

AYUTTHAYA HISTORICAL RESEARCH [AHR]

Ayutthaya City Island Bicycle Track III

The Hidden Ruins Loop
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AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

This bicycle tour has been designed to present some of the seldom seen ruins hiding inside of urbanized areas of Ayutthaya's main city island. These historic sites can be found at government offices, public schools, private businesses, and residential zones. Guidebooks and travel agencies rarely promote them, and even locals can be quite surprised to discover such ruins near their neighborhood. It is easy to drive by these sites without noticing they exist. Therefore, the fun of this particular biking route includes your effort in spotting them from their hiding places.

Ayutthaya is a living city that has risen, like the mythological Phoenix bird, from the ashes of an ancient kingdom. Burmese invaders destroyed Ayutthaya in 1767 and forced thousands of local residents to relocate to Burma as war captives. Historic sites such as former Buddhist monasteries crumbled into ruins for decades afterward. However, a modern city population gradually returned to the area and established a new city. They constructed schools for their children, hospitals for their sick, police stations for their protection, and government offices for administration. New neighborhoods sprouted up around ancient temple whose names had been forgotten.

Unfortunately, brick walls and fortresses were torn down to help build the new capital in Bangkok. Many of the ancient sites in Ayutthaya were further destroyed and old canals buried to construct roads for the city's prolific motor traffic. As a result of this damage, the Thai government decided to launch a master plan to protect the country's national heritage in Ayutthaya, which was registered with UNESCO in 1991 as a World Heritage Site. Approximately 221 historical structures in Ayutthaya have been registered as cultural heritage sites, and a large number of these ruins are highly concentrated in the Ayutthaya Historic Park, which covers 1/3 of the city island. However, the other 2/3 of the main city island is also full of historic sites that have fallen into ruin. These are worth protecting and appreciating as well. This bike tour has been designed to raise consciousness about these little-known historic sites and to advocate that they also be shielded from unchecked urban growth.

The tour will take 5-6 hours depending on the time spent at each location point. A few highlights on this itinerary have been listed more for the sake of smoother navigation and referencing, although they may also appeal to many cyclists as points of interest. Individual cyclists can choose where to stop according to their own tastes and time constraints. None of the historic sites listed on this route charge any admission fees.

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.

Tips and Warnings

Bicycles can be rented in different locations on Soi 2 Naresuan Rd, which is the starting point of this tour. Bike rental costs 30-40 baht (about \$1) per day on average, which makes bike touring an inexpensive way to see the city. Ayutthaya's terrain is mostly flat and easy to ride, but many streets and side roads are poorly marked, so use the map to simplify navigation.

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

Be cautious as traffic in and around Ayutthaya is sometimes chaotic and dangerous. Motor vehicles often fail to see cyclists and pedestrians, so you must closely watch out for *them*. Motorcycles are a particularly hazardous cause of local accidents. Dogs and potholes can also be dangerous, especially in remote areas. Weather can be very hot, so make sure to drink plenty of fluids and wear sun block. It is inadvisable to drive at night due to the lack of lighting and occasional recklessness of motor traffic.

The theft of bicycles is uncommon in Ayutthaya, but backpacks and cameras have been stolen on rare occasions. It is best to keep valuables with you when visiting the historic sites on route.

If you would like some information about lodging and restaurant options, please visit: www.ayutthaya-info.com.

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 emergency or accident:

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

Disclaimer

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AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

The route

Historical signboard in situ is marked as ()*

Entry fee required is marked as (\$)

- ❖ *From the starting point, go south to Naresuan Road and make a right (you may have to walk your bike to the opposite side of the road). Go west until you arrive at the end of the block. You will see a canal that is separated by two roads on either side. This canal is named Khlong Makham Riang, but it was called Khlong Nai Kai during the Ayutthaya period. It will serve as an important anchor for this bike route, as you bike pass by it several times on this trek. You can always return to this canal if you get lost or disoriented trying to hunt for the hidden temples. Make a right hand turn at the canal. The first hidden temple will be located immediately on your left hand side.*

Wat Langka consists of a single Khmer-style that most likely dates to the early-Ayutthaya period. The prang has a hollow opening on its eastern side that is full of bats. Stucco designs are still visible in some sections, and a headless mythological figure wielding a sword is perched high above on the southwestern side of the prang. There is no clear record of when this temple was build.

