

# 21 Forever

*An iconic Bangkok landmark, Terminal 21 is both kitschy and cool*

By Micaela Marini Higgs



As an avid window-shopper, **Terminal 21** (88, Sukhumvit Soi 19) is one of my favourite malls in Bangkok. When I first arrived in Thailand I was fascinated with the absurdity of the airport-themed mall where each floor is styled as a different international destination. Though the novelty has slightly worn off, it's still a great place for people-watching as new visitors eagerly take advantage of the space's many photo opportunities. My favourite feature remains the lavish bathrooms, which are decorated according to each floor's theme—like in 'San Francisco' where a bathroom is styled after a bakery, with walls covered in bread recipes and information about the history of sourdough.

If you're looking for a big selection of international retailers, this isn't the place, but if you're happy to spend a few hours rooting out the work of small designers, digging into baskets of vintage clothes, and finding a curated selection of what's currently trending at more hectic—and hot—outdoor markets, Terminal 21 is definitely worth a visit. After you take your obligatory selfies on the mall's three-story tall escalator or in the Harijuku themed toilet, here are five shops I recommend checking out (identified according to their specific numeric shop locator).

**BANG!BANG!:** Though the faces of Charlie Chaplin, Ziggy Stardust, and Twiggy are hardly new sights, **Bang!Bang!** (#2137) manages to put a new spin on portraits of pop culture icons through colourfully off-kilter illustrations. I was given a gift from the shop before I moved to Thailand, and it was the first place in the mall I ever visited, eager to browse their collection of t-shirts, postcards, scarves, and pins bearing famous faces. Their collection of eccentric knick-knacks, and the amount of Mr. Bean-themed merchandise available, makes it a fun place to find a strange gift or colourful addition to your own wardrobe.

**2HANDCLOSET:** If you're hoping to snag preowned clothing that is still on trend, or to find Thai designer clothes at a discount, **2HandCloset** (#1015) is packed with options. Cluttered with kitschy jewelry and knickknacks, the racks offer cheaper pieces from places like Topshop, right next to clothing from higher-end boutiques. You're almost guaranteed to find products from Thai designer brand Stresis, and on my last trip I spotted multiple pieces that were less than 6 months old. There isn't exactly a unifying theme to the shop's aesthetic so the selection



depends on when you visit, but even when I leave empty handed it's always worth the few minutes of browsing to see some of their amusingly over-the-top options.

**SAN-SAY-BAY:** My favourite place for wardrobe basics is **San-say-bay** (#2132). Their t-shirts and tops come in simple, often boxy cuts, and unlike many of the mall's other shops they actually let you try things on before you buy them. All the shirts come in solid colours and the same soft, well-weighted material, making for flatteringly loose designs. Though time in Bangkok has made me suspicious of cheaper shirts (most here cost B250) these pieces have stood up to well to heavy wear, making them a staple in my closet.

**VARA:** On the 3rd floor (Istanbul) you'll find lots of leather and bag shops, but when I'm looking for simple and elegant everyday purses I head straight to **Vara** (#3094). Made from genuine leather—sourced from Europe and America—in collaboration with local tanneries, these bags are super lightweight and come in a gorgeous range of unique colours. You could always visit their stall in Chatuchak Market, but I prefer mulling over my shopping decisions in an air conditioned space, and without five sweaty backpackers peering over my shoulder.

**MARY LOU:** I always swing by the jewellery shop **Mary Lou** (#3033) to see what new options they've set out. Tastefully displayed across bookshelves and wooden furniture, the shop's ceramic animal rings and earrings have proven to be easy gifts for my animal loving friends. If these pieces are a bit too twee for your tastes, they always throw in a few distinctive designs that play with tradition. I



like their current collection's take on the Claddagh ring—a traditional Irish ring where two hands hold a heart—that features ceramic hands with brightly painted fingernails clasping a plastic gem (B680). ■ [www.terminal21.co.th](http://www.terminal21.co.th)

## TERMINAL TOURISM

If you're a fan of Terminal 21 Bangkok, then you can mix in shopping with sunning during your next trip to Pattaya. Set to open in 2018, **T21 Pattaya** (as it's now known), is a six-storey mega mall that will offer everything from high-end boutique shopping to stunning hotel rooms. It's located near the Dolphin Monument roundabout. And if you find yourself in the heart of Isaan, there's a **Terminal 21 Korat** as well (which opened in late 2016).