

# On The Fairways

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Thousands of golfers from around the world who visit the kingdom agree: Thailand is the "Golf Capital of Asia."

**W**hoever came up with the idea of hitting a ball with a club in as few strokes as possible could never have imagined the popularity and passion this sport currently generates. Golf has grown from an old-fashioned pastime into a multi-million international sport industry. While the sport may be scarred with recent scandals, there is still a growing desire among many to give it a try.

Particularly in Thailand, interest in golf -- both as a sport and as a business -- is growing. On average, 400,000 foreign golfers come to the kingdom annually to play its more than 200 courses. In fact, it has turned into a huge part of the tourism industry, bringing in an estimated Bt8 million yearly. Recent proof of Thailand's popularity among golfers: the country has recently been honored to host the "Royal Trophy-Europe vs. Asia Golf Championship" in Chonburi.

Bangkok itself boasts more than 20 golf courses, the majority of which can be considered of international standard. With such a number to choose from, you might want to consider enjoying some of the world's most spectacular golf courses while you are on vacation or simply taking time off from a business trip. There are also several companies offering excursions and interesting packages for families and groups.

One of the most popular golf courses is the Thana City Golf & Country Club just off the Bangna-Trad Highway, only half an hour from Bangkok. Opened in 1993, Thana City's landscape is enhanced by natural streams and sand, which almost creates the illusion of a seaside course. The 18-hole championship golf course was designed by Greg Norman to test the keenest golfer. Several professional tournaments, including the 1993 Thailand Men's Open and the 1994 and 1995 Kosaido Thailand Ladies

Open, have been played on this course; it also hosted the final round of the Johnnie Walker Super Tour 1996. The price of entry for one golfer is approximately Bt1,620 on weekdays and Bt2,300 on weekends. For more information, call 02 336-1968. Address: 100-100/1 Moo 4, Bangna-Trad Road, Samut Prakarn.

If you don't want to wander too far away from the big city, then you might want to consider the Bangkok Golf Club. Located within Bangkok's suburbs, it is a mere 30-minute drive from the city, or 20 minutes from Suvarnabhumi International Airport. On offer are cleverly designed yet extremely testing fairways and greens. Price of entry is Bt1,600 on weekdays and Bt2,400 on weekends. Caddies are available for hire at Bt250 at all times. Call 02 501-2828 for more information. Address: 99 Moo 2, Tiwanon Road, Pathum Thani.

The Pinehurst Golf Club, one of the five top-ranking luxury golf clubs in Thailand, provides a truly international experience. Pinehurst's 27-hole course features many water hazards, and rolling hills dominate its landscape. Price of entry is Bt1,700 on weekdays and Bt2,300 on weekends. It is just less than an hour's drive from Bangkok. Call 02 516-8679 for more information. Address: 17 Phaholyothin Rd, Klong Nueng.



**GOLFING GREEN** - Thailand's green landscape at this time of the year makes it perfect for golf-playing visitors.



Photos by Golf Asian

Dozens of championship-standard courses in and around Bangkok also offer a wonderful time on the fairways. These include the Rajpruek Club (Tel: 02 955-0055), Kantarat Golf Course (Tel: 02 534-3840/3), Krungthep Kreetha Sports Club (Tel: 02 379-3717), Panya Indra Gold Club (Tel: 02 943-0000/10), The Legacy Golf Club (Tel: 02 914-1930/4), Unico Grande Golf Course (Tel: 02 379-3752), and Windsor Park & Golf Club (Tel: 02 989-4200/1). The provinces of Pathum Thani, Nakhon Pathom, and Chachoengsao – as well as nearby Pattaya, Chonburi, and Rayong -- also host a number of world-class golf courses, including Pleasant Valley Golf & Country Club (Tel: 038 260-825/6).

One of the newest golf and sports resorts is Pattana Golf & Sports Resort, which opened in December 2004. Located in the heart of the business areas of Chonburi and Rayong, Pattana Golf & Sports Resort offers twenty-seven holes of international standard golf courses, split into three nine-hole stretches. Undulating fairways, scenic mountain ridges, palm trees, and large water hazards await golfers looking for unforgettable rounds of the game. The 1000-rai resort also provides a variety of accommodation, as well as seminar and banqueting rooms. The golf resort is a one-and-a-half hour drive from Bangkok. For more details, call 038 318-999. Address: 99/89 Moo 9, Khoakansong, Sriracha. Chonburi.



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**WOMAN'S TOUCH**  
- Female caddies are popular in Thailand, keeping a watchful eye throughout the game.

