

2010

# Ayutthaya – Classic Boat Track



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AYUTTHAYA HISTORICAL RESEARCH [AHR]

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## AYUTTHAYA – CLASSIC BOAT TRACK (City Island Round Trip)

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This boat tour is designed for the modal tourist who wants to explore the rivers and canals, as well temples and ruins around the city of Ayutthaya, either by long tail boat or by barge. The tour (anti-clockwise) takes you on a stretch which was once a part of the front city moat, dug for defensive purposes; follows Khlong Muang or the city canal, in former times a part of the Lopburi River, which in the Ayutthayan era encircled the city; turns at Hua Laem into the mighty Chao Phraya River or the River of Kings and finally between Wat Ratanachai at Hua Sarapha and Wat Phanan Choeng, steer up north, on a stretch of the Pa Sak River or Teak wood River, which find its source in Loei province. The total length of this boat route is 13,6 kilometers.

The Chao Phraya in Ayutthaya is a tidal river and influences the Pa Sak and Lopburi rivers. The current shifts daily, depending on the tide in the Gulf of Thailand, with an exception at the end of the rainy season, when the floodwaters overrun the tide.

Ayutthaya was a typically a Siamese water-based settlement; one of the characteristics which gave the city its UNESCO World Heritage status. Unfortunately, Ayutthaya's waterways - the ancient transport and travel facilities - are fast disappearing. Many canals became stagnant, choked with urban trash or ran dry due to silting and lack of maintenance. Many more were claimed to make way for embankments such as concrete roads. Ayutthaya, "The Venice of the East", became a far cry. Notwithstanding, a tour around the island is still a wonderful event.

Whether you go for a long tail boat or a small barge is your proper choice. Long tail boats tends to do the tour in a bit more than half an hour, while a barge does the trip in a more leisurely 1,5 to 2 hours.

Longtail boats called "Rua Hang Yao", are a common form of water transportation used in Thailand and take their name from the long drive shaft that ends in a propeller and which is attached directly to rear of a car engine. The tail not only propels the boat but also its steering mechanism. The concept was developed in Thailand as a simple low cost means of motorizing wooden boats used in rivers, canals and seas, able maneuvering in narrow, shallow waters.

Among the oldest Thai barges is the "rua mat", distinguished by its duckbill-shaped bow and stern. This type of dug-out boat, made of a single hardwood log, mostly iron Malabar wood, was used to transport rice and other cargo. The "rua mat" was carved out with a chisel and its size sometimes enhanced by heating the carved log over a fire or by putting smoldering rice husks in its interior. When the wood was softened, the two halves were separated to broaden the hull. The boat was initially steered by a tiller, but is now mainly driven by an engine.

Only small barges can make the full city tour as the bridges over Khlong Muang are rather low, preventing larger barges to make the complete round tour.

If you are interested in viewing photographs of the temples in advance or would like additional historic information about these ruins, visit our website at [www.ayutthaya-history.com](http://www.ayutthaya-history.com).

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## **Tips and Warnings**

Long tail boats can be rented at the pier in front of the Chantrakasem Palace Museum near Hua Ro, just opposite Wat Monthop on Ko Loi.

Small barges are not found in quantity on Ayutthaya's rivers, but "The Seven Seas Restaurant" near the railway station has an old roofed "rua mat" for rent. (See: <http://www.ayutthaya-sevenseas.com/boat-trips.html>).

## **Who are we?**

Ayutthaya Historical Research [AHR] consists of a small group of researchers/writers with the aim to promote Ayutthaya's cultural heritage. We are local expatriates who have been living in Ayutthaya for many years and would like to share our knowledge with future visitors. Therefore, we have personally tested each of these suggested routes by cycling and/or walking. More information on the authors can be found at: <http://www.ayutthaya-history.com/Authors.html>

