

guardian.co.uk

Bangkok's top 10 quirky hotels

A current crop of small and intimate places to stay is a refreshing change in a city where big and brash is the norm, says China Williams

China Williams
guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 19 December 2007 12.36 GMT

[A larger](#) | [smaller](#)



Lotus room ... Old Bangkok Inn's rooms are individually decorated in Thai floral themes

In a city where excess means success, the recent proliferation of small hotels and inns is a curious embrace of less is more. Better seize the opportunity to stay at these intimate hotels before Bangkok comes to its senses and replaces them with mammoth towers.

1. Baan Chantra

A short walk from the tourist ghetto of Khao San Road, Baan Chantra might be marketed as a boutique hotel but it is really a more mature version of the area's famous guesthouses. The converted 1930s shophouse retains its original teak interiors with an informal atmosphere, perfect for folks who prefer the backpacker ideal of staying close to the local community but who also need some of life's mod cons. The hotel's four rooms range from standard, which is comfortable but modest, to deluxe, which is a slightly more boastful designation for a bigger room with an attached sun deck.

- 120 Samsen Road, Banglamphu; + 66 2628 6988; double 2,400THB (£39)

2. Phranakorn Norn Len

A guesthouse with style, Phranakorn Norn Len has an arty thrift-store aesthetic. The simple rooms are transformed from basic flops to quirky abodes with hand-painted floral wall patterns, hanging plants and quilted throw pillows. The shady garden and courtyard help promote the hotel's guiding principle for a stress free stay and the guests seem to truly appreciate the gesture. This do-good code infuses the morning meals, which are vegetarian and use locally grown ingredients.

- 46 Soi Thewet 1, Krung Kasem Road; + 66 2628-8188; double 2,200THB (£36)

3. Old Bangkok Inn

A charming nod to the past, [Old Bangkok Inn](#) occupies the antique district once home to minor Siamese royalty and epitomises the city's revival of classically minded hotels. The 10 rooms, including lofts and suites, are individually decorated in Thai floral themes that evoke a romantic ambience, although the square footage is a little meager. The hotel goes beyond style with many eco-friendly measures, including solar water heating and energy efficient appliances.

• 609 Phra Sumen Road, Banglamphu; + 66 2629 1785; double 3,700THB (£60)

4. Arun Residence



Until recently, Bangkok's most historic district of Ko Ratanakosin, filled with palaces and temples, closed down after dark. But this riverside inn, occupying an old Sino-Portuguese-style building, now provides a place to bed among nighttime vistas of the temple spires. [Arun Residence](#) bears simple but elegant period décor in its five rooms, mostly split-level lofts. The Arun suite has a private balcony with views of monumental Wat Arun.

• 36-38 Soi Pratu Nok Yoong, Maharat Road, Ko Ratanakosin; + 66 2221 9158; double 3,100THB (£50)

5. Ibrik Resort by the River

Barely big enough to be called an "inn", [Ibrik](#) feels more like a private residence with only three guest rooms and a non-commercial location in Thonburi, across the river from Bangkok. A small, understated sign marks the entrance from the pedestrian lane that winds past a local market, a renowned theatre school and a neighbourhood temple. The interior is crisp and modern and the River Room has a big picture window drinking in the adjacent Chao Phraya River (although the river traffic is as noisy as it is picturesque).

• 256 Soi Wat Rakang, Arunamrin Road, Thonburi; + 66 2848 9220; double 4,000THB (£65)

6. Chakrabongse Villas

The Thai king may never offer you a spare room during your stay in the kingdom, but you can bunk like a royal at this [former palace](#), just a brief stroll from the historic sites of Ko Ratanakosin. The riverside estate dates to 1908 when it was used for overnight visits by the 40th son of King Chulalongkorn. Today, three traditional-style apartments occupy the lush garden, soaking in private views of the river; the interiors boast rich hues of gleaming teak and earth-toned silks.

• 396 Maharat Road, Ko Ratanakosin; + 66 2622 3356;; double 10,000THB (£163)

7. Shanghai Inn

Although Chinatown is one of Bangkok's more intriguing neighbourhoods, the sleeping options are monopolised by hulking matrons dating from the gaudy days of pink vinyl and shag carpet. This [hip hotel](#) breaks the mould with retro Chinoiserie stylings. Pink and purple lanterns, bamboo floors and imperial-inspired furniture transform the hotel's 55 rooms into boudoirs evoking jazz-era Shanghai.

- 479 Yaowarat Road, Chinatown; + 66 2221 2121; double 2,800THB (£46)

8. La Residence Hotel

One of the city's first "boutique" hotels, [La Residence](#) is a petite player amid the high-rises of Bangkok's financial district. Each of the 26 rooms is individually decorated but without excessive fussiness or pretension. The staff are accessible and helpful with recommendations and general know-how. The drawback is that the location is a little lacklustre, surrounded by the ageing commercial buildings of Surawong Road. Despite this, it is just a short walk to Patpong and a Skytrain station, and slightly further to the riverside luxury hotels.

- 173/8-9 Surawong Road, Bangrak; + 66 2233 3301; double 2,000THB (£33)

9. Eugenia



Now that travel is no longer an aristocratic sport, it is rare to find a new hotel that has modelled itself after the steamship-era grand dames. But this [19th-century manor house](#) prefers a simplified Victorian sensibility to the prevailing club Zen look of modern hotels. The 12 sumptuous suites are decorated with canopy beds (and starched Belgian linens), hand-hammered tubs, and antique fixtures collected by the owners. Sip a draft of sophistication beside the pool or in the hunting lodge library. To complete the privileged fantasy, hire one of the hotel's chauffeured vintage Jaguars for the trip from the airport.

- Soi 31, Sukhumvit Road; + 66 2259 9017; double 5,800THB (£94)

10. Seven

Oftentimes with minimalism there is no room for a sense of place (or a large suitcase, but that's another matter). Rather than blotting out the local landscape, this [sleek boutique](#) has ingeniously embraced its Thai character with a unique concept: its six guest rooms (and lobby makes seven) are decorated in the colour that Thais associate with each day of the week. The pink room is Tuesday, the blue room is Friday and so on.

- 3/15 Soi 31, Sukhumvit Road; +668 1616 2636; 4,000THB (£65)

• China Williams is the author of the Bangkok Encounter guidebook, published by Lonely Planet at £6.99.

guardian.co.uk © Guardian News and Media Limited 2009