



# MY CITY\* BANGKOK

CHRIS AND ETTY LEAD US OFF BANGKOK'S TOURIST TRAIL AND REVEAL HOW THIS VIBRANT CITY STOLE THEIR HEARTS

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS SCHALIX

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*\* There's no better way to get to the heart of a city than through the people who live there. Every month, we ask someone, clearly in love with their city, to take us on a personal tour and tell us what makes it so special. You may feel inspired to visit one day or to rediscover the charms of a city closer to you, but for now just sit back, relax and enjoy some armchair travel.*

### How long have you lived in the city?

Etty was born and raised in Taichung, Taiwan, and after stints in New York and Shanghai she moved from Taipei to do her master's degree at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok in 2013. After graduating she became an arts teacher at an international school here. Chris met Etty in Bangkok while on an eight-month trip around Asia in 2014 and fell in love with Etty and the city. After finishing his studies back in home in the Netherlands, he sold all his possessions, bought a one-way ticket and made Bangkok his home.

### Tell us what makes your city unique

As a city full of contrasts, Bangkok never gets boring. Here, new and old collide in an enchanting chaos that is impossible to ever grasp fully. As an example, we start the day with a \$1 noodle soup on the pavement and end the night sipping \$20 cocktails in a hidden speakeasy. The city oozes energy and excitement and is always in development. After more than four years here, we're still discovering new neighbourhoods and cool hangouts - sometimes less than a kilometre from home.

### What is it like in October?

Bangkok is swelteringly hot year-round, but October sees somewhat lower temperatures than the months before. However, this is the end of Thailand's 'rainy season' so the occasional downpour can be expected.

### What time of day do you most enjoy?

Despite both of us being terrible morning people, the rare occasions we're out and about at dawn are truly rewarding. Bangkok is a 24/7 city, but the early morning buzz on its markets is definitely worth waking up for.

### What's the nature like?

What nature?! Bangkok has one of the smallest parks-to-people ratios in the world, so patches of green are few and far between. For a jungle experience, you'll have to head to the 'burbs - Ban Krachao, a boat ride away, is Bangkok's only truly green space and well worth a visit.

### Where's your favourite outdoor space?

That would be Ban Krachao. Only 15 minutes from »



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- 1 A jolly fruit seller in Chinatown.
- 2 Golden buddhas line the streets in Sanam Luang (old town).
- 3 Portraits of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who died last year, still appear on virtually every corner.
- 4 The world's smelliest fruit: durian.
- 5 East meets West: historical Thai photography sits above Pepsi adverts



“Bangkok is synonymous with street food and every visitor should give in to a sidewalk feast”



Bangkok's CBD, it feels a world away from the concrete jungle. On rare days when the heat is manageable, we love hopping on the tiny ferry at Wat Khlong Toey to cross the river to Bangkok's 'green lung'. Here, we rent bicycles for about 100 THB/day (about £2.25) and explore the pathways that lead through locals' backyards, banana plantations and dense jungle forest, stopping for a *cha yen* (iced milk tea) or two along the way. Alternatively, there is always Lumpini Park, Bangkok's answer to NYC's Central Park – this green space in the centre of town is always buzzing with life.

**Tell us about the light and colours**

Bangkok's streets can go from all-white minimalistic to a riot of colour within a kilometre. On good days, dawn and dusk see candy-coloured skies ranging from pastel pink to warm orange.

**What about the people who live there?**

It's the diverse mix of people calling Bangkok home that makes the city so interesting. Hard-working but incredibly friendly Thai labourers, Thai-Chinese shop owners and a huge community of Japanese expats, every group has left its mark on the city, making it a welcoming place for people from all walks of life.

**Where do you gather with friends?**

We love hanging out in small community malls like The Commons or 72 Courtyard, both in Thonglor, where multiple cool bars, restaurants and cafés merge in a sort of upscale foodcourt. Paired with the occasional live band or DJ, these spots make for a great night out.