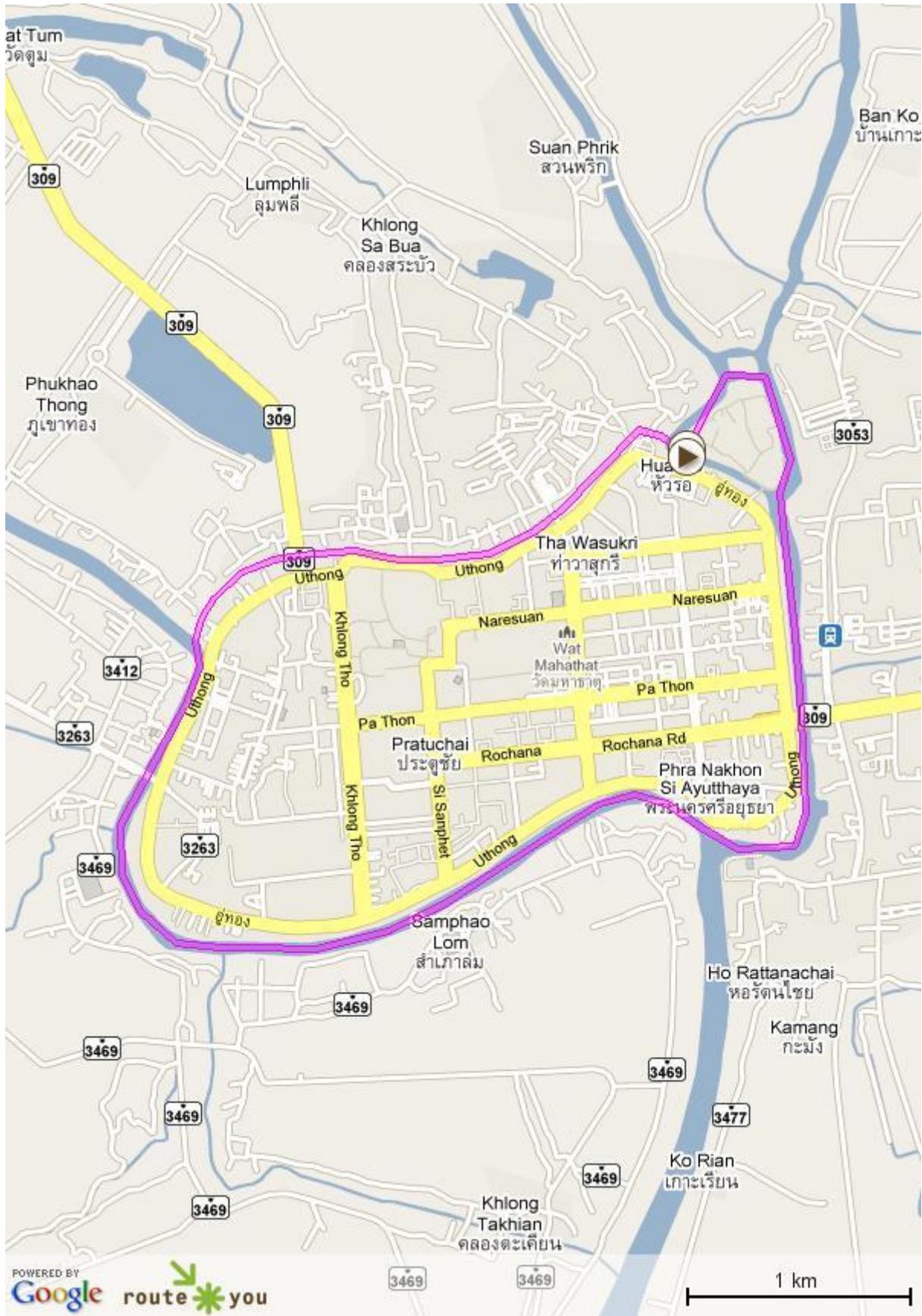
## **In case of emergency or accident:**

Contact the Ayutthaya Tourist Police Station: (035) 241-446, (035) 242-352 or 1155.

