and a poolside bar where you can watch the sun fade into the city lights. **Tenface** is a new addition to the design hotel scene, with apartment-style rooms, an in-house 'entertainment guru' and a podcast guide to young, hip Bangkok.

With the tagline 'it's not a hotel, it's a home' **The Eugenia** is like your own private colonial mansion (complete with Jaguar shuttle cars) in the heart of the city. ☺

**Siam Paragon**, Rama 1 Rd; **Gaysorn & CentralWorld**, Ratchadamri Rd; **Emporium**, 622 Sukhumvit Rd; **Chatuchak**, Kamphaeng Phet 2 Rd; **Suan Lum Night Bazaar**, Lumpini Park; **Patpong**, Silom Rd; **Khao San Rd**, Banglamphu district; **It's Happened to be a Closet**, 32 Khao San Rd; **Long Table**, Sukhumvit Soi 16; **WP Wine Pub**, 8-2 Rangnam Rd; **Sirocco**, 1055 Silom Rd, Bangrak; **Bed Supperclub**, Sukhumvit 11; **Mini Bar Royale**, Sukhumvit 23; **RCA**, Phrom Phong; **About Gallery**, Chinatown; **Leelawadee**, Thedsabansongkor Rd, Ladyoa; **Devarana Spa**, Dusit Thani Hotel; **i.sawan**, Grand Hyatt Erawan; **The Dream Hotel**, 10 Sukhumvit Soi 15, [www.dreambkk.com](http://www.dreambkk.com); **Tenface**, 81 Soi Ruamrudee 2, [www.tenfacebangkok.com](http://www.tenfacebangkok.com); **The Eugenia**, 267 Soi Sukhumvit 31, [www.theeugenia.com](http://www.theeugenia.com).