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SPEED EDITION

Inner calm

A riverside hotel in the heart of Bangkok is the perfect post-flight pick-me-up

Words: Scott Manson

I really hate flying. Not in a pop-a-sleeping-pill, high anxiety sense, but more just the sheer drudgery and energy-sapping nature of the experience. Flying first class or by private jet are different, of course, but on my recent trip to Thailand I was flying coach – 12 hours of baby-crying, passenger-snoring, lumbar-damaging hell.

Add to this the airport transfer through Bangkok's notorious traffic and, by the time I reached The Siam hotel, I was more tightly wound than a cheap Russian wristwatch. It was early too, so I steel myself for the words that strike fear into the hearts of every long-haul traveller: 'I'm sorry sir, but your room isn't ready yet.'


And yet, despite it being 9am, within five minutes I was upstairs in my beautifully appointed room – even pausing on the way to take in the exquisite public areas of this boutique hotel. It's the definition of serene, all bubbling fountains, natural light and impressive vegetation. Vast plants reach up to the huge skylight ceiling above the central courtyard – I could almost feel their oxygen release pumping into my flight-tired body.

The room itself is a mash-up of Art Deco meets Thai auction house. Its heritage feel comes from well-chosen art on the walls – old Muay Thai fighters in my case – as well as fascinating vintage documents and letters from the 19th and 20th century. Elsewhere, the bed is vast and looks

towards a light flooded lounge area, complete with chaise longue and a courtyard view. There's also a large, stylish bathtub – another key antidote to those hours on a plane. Heavy dark wood furniture and brass ceiling fans complete this picture of a century-old Thai house.

The exterior space is no slouch either. Little wonder, given the whole hotel was designed by celebrated hotel guru Bill Bensley. There's a riverside swimming pool, complete with bar and loungers that let you watch the sun set, and check out the surprisingly busy boat traffic that chugs past just a stone's throw from where you sit.

You can eat in the hotel of course, and very good it is too. But I'd encourage you to make use of the free boat service that runs regularly from The Siam's private pier to take you to your riverside restaurant of choice. It'll stop pretty much anywhere there's a jetty on the Chao Praya river and it's also handy for visiting the many temples that line this waterway. Crucially, you can go your whole Bangkok trip without ever having to endure the bumper-to-bumper road traffic that the city is so famous for.

The hotel is a true one-of-a-kind and I'd encourage everyone – particularly those that usually stay at the luxury chain hotels – to discover a taste of old Thailand at The Siam. 

thesiamhotel.com