## *Disclaimer*

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## (City Island Round Trip)

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### The route

*Historical signboard in situ is marked as (\*)*

*Entry fee required is marked as (\$)*

*Boat dock present marked as (+)*

- ❖ *From the starting point - the landing at the open market in front of the Chandra Kasem Museum - the boat will take you north along a stretch of the former Front city moat.*
- ❖ *On your left hand side, you will bypass the Hua Ro market, where once the proud Maha Chai Fortress stood. The boat will pass under a metal bridge which replaced the old Thamnop Ro Bridge, while right in front of you is a water confluence, being the mouth of the old Lopburi River.*

**Talad Hua Ro** is a local fresh market in existence since 200 years. The name “Hua Ro” is derived from the "Thamnop Ro", a kind of weir made of wooden beams positioned in the water to break the speed of the old Lopburi River in order to prevent damage to the embankments. The market was situated in the vicinity of the water speed breaker, hence its name. The weir was situated at the confluence of the old Lopburi and the Front city moat where the Maha Chai fortress one stood. The market is being touristic promoted as a traditional market. Long time ago a big fire burned down the two storey wooden shop houses of the market. The story goes that a woman in Chinese opera costume, standing on top of the roof of the lined storey houses, waving her arm to put out the fire. Residents believed it was the Chinese Goddess Chao Mae Ton Jan, protector of the market. The Hua Ro market was renovated afterwards. Since 1967 locals organized yearly a Chinese opera performance to pay respect to the goddess. A Chinese shrine has been built at the northern rim of the market along Khlong Muang.

**Saphan Thamnop Ro** was the only bridge in the Ayutthaya period that connected the city island to the main land. Transportation from one riverbank to another was done by ferryboat at that time, hence the many landings (“Tha”) around the city. The Thamnop Ro Bridge derived also its name from the wooden weir positioned here in the water to break the speed of the Lopburi River. The Maha Chai Fortress was located on the corner of the city island, where now the Hua Ro market is situated. The bridge dates from the White Elephant War (1563-1564), when the Burmese used rubble to build a bridge that crossed the old Lopburi River in order gain access to the city. During the reign of King Chakkraphat (r.1548-1569), the causeway was renovated to include bricks. It was 6 meters in width and had gaps in the middle with removable planks. This causeway was then used for state purposes only. Thamnop Ro Bridge was destroyed during Ayutthaya’s siege in 1766-1767, but many old bricks and laterite blocks can be seen in the vicinity where it once stood. A metal walking bridge stands in the approximate location, connecting the Hua Ro market to the Phaniat peninsula.

- ❖ *The boat will turn to the left in western direction, along the city canal, the latter being the Lopburi River in former times. The first bridge you will go under is linking the Hua*

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*Ro market with Wat Mae Nang Plum; the second bridge links up with Wat Intharam, while the third bridge brings you to Wat Wong Khong.*

**Wat Wong Khong** is an active monastery, cut in the middle by a road. It is situated north of the city canal just west of the bridge. On the side of the canal, there is a living area for the monks (kuti) and a large Chinese shrine of Mae Khoan Im. The opposite side of the road contains the ordination hall and the more active part of the temple. During the Ayutthaya period, Wat Wong Khong was an important ferry crossing point towards Pratu Khao Pluak.

- ❖ *The boat will continue on the city canal. Arriving at Wat Kuti Thong and just before the temple's bridge over the city canal, stands a strange stone pillar and shrine on your left hand side.*

**Water gauge** - The pillar is the old "San Lak Muang" or "City Pillar Shrine", which once stood on the northeastern corner of the Grand Palace. During the floods of 1831, King Rama III erected a stone pillar to gauge the water level at Ayutthaya, which topped that time 5.23 m above sea level. The King probably used the Grand Palace's old city pillar as water gauge.

- ❖ *After the shrine the boat takes you to the confluence of Khlong Sra Bua (the lilly pond canal) and the old Lopburi River, just before a bridge linking the Grand Palace area to Wat Na Phra Men. Just at the corner of this water section on the northern river bank stood Wat Mai Klang Sra Bua.*

**Wat Mai Klang Sra Bua** - In situ are the remains of an ordination hall and a number of satellite chedi, surrounded by an outer wall. According to archeological evidence the monastery dates from the Late Ayutthaya period (1629-1767) and could have been in use even in the Early Ratanakosin (Bangkok period). Historical data about the monastery and its construction are unknown. The temple complex faces south towards the Lopburi River as most of the temples along this city canal. It is customary in South and South-east Asia that the monastic structures are aligned in an east-west axis and that the principal building faces east, the direction of the rising sun and representation of life.

