

BANG RAK:

The Village of Love



Roses.
Chocolates.
Valentine's cards.
Scents and jewelries.
Movie and dinner dates.

These are some of the things that are on high demand around this month of the year, given as tokens of love to significant others. Valentine's day is here once again.

But here in Bangkok, there is a place that is especially popular in February, called BANG RAK, it is one of 50 districts in the capital city of Bangkok.

BANG RAK in English means "Village of Love".

From long ago, its name which is written in Thai as "บางรัก" (pronounced Bang Rak) meaning "Village of Cure", was believed to originate from two reasons: a famous hospital is located here, and the other is because a medicinal plant called "Rak" used to be easily found here.

Later, the name was changed to shorter a Thai script "บางรัก" (also pronounced Bang Rak) and became "Village of Love" as translated in English.

The name being so, Bang Rak now is the popular district for couples to register for marriage especially on Valentine's Day.

There are many other reasons why this is a 'must-visit' place for tourists and not-so romantic ones as well. Bang rak has many things to offer to fall in love with. First and the most popular is the Lebua Hotel's Sky Bar in State Tower. This got its Hollywood exposure from the Hangover 2 movie of 2011. Since then, hundreds of tourists come every night to get a panoramic view of Bangkok's night lights from the 68th floor, have a sip of its now equally popular cocktail called "Hangoverini", or dine at their certified "world's highest open-air restaurant" (if diner's budget permits) and of course, take "selfies" with the golden dome as the backdrop.



SIAM LIVING
by Maricel Diaz

In mid-2017, the new tallest building in Thailand called Maha Nakhon Tower will be open to the public once it is completely finished. This newest architectural landmark boasts a unique "pixelated"-like structure, with a rooftop observation deck on the 77th floor as well as exclusive high-end residential units, luxury boutique hotel accommodations, and some posh dining/wining venues at lower levels of the building.

Shopping sprees can also be had in Bang Rak; for souvenir items, the Patpong night bazaar is the perfect



place to get them. Patpong Road is lined with stalls offering cheap clothing, bags, shoes, and home décor. This is also one of the red light districts in Bangkok with cheap drinks, go-go bars, karaoke joints and pubs for all sorts of adult crowds. For quality, authentic and reasonably priced jewelry, head to Si Lom Road where most of the jewelry are actually made.

Additionally, street food eating is popular in this area; the nightly 3-hour river cruise buffet dining along Chao Phraya River is also found here. Small cruise ships offering the dinner cruise experience dock along Siphraya pier, beside River City Shopping Complex.

Bang Rak is a commercial bustling area by day but nonetheless, it is worth touring at daytime as well. Various worship places aside from Buddhist temples are also found here.

The Hindu temple Sri Mahamariamman or Wat Kek to locals is quite popular with their annual ceremony called Nawa Ratri celebrated in October. Also, the Assumption Cathedral, the principal Roman Catholic church of Thailand which Pope John Paul II visited in 1984 is



located within the school grounds of Assumption College at Oriental Avenue Road.

Finally, if you want to have a glimpse of how a house of a typical middle class family from long ago in Bang Rak looked like, visit the Bangkokian Museum or Bangkok Folk Museum in Chareonkrung Road. It is a small, quiet museum consisting of two beautiful wooden houses that showcase charming and old-fashioned structures and home furnishings giving a glimpse into the way of life (especially that of former

homeowners) in the Bangkok of past. You can visit the museum from Wednesday thru Sunday from 10AM to 4PM and is free of charge.

Bang rak is accessible by both Skytrain (BTS) and underground (MRT) transport system so going there from different Bangkok areas is very convenient.

When planning a visit to Bangkok, make sure you include Bang Rak in your itinerary and fall in love with what's in store in the "Village of Love". ■