

# Cognoscenti magazine

Because life is short

## The Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit Bangkok, Thailand

Situated along bustling Sukhumvit Road in the heart of Bangkok, **Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit** has a lot more going for it than its central location. It has resort-like features which provide its guests with a surprising level of quiet and tranquility in the midst of it all. You're just steps from the Asok Skytrain Station and all that the city has to offer, but when it's time to relax, you can return to the hotel to enjoy a soothing massage or simply lounge next to the palm-fringed swimming pool.

At the Sheraton, even standard guestrooms are a generous 45 square meters in size. The Grand Deluxe room occupied by visiting **Cognoscenti Magazine** editors came packed with amenities likely to appeal to business class travelers, including data port, high-speed internet and 2-line telephone, mini-safe and mini-bar. We especially liked the large work desk with its comfortable chair and the separate armchair. Decorated in tones of soft beige and sage green, our room was well-designed, with thick blackout curtains and four down pillows making sleep easy. The bathroom was in granite and featured a nice glass-enclosed shower.

This 27<sup>th</sup> floor room came with executive guest privileges, although exactly what these privileges were—such as the right to enjoy complimentary drinks down-



*Rooms with generous business amenities.*

stairs each evening in the lobby's "Library" lounge—seemed rather ill-defined to us at first. (Executive privileges should always be clearly spelled out at hotels.)

Does a hotel have fresh or ersatz flowers? The answer is always one of the telltale signs of quality. At the Sheraton Grande Sukhumvit the answer is resounding:

there are lovely fresh flowers in the hallways, the rooms, and even the elevators.

The swimming pool is one of the most lushly-landscaped you'll find in Bangkok. Lounging around its turquoise waters, you'll begin to notice that sounds from the hectic outside world are effectively blocked—it truly is an oasis. The tranquility extends to laid-back **Sala**, also set by the pool. Here breakfast is served in the morning, as well as snacks and sandwiches for the rest of the day.

Arranged around a central food island, the busy, well-stocked breakfast buffet at the **Orchid Café** offers everything from freshly baked breads to baked Virginia ham, as well as Asian favorites like noodle soup and dim sum.

The **Sunday Brunch**, which sprawls out into the lounge area and the red-brick **Rossini** restaurant, is

one of Bangkok's most extravagant. Mouth-watering trays of mussels, oysters, lobster and shrimp stand atop a large ice sculpture, but there are over 100 dishes in all, including plenty of salads and vegetables for the diet-conscious. A 3-piece jazz band even serenades you as you dine.

At **Basil**, the Thai restaurant, the focus is on freshness—even the coconut milk comes from fresh coconuts, not from a can. The place has a distinctly contemporary feel, with the spare effect of blond wood expanses offset by pots of lush banana palm leaves and clusters of wax-papered lamps lighting the room. On each table, an assortment of gourmet Thai vegetables is presented in a vase. Drinks are served with a Thai twist: instead of a straw, a lemongrass stalk is used!

The dishes are rated in the menu for spiciness ranging from “pleasantly hot” to “volcanic.” *Nua Hor Bai Ka-Na*, or grilled beef tenderloin roll with kale leaves and spicy lemon sauce, was a winner, the contrast of flavors exploding in the mouth. *Goy Goong* was a delicious salad of grilled prawn marinated with lemon juice and herbs. Shallots were ample in this dish, their flavor offset by the cool taste of mint leaves and fresh cucumber and the bracing bite of citrus. *Musma Rue* Rock Lobster didn't quite come to life, the use of potatoes too heavy a match for the delicate lobster. In *Pla Gapong Nueng Manao*, steamed seabass with lime, chili and garlic was kept light, healthy, and tender.

With its warmly lacquered wooden floors and an abundance of graceful orchids, the in-house **Grande Spa** has a quiet and relaxed feel. “Coming up here is like entering a cocoon,” says Spa Director Carol Fajht.

“In Thailand,” adds Carol, “the land is rich in herbs and the people know how to use them. They've not used chemicals like in the West, so the plants have retained their anti-oxidant value.” “Integrity,” the spa's

exclusive product line, features lemongrass as a key ingredient. “Integrity” products come in environmentally-conscious packaging, with palm-wood caps rather than plastic.

The softly lit treatment room had walls of carved wood. We enjoyed Herbal Pound massages in a twin room furnished with side-by-side massage tables. First the therapists “pounded” major muscle groups with a steamed herbal poultice, then they came through a second time to give a gentle and thorough massage.



*At Basil: Thai cuisine in a contemporary setting*

This article was written by contributing editors to *Cognoscenti Magazine*.

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