- ❖ *Passing under the bridge and looking to the southern river bank, you will see a beautiful riverside boat landing, called Tha Wasukri.*

**Tha Wasukri** or the Wasukri landing was the royal palace jetty used by the Ayutthayan royals to board the royal barges. From this landing ran a covered corridor (Th: chanuan) all through the whole palace area until the northern gate of Wat Sri Sanphet, offering discretion and shade.

- ❖ *Leaving Tha Wasukri, the boat will head towards the confluence with Khlong Tho, formerly called Khlong Chakrai Yai, now protected by a sturdy water gate. This canal*

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*ran southwards through the city, leading all the way to Wat Phutthaisawan. Opposite the mouth of the canal at your right hand side, stands Wat Choeng Tha.*

**Wat Choeng Tha** was situated in a prime location during the Ayutthaya period. The Royal Palace was on the opposite side of the old Lopburi River. Wat Choeng Tha is an active temple with many of its ancient structures still in situ. One of its defining features is a large Khmer-style prang with niches in each of the cardinal directions. Boats can easily dock on site. The ancient Dock of Royal Barges stood on the west bank of the old river from Wat Choeng Tha to Wat Phanom Yong. The ancient dock was divided in separate trenches each locked up in a wooden and roofed enclosure. There were about 20 barge houses. The dock and the barges were destroyed in the Burmese attack of Ayutthaya in 1767. No visible traces remain of it and the landscape has been unfortunately largely altered.

- ❖ *Continuing along the river where once the royal barges were stationed, you will pass a bridge. Past this bridge on the northern river bank stands Wat Phanom Yong, while on the southern bank you will find the old Pridi Banomyong residency, which is now a memorial and museum. Further up you will meet Wat Sala Pun and Wat Phrom Niwat, before arriving at the confluence with the Chao Phraya River.*

**Wat Phanom Yong** or the “Monastery of Wet Nurse Yong” is an active monastery situated on the north bank of old Lopburi River. The monastery was likely built in the reign of King Narai (r. 1656-1688). Destroyed in the last war with the Burmese in 1767, Wat Phanom Yong was rebuilt by King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910).

**Wat Sala Pun** or the “Monastery of the Pavilion of Lime” is an active monastery situated on the north bank. Wat Sala Pun is renowned for its beautifully hand carved wooden Tripitaka cabinet in which were kept the sacred Buddhist manuscripts, mostly large libretto books made of a type of thick mulberry paper depicting elaborate scenes from the Jatakas, story of Phra Malai, life of the Buddha, etc.

**Wat Phrom Niwat** or the “Monastery of the Abode of Brahma” is an active monastery located on the north bank. The temple was initially known as Wat Khun Yuan, making reference to a military named Khun Yuan Yonok who ordered its construction in 1564. The temple has been reconstructed in the post-Ayutthaya era, but restored a number of times the last century.

- ❖ *Arriving at the junction of the Chao Phraya at Hua Laem and looking slightly to the right on the opposite river bank, you will see Wat Tha Ka Rong and its recently established water market. Queen Suriyothai’s golden chedi shines brightly at your left hand side, just opposite Wat Thammaram, while further south is Wat Kasatrathirat.*

**Wat Tha Ka Rong** or the “Monastery of the Landing of the Crying Crow” is an active temple with Buddhist clergy. It has recently become a hot spot due to a water market held on its premises during weekends. It is also popular oddly because of its impressive bathrooms. This monastery was initially named Wat Tha as it was situated on a landing of the Chao Phraya

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River. The dockyard provided shelter for approximately two hundred boats. To its south was Wat Ka Rong (and a small vihara still exists). The names of the two monasteries were merged under this new name. The Chronicles of Ayutthaya mention the temple's existence for the first time in the mid-sixteenth century, but the monastery has been likely established much earlier. It has been the site of major military battles, including the final conflict with Burmese troops in 1767.

