



## Days Out Bangkok

# The Grand Palace and Temple of the Emerald Buddha

**Directions:** The most scenic way is to take the BTS Skytrain to Taksin Station. Then take the Chao Phraya River Express boat which will drop you at Tha Chang Wang Luang Pier. You can walk from here to the palace.

Cost: 250 baht for foreigners, free for Thais.

Contact: Tel: 02-623 5500,

Web: [www.palaces.thai.net](http://www.palaces.thai.net)

**BANGKOK'S** Grand Palace is Thailand's most famous tourist attraction - and for good reason. The palace is a glittering tribute to the country's love for religion and royalty.

It's the one place many tourists head to on their first day but it's also a place where many long-stay residents have never been. There is nothing to rival its brilliant architecture and history, the place is dripping with culture.

Forget the floating market, the elephant rides or the Temple of Dawn - this is the Kingdom's greatest attraction.

As befitting such a regal place, there are a few things to remember before going inside. Before entering, guards will check your clothes to make sure you don't offend any sensibilities. And at the Grand Palace they have a dress code second to none.

Forget about wearing see-through shirts, or sleeveless shirts and if your shirts are fortunate enough to possess sleeves, don't even think about rolling them up.

Sandals are also out unless they

have ankle and heel straps. Thankfully the staff expect visitors to get it all wrong and so you can hire the appropriate clothes from a small office.

Once inside, be careful when entering and leaving temples. There's a red step at each entrance, which helps block evil spirits who may want to get inside. Stepping on the red step is a major faux pas, carefully step over it instead.

The palace is a collection of majestically-decorated halls and rooms. The highlight is undoubtedly The Emerald Buddha, the most sacred object in Thailand.

The image is made from solid jadeite and is reputed to be more than 1,000 years old. It sits high on a golden tiered altar in an enormous hall. Whenever the seasons change, the Buddha image is given different coverings in line with the weather, so in winter he is covered while in summer he has less protection.

While the Buddha is a beautifully ornate symbol, its surroundings are just as stunning. The huge chapel is covered with paintings representing the life of the Buddha, while outside millions of coloured glass form the mother of all mosaics.

To the north of the temple is the Royal Pantheon, inside which are life-size figures of the last eight Thai Kings. Around the building are the nymph-like mythical figures of 'kinnaras' and 'kinnari's.

Look out for the spired pavilion

## Royal Thai Consulate-General (WA)

The office for the Royal Thai Consulate General is located at:

Level 4 'The Victoria'

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Telephone 9221 - 3237, Fax 9221 - 1635.

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The Honorary Consul-General is Brigadier W.D. Jamieson and the Honorary Consul is Mr. W.J.D. Jamieson.

The Office hours are 9:00am to 12:00noon Tuesdays and Thursdays and the telephone is answered during these hours. The office may be contacted by fax at any time and urgent faxes will be answered without delay.

In the case of an emergency the Consul-General may be telephoned on +61-8 - 9386-8092.

## Australian Embassy - Bangkok

**Embassy** 02 344 6300  
(including Consular and  
Passports)

Fax: 02 344 6301

**DIMIA** 02 344 6400

(All enquiries regarding visas  
and migration)

**Austrade** 02 344 6333

Fax : (662) 66 2 344-6306

**Australian Education Centre**  
02 344 6488

The Visa section has moved to  
Thai CC Tower.

**Australian Visa Application  
Centre**

Level 34, Units 2 & 3  
Thai CC Tower

889 South Sathorn Road  
Bangkok 10120

Telephone 02 6723476 - 79

nearby, which is the Holy Library. This houses Buddhist scriptures.

Also close to the Emerald Buddha Temple is the Amarin Vinitchai Throne Hall. Its opulence is breath-taking, and while it was once the palace of the first three Chakri Kings, it is now used for formal banquets and functions.

Near to the throne hall is the Chakri Maha Prasat Palace, a three-storey Italian Renaissance building featuring a Thai-style roof. Apparently the unusual roof feature was added to ensure the skyline looked consistent throughout.

One of the best features of the palace is its variety. As well as the exquisite halls there is also the Coin and Decorations Museum, a fascinating array of coins through the ages, and also a collection of Royal decorations which denote various ranks of the Royal

family and government officials.

When it comes to architectural brilliance, there is little to match the Grand Palace. If proof were ever needed as to how much Thais revere Royalty, then it is here.

Many of the main buildings were created for Rama V, one of Thailand's most famous monarchs and the first who travelled to Europe.

King Rama V had Phra Thinang Chakri Maha Prasat built in 1877 as his personal Royal Residence and even today it is still the best-known architectural landmark in the Kingdom.

You can spend two or three hours wandering from building to building, and your enjoyment will be enhanced further if you hire one of the audio guides on offer, which are available in a variety of languages.

An umbrella or hat is a wise

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