**Where are the best places to eat Thai food?**

Bangkok is synonymous with street food, and every visitor should give in to a sidewalk feast. You'll find carts dishing up noodle soups and curries on sidewalks all over town, but Yaowarat (Chinatown) and Sam Phraeng (in the Old Town) are some of our favourites. Recent years have also seen the arrival of more and more 'upscale' eateries going back to traditionally Thai roots. For authentic flavours, with or without a modern twist, try some of our favourite hip Thai restaurants like Baan Padthai, 80/20 and The Local Canteen.

**What's your favourite way to get about?**

Bangkok's traffic can be hellish, but there are plenty of options to get from A to B by public transport. The BTS (the skytrain) and MRT (the underground metro) are convenient, but we love using the Khlong boat to get a peek at local life. Running almost parallel with Sukhumvit Road, the Khlong (the canal running

through the city, not to be confused with the big Chao Phraya river!) is buzzing with local life and provides a fantastic peek inside the 'real' Bangkok.

**What's the shopping like?**

We like to visit upscale malls like EmQuartier and Central Embassy, which have a mix of contemporary designers and international boutique brands. But we also love picking up homewares at one of the many markets or local mom and pop shops.

**Where do you like to escape to?**

When we want a break from the city we go to nearby Khao Yai National Park. Only three hours from Bangkok (close by Thai standards!), you'll find a jungle packed with boutique resorts, restaurants and lush greenery.

**What has been your best discovery?**

The quaint little area called Talad Noi, just minutes from Chinatown is not on everyone's radar yet. Expect a mix of hard-working locals, cool coffee shops and fabulous street art scattered around its winding alleys.

**What do you miss most if you've been away?**

The energy we found in Bangkok is something we've yet to discover anywhere else. And while we're on the road exploring new places almost every month, this energy keeps us longing for Bangkok.

**What would surprise a newcomer?**

Postcards show Bangkok as a city of golden pagodas, floating markets and stalls on crumbling sidewalks. But Bangkok is also a hyper-modern Asian metropolis, home to stunning contemporary architecture, world-class cuisine and a sophisticated art scene – not far off what you'll find in Singapore and Hong Kong.

**What would you change about the city?**

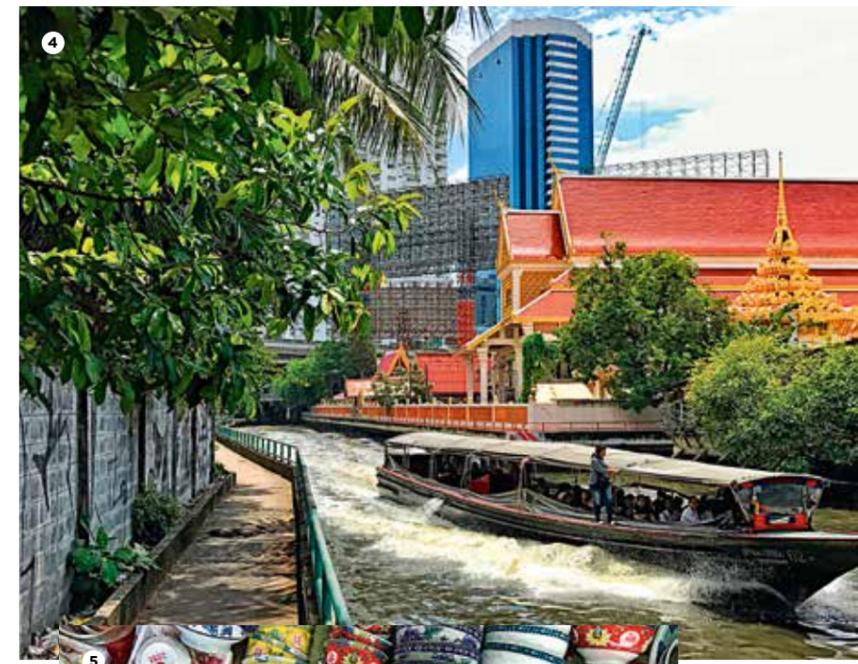
Bangkok is changing too fast. Blocks of gorgeous Chinatown shophouses have to make way for shiny office buildings, and street food areas are being swept up for high-rise condominiums. I'd like to hold on to the charming 'old' Bangkok just a little longer.