**Wat Thammaram**, was earlier called Wat Thamma, or the Monastery of the Dhamma (the teachings of the Buddha). It is located along the west bank of the Chao Phraya River. In situ are several monastic structures of recent times, although the foundations of more ancient structures are still visible. Remains of the old outer wall and the lower part of the old gates can still be seen. Royal Chronicles mention this site in 1569, while the city was under siege by Burmese troops. Phraya Thamma had set up his stockade to defend the west side of the City against the Burmese; an important strategic position across from Sop Sawan Monastery and near to the Rear Palace. The Burmese hatched a secretive plan to send a spy, Phraya Chakri, behind city walls to manipulate Siamese leaders on the other side. As part of a plot to trick Ayutthaya troops, the Burmese king ordered that 30 Burmese, Mon, and Laotian guards be executed by impalement in front of the stockade; claiming that this punishment for deserved for allowing Phraya Chakri to escape.

**Chedi Sri Suriyothai** consists of a single but elaborately designed bell-shaped chedi. It has been gilded with gold paint from the relic chamber to the top of its spire, which adds to some amazing reflections at sunset. Its base is square with many redented corners, and there is an entrance on the northern side. According to Prince Damrong Rajanubhab, this monument contains the ashes of Queen Suriyothai. Royal Chronicles describe her as a heroic wife who died in battle while trying to save the life of King Chakkraphat. As the story goes, King Chakkraphat and two of his sons were leading an army into battle against Burmese troops. Queen Suriyothai, fearing for her family's safety, secretly dressed as a male soldier and rode an elephant into the fight. While fighting a Burmese general on the back of an elephant, King Chakkraphat's elephant stumbled, which put him at risk to his opponent's blade. Queen Suriyothai heroically charged in front of the enemy's weapon, sacrificing her own life in his place. In her honor, King Chakkraphat had a funeral monument and a preaching hall constructed on the site of her Royal cremation.

**Wat Kasatrathirat** is a monastery still in use by the Buddhist clergy. Besides the ordination hall and the relatively small prang, most of the monastic buildings are from recent times. Although the history of this temple remains hazy, it is presumed to be built in the mid-to-late Ayutthaya period. The principal monastic structure is a large Khmer-style prang, which has recently been painted white. There are no stairs to access the various niches inside the prang. Traces of restoration include the bell-shaped chedis inside the niches, which earlier contained Buddha images. The temple was renovated in the first reign of the Ratanakosin Period (1782-1809) by Prince Khrom Khun Isranurak, a nephew of King Rama I. The renovation was in essence a complete overhaul of the temple. The temple at that time changed names from Wat Kasatra to Wat Kasatrathirat.

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- ❖ *Once you have passed Wat Kasatrathirat, you will navigate under a large concrete bridge linking the island with the western rural outskirts and leading to Ang Thong. The Chao Phraya River starts its curve into the eastern direction, and soon you will see on the western bank a huge temple complex, the most magnificent ruin of Ayutthaya – Wat Chai Watthanaram or the Monastery of Victory and Progress. In close proximity stands Wat Sanam Chai.*

