

The Wonderer

CURATED TRAVELS FOR INSPIRED LIVING

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07

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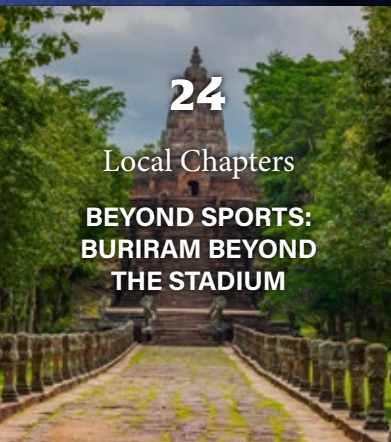
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Editor's Letter

Dear Wonderers,

In no time, we've reached the fourth quarter of 2026. It's been a good ride, and we still have time to make plans and create more memories with our loved ones and explore. Now is the time to surprise yourself with stories and experiences that will make 2026 a year to remember.

In this last issue of the year, our cover story on **Pattaya** (p. 18) invites you to explore the city at nightfall, not through a typical nightlife itinerary, but through experiences that offer a different perspective. For those heading northeast in Thailand, discover more things to do in **Buriram** (p. 24), and you may find yourself pleasantly surprised.

In some countries, October comes with magical autumn colours, including **China** (p. 8), where even large cities can turn into fairy tales. Also in the same month, it's time for vegetarian food festivals in many Asian cities, and the food-forward town of **Penang** (p. 14) is where meat-free options tell the story of how the city came to be so charming.

What's more, **Amari Vientiane** (p. 30) invites you to slow down and let Vientiane tell its own story, with tips from a staff member. Pet parents can also find out why **Shama Yen-Akat** (p. 34) has long been a favourite among people with furry friends.

These last months of the year are a chance to soak up all the things you cherish. Don't blink, or you'll miss it. Curious about somewhere new? Make it happen.

Warm regards,

The Wonderer Editorial Team

The Wonderer

CURATED TRAVELS FOR INSPIRED LIVING



▲ Colombo



ALONG THE COLOMBO COASTLINE

Stories of Colombo's landmarks and ocean views



▲ Galle Face Green

GALLE FACE GREEN

Set along the Indian Ocean, Colombo is a commercial city that has unique charms. Sri Lanka's meaningful stories hide throughout the city, from colonial rule and maritime trade to independence and modern city life. Even when you only have time to explore the waterfront, you can still visit landmarks that unveil many sides of the island's urban heart.

Galle Face Green is one of Colombo's most popular public spaces, where people gather to socialise and unwind. Its history, however, began with rather different ambitions. The promenade was authorised in 1856 under British Governor Sir Henry George Ward and completed in 1859, partly to create a space where people could enjoy the sea air. The wider green was also used for sports, with horse racing held here as early as 1821, while golf, cricket, polo, football, tennis, and rugby were also played on the open land.

Today, the atmosphere is much more relaxed. Families, joggers, kite flyers, and street-food vendors gather here, particularly toward sunset. With the ocean breeze and wide horizon, it is a place to see Colombo at its liveliest.



▲ Old Parliament Building



Colombo Lighthouse ▲

OLD PARLIAMENT BUILDING

A bit away from Galle Face Green is the Old Parliament Building, one of Colombo's best-known colonial-era buildings. Designed in a Neoclassical style by Austin Woodeson of the Public Works Department of Ceylon, it was opened in 1930 during British rule. Its grand columns and symmetrical façade make an impressive contrast with the restless sea close by. Today, the building houses the Presidential Secretariat, adding another chapter to its political history.

The building originally housed Ceylon's Legislative Council and later became home to the country's legislature. Parliament remained here for 53 years until the new parliamentary complex opened in Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, the country's administrative capital, in 1983.

COLOMBO FORT

Despite its name, Colombo Fort is no longer dominated by a fortress. The area began as a Portuguese fortified settlement before the Dutch took control in 1656 and rebuilt and expanded the fortifications. Under British rule, the fort became the centre of colonial administration. However, by the late 19th century, the old walls were considered an obstacle to the city's expansion. Large sections were demolished between 1869 and 1871. The fort itself disappeared, but its name survived.

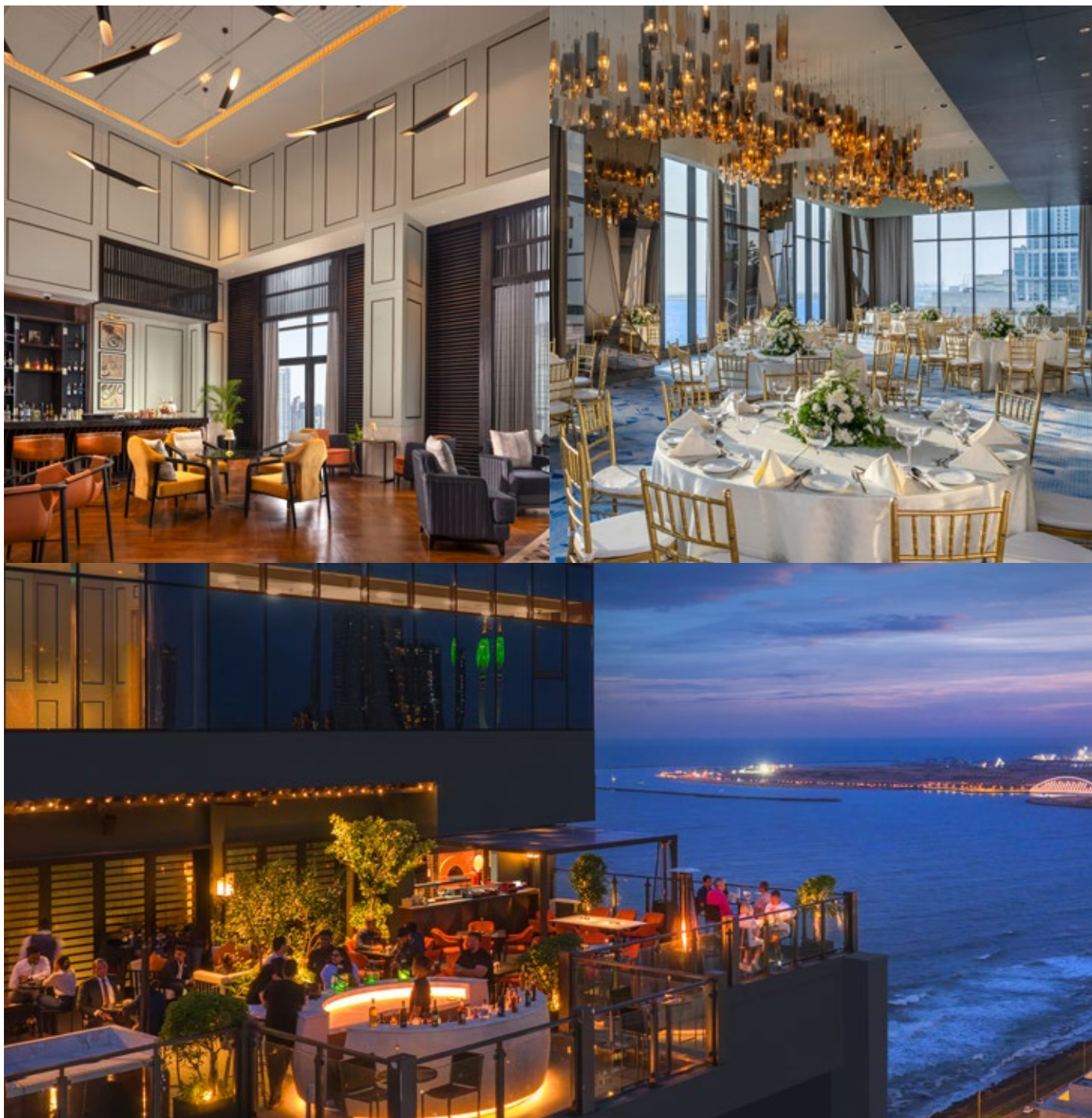
Today, Colombo Fort is a lively historic district where signs of its old fortified past still linger. The streets are lined with grand colonial-era buildings, old warehouses, and landmarks, all reflecting Colombo's long history as a busy trading port.