- ❖ *Continue biking south until you arrive at the next intersection. Turn right and go over the bridge to the opposite side of the road, then continue cycling in the direction west for the next 5 minutes. On the way, you will pass a small ruin on your left hand side.*

Wat Khok Muang is oriented in an east/west axis. In situ are three structures. To the east is a brick bell tower. In the middle of the monastery is a small ordination hall. The third structure is a *mondop* with a staircase and several redented corners. Wat Khok Muang has been renovated by the Fine Arts Department. Its architectural style suggests it was constructed in the late-Ayutthaya period.

- ❖ *Continue biking west. You will be heading toward Chikun Road and Wat Maha That. However, shortly before you arrive, there will be a large ruin on your right hand side. Look for its spire poking out from the trees or a small clearing of ground closer to Chikun Road. This should enable you to glimpse the path for entering the first Point of Interest.*

Wat Lad is a restored ruin located south of the Pa Than Bridge (in the Pratu Chai District). Its highlights are a large reliquary tower with an entrance on the eastern side and the remains of an old ordination hall. A large face of Buddha image has survived, and it can be still seen on the altar of the ordination hall. The date of its foundation is still subject of debate. According to some sources, this monastery was used in 1424 by Chao Yi and his military troops before fighting his elder brother, Chao Ai, for rights to the throne. Both brothers met their deaths in battle, and two chedi were built for them as memorials. An ancient canal known as Khlong Pratu Khao Pluak once passed beside the western side of Wat Lad, dividing it from Wat Maha That.

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

- ❖ *Go to Chikun Road and turn left. The parking lot for Wat Maha That will be situated directly across the street. Chikun Road marks the eastern boundary of the Ayutthaya Historical Park, separating it from the urban zone of the main city island. This street also marks the approximate boundaries of the early city walls. Go south on Chikun Road until you arrive at the roundabout (about two blocks). Make a left hand turn onto Pa Thon Road. On the corner there is a small ruin located on the property of the police station. It appears as a large brick mound and is very easy to miss.*

Tewa Sathan is the site of a former Brahmin temple. It is an unexcavated mound with a large, cloth-wrapped, Bodhi tree growing out of its former altar. There was once a headless and armless image on site, but this has since been removed. There were several Brahmin shrines situated near this police property. During the Ayutthaya period, Brahmin priests played an important role in religious ceremonies, legal decisions, and the setting of punishments for crime. In 1636, King Prasat Thong relocated the Brahmin priests to the area around Tewa Sathan. The king gave them 100 cows and 100 horses as alms, which they returned to the monarch because they lacked the slaves to take care of them.

- ❖ *Go east on Pa Thon Road. On your left hand side there will be another historic site, which is also on the property of the police station. It may be difficult to see because trees shield it from view. The trick for finding it is to use the post office on the opposite side of the road as a reference. The ruin is situated across the street from the post office.*

Wat Kraji's main feature is a large bell-shaped in the style of the Middle-Ayutthaya period. It may have been one of the unnamed pagodas featured on La Mare's 1751 map. Looters have dug a large hole into the northern side of the chedi, which reveals a large inner chamber.

- ❖ *Continue east on Pa Thon Road. You will cross over Khlong Makham Rieng once again. Between the canal and U-Thong Road, on your left hand side, there is another historic site. However, this one is very difficult to see because little of it is visible above the ground. Look for a field covered in heavy vegetation. There is usually a bus parked in the vicinity and trash clutters the area. This site is not worth missing unless you are really curious to find it. (Wat Pa Thon is a ruin that has eroded down to the ground level. There are traces of living quarters or tiny rooms on site. Some maps suggest this was once a Buddhist monastery, while other maps claim it was brick houses used by residents. There are a few lower portions of Buddhist images scattered around the area. However, the main feature is some residual walls suggesting several small rooms made from brick.) Continue biking east until you arrive at U-Thong Road, and then turn right. You will go under the Pridi Banomyong Bridge, which will allow you a quick glimpse of some old city walls on your left hand side. Continue biking south on U-Thong Road. There will be a clearly marked entrance for an active temple on the right hand side of the road (opposite of a wooden massage shop directly*

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

beside the road). Turn right and go down the side street to see this temple. This will be the first of two Points of Interest on this bike route that have Buddhist clergy.