**Wat Chai Watthanaram** was built in the 1630 by King Prasat Thong, who believed that the Khmer-style prang would reflect Ayutthaya's historical magnificence at the end of a Buddhist millennial year. This temple is unique as it has the only fully symmetrical architectural design in the city. One theory is that Wat Chai Watthanaram was built on the spot of King Prasat Thong's former home, and that it was constructed to make merit for his mother – or possibly his stepmother. Popular folklore suggests King Prasat Thong had a childhood dream in which a golden tower was buried inside an anthill at this location. When the anthill was later excavated it proved his dream a prophetic revelation. Another theory is that Buddhist monks predicted the annihilation of Ayutthaya at the end of the Buddhist millennial year unless enough merit had been accumulated, so King Prasat Thong launched a massive campaign to build and renovate temples across the city. Whatever the reason, the return of the Khmer-style Prang marked a new era of architecture in Ayutthaya. Like other temples in the west, Wat Chai Wathanaram ultimately felt the brunt of war. The Burmese besieged this monastery in 1767 and used it as an army camp while staging attacks on the main island. Excavations revealed evidence of damage by cannon balls. After 1767, Wat Chai Watthanaram was abandoned and looted for decades afterward. The Fine Arts Department renovated Wat Chai Watthanaram between 1987 and 1992. It remains one of the most breathtaking tourist sites today. (\*)(\$)(+)

**Wat Sanam Chai** is an active temple located beside the Chao Phraya River in close proximity to Wat Chai Watthanaram. A number of ceramic plates from China decorate the front entrance of its sermon hall. According to monks at this temple, these plates originated from the late-Ayutthaya period, but were incorporated into the temple's design in modern times. Some portions of the temple's outer walls still exist. However, the most significant structure in site is an old memorial chedi reflecting the Burmese-Mon style. This was built in the Mid-Ayutthaya period for Burmese soldiers that had died in battle. In the latter years of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, a monastery was founded on the site.

- ❖ *We continue our boat trip and are heading for the water junction with Khlong Takhian. Takhian canal is named after the Malabar Ironwood and was a dug shortcut between two stretches of the Chao Phraya River, used by boats to avoid the heavy current of the river and the turbulent waters near Bang Kaja at its confluence with the Pa Sak River. The mouth of the canal is situated just west of the Saint Joseph church in the former Cochin Chinese settlement. In Ayutthayan times, the Marine Vessel Dockyard was located near the mouth of the canal. The dock housed around 30 marine warships and 100 more smaller fighting vessels. There was also a well-known floating market in its vicinity. St. Joseph's Church is situated on the south bank of the Chao Phraya River beside Khlong Takhian.*

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**St Joseph's Church** - In 1665, Siamese King Narai granted French bishops a spot near the Chao Phraya River in the Cochin Chinese quarter called "Ban Pla Het". In 1665-1666, they built the Seminary of Saint Joseph (later renamed as the Seminary of the Holy Angels). In 1673, King Narai granted another piece of land and offered assistance in building the wooden St. Joseph's Church, which was renovated with bricks in the European style between 1685 and 1695. In March, 1767, the St Joseph seminary was surrounded by attacking Burmese. The settlement fought bravely, but they were few and short of ammunition. After parlaying with the Burmese General and being promised safety and protection for all persons and property, the bishop surrendered on 23 March. The church and seminary, as well as the Jesuit and Dominican churches, were nevertheless plundered. The houses near the church, mostly used by Vietnamese converts were burned down. The fire spread to the church and seminary which were both reduced to ashes. Father Jean-Baptist Pallegoix began restoring the church in 1831, which was completed by 1847. The church has been a place of continuous Catholic worship in Thailand for over 300 years. Hundreds of Christians and many of the missionary priests were buried at the local churchyard. (+)

- ❖ *We continue further east along the Chao Phraya River until we meet Wat Phutthai Sawan on the southern river bank.*

**Wat Phuttai Sawan** is situated opposite the mouth of Khlong Chakrai Yai, presently called Khlong Tho, a canal linking the former Lopburi River with the Chao Phraya River and runs adjacent the former Royal Palace grounds. The temple was built in 1353 AD by King Ramathibodi I at the royal residence of "Wiang Lek", the site where he first settled before establishing Ayutthaya as the capital city in 1350. The temple was constructed after his elder brother defeated the Khmers and brought war captives back in 1352. The monastery was possibly one of the first temples constructed in the Ayutthaya Kingdom and has a preaching hall and a great holy reliquary. The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya mention that the army of the King of Ava invaded Ayutthaya in 1549 and set up a stockade in this area. It was also taken by the Burmese during the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. (+)