COLOMBO LIGHTHOUSE

For generations, ships sailing towards Colombo have relied on this lighthouse to find their way into one of Sri Lanka's busiest ports. The present structure was built in 1952, replacing an earlier lighthouse whose light had been obscured by nearby buildings as Colombo Harbour expanded.

Standing at the southern end of the port, the lighthouse became an important navigational landmark for ships approaching Colombo by sea, helping them identify the harbour entrance. This role reflects Colombo's importance as a maritime gateway, connecting Sri Lanka with major shipping routes across the Indian Ocean.

With the ocean as an ever-changing backdrop, Colombo's coastline offers far more than beautiful views. This is where the city's history, daily life, and maritime spirit all come together. Take a leisurely walk, look a little closer at the landmarks along the way, and discover the stories that have shaped this vibrant city by the sea. ■



Amari Colombo

Set along the scenic Galle Road seafront, Amari Colombo is an urban hotel that combines acclaimed architecture with warm Sri Lankan hospitality. The waterfront location puts the city's highlights within easy reach, with Galle Face Green, the Old Parliament Building, Colombo Fort and the Colombo Lighthouse all nearby. The hotel is just 45 minutes from Bandaranaike International Airport, with airport transfers available to make arrivals and city exploring effortless.

The 167 rooms and suites mix contemporary style with touches of local character, creating a comfortable base for business and leisure travellers alike. Guests can enjoy Thai, Sri Lankan, Indian, Italian and international dishes right at the hotel, then relax at the rooftop infinity pool and bar, with views stretching across the city and the Indian Ocean. With its prime location, refined comfort and modern amenities, Amari Colombo offers an elegant and relaxing way to experience the city.

Explore more: www.amari.com/colombo



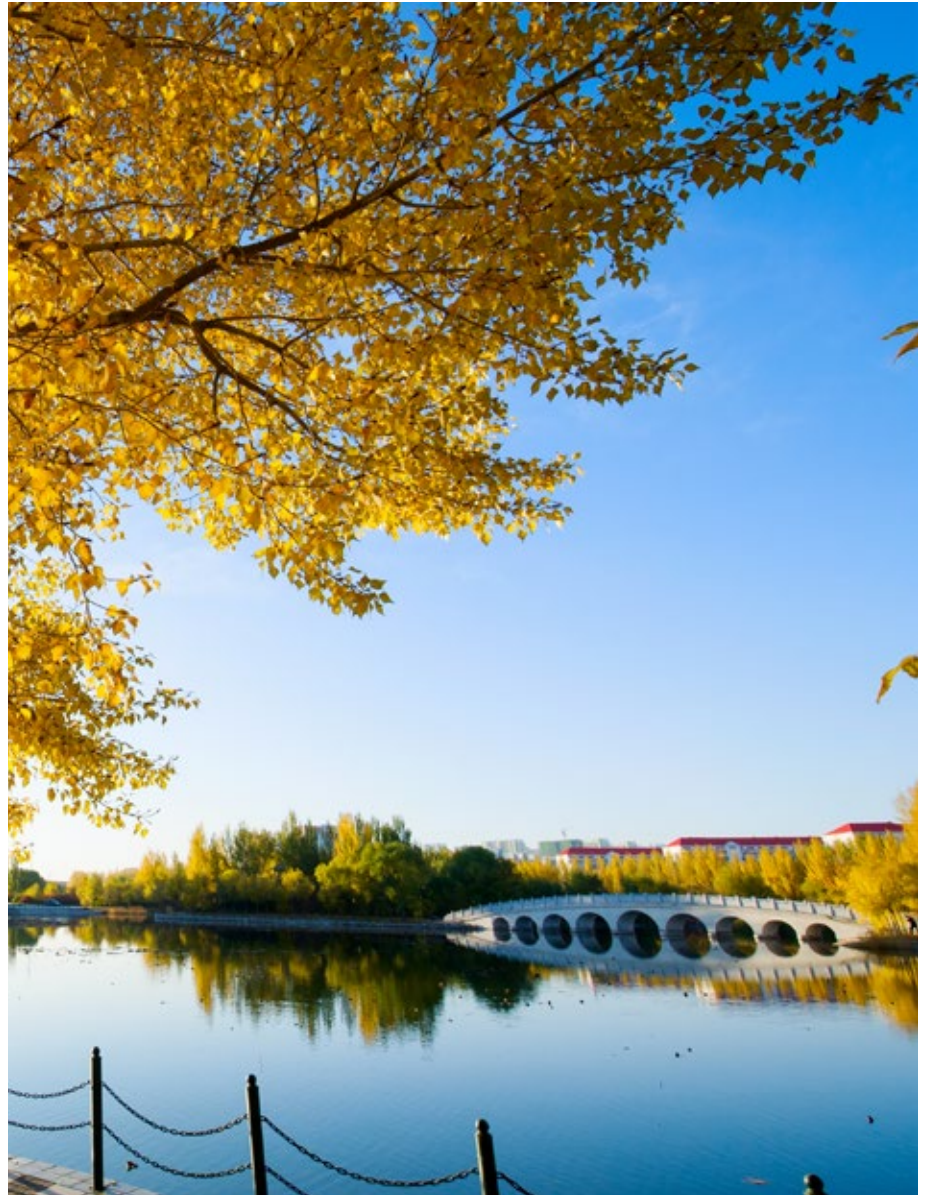
AUTUMN COLOURS IN CHINA'S INDUSTRIAL CITIES

The contrasting shades that unveil surprising charms

Many people picture China's industrial cities in a certain way: steel mills, heavy machinery, oil fields and busy streets. But when autumn comes, these cities often show a different, gentler side. Parks, lakes and forests, both inside the cities and just outside them, turn into colourful seasonal landscapes. This creates a striking contrast with the industrial image most people know.