Wat Suwan Dararam was built in the late Ayutthaya by the father of King Yodfa (Rama I) of the Chakri dynasty. It was formerly known as Wat Thong (Golden Temple). Wat Suwan Dararam was one of the first monasteries in Ayutthaya to receive royal patronage after the fall of the city in 1767, and this temple continued to be beautified by future Chakri Kings. King Rama II began the reconstruction of ordination hall (ubosot), but it was not completed until the reign of Rama III, who had the walls painted with elaborate murals. These murals were renovated during the reign of King Nangklao (1824-1851), also known as Rama III. King Chulalongkorn added improvements to the ordination hall and monk's quarters (kuti). King Vajiravudh contributed glazed tiles to the roofs. This ordination hall also has a delicately carved wooden gable with various mythological figures on display.

A secondary structure at Wat Suwan Dararam is its sermon hall (viharn), which contains several murals depicting the story of King Naresuan. These murals were painted by Phraya Anusas Jitrakorn during the reign of King Prajadhipok (1925-1935). His work was not completed until 1931. A large bell-shaped chedi sits on an upraised platform behind this sermon hall. A number of white chedi surround it.

- ❖ *Go back up to U-Thong Road and make a right turn. You will pass another active temple within seconds. It will be on the left hand side of the road. In the Ayutthaya period, this area was covered with shops, markets, warehouses, and a harbor for docking boats. There was a strong Chinese influence in ancient times around here.*

Wat Ratanachai, more commonly known as Wat Jin (Chinese temple), is an active temple with Buddhist clergy. Many Teochiu Chinese migrated to this part of the city in the previous century, giving the temple its current nickname. Nearly all of these architectural structures date to the recent Ratanakosin period. However, this area has featured strongly in Royal Chronicles. Prince Si Sin, the younger brother of 11-year-old King Yot Fa (who was executed in 1548), used this site to stage a surprise attack on the Royal Palace. Prince Si Sin advanced by way of the Ratanachai Tower/Gate and moved toward the palace on the back of an elephant. Chao Phraya Maha Sena rode out on a white elephant to stop him, but was killed by Prince Si Sin's scythe. Prince Si Sin was later killed in battle at the Royal Palace. In 1569, Burmese troops attacked the stockade at the edge of the river on the side of Ratanachai Gate.

The highlights of Wat Ratanachai are a white bell-shaped chedi, which is perched on a large platform with a staircase and several deep niches in its side. Sections of an ancient wall are still in situ as well. A well-preserved pointed vault gate (Pratu Chong Kud) can be seen beside this Buddhist temple. To visit this bricked gate, you must enter the Wat Ratanachai Municipal School on the western side of the monastery.

- ❖ *Go back to U-Thong Road, which will start curving toward the direction west. If you pay attention you can see a single chedi peeking out from behind a fenced yard next to the River View Hotel. It will be on the left hand side of the road.*

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

Ayutthaya is full of tiny mysterious. One of these is a small brick-and-mortar chedi directly adjacent to the River View Hotel. This chedi is not mentioned on the 1926 map of Phraya Boran Rachathanin, and there is no record of a monastery ever being on this site. Its appearance suggests that it was constructed during the recent Ratanakosin period; however none of the nearby residents can recall its origins. It is not known who this memorial was constructed for.

- ❖ *Continue biking west along U-Thong Road. You will immediately pass by a large brick fortress on the left hand side of the road.*

The brick walls of **Pom Phet** were built around 1580. Archaeological evidence suggests that the original walls were 6.5 meters thick. It was strategically located at the confluence of the Chao Phraya and Pa Sak River - an important harbor area used by foreign ships. On the ground floor of Pom Phet there were 8 cannons. It has been recently renovated in 2010.

- ❖ *Keep going west on U-Thong Road. You will once again bike over the canal Khlong Makhnam Riang (or Khlong Nai Kai). On the right hand side of the road, there are the remains of a small ruin. It is located directly on the property of a woman's dormitory. You won't be able to go inside for a closer look, but a large Buddha image will be viewable from the road if you bike slowly. The woman's dormitory once had four monasteries on site, but most of them have eroded to brick mounds.*

Wat Tha Ma was named after a site where boats docked for the delivery of horses. There is not much record of its history or construction date. In situ is a fairly large Buddha image with his head and face fully intact. A shrine with a roof has been built to protect this image. Parts of other Buddha images can also be seen on display.

