

Economy Hotel in Bangkok

In mid-May, while I was on a short business trip to Bangkok, Thailand, I chose not to stay in a high-end hotel, but rather a reasonably priced economy hotel. Allow me to briefly introduce the perks and limits of staying at an economy hotel as you read this on a short coffee break.



The hotel I would like to introduce is called the “Holiday Inn Express Bangkok Siam” (which has 300 rooms available). Although the hotel is located in central Bangkok, the accommodation pricing is reasonably low. I had not experienced any dissatisfaction during my brief stay. In fact, I have come to understand that economy hotels such as the “Holiday Inn” provides the basic needs and services to those looking for a reasonably low-priced, comfortable accommodation.

(1) Basic Service

The first thing that took me by surprise is that there was no currency exchange service at the front desk. There was no way for me to exchange Japanese yen, US dollars into Thailand bahts. “I can’t convert my money here?” I asked with a hint of surprise on my face. The lady at the front desk answered with a smile, “If you go to the next building there is a bank. Please exchange your money there. There’s also an ATM at your convenience.”

The second thing that I noticed is that there was no business center. However, the front desk was readily able to make any fax or copies. Internet connection via stationed PCs was provided for 24 hours at the first floor lobby.

There were of course no gift shops, but a vending machine located near the entrance when one needs to quench their thirst for water or soft drinks.



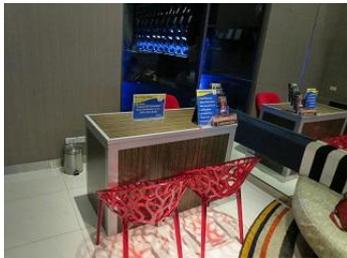
(2) Location

The hotel is located just 3 to 4 minutes walk from the National Stadium station of the Bangkok Mass Transit System (BTS). The famous Siam Center is just 500 meters away of walking distance and even if one takes the BTS, it is just one stop away at Siam station, the largest and busiest station. There is even a convenient access way from the hotel to Siam Center and a Tokyu Store (a Japanese super market) for those looking to buy Japanese food and everyday items in Thailand.

While heading back to the hotel from the National Stadium station, I would frequently stop by the 7-11 convenience store. There is a mailbox right in front of the store to which I frequently stopped by to send mails.

If I were to give just one small complaint of the hotel, it would be the lackluster breakfast (buffet style). Breakfast consists of porridge, eggs and sausage, fresh juice and croissants, and self-served coffee from a coffee machine, all provided at the 7th floor cafeteria. My only complaint is that the taste in my opinion... was lacking.

My return flight to Tokyo departs at 7:30 AM. That meant that I had to check-out of the hotel in the early hours of 4:45 AM to make my flight. I thought to myself, "How do I get to the airport?" and lo and behold a sign that read "Siam Raft



Travel" appeared in my view. The travel agency was composed of just a desk and three chairs located on a corner of the first floor. I asked a man by the name of Mr. Pao at the desk, "Can you arrange a car for me to get to the airport?" He lit up with a bright smile and said "Yes, of

course!" He instructed me to write down on a scrap of paper, my name, room number and the time that I'd like the car to be arranged for.

Things were going smoothly, up until the moment of payment. "We don't accept credit card, only cash!!!" exclaims Mr. Pao. "How about I pay along with the room charge?" I asked. "Payment is separate and independent from the hotel," Mr. Pao responded. I went to the bank at the next building in haste to take out cash from the ATM.

The good-natured Mr. Pao spoke a little Japanese. Once the transaction was settled, he says to me in Japanese, "I love katsu-don (deep-fried pork and egg bowl)!" The random yet whimsical conversation with Mr. Pao concludes my business trip in Bangkok.

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