Changchun ▲



Daqing ▲

Whether you are visiting for business, culture or simply to explore, these economically significant cities offer beautiful natural spaces where you can slow down and enjoy the colours of autumn, which are prevalent in September and October each year. Even in busy, industrial and highly urbanised surroundings, there is always a peaceful place to take a break and enjoy nature.

DAQING: THE OIL CITY

Located in western Heilongjiang, Daqing is best known as China's oil city, but there is more to its story. The discovery of the Daqing Oilfield in 1959 transformed the city into China's largest oil production base and shaped its industrial identity. Today, that rich oil heritage lives alongside extensive green spaces and wetlands, creating a striking contrast where rich industrial heritage meets tranquil natural beauty.

Daqing Forest Park

When the Daqing Oilfield was discovered in 1959, the city became one of China's most important petroleum centres.

To balance the heavy-edged buildings and industrial infrastructure, Daqing has also deliberately developed lakes, wetlands and green spaces, giving the city a much greener character than its industrial reputation might suggest, with Daqing Forest Park being part of this effort. Its forests, lakes and open spaces offer a natural counterpoint to the city's oil-driven identity. When autumn arrives, Manchurian ash, Manchurian walnut and Amur cork trees turn yellow and gold, creating a particularly striking contrast with the modernised city. The park also offers the perfect setting for a family outing or a peaceful day immersed in nature.



▲ West Lake

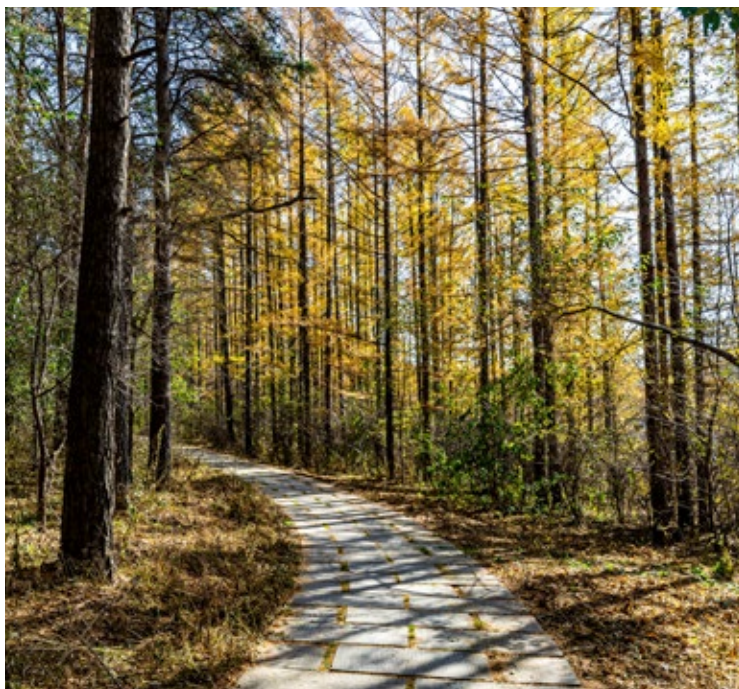
HANGZHOU: WHERE SCIENCE MEETS CULTURE

The capital of Zhejiang province, Hangzhou is not only a renowned cultural and scenic destination but also an important centre for technology, manufacturing and commerce. It is home to major companies and a thriving digital economy, while its strategic location near the Yangtze River Delta has historically played an important role in the region's trade and industry. Yet at the heart of this modern city lies West Lake, a landscape celebrated by writers and artists since the Tang Dynasty and recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

West Lake

Beyond being a panoramic spot in the city, West Lake has been part of the city's cultural identity for centuries, inspiring poets, artists and scholars and shaping the way Hangzhou is perceived. Its famous causeways, gardens, temples and hills were carefully developed around the lake over generations, creating the soul-soothing landscape we see today.

Autumn gives this historic landscape another character. Maples turn red, ginkgo trees become golden and dawn redwoods take on copper-red tones, while the lake reflects the changing colours. Yanggong Causeway, Beishan Street and Xiling become especially gorgeous, painted with seasonal colours. What's more, around September and October, sweet-scented osmanthus, Hangzhou's official flower, adds its memorable fragrance to the city, making autumn here a sensory experience as much as a visual one.



▲ Jingyuetan National Forest Park

CHANGCHUN: THE GREEN-COVERED MANUFACTURER

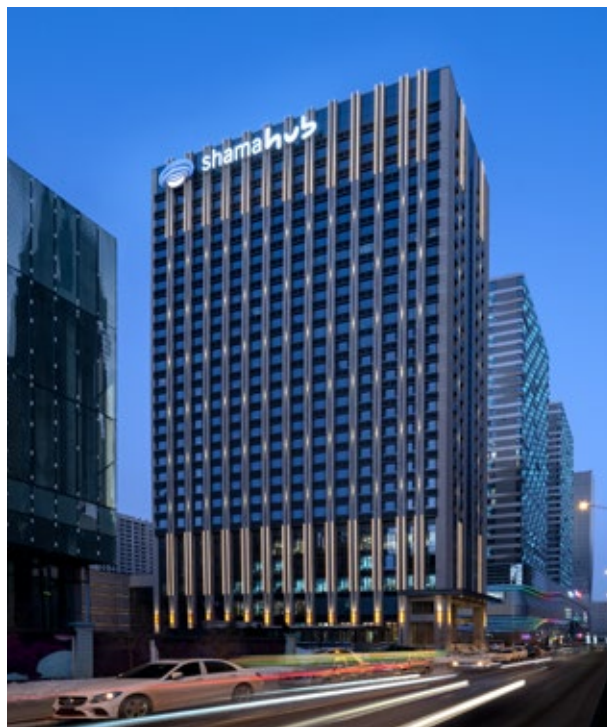
Known as China's "Automobile City", Changchun has long been associated with manufacturing. The capital of Jilin province became an important centre of the country's automotive industry with the establishment of First Automobile Works in the 1950s. Alongside its production-heavy function, the city is also known as a forested city, boasting one of the highest urban green coverage rates in China, with expansive forest networks and tree-lined avenues designed to integrate natural ecosystems into its industrial landscape.

Jingyuetan National Forest Park

Located southeast of Changchun, Jingyuetan National Forest Park is one of the city's most important natural attractions. It is also home to a vast man-made forest, among the largest planted forests in Asia. Covering a vast area of forest around the Jingyuetan Reservoir, the park combines woodland, hills and water, creating a peaceful escape from the urban landscape. Its name comes from the crescent-shaped reservoir, which is one of the park's defining features.

