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# Guide and locals reveal how to spend a day in Bangkok

Markets, a bakery, factory, cooking lesson and religious sites such as Erawan Shrine show off the Thai city's diversity.



A worker wraps bows around crabs at Khlong Toei Market, both to make them look appealing away. (LOUISE DUFFY)

By **DAVID BATEMAN** Staff Reporter  
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BANGKOK, THAILAND—Stepping from hotel air conditioning into an instant sweat-inducing heat reveals the city is an iceberg in a sauna. The bulk of its substance is hidden from view down tiny

alleys and khlongs (canals). [Smiling Albino](#) guide Kob Kachonsittinoppakun is used to finding one of her favourite spots melted away to form something else entirely. This is what a day in Bangkok looks like, with tips from Kachonsittinoppakun and friendly locals:

## **Breakfast**

Take a cooking lesson with Poo, real name Khun Saiyuud Diwong, an internationally acclaimed TV chef who launched a school in her native Khlong Toei, a Bangkok slum. Her boundless enthusiasm leads you through a market tourists rarely visit, an authentic experience not for the squeamish. The meat arrives live. In her kitchen, Poo demonstrates Thai recipes for pomelo salad, masaman beef curry, pad thai and more.

## **Lunch**

A short boat ride down the Chao Phraya River passes religious sites, from Chinese pagodas to Buddhist temples to the grand Santa Cruz Church, the Catholic church originally built by the Portuguese in the late 1700s. The European influence is alive when I turn right off the dock and walk down little non-descript alleys to Thanusingha Bakery House, a café, home and office where delicate sugary cakes that have the texture of doughnuts are made.

## **Early afternoon**

Hurtle through khlongs to a tire-lined dock where the faint clash of metal on metal is audible. Locals don't see many *farang* (white foreigners) here, so expect the odd lingering stare. The source of the noise is Banbu Collection Stainless Factory, where workers make bowls, plates and all sorts. Before we even speak, they haggle the price for five items down from 700 to 600 baht (\$23 Canadian) just by looking at us. I'm not sure if that's a compliment.

## **Late afternoon**

Erawan Shrine is upbeat and dazzling, nothing like a drab western religious site. Worshippers place offerings of orange marigolds, yellow candles and firework sizzler sticks. The better off invest in gold-covered elephants or set free little birds trained to return to their seller on release. It's easy to forget, amidst the peaceful praying and children playing, that a bomb attack here killed 20 people in 2015.

## **Dinner**

No trip to Thailand is complete without pad thai that redefines how the dish should taste. I walk past Baan Phadthai at first, wondering if I can be in the right spot down a diminutive backstreet. The food resolves any misgivings, especially the miang kham, a Thai version of fajitas that substitutes leafs for tortillas. Afterwards, take a short stroll to the Mandarin Oriental hotel for Thaijitos and jazz at the Bamboo Bar.

## **Night**

Bangkok compartmentalizes markets into zones for particular products, like the streets of 17th-century Edinburgh or London. They come alive at night. Chatuchak Weekend Market sells everything from obscure books to crunchy bug snacks. Antique furniture, vintage cars and vinyl records are the highlight of Rod Fai Night Market. Pak Klong Talad is the flower market, bursting with colour, where each member of a small family busily slices 70 kilograms of ginger into matchsticks for restaurants to use.

*David Bateman was partially hosted by Smiling Albino, which did not review or approve this story.*

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