

BAZAAR LOVE TRIANGLE

With hundreds of shopping and street food stands laid out in airy expanse, Greenway Night Market in Hat Yai outdoes other Thai markets. **Barbara Woolsey** navigates the ins and outs of this hip and happening commercial trading ground



The balmy tropical air carries stimuli in rapid succession: smoky sizzle from a *satay* (skewered meat) grill, crackling hot oil bathed in a wok, multi-coloured rice balls splashing into pools of coconut milk. Sellers hawk vibrant fabrics to the left; curios varied in size, shape, and mystique to the right. Crowds milling around. That's what the hustle and bustle of Thai markets is all about – sensory overload you can't help but be smitten with.

But despite such hallmarks, **Greenway Night Market** in Hat Yai is not your run-of-the-mill Thai market. This new open-air bazaar exchanges the usual sweaty chaos for shipshape rows and a relaxed evening vibe. There is ample air and elbow room; which is just plain unheard of at Bangkok's Chatuchak Market. It's hard to believe that Greenway, a much-loved attraction in Thailand's deep-south capital, is actually five acres and enjoys anywhere from 5,000 to 8,000 visitors on the weekends.

Around a century ago, Hat Yai was just a small rural village, flourishing into southern Thailand's largest city after the railway was constructed. It is now a major transportation hub, with a train station and airport both serving internationally.

Close to the Malaysian border, Hat Yai is not only beloved by tourists from Penang and Kuala Lumpur, but also from elsewhere in Malaysia and Singapore. They feel right at home in the city's deeply-rooted cosmopolitan digs, which includes large Malay-Muslim and Thai-Chinese communities.

As a popular pit stop, Hat Yai is running 24/7. Ethnically diverse street food is available on every *soi* (side street) corner – Cantonese and halal delicacies; traditional Thai fry-ups; and curries emanating chilli, cardamom, or cumin depending on their indigenous origins. Old Chinese men stroke wispy beard hairs outside cluttered

emporiums, while women in hijabs do their daily shopping of produce and spices.

All the visitors want goodies to bring back home, and Hat Yai is also known for big Western-style shopping malls and department stores. The tropical city is a happy hunting ground for shopaholics and foodies alike, and the sweet spot of it all is the Greenway Market downtown.

Greenway is a one-stop shop for some of the best vittles and buys that Hat Yai has to offer. First opened as a rather straightforward Thai night market in 2003, Greenway gradually developed into a trendy community concept "to keep up with the changing lifestyles and shopping habits of consumers", according to general manager Montree Leelavichitchai, a Hat Yai native who has been heading Greenway since the beginning. "It is a sharing space for the community ... for both relaxing (and) shopping."

The market diffuses the eclectic spirit of Hat Yai across

ABOVE FROM LEFT:

Pad thai, real leather goods, and trendy clothing are all on offer at Greenway Night Market.

CIRCLE:

Food kiosks boast bright airy seating that are ideal for post-browsing.



The Street Life Zone features hip streetwear from independent designers.



Burgers and *bingsu* are highlights of the international food selection.



WHAT'S NEARBY

Greenway Market is centrally located in Hat Yai, with plenty more to discover

Go for more retail therapy

Hat Yai's premier mall Central Festival is a short one-kilometre away. Asean Night Bazaar, a more traditional night market with common souvenirs, is only an eight-minute walk.
centralfestival.co.th

Say a little prayer

Located atop a hill, the Four Face Buddha offers impressive views.
tourismthailand.org

Jumpstart another excursion

Hat Yai Bus station is an ideal jump-off point to prime Thailand neighbouring destinations like Phuket and Bangkok.
thai2siam.com/hat-yai-bus-terminal

two separate sections: Greenway Food Station and Greenway Shopping.

Greenway Food Station is a two-storey loft building shaped in geometric squares. The contemporary design features dark exposed beams; it's reminiscent of the structures of traditional Thai homes with a dash of industrial chic. All the straight, clean lines provide an intuitive setup for the more than 70 food vendors serving a total of 1,000 different dishes.