Jingyuetan's story began with water. The reservoir was created in the 1930s during the Japanese occupation of Changchun, then known as Xinjing, to supply water to the growing city. Today, the reservoir remains at the centre of Jingyuetan National Forest Park, one of Changchun's largest green spaces.

Naturally, autumn's colours are fleeting, making them all the more memorable once witnessed with your own eyes. If these landscapes have sparked your curiosity, it might be worth planning a trip while the colours are still at their best, before the season quietly gives way to winter. ■



Shama Across China

Offering comfort and flexibility, with facilities designed to meet the needs of both short- and long-term stays, the Shama hospitality brand is favoured in countries including China, where it has a presence in a number of key cities.

In Changchun, **Shama Hub New City Changchun** puts flexibility at the centre of the stay, with customisable rooms and shared spaces for relaxing, working, and socialising. Guests can enjoy The Hub Bar and The Hub Lounge, serving Northeastern Chinese and international dishes, as well as a gym and children's play area, making it a good fit for solo travellers, friends, and families alike.

Further south in Hangzhou, there are two Shama properties to choose from, each suited to a different kind of stay. **Shama Serviced Apartments Zijiangang Hangzhou** offers fully furnished studios and two-bedroom residences with kitchenettes, workspaces, a business centre and gym. For a more affordable option, **Shama Hub Qiantang** offers flexible options designed with working professionals and longer stays in mind.

Across both destinations, the heart of the Shama experience remains the same: a place of comfort with cool neighbourhoods just steps away.



▲ Super Nice Land at Cloud 11

Ⓛ

THE CREATIVE SIDE OF PUNNAWITHI

Bangkok's up-and-coming neighbourhood
for creative minds

Ⓛ Local Chapter

Along Sukhumvit Road, Punna Withi is becoming one of Bangkok's more interesting creative neighbourhoods, where one-of-a-kind spaces are found alongside intimate cafés, restaurants, and independent shops. Beyond its growing skyline and easy BTS access, the area offers plenty of places to eat, work, browse, and simply soak up creative energy.

Here are five spots worth checking out in Punna Withi to recharge your creative energy.

CLOUD 11

As Bangkok's latest creative hub, Cloud 11 brings together production studios, event spaces, cultural venues, and facilities for creators in one thoughtfully designed space. Engaging exhibitions and events are on rotation, with sports courts such as **Pad Thai Padel** and outdoor spaces to satisfy the active patrons. A pet-friendly zone makes it a lively place for people and their four-legged friends as well. Cloud 11 also features **theCOMMONS**, a cool communal space with curated eats and drinks; **Doc Club & Friends**, a haven for independent and thought-provoking film lovers; and **Super Nice Land**, part café, part select shop brimming with awesome finds. And there is plenty more to come.



▲ Homm

HOMM

For bold, full-flavoured Southeast Thai cuisine with international twists, homm.bkk is a go-to among Bangkok's curious food lovers. The playful, casual setting is made for social dining, with its grills earning particular praise. Despite the quality, prices remain approachable, making it an easy choice for a relaxed meal with friends. Due to its popularity, booking ahead is a good idea.

NORMAL AND HAPPY

Right off the road but a world apart, Normal and Happy is a cosy space to work, read, and talk. With a selection of specialty coffee, quality tea, and pastries to keep you fuelled, the relaxed atmosphere makes it easy to sink in and stay a while. It's an unassuming, welcoming spot for when you want to slow down and let your thoughts wander.

KLER

For something more intimate, Kler is a casual dining spot that puts seasonal, local ingredients at the heart of creative Thai-fusion cooking. Each dish reflects the chef-owner's passion: turning seasonal ingredients into something thoughtful. For a little hands-on fun, you can paint your own wine glass and be proud of your artwork. Simple in appearance but full of character, Kler makes for a memorable meal and a great place to spend time with your favourite people.

DOG DAYS ARE OVER!

This cool little cocktail bar is known for its warm ambience, tasteful playlists, and cute details throughout. Whether you are here for a casual work discussion, to get the creative juices flowing or purely to forget about work, this place welcomes everyone, including their furry friends, with open arms. ■



▲ Kler



Shama Sukhumvit 101 Bangkok

Located in the Punnawithi area, Shama Sukhumvit 101 Bangkok offers a relaxed and comfortable home base for city living, bringing the Joy of Living into everyday life. Just a short distance from Punnawithi BTS Station, it also provides convenient access to a wide range of shopping, dining, and lifestyle destinations, including True Digital Park, Cloud 11, and more, as well as major roads.

Designed for extended stays, the fully furnished one- and two-bedroom lofts come with balconies, kitchenettes, smart TVs, and free Wi-Fi. Residents can also enjoy a fitness centre, co-working space, lounge areas, and automated parking, making it easy to balance work, downtime, and living life in your own way.

Explore more: www.shama.com/sukhumvit101



THE FOOD THAT TELLS PENANG'S STORY

When vegetarian dishes are more
than just meatless options



Famed for its compelling food scene, Penang's culinary appeal goes beyond familiar favourites like char koay teow, assam laksa, and Hokkien mee. Shaped by generations of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and international communities, the island's food culture reflects a rich mix of histories, religions, and traditions.

Aside from the meat dishes, vegetarian food is an important part of this city's story. Long-standing Chinese Buddhist and Taoist traditions are found alongside a strong South Indian vegetarian culture rooted in the island's Tamil community. Far from being a modern plant-based trend, vegetarian food offers the flavours that have shaped Penang.

The story of Penang is told through dishes rooted in plants and a food culture that runs deeper than you might expect.



Vegetarian Char Kway Tiew

THE IMPACT OF CHINESE TRADITIONS

Chinese Buddhist vegetarian cooking has a long history in the region, and Penang is home to many restaurants and food stalls connected to Buddhist and Taoist traditions. Rather than simply serving vegetables, these places recreate familiar dishes using ingredients such as tofu, mushrooms, wheat gluten, and tofu skin.

Penang grew into a major trading port after the British established George Town in 1786, while Chinese migration increased significantly in the 19th century. Chinese communities, including Hokkien, Teochew and Hakka groups, built temples, clan associations, businesses, and neighbourhoods, bringing their religious and cultural practices with them. Vegetarianism, already embedded in some of these traditions, became part of community life and spread through religious and communal institutions.

One of the best times to see this tradition is during the Nine Emperor Gods Festival. Held over nine days according to the Chinese lunar calendar, the Taoist festival includes a period of vegetarian observance and purification. It honours the Nine Emperor Gods, who are linked to the stars of the Big Dipper and, in Taoist tradition, to Doumu, the Mother of the Big Dipper.

Devotees traditionally follow a vegetarian diet for the nine days as an act of purification and religious devotion. Some stricter practices also exclude eggs and pungent ingredients such as garlic and onions, along with meat and seafood. Temporary vegetarian stalls appear across the city, often marked with yellow flags. Even hawkers who normally sell meat may switch to vegetarian food for the occasion, bringing the tradition beyond temples and into everyday street life.



