

BANGKOK DREAM

BY JOHN BRIERLEY



I was tired. After eleven hours flying, nothing can be worse than having to think about onward transportation to ones hotel. But here at Bangkok Airport all I had to do was to look for a handsome young man holding a massive card bearing my name – and then just relax in a smart car whilst being whisked away to the Aquarius Guest House, just forty minutes away. This exclusively gay establishment was opened fifteen years ago and is situated in a quiet road off one of the main city streets, just minutes away from the nightlife.

Amnat carried my luggage into a very large, air-conditioned room on the ground floor. It was en-suite and boasted a king-sized bed, 28 inch TV and a full size fridge/mini-bar. After helping me to unpack, I asked the 28 year old if he'd care to stay a while longer. He did – willingly. In fact he stayed with me every night and even brought me breakfast in bed. Apparently there is no charge for the toast and coffee I had, or the host service, although the boys expect a tip of around £15 for making your holiday extra special. There were normally at least six or seven boys around the house.

After settling in, and getting used to the 95degree heat, I wanted to explore Bangkok. I was told the local park (about 20 minutes walk away) was interesting – particularly in the mornings. Well it was, especially watching very fit gymnasts going through their routines. Lots of enthusiastic joggers too. Very sexy.

Pet, who organises personal guided tours at the Aquarius, suggested I might like to travel a bit further a field, so I booked a trip with him (and Amnat) to see the floating markets, followed by a fascinating glimpse of the Buddhist temples. I felt just like a tourist.

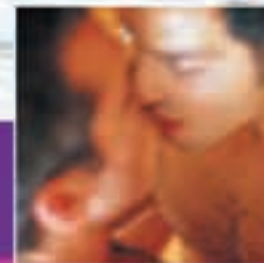
Nightlife in Bangkok is something else. Colourful, vibrant and full of variety, with clubs to suit every possible taste. Amnat introduced me to the Telephone Bar, one of the many gay venues. The atmosphere was relaxed and very friendly. The Tuk-Tuk (a 3 wheeled taxi) costs 50 pence to get there and a G & T will only set you back £1. If you fancy someone in the bar all you have to do is give them a call – there's a telephone on every table. Have fun!

The Telephone Bar had a varied menu of Thai and international dishes, but if you really crave for your sausages ➤

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▶ and mash or pie and chips – pop into the Toby Jug just down the road where the local business men congregate daily. It's not gay – but the food's terrific. I just had to visit a 'Go-Go' club and there are many to choose from, but the two most popular are 'Dream Boy' and 'Boys of Bangkok'. Entrance is free, but a beer costs about £3. All the performers initially parade on the stage in skimpy costumes with number tags attached – hoping you may choose your late-night date from the display of beauty. Later, we were treated to an hour's show of comedy and dance routines plus an unbelievable finale. I watched in awe, and although I did fancy no. 35, Amnat reminded me he was number one.

Before leaving this wonderful city of dreams I decided to sample the local sauna, ten minutes walk from the Aquarius. Babylon is a luxurious complex where you can totally relax in the steam rooms, intriguing cubicles or just sipping a drink by the swimming pool. If you seek company, that's no problem. It's very different to many saunas in Britain, and somewhat cheaper. Highly recommended. So the time for good-bye finally came. Pet had arranged to drive me back to the airport but, prior to leaving, Amnat presented me with the most beautiful orchid ever. The card with it read "see you again soon. I love you." I did see him again, and real soon.

Don't forget the all-important jabs before you go away and get some mosquito repellent, otherwise you could be itching quite a lot. As far as money is concerned, always change sterling in Bangkok. The rate is far superior to the UK and there's no commission for cash. You'll need to save 500baht for the departure tax on your return from Bangkok airport.

This has been by far the very best holiday experience of my life – surprising, magical and very satisfying. When you stay at the Aquarius you become a friend, not just a guest. Both men and women are welcome. Just remember, you may fall in love when you're there and it could be forever.

Alternative tour operator Manaround
Tel: 020 8902 7177 or go to
www.manaround.com

Fact file

Aquarius Guest House
(www.aquariushouse.com),
tel: 006622860217
e-mail: vichai@aquariushouse.com

En suite rooms are 950baht – 1300baht plus 10% tax

Airport transport is 600baht each way and tours cost from 1800baht.



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Paul Martin (Chetto/Heaven)

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