- ❖ *Continue biking east on U-Thong Road. This area was popular for foreign residents during Ayutthaya times. They lived in brick houses along this neighborhood, and even the streets were comprised of brick. Some foreign maps referred to it as China Street. You will pass by a water tower on the left hand side of the road. This should alert you to the next Point of Interest. There will be a small paved road coming up on your right hand side. Make a right hand turn when you see it and start biking real slow. There will be a thin dirt path on the right hand side. Turn right on this first side road and proceed east for about 1 minute. The dirt path will lead to a small residential neighborhood, and if you watch closely you will find a hidden memorial chedi and the remains of an ordination hall.*

Wat Sam Jin was connected to a chain of three Chinese pagodas along "China Street". These temples stretched from the Chinese Gate (Pratu Jin) to Khlong Makhnam Riang. It isn't clear when Wat Sam Jin was originally founded, but it is likely featured on several foreign maps from 1660 to 1751. The primary structures in situ are a large square tower with an entrance on its eastern side and the basic foundation of an ordination hall. The remains of several Buddha

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

images are scattered on top of the ordination hall. There are also many roof tiles from the King Narai period (r.1656-1688).

- ❖ *Return to U-Thong Road and continue biking west. The house of Constantine Phaulkon was located on the right hand side of the road. This Greek-born foreigner rose close to the high position of foreign trade minister (Phra Khlang) before being beheaded in Lopburi for his role in a revolution. However, the remains of his house are situated on private property and are inaccessible.*
- ❖ *Therefore, continue west until you arrive at the next crossroads. This is now Chikun Road. Make a right hand turn, and then make an immediate second right hand turn down the first side street. This will lead you to residential property, but you will catch a quick glimpse of Saphan Pratu Jin, or the old Chinese Gate bridge.*

Pratu Jin was located on the southern end of Khlong Khao Pluak, and it provided access to the Chao Phraya River. This was an important gate used by traders, and it signifies the western boundaries of a Chinese neighborhood. Chinese merchants had markets in this area for selling deserts, groceries, and enameled brass. There is still a chunk of the Pratu Jin Bridge viewable. It has partially collapsed, but a small shrine has been built on top of its remains.

Return to U-Thong Road and head west once again. On your right you will see some beautiful and very scenic ponds. This is the property of the current Ayutthaya governor. The ponds resulted from the blockage of Khlong Thep Mi when modern roads were constructed in the vicinity. Muslims lived in this area during the Ayutthaya period in a community known as Tuk Raeb Khaek. The French also stayed on this property at one point. According to some maps, Constantine Phaulkon was also housed here.

Keep going west on U-Thong Road. You will arrive at a side road leading to Ayutthaya Rajabhat University and the Ayutthaya Historical Study Center. There was once a Buddhist monastery called Wat Pa Jak on this corner, but it has since been destroyed. A statue of the Hindi God Indra sits on its former location. Do not go down this side road. Instead continue west for about five minutes. You will arrive at the next intersection. The next Reference Point is located on the property of the hospital. It can be clearly seen from the intersection. Turn right on this busy intersection and have a closer look.

Wat Prasat the only ruin visible at the Ayutthaya hospital (besides the remains of an ancient well seen at the western parking lot). However, there were once three other monasteries on the premises that have since been destroyed. The remains of Wat Prasat consist of a single bell-shaped chedi in the style of the middle-Ayutthaya period. It is rather large and appears to have broken into two separate sections. It was built on a street that the French cartographers called “Rue du Barcelon” - the district used by the Siamese Minister of Trade, or *Phra Khlang*. Wat Prasat appears on the map by Sieur La Mare, although it is unnamed. The hospital maintenance crew takes care of the *chedi* very well. Hospital patients and their families often visit this ruin to make offerings.

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

- ❖ *At this point, you will be biking north along the street known as Wat Phra Ram Road. Within one minute, you will see a large ruin of the opposite side of the road (to the east). You can simply walk your bike to a small entrance gate beside this ruin.*
- ❖ *If the gate is closed for some reason, just bike to the next intersection and make a right. This will lead you to the front entrance of Ayutthaya Rajabhat University. This was also used by Muslim communities under the name of Khok Khaek. Go inside and take either the first or second turn on the right. Both will lead you to Wat Borom Phuttharam.*