THE IMPRINT OF SOUTH INDIAN FLAVOURS

South Indian food has been part of Penang's multicultural landscape since the colonial era, with dishes such as dosa, idli, vadai, sambar, rasam, and banana leaf rice becoming part of the city's food culture.

When George Town was established, the British brought Indians to Penang for various forms of labour, including public works, while Indian merchants, traders, and other migrants also arrived independently. Many came from Tamil-speaking areas of southern India, particularly present-day Tamil Nadu.

Over time, they built a thriving community in George Town. Naturally, they brought their food traditions with them. Vegetarianism was already deeply ingrained in several South Indian traditions, particularly among some Hindu communities. Foods based on rice, lentils, vegetables, coconut, spices, and fermented batters also fit naturally into communal cooking and temple traditions.

That tradition is still very much alive today, particularly around Little India and nearby streets such as Lebuh Penang, Lebuh Pasar, and Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling.

What makes Penang vegetarian food so interesting is how deeply it is woven into the island's communities. Exploring it is, in many ways, a way of tasting the story of how this small island became such a fascinating cultural melting pot. ■



Amari SPICE Penang



OZO George Town Penang

Amari SPICE Penang

A five-star city hotel designed for both business trips and leisurely getaways, Amari SPICE Penang puts you within easy reach of Penang's attractions while offering a comfortable base. The 453 rooms and suites feature floor-to-ceiling windows with sweeping city views, alongside thoughtful amenities for a relaxing stay. Guests in executive rooms can enjoy the Club Tiffin Executive Lounge, while everyone can unwind at the expansive saltwater pool, four restaurants and bars, and first-rate spa. And when it's time to head home, Penang International Airport is just a few minutes away.

Explore more: www.amari.com/penang

OZO George Town Penang

Right in the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, OZO George Town Penang is a convenient base for exploring the charming city, whether you're travelling with family or looking for a lively urban escape. The hotel combines contemporary, well-equipped spaces with plenty of room to recharge, including a rooftop pool, modern gym and cosy dining options. Choose from compact Deluxe Rooms, spacious Superior Two Bedroom rooms or suites for a little extra comfort, all within easy reach of George Town's cultural sights and city attractions.

Explore more: www.ozohotels.com/penang-malaysia



An aerial photograph of Pattaya, Thailand, at dusk. The city's lights are visible against the darkening sky, with the beach and the sea in the foreground. A curved breakwater is visible in the water.

Pattaya After Dark: Beyond the Bars

Nightlife of the party capital in a new light

Flashing city lights, the endless din of music in every genre, and the inviting smells of buttery roti drifting from roadside carts—Pattaya is a city that seems to come alive after dark.

For decades, its nightlife has been known for the neon-lit streets, beachside bars, and late-night entertainment. However, there is another side to Pattaya after sunset that is less about staying out until sunrise and more about seeing the city from different perspectives. You don't have to party to enjoy the best of Pattaya after hours.



Phra Tamnak Mountain Viewpoint

Take in the city from above

For a different perspective on Pattaya at night, head up **Phra Tamnak Mountain Viewpoint**, where you can witness the city lights spreading out below, the coastline curving into the darkness, and boats in the harbour.

Below, Pattaya can feel almost relentlessly energetic. From above, that same energy becomes serene. Watching the city move from this vantage point offers a moment of stillness without feeling isolated.

The viewpoint, open until 10PM, sits on Phra Tamnak Hill, between South Pattaya and Jomtien. The hill is home to several religious and historical sites, including Wat Khao Phra Bat and the monument to Prince Abhakara Kiartivongse, also known as Krom Luang Chumphon.

Eat your way through the night markets

For a more low-key exciting experience in Pattaya after dark, head to one of the city's night markets. **Thepprasit Night Market**, **Pattaya Park Night Market** and **Jomtien Night Market** are great places to experience the city's street food culture, as well as exotic produce.

Come hungry. You'll find everything from small snacks and grilled skewers to filling Thai dishes, with fresh seafood being the highlight. Follow the smell of smoke and you'll find prawns, squid, and other fresh delights of the sea grilled over hot charcoal.

Tropical fruits are also the must-tries at the night markets. Sample succulent mangosteen, crunchy salacca, or juicy jackfruit. For something refreshing, grab a fruit smoothie of your choice. Mango sticky rice is always a good idea.

The markets are not just about food. You can also browse stalls selling clothes, accessories, and small souvenirs to take home. Shopping here is relaxed and easy, with plenty to discover as you walk around.



Sanctuary of Truth



Night Market in Pattaya

See the intricate architecture at dusk

As the sun goes down, the **Sanctuary of Truth** takes on a different feel. The huge wooden structure is already one of Pattaya's most impressive sights, with detailed carvings covering almost every surface. In the softer evening light, the carvings and sculptures look even more striking.

The Sanctuary of Truth was created by businessman and cultural patron Lek Viriyaphan, also the founder of Ancient City and Erawan Museum, who had a lifelong interest in art, religion, and philosophy. Beyond its impressive design, the Sanctuary of Truth explores ideas about humanity, spirituality, morality, and the meaning of life.

An evening visit, currently available from 6:20PM to 8:30PM, offers a quieter way to experience the landmark and may get you thinking about the more important things in life.

Go squid fishing after sunset

If your idea of nightlife involves doing something rather than simply sightseeing, try squid fishing. There are local operators offering squid-fishing trips around Pattaya, ranging from private speedboat excursions to shared boats and floating venues such as **Tappia Floating Cafe Pattaya** or **N.P.E Pattaya**.

Once you're out on the water, you can enjoy a different view of Pattaya, with the city lights along the coast in the background. And in no time, you can savour the literally freshly caught squid you caught. It is a good option for groups or anyone looking to try something different.



Pattaya International Fireworks Festival

Fire Show in Pattaya



Catch a fire show by the sea

For something more spontaneous, look out for a beachside fire show, with **DAM Pattaya** among the places known for twirling fire. Watching fire performers on the beach is a classic tropical night-out experience. With the sound of the waves, music playing in the background, and Pattaya's nightlife nearby, it makes for a lively evening by the sea.

Just grab a refreshing drink, find a spot by the sand, and stay for the spectacle.

Plan around the Pattaya International Fireworks Festival

The much-anticipated **Pattaya International Fireworks Festival** returns on November 27 and 28 this year, bringing one of the city's biggest evening events to Pattaya Beach. Led by international pyrotechnic teams, the event will light up the sky with fireworks set to music, while food stalls and other activities take place along the waterfront.

The festival is popular, so hotels near the beach can fill up quickly. But the crowds are part of the fun. If you are visiting for the festival, staying within walking distance makes it easier to enjoy the evening without worrying about traffic. Amari Pattaya and OZO North Pattaya are both great stay options for this and every other occasion.