**Where would you recommend somebody to stay?**

Don't make the mistake of many first-timers: stay away from Khao San Road – this part of town is as un-authentic as it gets. Base yourself in one of the quirky boutique hotels in the Old Town, or opt for a stay nearby a BTS station along the Sukhumvit line, from where you'll have easy access to the rest of the city.

**What keeps you in Bangkok and is there anywhere else you'd like to live?**

Bangkok has stolen our hearts and we see ourselves based here for at least another decade. If we had to move, we'd probably choose Tokyo as our next stop. »



- 1 Colourful temples all around Chinatown.
- 2 Bangkok's best mango sticky rice: Mae Varee.
- 3 Two wheels good, four wheels bad: Ban Krachao bike rides.
- 4 The Khlong boat – a great way to get around town.
- 5 Chinese tea cups are hard to resist at 20 THB a throw.
- 6 Old and new collide in Soi Nana



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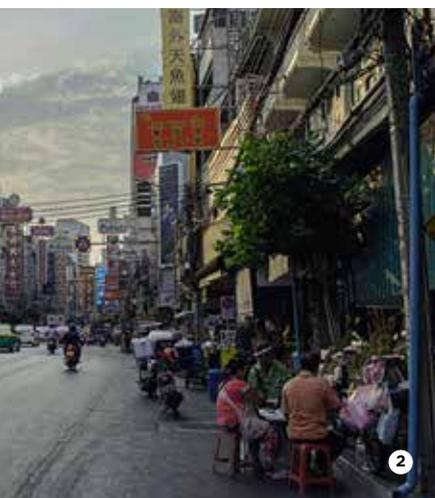
**ETTY LIU & CHRIS SCHALKX** are the couple behind [ricepotato.co](http://ricepotato.co), an urban guide to Bangkok and beyond. Follow them on Instagram: [@ettyliu](https://www.instagram.com/ettyliu) and [@chrsschlxx](https://www.instagram.com/chrsschlxx)



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- ① A typical Chinatown scene.
- ② Yaowarat Road - Chinatown's beating heart.
- ③ Colonial chic: The Cabochon Hotel is in a quiet alley in the city centre - a great base from which to explore.
- ④ Chinese paraphernalia at Ba Hao café

## CHRIS AND ETTY'S PERSONAL TOUR

### Favourite café/bar

#### BA HAO

Bangkok's most sophisticated Chinatown hangout. Decked out with old-school Chinese paraphernalia and neon lights. [ba-hao.com](http://ba-hao.com)

### Favourite restaurant

#### GEDHAWA

Despite the many world-class restaurants in Bangkok, it's the quirky Gedhawa Restaurant that stole our hearts. Amazing staff, handwritten menus, and the best Northern Thai food in the city. *24 Sukhumvit 35 Rd, Wattana, Bangkok*

### Favourite market

#### TALAD ROT FAI

Fantastic Thai food, quirky knick-knacks and a huge collection of Thai and international antiques

and vintage clothing: this market in the Ratchada area is a treasure trove for avid shoppers.

### Favourite shop

#### THAI HOME INDUSTRIES

Thai handicrafts done right. Set in a traditional Thai building, the shop is a sight in itself. *35 Charoen Krung Soi 40, Bangrak*

### Favourite Gallery

#### CITYCITY GALLERY

This sleek-looking gallery just off Sathorn Road showcases work by young Thai talent in all shapes and forms. [bangkokcitycity.com](http://bangkokcitycity.com)

### Place to see by night

#### YAOWARAT

A riot of scents, flavours and neon lights at the buzzing heart of Chinatown. Come for the food,

stay for the hip cocktail bars.

### Favourite view

#### RIVER VIBE BAR & RESTAURANT

Perched atop the unassuming River View guest house, deep inside Chinatown's small alleys, River Vibe comes with a million-dollar view over the Chao Phraya river without the price tag you'll find at neighbouring rooftop bars.

### Favourite way to spend an hour

#### WATPO THAI MASSAGE

You can't leave Bangkok without having a Thai massage at least once. Don't risk an awkward experience (you know...) and only choose shops that have been recommended extensively, like this one. [watpomassage.com](http://watpomassage.com)