- ❖ *Continue your boat trip east. You will pass by the Islam Vattana Mosque on your right and after a while come to the next historical reference point. It will also be on your right hand side, and a large ferry boat will be carrying motorcycles and pedestrians to and away from it.*

**Wat Khun Phrom** is an active monastery situated along the Chao Phraya River. The ordination hall is built in the Late Ayutthaya style (1629-1767). The monastery was originally established in 1557. Its highlight is the two Dvaravati-style images at the staircase leading to its sermon hall. One of the originals can be seen at the Chao Sam Phraya Museum. (+)

- ❖ *Continue east from Wat Khun Phrom. The next historic site will be a small and active Buddhist monastery on your right.*

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**Wat Nang Kui** is an active temple located along the Chao Phraya River. The monastery was built in 1587 with the sponsorship of a wealthy woman called Lady Kui. The monastery was left empty after the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767 until it was renovated during the Reign of King Rama III. (1824-1851). Wat Nang Kui is known for its sandstone Buddha image, which is believed to have been discovered underwater by a monk. One Buddha image in situ has a highly distinctive and unusual smile (Luang Phor Yim). One highlight at this temple is a large carving from the trunk of a Takhian tree (Mae Takhian Thong). Locals claim that a female spirit with magical powers still lives in this wood. (+)

- ❖ *Arriving at the confluence of the Pa Sak and Chao Phraya River you will find a large brick fortress on your left hand side. Opposite the fort is Bang Kaja area and its monastery which bears the same name.*

**Pom Phet** or the Diamond Fortress was one of the sixteen fortresses along the city walls of Ayutthaya. Situated in the southeast, at the confluence of the Pa Sak River and the Chao Phraya River in Bang Kaja area and on the east bank of the Nai Kai canal, Pom Phet was the most important fortress, protecting the harbour where foreign ships were forced to anchor for inspection and unloading. No foreign ships travelling up the Chao Phraya River before were allowed beyond this point. Pom Phet is the one of the two remnants of old fortresses and now a public park. The site has been recently renovated, since serious damage occurred from water erosion to the river banks. The brick walls of Pom Phet were built around 1580. Archaeological evidence suggests that the original walls were 6.5 meters thick. On the ground floor of Pom Phet there were eight cannons and another eight between the crenulations on top.

**Wat Bang Kaja** (Monastery of the Kacha Village) had fallen into decay before being repaired and renamed with the title, Wat Mai (New Monastery). It is strategically located on the confluence of the Chao Phraya River and the Pa Sak River, just opposite the Phet Fortress and the old harbor. This was a densely populated Chinese area close to many floating markets. The temple's highlights include an elaborately decorated open-air sermon hall and a large chedi. Traces of the original buildings can be seen behind the sermon hall. (+)

- ❖ *Opposite of Bang Kaja, on the eastern river bank is a temple older than the City of Ayutthaya itself.*

**Wat Phanan Choeng** - Royal Chronicles mention the installation of a Buddha image at Wat Phanan Choeng in 1326, prior to the foundation of the Ayutthaya kingdom. As the story goes, the daughter of a Chinese emperor, Soi Dok Ma, was offered to a Thai king for marriage, but the Chinese princess felt insulted by the arrangement and killed herself. Wat Phanan Choeng was erected to mark the site of Soi Dok Ma's funeral service. Her image is on display on the second floor of a Chinese shrine on site. At the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767, about 2,000 Chinese locked themselves into a stockade at Wat Phanan Choeng to defend the city. However, the Burmese cut them off from supplies and reinforcements, so the Chinese were pressured to leave the temple. Burmese troops then killed them. Legend suggests that tears flowed from the eyes of the Buddha image at Wat Phanan Choeng once the city fell in 1767. It is still the largest sitting Buddha image in Ayutthaya. (+)

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- ❖ *The next historical site is situated opposite of Wat Phanan Choeng, on the other side of the Chao Phraya River.*

**Wat Ratanachai** is more commonly known under the name of Wat Jin today, because many Teochiu Chinese migrated to this part of the city in the latest century. As an active monastery, Wat Ratanachai has all the basic architecture structures of a Buddhist temple: sermon hall, bell tower, monk quarters, crematory furnace, and a number of chedi. Nearly all of these architectural structures date to the Ratanakosin period. The highlight of this monastery is its central bell shaped chedi, which has been painted white. A well-preserved pointed vault gate (Pratu Chong Kud) can be seen next to Wat Ratanachai. To visit it, you must enter the school west of this temple.