All the Thai favourites can be found here – pad thai, *tom yum* soup, egg noodles topped with crab and wontons, boat noodles swimming in umami-bomb broth, fruit shakes, and more. Muslim staples such as *roti*, *teh tarik*, and hot milk tea are also available.

You can't visit southern Thailand without trying the famous Hat Yai fried chicken. Double-dunked in oil and marinated with ingredients, such as garlic, whole white and black peppercorns, cumin, and coriander, it's a favourite local dish. You'll get it served up on a plate heaped with fried shallots

and with a ball of sticky rice.

The Thai dessert *khao niao mamuang*, or mango sticky rice, is also famous in Hat Yai for the abundance of fresh mangoes on nearby farmlands, but you also can't go wrong with other traditional desserts such as *kanom krok* (little sticky rice pancakes with coconut milk), *khao kriad pak maw* (steamed rice dumplings), and *sakoo sai moo* (tapioca pork).

Since Thais love importing trends, from K-pop to Japanese manga, Greenway has a bountiful selection of international treats too. Sushi and other Japanese dishes such as curry and *tonkatsu*, biryani rice, *bingsu* (Korean shaved ice dessert), and Western-style grilled delights all find their place.

To order, purchase a cash card from a cashier stand and use it to pay each vendor. If there's any *Baht* leftover, you can return the card and get a refund. A special promotion for tourists is often on offer, with the purchase of every 100-*Baht* cash card usually receiving an extra value of 20 *Baht*.



Seating is comprised of a chic warehouse-inspired dining area and a breezy outdoor garden. On the second floor, a skywalk, balcony, and prismatic graffiti mural present excellent Instagram ops, as well as a children's playground overlooking the shopper's hubbub down below. Wi-Fi Internet connection is available throughout the market, too.

Greenway Shopping is divided into three zones. The main **Plaza Zone** is made up of more than 500 stalls and shops. A flea market flaunts retro treasures and vintage threads. Aside from clothing and accessories, there are also your usual Thai shopping mall fixtures: mobile device and accessories booths, a nail spa, and even a tattoo parlour and barbershop.

Souvenirs here at better than your average flower-carved soaps and wooden frogs tumbling around other Thai markets. Think handmade dolls and lanterns, funky silver baubles and pendants, and more artisan favours that are

sure to ace the gift-buying for friends and family back home.

The **Street Life Zone** is the market's newest addition, focused on street-style and fashion from independent brands. Custom handmade bags from local label Banara are a hit, with an ever-changing collection of leather and wicker in multifarious colours and frills. Stylish Thai shoe brand, Carlaberotti, sells sleek ladies' sandals and slides, and another standout is Black & White, a men's clothing shop inspired by Japanese streetwear.

Last but not least, there is the **Green Zone** where organic produce is delivered fresh daily from farmers on the outskirts Hat Yai and the surrounding Songkhla province. Veggies are ripe and ready for cooking, but a selection of cooked meals are available, too.

While most Thai markets are traditionally cash-in-hand, Greenway is keen to move towards electronic payments. Around 200 vendors take credit card and QR payments, and general manager



BARTER LIKE A BARGAIN BOSS

Haggling skills are essential in Hat Yai. With so many travellers coming through daily, local vendors and taxi drivers are known for trying to tack on a few extra *Baht* when they can. When bargaining for merchandise, a good rule of thumb is to counter with half the initial price offered by the seller and hammer out a deal from there. Hotel staff are great resources for finding out the correct prices. When in doubt, walk away – you might get followed by a better offer!

Leelavichitchai says he's working closely with vendors to keep expanding that number. With such a focus on sustainability, eclecticism, and originality, Greenway is indeed a trading place of the future in Thailand.

greenwaynightmarket.com

ABOVE:
An in-house shop selling art-related merchandise is sandwiched between Urban Spree's art exhibits.

CIRCLE:
Be spoilt for choice when shopping for clothes at Greenway Market.



Scoot
flies to Hat Yai daily.
Book your flights at flyscoot.com