Wat Borom Puttharam was founded during the reign of King Phetracha (1688-1703), who lived in this neighborhood as a child. It is unusual for a local temple, as it was one of the few designed in a north/south access, pointing toward the Royal Palace. The monastery was known for the glazed yellow tiles that once graced the roof of its ordination hall. King Borommakot (1733-1758) added doors to the ordination hall, which were inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A beautiful and fully intact Buddha sits in the Subduing Mara pose on the altar inside. Many university students visit this Buddha image to pray before tests. In addition to the ordination hall, there are also the remains of a late-Ayutthaya period Khmer-style prang and other chedi. The foundation of a sermon hall is also visible. This temple has been renovated several times by the Fine Arts Department. One addition includes a reconstructed bridge (Saphan Chakrai Noi). This arched bridge has been designed with a Persian-influence. There are traces of an ancient canal in situ. Khlong Chakrai Noi once ran from Wat Phra Ram to the Chao Phraya River; however, the canal has mostly been buried today.

Go to the opposite side of Khlong Chakrai Noi to see the next historic site. This can be done by biking east to the next road and making a right turn. You will head in the direction of the sports stadium. The next Point of Interest is on the right hand side of the road.

Wat Singharam was most likely built in the middle Ayutthaya period, but there is also evidence that King Borommakot made renovations during his reign (1733-1758). This monastery was aligned on an east/west axis. The sermon hall was once decorated with stucco and Chinese porcelain. Two large bell-shaped chedis are located on the side, but both show signs of heavy looting. There is also a small mondop to the south. There is evidence that Wat Singharam had once been burnt in a fire.

Wat Suan Luang Khangkhao is associated with King Narai, who reigned from 1656 to 1688. The name of this temple implies that it was a royal monastery frequented by bats. Therefore, it is interesting to note that a large number of flying fox bats still live in the area, though not directly inside the temple anymore. Wat Suan Luang Khangkhao was located besides Khlong Chakrai Noi. This ruin is distinguished by its massive ordination hall that has eroded to the foundation layer. There are also several chedi on its western side that have been greatly looted. On the western side, there is also a small chedi. The Fine Arts Department made recent restorations.

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

The road will curve east from Wat Suan Luang Khangkhao and eventually veer in the direction north. Stay with this road and it will lead you near the student cafeteria. There you will see a small Muslim shrine.

Tomb of Sheikh Ahmad Qomi - Sheikh Ahmad Qomi arrived in Ayutthaya from Persia with his younger brother Mohammad Said during the reign of King Naresuan (1590-1605). The two brothers became wealthy from trade with Siam, so they established homes made of brick in Ayutthaya. Sheikh Ahmad, also known as Chao Phraya Bovorn Racha Nayok, introduced the Shiite teachings of Islam (Chao Sen) in the city, and it is suggested that he helped put down a rebellion by foreigners against the Royal Palace. The younger brother moved back to Persia, while Sheikh Ahmad was promoted to the high position as a minister of trade. He became the first Chula Rachamontri in Siam and settled down in Ayutthaya after marrying a local woman named “Chuli”. His descendents include members of the esteemed Bunnag family. The shrine to Sheik Ahmad Qomi is believed to have been erected at his family cemetery plot. In the late-1980s, a large ceremony was held to commemorate the shrine’s completion. It has been renovated several times since then.

Go back to the main entrance of Ayutthaya Rajabhat University. This can be done by simply heading west to the next intersection and taking a right turn. Cross the street to the opposite side of Rojana Road and make another right. You will head east to the traffic lights at the end of the block. Ayutthaya Witthayalai School will parallel Rojana Road on your left hand side. You can catch a brief glimpse of Wat Pa Sak is you have a quick eye. Otherwise, stay with the route because you will have a second chance. Make a right turn at the intersection and bike north on Chikun Road. The next Reference point is a small ruin immediately near the corner on your left hand side. It will be partially concealed on school property by a few trees.

Wat Mae Nang Muk is a single chedi, which remains partially buried underground. It was probably constructed in the late-Ayutthaya period. Its architecture shows a Khmer influence, and it seems to be a derivative of a prang with a large number of redented corners. There is an arched niche in each of the cardinal direction where Buddha images probably stood. Little is known about Wat Mae Nang Muk’s history.