Even though Pattaya is famous for its nightlife, there is more to the city after sunset than bars and dazzling lights. This city never sleeps, and there is always another way to experience it. ■



Amari Pattaya



OZO North Pattaya

Amari Pattaya

Set at the northern tip of Pattaya Bay, Amari Pattaya offers a relaxed stay close to the beach, city malls, and local attractions. Contemporary spaces blend modern Thai craftsmanship with a coastal feel, creating a comfortable setting for both relaxation and work. The hotel's 339 rooms feature large windows, with many offering private balconies and views of the bay. For families and groups seeking more space, **Amari Suites** offers spacious two- and three-bedroom suites designed for comfortable stays together, with exclusive access to **Club Nipa**, an executive lounge offering added comfort and privileges. **Club Napha**, located on the 19th floor of Amari Tower, provides an elevated retreat with breakfast, evening cocktails, and canapés. Families can also enjoy creative activities at **Tree House Kids' Club**, while Amari Hosts are on hand to make each stay comfortable.

OZO North Pattaya

OZO North Pattaya is a vibrant base within walking distance of Terminal 21 Pattaya and the beach, balancing quality rest with easygoing social spaces. Rooms feature soft beds, supportive pillows, and blackout curtains for a comfortable night's sleep, while EAT serves an international breakfast buffet with a playful DIY Donut Station, signature noodles in anchovy miso broth and Eastern Thai favourites. THIRST offers casual bites and drinks, complemented by grilled seafood and crowd-pleasing favourites at the Grill & Chill Dinner. BIG CHILL provides a relaxed setting for work and connection, while the pool, 24-hour TONE Fitness Centre and OZO Connectors add plenty of options for downtime and local discovery.

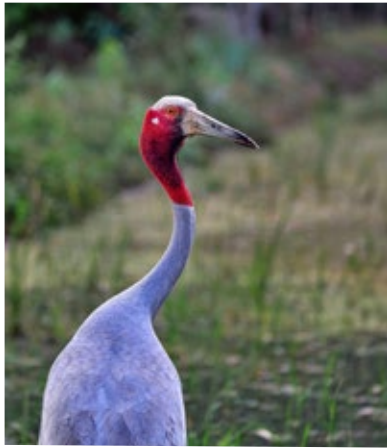


Khao Kradong Forest Park



BEYOND SPORTS: BURIRAM BEYOND THE STADIUM

From compelling history to a memorable dinner



Thai Sarus Crane Wetland

Best known as a destination for football and motorsport excitement, Buriram has plenty to offer beyond its stadiums and race track. The province is also home to ancient temples and historical sites with fascinating stories, as well as opportunities to experience natural landscapes and local culture. Here are some ideas for things to do in Buriram when you are in town for a sporting event, helping you make the most of your trip.

Time Travel at Phanom Rung Historical Park

Atop the rim of an extinct volcano, Phanom Rung Historical Park is one of Thailand's most remarkable Khmer monuments. The sanctuary was built over several periods between around the 10th and 13th centuries as a Hindu religious site dedicated to Shiva. Its grandiose processional walkway, intricate stone carvings, and imposing main sanctuary echo the architectural and religious traditions of the ancient Khmer civilisation. In Hindu cosmology, Mount Kailash is the mythical, ice-capped peak in the Himalayas where Lord Shiva is believed to reside. Here, that spiritual journey is recreated physically; every level, staircase, and doorway marks a step from the earthly world toward Shiva's heavenly home.

Take a Short Hike at Khao Kradong Forest Park

Home to an ancient, now-inactive volcano, Khao Kradong Forest Park is the place to test your fitness, climbing a 297-step staircase through the lush forest to reach the revered Phra Suphattharabophit, the large Buddha image overlooking the province as a sacred guardian. Then you can explore the remains of the half-moon-shaped volcanic crater, estimated to be 300,000 to 900,000 years old, and the surrounding volcanic rock formations. The park offers an easy way to combine a little exercise with a glimpse into the geological and cultural forces that shaped the province.

Birdwatching at Thai Sarus Crane Wetland and Learning Centre

Located near Huai Chorakhe Mak Reservoir, this is an interesting spot to learn about one of Thailand's remarkable wildlife recovery stories. The species of Thailand's tallest



Phanom Rung Historical Park

flying bird, The Eastern Sarus Crane, disappeared from the country's wild wetlands in the 20th century, with the last confirmed wild sighting in 1968. As an attempt to revive local ecosystems, a reintroduction programme began in Buriram in 2011, and the surrounding wetlands are now home to cranes that have successfully returned to the wild and reproduced. Beyond birdwatching, the centre introduces visitors to wetland conservation and the relationship between wildlife and local communities.

Shop for Mudmee Silk in Na Pho

Buriram is known for its silk, and Na Pho is particularly renowned for its traditional Mudmee (also known as ikat) weaving. At the Na Pho District Folk Craft Centre, you can browse handwoven silk made using generations-old techniques. Mudmee patterns are created by tying sections of silk thread before dyeing them, then weaving the threads to reveal intricate designs, giving Buriram Mudmee a unique hybrid identity characterised by both geometric Laotian motifs and fine Khmer-inspired details.

Indulge in a Special Meal at Prego

Good food can make a trip even more memorable, and Prego at Amari Buriram United is well worth adding to your list. This renowned Italian restaurant draws on the time-honoured family recipes of Chef Marco Boscaini, serving authentic flavours full of character and heart, alongside an extensive selection of fine Italian and French wines. After a day of exploring, it is the perfect place to recharge with flavourful dishes made from high-quality ingredients, and be sure to try the signature risotto and wood-fired pizzas. ■



THE COLOURS OF LEADERSHIP

How understanding people became Jose Luis Duran Sanles' greatest management lesson

If you ask Jose Luis Duran Sanles, General Manager of Amari Bangkok, about hotel performance, he can speak confidently about revenue, commercial strategy and food and beverage.

But ask him what makes a great leader, and his answer is surprisingly simple.

"It's about understanding people."

It is a lesson that did not begin in a boardroom or a business school. It began at home.

When Jose's eldest son was diagnosed with autism, he started reading everything he could find to better understand how his son experienced the world. What began as a father's search for answers gradually became a lifelong interest in psychology, communication and human behaviour.

"I wanted to understand what my son needed," he says. "The more I learned, the more I realised that every person communicates differently."

Today, that same thinking shapes how he leads his team.

Rather than expecting everyone to respond in the same way, Jose believes leaders should adapt their communication to the individual.

"Some people need facts. Some need encouragement. Others need time to explain their ideas. If leaders understand how people think, we can support them better."

One concept that particularly resonates with him is a personality model that groups people into four colours. While he knows no model is perfect, he finds it a practical way to remind himself that there is no single approach that works for everyone.