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## Golf Tours

A golf game is even more exciting when it is accompanied by a tour, both sightseeing and otherwise. Many tour companies offer golf trips and excursions at competitive prices. Golf of Siam's "Siam Golf Package" offers a seven-day, six-night tour. The tour includes shopping, sightseeing, and plenty of time for relaxation. Three nights are spent in Bangkok and the other three at a city of your choice. For more information about the tour, contact [info@golfsiam.com](mailto:info@golfsiam.com).

If you are interested in experiencing a true golfer's paradise, then you might want to consider a package tour to Hua Hin, Thailand's charming royal beach resort town. Hua Hin (and nearby Cha-Am) boasts some of the most spectacular golf courses in Thailand, including the Imperial Lakeview (Tel: 032 456-233/40), Palm Hills Golf Resorts (Tel: 032 520-820), Springfield Royal Country Club (Tel: 031 393-223), The Royal Hua Hin Golf Course (Tel: 032 512-475), and the Banyan Golf Course (Tel: 032 616-200). Many tours include transport from Bangkok to Hua Hin, as well as transfers to and from the airport. You will also get an opportunity to visit the ancient city of Ayutthaya, Thailand's capital for many years when it was still called Siam. Check out [golforient.com/thailand](http://golforient.com/thailand) for more information.

Golf is also a booming business in the northern areas of Thailand. Chiang Mai has many outstanding golf courses, including the Chiang Mai Green Valley (Tel: 053 298-220), Lanna Golf Club (Tel: 053 221-911), Mai Jo Golf Club (Tel: 053 354-431), Waterford Chiang Rai (Tel: 053 953-440), and Santiburi Golf Course (Tel: 053 662-821). One of the most interesting is the Royal Chiang Mai Golf Club (Tel: 053 849-301), which is a half-hour drive from the town proper. The golf resort is located among numerous hills and streams, providing the ultimate experience for family relaxation. It is considered one of the best in the province. Combine your golfing experience with shopping, culture, and other unique activities available to visitors in the province. For more information on other golf courses in Chiang Mai, visit [www.golfchiangmai.com](http://www.golfchiangmai.com)

You can also enjoy golf on Koh Samui. The golf trip package includes a stay at a hotel of your choice, along with a go at the island's first golf course at Santiburi, where professional golf tournaments have been played in close proximity to the main beach resorts. Upon arrival, you will be greeted by a driver who will take you to the resort. On the second day of your trip, you will be transported to the Santiburi Country Club (Tel: 077 421-700/8). You will also

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**WORLD-CLASS** - Many of Thailand's large championship courses were designed by world-famous golfers.

get plenty of free time to relax and enjoy a swim or take a soothing massage. For further information on this package, log on to [www.golfasian.com/golf-holidays/thailand/koh-samui](http://www.golfasian.com/golf-holidays/thailand/koh-samui) (Tel: 02 714-8470)

The more developed island of Phuket, host to many popular golf tournaments in the past, is perhaps the ultimate place for tourists for golf; it's possible to enjoy both the beach and the warm weather at the same time as their favorite sport. Phuket has an international airport that welcomes carriers both local and international, and it generally offers visitors a wider selection of hotels. A number of courses offer world-class golfing, including Blue Canyon Golf Course (Tel: 076 328-088), Laguna Phuket Golf Club (Tel: 076 270-991/2), Mission Hillas Phuket Golf Resort & Spa (Tel: 076 310-888), and Phuket Country Club (Tel: 076 321-365/71). For more information, visit [www.phuket-golf.com](http://www.phuket-golf.com)

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## Golfing Like a Pro

If you haven't had the chance to play golf before and would like to give it a try, there are plenty of golf schools offering courses that will have you swinging your club like a pro. For beginners, try the golf schools that offer beginner courses spanning just two or three days. Many programs include one-on-one training and a personalized schedule that meets your needs. For one such program offered in Bangkok, Hua Hin, Phuket and Chiang Mai, e-mail [info@golfthink.com](mailto:info@golfthink.com).

Mastering the techniques of your golf swing certainly needs both practice and patience. One of the best ways to do this is concentrated effort both on the field and in a simulated environment. In this way, The Bangkok Golf Training Centre is one-of-a-kind. The training center is equipped with a welcome reception, a conference room, and virtual video lessons. There is also an indoor facility that opens up into a full driving range field for simulations. Most of its instructors have been enrolled in tournaments before and are ready to share their expertise. (Tel: 02 501-2828; e-mail: [training@bangkokgolfcentre.com](mailto:training@bangkokgolfcentre.com).) ■