

deliver privacy and quiet even with screaming Sukhumvit right outside. Front rooms have a bird's-eye view of the street's traffic-snarled grandeur. The petite among us will find the rooms cosy, while others may argue for the term 'cramped'.

Novotel Lotus Bangkok (Map pp122-3; ☎ 0 2261 8111; www.accorhotels-asia.com; 1 Soi 33, Th Sukhumvit; d from 3000B; Skytrain Phrom Phong; ♿ ♿) Another in the Accor brand is this well-designed modern creation complete with a soothing lotus pond in the centre of the lobby. Rooms are plush and private. There are also suites on a semiprivate floor with a terrace.

Davis (Map pp122-3; ☎ 0 2260 8000; www.davisbangkok.net; Soi 24, Th Sukhumvit; d from 3000B; ♿ ♿) Close to Th Phra Ram IV, the Davis is a peach of a place with cool sophistication and rooms decorated like a Raj's palace, a Kyoto hermitage or a Burmese plantation. Freshen up in the big marble bathrooms after a dreamy slumber in the fluffy beds. Straight from the pages of *Architectural Digest*, the detached Thai villas are polished to a burnished golden wood with deep sleigh beds and big sunny windows arranged around a private lap pool and garden.

Bel-Aire Princess (Map pp122-3; ☎ 0 2253 4300; www.bel-aireprincess.com; 16 Soi 5, Th Sukhumvit; d from 3500B; Skytrain Nana; ♿ ♿) This hotel is all dolled up with a stylish lobby and rooms that are being upgraded to match.

TOP END

Seven (Map pp122-3; ☎ 0 2662 0951; www.sleepatseven.com; 3/15 Soi 31, Th Sukhumvit; d from 4000B; Skytrain Phrom

Phong; ♿ ♿) Did you know that in Thailand the days of the week are associated with the Hindu Gods and their symbolic colours? This new boutique hotel has incorporated this cultural hook into its conversion of a Sukhumvit apartment building. Each room is decorated to match the colour associated with a particular day of the week. The décor is evocative of Thai mural painting in modern and elegant hues. To further the theme, pick the room that represents the day of the week you were born – an important component of Thai astrology.

Eugenia (Map pp122-3; ☎ 0 2259 9011; www.theeugenia.com; 267 Soi 31, Th Sukhumvit; r from 5800B; Skytrain Phrom Phong; ♿ ♿) Colonial manor houses aren't an indigenous legacy in Thailand but this anachronistic hotel polishes the anomaly to reflect a refined Victorian lady. Here in the most modern part of town, Eugenia looked into the history books for inspiration, decorating 12 guest rooms with canopy beds, old-fashioned light fixtures and other clean yet feminine touches.

Dream Bangkok (Map pp122-3; ☎ 0 2254 8500; 10 Soi 15, Th Sukhumvit; Skytrain Asoke or Nana; r from US\$136; ♿ ♿ ♿) If heart-shaped beds and champagne-glass tubs were given a modern makeover, you'd have Dream Bangkok, another conquest by New York hotelier and socialite Vikram Chatwal. The clubby blue-lit décor is unintentionally kitsch, making it a match made in dreamland for the City of Angels and a welcome addition to beer-belly Nana.

Westin Grande Sukhumvit (Map pp122-3; ☎ 0 2207 8000; www.westin.com/bangkok; 259 Th Sukhumvit, Soi 19;

SPEAKING BANGKOK

You might not learn Thai during your stay in Bangkok, but plenty of Thai phrases and hybrid words infuse the city's unique bilingual dictionary. Here are a few:

- **Hi-so** – There are three criteria for being *hi-so*: young, rich and beautiful. Most are bilingual Thais or *lûuk khreung* (half Thai-*faràng*) with VIP credentials and serious shopping addictions satisfied at the Emporium Shopping Centre. Don't expect to sit next to a *hi-so* on the Skytrain, they have chauffeured cars. Oddly, the English word 'hipster' has been coopted by the *hi-so* crowd to refer to things that are fabulous.
- **Khunyng** – An aristocratic title, this term is sometimes used more broadly to refer to Bangkok's ruling matrons. With their Imelda Marcos-helmet hairdos, jewel-toned Thai silks and thick pancake makeup, *khunyngs* can usually be found at official ceremonies or heading an entourage of merit-makers.
- **Dek Neaw** – Supercool teenagers who hang out in Siam Square showing off urban fashion and meticulously styled bed-head hairdos.
- **Freelancer** – Careful when you use this all-purpose word to refer to a contract worker. In Bangkok, it means you are a prostitute who doesn't belong to a brothel.