- ❖ *We are navigating now on the Pa Sak River, but the stretch here until our starting point was in Ayutthayan times the Front city moat or “Khu Na Muang”. The Pa Sak River was deviated to this canal at some stage. On our right hand side we will pass more Buddhist temples.*

**Wat Ko Kaew** or the "Monastery of the Crystal Island" is situated on the east bank of the Pa Sak River on an island formed by Khlong Khao San in the north and Khlong Thanon Tan in the south, and confluence at the mouth of Khlong Dusit. In situ is a large and prosperous monastic complex. Ko Kaew is mentioned a few times in the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya as a strategic location where the Burmese positioned part of their army when attacking Ayutthaya.

**Wat Kluey** or the "Banana Monastery" is situated on the east bank of the Pa Sak River. The temple is mentioned in the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya as being the place where the Siamese Luang Saraseni and his followers set up camp in December 1766 prior to the fall of Ayutthaya, at par with Phraya Kamphaeng Phet.

- ❖ *The boat will take you under the old Pridi Banomyong Bridge, the main bridge linking the City Island with the main land. The bridge was renovated and renamed Naresuan Bridge. Just passed the bridge on the river junction with the Ban Bat canal on the southern bank stands Wat Phichai Songkhram.*

**Wat Phichai Songkhram** or the “Monastery of War Victory” is a temple still in use by the monastic clergy. It is a classic built temple with an ordination and sermon hall. A copper plate at the monastery indicates that it was built shortly before the final war between Burma and Ayutthaya in 1765. The temple is mentioned in the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya as being the place where the Phraya of Tak (later King Taksin) with his followers set up camp in December 1766. Phraya Tak, convinced that Ayutthaya would soon be lost to the Burmese, decided to seek his fortune by escaping south. Folk tale states that he went to pray at Wat Phichai to seek good fortune in his planned escape to the south.

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- ❖ *Continue navigating up the Pa Sak River. You will pass Ko Loi on the eastern side and make a bend around the island. To the north is a smaller island called Ko Chong Lom, which you likely will pass on starboard. After making the tour of Ko Loi, you will pass by Wat Monthop. The boat landing and arrival point is just opposite of the monastery.*

**Wat Chong Lom** is located on a small island northeast of the city. It is situated just north of Ko Loi (another island in the vicinity). The only way to access this shrine is by boat. This island has no walking path or road. Only eight families currently live on it, but some of their houses are quite traditional and beautiful. The only business is a single shop house, which delivers groceries around the city by boat. The island lacked basic utilities such as plumbing and electricity until recent decades. Wat Chong Lom is mostly comprised of single structure. It is an open-aired sala with five Buddha images of various sizes inside – all in the Subduing Mara pose. A second structure can be seen close to the edge of the river. This open-aired sala encases a single Buddha image.

### **Wat Monthop**

Wat Monthop or the “Monastery of the Spired Building” is situated on Ko Loi (floating island). The temple stood before on main land. The creation of the small islands Ko Loi and Ko Chong Lom due to digging of new water shortcuts dates from the post Ayutthaya-era. The monastery is mentioned in the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya during the last Burmese war of 1766-1767. The Burmese under General Nemiao finalized their encirclement of Ayutthaya after having reached and burnt down the Throne Hall at the Elephant Kraal. The invaders established one of their stockades here. Bastions were erected in the stockades from where large guns fired into the city. It was also in this area that bamboo slat bridges were built across the Lopburi River at the weir besides the Maha Chai Fortress. Ayutthaya fell on Tuesday 28 April 1767, prey to the jungle in the years after.



### *Disclaimer*

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