Thai handicrafts are the products of intricate creativity and long held heritage of the Thai people in various parts of the country. The handicrafts are made primarily for practical purposes and also as items of beauty. Following is a list of outstanding Thai handicrafts with their unique characteristics which make these items one of the most outstanding attractions of Thailand.

**Nielloware:** Originally, nielloware were all hand made but nowadays, some are made through the use of equipment and the application of modern technology. Nielloware is the art of applying an amalgam of black metals to etched portions of either silver or gold. Nielloware products include trays, bowls, teapots, cutlery, jewellery, and boxes for betel leaves and areca nuts.

**Bronze Ware:** There are two kinds of bronze ware in Thailand. The first type is the bronze (alloy of tin and copper) object which is cast by the lost wax process wherein molten bronze is poured into baked clay moulds, such as in the making of Buddha images and bells. The second type of bronze ware is made by striking heated pieces of metal into various shapes such as utensils and weapons, i.e. knives, axes, spades, sickles, and metallic bowls. The same process is used in making silver and gold ware. The following are examples of the unique sites for bronze ware: Bronze ware at Ban Pa-Ao, Ubon Ratchathani Province.

**Weaving:** Hand-woven fabrics and mats have developed into the present-day cotton and silk weaving traditional folk craft. Especially the hand-woven fabrics have become the major handicraft of the country in terms of the production for Thailand’s garment industry. The delightful designs of the fabrics vary according to the unique
Bencharong (five-coloured) ceramic ware

Gilded lady's handbag

Silverware
characteristics of each region. *Tin Chok* from the North and Northeast, for example, *Nam Lai* of Nan; Laplae, Uttaradit Province; *Hat Siao*, Sukhothai Province, Phum Riang, Surat Thani Province; *Ko Yo*, Songkhla Province; *Prae Wa*, Kalasin Province; *Hang Krarak*, Surin Province; *Ban Khwao*, Chaiyaphum Province; Amphoe Chonnabot, Khon Kaen Province; Amphoe Pak Thong Chai, Nakhon Ratchasima Province and Chanthabun Mats, Chanthaburi Province.

*Lacquer Ware:* Lacquer is used to provide a nice finish, through the decoration of gold leaf to the artefact container or basket made from bamboo. The major design is called *lai rot nam* (in black and gold). In the northern part of Thailand, a group of people known as Thai Khoen specialize in the production of lacquerware, hence the name Khruang Khoen or Lacquer ware. There is a village known as “Ban Khoen, (a village of lacquer ware) in Tambon Haiya, Amphoe Mueang, Chiang Mai Province. “Khoen” ware is derived from a group of Khoen people who had migrated from Myanmar to settle down in the Chiang Mai area some 100 years ago. Major products include useful containers more than ornamental ones. Outstanding items are water containers, cigarette boxes, and betel nut sets, etc.

*Enamel Ware:* Enamel ware is another type of handicraft which is similarly made as neilloware. Expensive enamel ornaments are adorned with gems of various colours and can be applied to gold, copper, and bronze. In the old days enamel products such as food containers, spittoons were specially made for royalty, aristocrats, and high-ranking Buddhist monks.

*Ceramics:* Through the procedure of firing and glazing with various colours, ceramics is another traditional product. Besides pottery, the major products of ceramics include floor and mosaic tiles, sanitary ware, dining and kitchen ware, ornaments made of ceramics and other ceramic-related products such as containers. Since the Sukhothai
Period, ceramics had been known as Sangkalok or Sukhothai Ware. Due to popular demand from the consumers, the ceramics industry can be found in Lamphun, Lampang and Chiang Mai provinces.

Mother-of-pearl Inlay Products: Traditional, intricate handicraft, processed with the art of mother-of-pearl inlay is applied to objects. Lacquer is used as adhesive agent.

The beautified effect is created by the sparkling contrast of pinkish mother-of-pearl with the blend of the blackish “rak”. Items inlaid with mother-of-pearl are furniture, containers, trays, betel nut boxes, door and window panels of temples and palaces. Pearl carving is nowadays practised at Amphoe Mueang, Phra Nakhon Si Ayathaya Province. Moreover, in the south of Thailand, at Phuket, pearl carving has been applied in making utensils and souvenirs—most popular among visitors.

Wood Ware: The art of wood ware has been popular both as handicraft and as useful utensils. Decorations with wood carving of animal and plant motifs include temple buildings, doors, shutters and gables supporting the overhanging roofs. Moreover, there are other wood ware products for household objects such as beds, cupboards, mirror frames, tables, etc. Wood ware of old and new designs has been developed into outstanding products which are economically important to the export industry of Thailand.

At present, the most reputed village for wood carving is “Thawai Village”, Hang Dong District, Chiang Mai Province.

Basketry: Known as home industry, basket-making has been important to the every day Thai life for quite a long period of time. This folk art which is in the form of souvenirs, can be classified into different types according to their usage, such as fish traps for catching aquatic animals, baskets, rice boxes, containers, mats and hats. The central part of Thailand is the site for good basketry.

Silverware: The northern part of Thailand is popular as the site for making silverware. Users of silverware are normally high-ranking dignitaries.