"A blue person likes facts. They are thoughtful and want you to get straight to the point," Jose explains. "A red person should be treated differently. You listen first, recognise their efforts, then communicate your message in a more powerful way." He describes green personalities as naturally empathetic and supportive, while yellow personalities tend to be outgoing and expressive. "The message may be the same," he says, "but how you communicate it should be different."

That belief also influences how he manages his hotel.

For Jose, teamwork is not simply about working together. It is about connecting people across departments, helping them understand each other's challenges and ensuring everyone is moving towards the same goal.

"When different departments communicate openly, problems become much easier to solve."

It is also why he spends time listening before making decisions.

"I always communicate where we need to go, but I also want to understand the challenges the team is facing. Once everyone understands each other, we can move forward together."

Although Jose began his career in food and beverage, he has never stopped learning.

After moving into commercial leadership, he taught himself revenue management and digital marketing through online courses, books and by working alongside experienced commercial leaders.

"What I enjoy about commercials is that you can immediately see the impact of your decisions. You try something, you learn from it and then you improve."

His passion for food and beverage, however, has never disappeared.

He believes restaurants do much more than serve meals.

"They give a hotel its identity. People remember experiences. They remember conversations, flavours and the time they shared together."

That belief is reflected in the diverse dining concepts at Amari Bangkok, where each restaurant has its own purpose, personality and guest experience.

Away from work, Jose's priorities are equally clear.

He divides his reading into two categories. Weekdays are for business books on leadership, strategy and innovation. Weekends are reserved for

psychology, meditation and personal growth.

He also makes a conscious effort to spend meaningful time with his family.

Rather than planning holidays around himself, Jose designs each day around what matters most to each of his three children. One loves trains. Another enjoys aquariums and sharks. His daughter loves the outdoors and collecting seashells on the beach.

By making sure every child has a moment that belongs to them, he hopes they all feel equally valued.

"As parents, that's our mission. We want them to feel equally loved."

Perhaps that same philosophy explains the way Jose leads.

Whether he is talking to a colleague, welcoming a guest or spending time with his children, he believes the best relationships begin by understanding the person in front of you.

Because in hospitality, just as in life, meaningful connections are built by listening first, understanding different perspectives, responding with empathy and showing mutual respect.

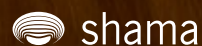
That is leadership at its finest. ■



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A special collection of signature treatments celebrating 60 years of ONYX Hospitality Group.

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Rooted in Thai wellness traditions, maai spa takes a holistic approach to body, mind, and spirit.

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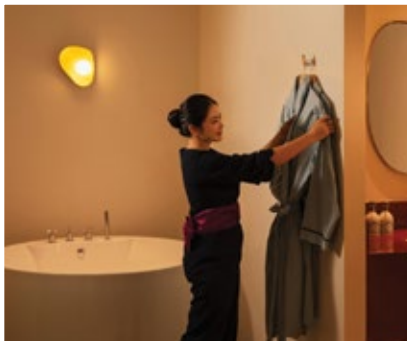
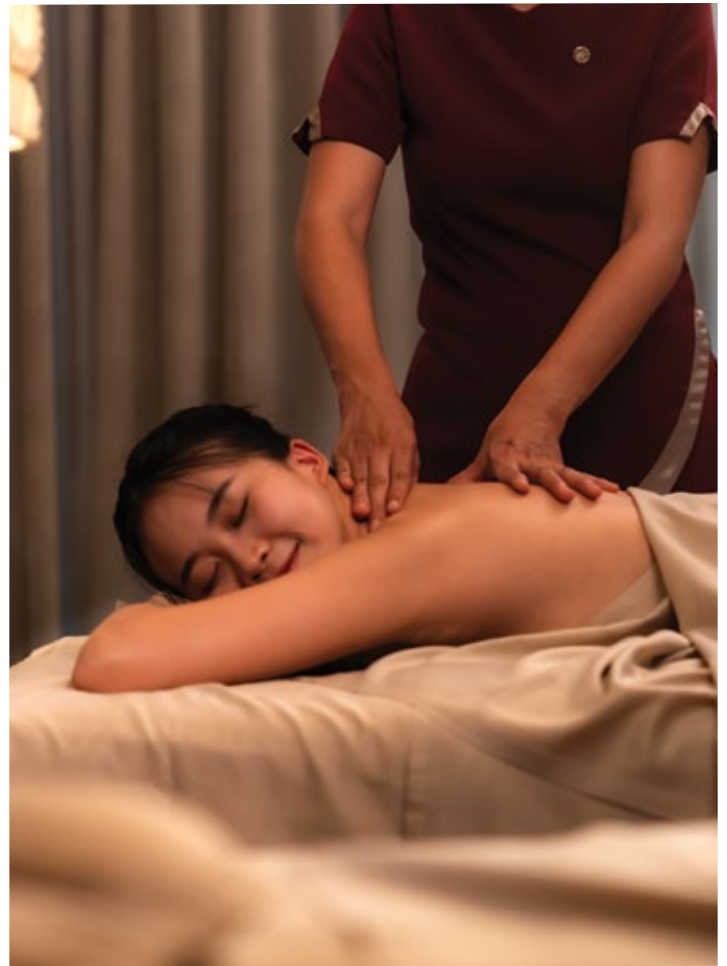
RUEN MAAI MASSAGE

Inspired by the natural strength and graceful flow of wood, this therapeutic journey blends rhythmic Thai techniques, warm oil, and gentle stretching to release muscle tension, improve circulation, and restore inner balance.

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An energizing sports massage designed for active bodies seeking to restore strength and vitality. Deep, targeted strokes combined with dynamic stretching ease muscle tightness and enhance flexibility, while supports faster recovery and physical performance.

Discover the Art of Healing at maai spa, Amari Pattaya
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breeze spa



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LET VIENTIANE TELL ITS OWN STORY

The art of gradual storytelling
in the Laotian capital

For **Peter Nammavongoudom**, Vientiane is a city that reveals more of itself the longer you spend time there. Beyond the usual sights, there are bowls of food at the morning market, a small café along the way, local conversation, and, of course, those precious moments you don't plan. It is the little things that allow you to really explore.



Amari Vientiane



Peter Nammavongoudom

Before entering hospitality, Peter began his career in the world of fashion magazines in Laos. It was here that he discovered his love of storytelling and how a story can change the way people see a place. When he moved into hospitality, he realised those two concepts had more in common than he expected.

"Hospitality is another form of storytelling," he says.

For Peter, a hotel is more than a place to stay. It becomes part of the experience guests take away from a city. This idea became particularly meaningful when he joined **Amari Vientiane**, Amari's second hotel in Laos. Arriving when everything was still taking shape felt like being given a blank page—an opportunity to help write the story of the hotel while giving guests a different way to get to know the city, beyond a guidebook.

Ask Peter what makes Vientiane special, and he is more likely to talk about its 'rhythm' than its landmarks. It is a city that does not ask you to hurry. Slow down, he suggests, and you begin to notice more of the everyday life happening around you.

"I often recommend that guests experience the city in layers," he says. "Start with the important landmarks, then look at how people here live from day to day."

That might mean visiting That Luang, Patuxai, and Wat Sisaket, then

taking time for a morning market, Lao coffee, a bicycle ride along quieter streets, or an evening by the Mekong. Food offers another way in, from khao piak sen, mok pa and larb to grilled river fish and papaya salad. Even a few simple Lao words, such as "sabaidee" or "khop chai", can make encounters with locals feel warmer and more personal.

For Peter, part of the appeal of Amari Vientiane is its connection to the city rather than separation from it. Set along the Mekong, close to the city centre and night market, the hotel makes it easy to experience Vientiane throughout the day—heading out in the morning, returning to relax in the afternoon, then watching the sun set over the Mekong from Stellar Rooftop Bar on the hotel's rooftop.

And when it comes to recommending places to guests, Peter believes it should go beyond simply saying, "This place is beautiful," or choosing somewhere because it is popular. He prefers to recommend places he has experienced himself, so he can understand what they are really like and what might suit each guest.

"A place may look beautiful in a photograph, but I want to know more—what it actually feels like when you get there, when to go, what to eat, how long to spend there, and what kind of traveller it suits," he says.

For him, a small restaurant or an ordinary local spot can be just as

worthwhile if you arrive at the right time and remain open to what you find. The same applies to discovering Lao culture. There is no need to understand everything at once. It can unfold naturally through food, hospitality, music, local ingredients, and stories from the people who live there.

Perhaps the best way to experience this philosophy is in the way Peter would spend a day in Vientiane. He starts at a morning market with Lao coffee and khao piak sen, then cycles through the city, stopping at temples and Patuxai before finding a simple Lao lunch. The afternoon might be spent relaxing or exploring the city's cultural side, followed by an evening walk along the Mekong and a final drink at Stellar Rooftop Bar.

But there is one thing he would leave deliberately open: time with no plan.

Because sometimes the moments we remember most are not the places we set out to see, but the small café we happened to walk into, the restaurant we had never heard of, or a brief conversation with someone along the way.

Perhaps that is why Vientiane does not need to hurry to be understood. The slower you travel, the more you look around, and the more space you leave for the unexpected, the more the city has a chance to tell you its own story. ■



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Ⓜ

A SECOND HOME FOR BANGKOK'S FURRY FRIENDS

The comfort of staying at Shama Yen-Akat with pets



For Poy and Jib and their beloved dogs, Steve and Steam, travelling from Ang Thong to Bangkok has taught them that a good family-friendly place is more than just comfortable. It's a space where their furry companions can relax and feel as welcome as any other guest.

Poy and Jib are the parents of Steve, a nine-year-old Golden Retriever, and Steam, a six-year-old Siberian Husky. Following pet events and the city's vets, the family regularly makes the journey to Bangkok, and their go-to base of exploration is Shama Yen-Akat Bangkok.

Their first stay at **Shama Yen-Akat Bangkok** was on 6 May 2022. Poy remembers the date clearly because the hotel had prepared a welcome card featuring photographs of Steve and Steam. She still keeps them to this day.

Another detail that puts the family at ease is the room set-up designed specifically for guests travelling with pets. Everything is thoughtfully arranged in a separate area; the corridor from the lift to the room is carpeted, while the space comes equipped with a pet bed, pee pads, waste bags, and other essentials. On the rooftop, there is also an artificial grass area for toilet breaks, ideal for Steve and Steam,

who are accustomed to doing their business on grass.

On one occasion, the family stayed in a different room. After taking the two dogs up to the rooftop garden for a walk, Steve came back down and turned toward their old room, finding it without hesitation.

"He remembered exactly where our room was. When you come somewhere this often, it starts to feel like a second home," they said.

Steam's favourite thing about staying here would be the pet bed. Even when it looks slightly too small for him, he loves to curl up here. Steve, meanwhile, is a devoted boy. He loves climbing onto the bed to sleep with them. Beforehand, Poy lays down a familiar piece of fabric that they use regularly. The moment Steve sees it, he knows he is allowed up.

Every time they are here, the dogs get excited about the treats prepared for them, with Steve usually rushing over first to see what is placed beside the bed. Sometimes it is wet food, dried fish or a new kind of treat.

"At home, they don't get that many treats, but when we go travelling, it's like they're having a day of indulgence," Poy says with a laugh.

Another thing that makes returning easy is the staff, who have grown

familiar with the dogs. On one occasion, Poy and Jib had to attend an event where pets were not allowed. They left the dogs in the room for around an hour and a half, asking the staff to let themselves in and check that Steve and Steam were doing well, then message them with an update. It was a small gesture, but it showed the family that the two dogs were not just pets. They were guests.

"Dogs only get to see as much of the world as we take them to. If we want them to see more of the world, we have to be the ones to take them out," Poy said.

For Poy, the small acts of thoughtfulness are what make Shama Yen-Akat Bangkok a place for her family time and again.

As for Steve and Steam, travel memories may be simple things: a carpeted corridor where they can run with confidence, the same familiar bed, a new bag of treats, and a room they both know.

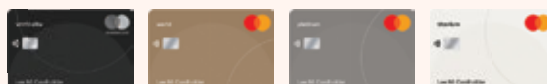
It is not simply somewhere to stay while running errands in Bangkok. It's a familiar space where they can relax, feel at ease and be welcomed like two very special guests—even after the trip is over. ■



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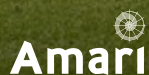
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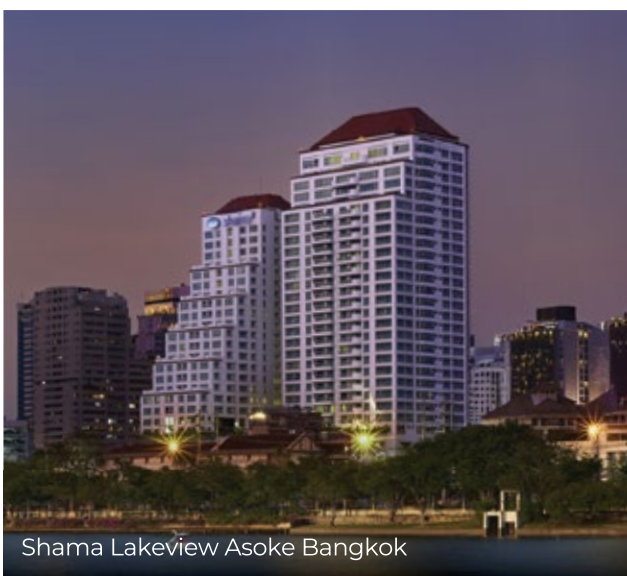
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