- ❖ *Bike north for a few seconds longer, and you will see the entrance gate for Ayutthaya Witthayalai School (it will be opposite of the 7-11 on the other side of the street). Enter the school property and bike west for a minute or two. The next Point of Interest will be visible down a small street on your left hand side.*

Wat Pa Sak - There are two main structures at Wat Pa Sak. The first is a Khmer-influenced chedi resembling a prang. It is believed by some archeologists that Wat Pa Sak was constructed during the early Ayutthaya period. A large number of holes have been dug into its sides by looter, which has weakened its stability Metal girders hold it in place. The second structure has a square-like that possibly served as a sermon hall. The top of this base seems to have collapsed into a mound. Interestingly, based on the positioning of these two structures, Wat Pa Sak would appear to be aligned on a north/south axis - a rare traits for monasteries in

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

the early Ayutthaya period. There is also a large number of Buddha images on site. Among this scattered detritus is a carved bowl-like structure.

There is little known about this monastery's history. A canal once ran along an east/west axis just north of Wat Pa Sak, which provided easy access to the monastery. To its east was a small pond that also gave boats access. Canals around Wat Pa Sak formed a small island. There is evidence that Wat Pa Sak was restored in the late period. Wat Pa Sak was excavated by the Fine Arts department in 2001.

- ❖ *The next historic site is also located at Ayutthaya Witthayalai School. Continue biking west on the previous road inside the school. You will turn right just ahead. This will bring you to an old ruin on your left hand side. If you have an astute eye, you will be able to spot its spire at a distance away.*

Wat Saphan Nak is distinguished by its large bell-tower. There is a clear outer layer showing that the chedi's size had been expanded. A large section of the foundation base can be seen, and an arched niche is visible at the southern side. A large hole has been dug into it by looters. Similar looting holes can be seen at the level of the relic chamber. There are also traces of boundary walls built around this monastery, some of which have been partially restored. There isn't much known about the history of this Wat Saphan Nak. It is named after a wooden bridge that was situated west of the monastery's boundaries. The bridge is now gone and the canal beneath has since been buried for a modern road.

- ❖ *Return to the Chikun Road entrance of Ayutthaya Witthayalai School. Turn right and go toward the traffic lights. Make a left hand turn on Rojana Road. On this first block there will be a large ruin on the left hand side. This is the final highlight of this bike route.*

Wat Khun Muang Jai consists of four primary structures: an ordination hall, one sermon hall, a large chedi, and a two-story living quarters. Of these structures, the large chedi is probably the most breathtaking. Its tall base consists of several layers that support a bell-shaped structure as its relic chamber. One corner chedi has survived at the top. One layer is superimposed over another. This style of Thai architecture is known as "Yok Ket", and there are only a few monasteries in Ayutthaya of this type. The chedi's walls have intact decorative stucco patterns – including a few niches where a standing Buddha image can still be seen. These patterns and Buddha images reflect a Khmer influence.

There are sermon halls on both sides of the central chedi. These have been restored by the Fine Arts Department. The sermon hall on the western side is very elaborate. Its foundation is in good shape and a large number of chedi are in situ. One of these smaller chedi is at an angle so steep that it appears to be falling over. The sermon hall on the eastern side is smaller and more damaged. Nevertheless, this structure includes some remnants of Buddha images and a reasonably preserved foundation layer. A large bodhi tree grows out of its altar. A two-story building is located on the northwestern side of Wat Khun Muang Jai. This type of

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

structure is associated with residential halls of highly positioned monks or members of the royal family.

Wat Khun Muang Jai is a very ancient temple. It may pre-date the establishment of Ayutthaya in 1351. However, there are few records about its history. Documents refer to it being used for an important ceremony for taking oaths of allegiance. Royal Chronicles mention a Khun Muang that was appointed to the right wing of the Royal army sent to Sukhothai during the reign of King Narai. An oath of allegiance was taken around that time. The Fine Arts Department restored this monastery in 1969-1970 and once again in 2006.

- ❖ *Continue biking east on Rojana Road until you arrive at the next traffic lights. This intersection marks your return to Khlong Makham Riang. Turn left and bike north along the canal. You will see a ruin on the first block on your left hand side.*

Wat Ho Rakhang's most outstanding feature is its two-tiered bell tower. This tower doubles as an entrance gate. It has arched gateways pointing toward the canal. The second tier has windows in all four of the cardinal directions, and there are number of redented corners. The bell is completely missing. Behind the bell tower, there is a small sermon hall. This consists of the basic foundation layer and some stubs of pillars. A large number of headless Buddha images lay in stacks on the altar. These are often decorated by people in the neighborhood. Some Bodhi trees have sprouted on the foundation. In addition, there are traces of some walls and floor tiles in situ.

- ❖ *Continue going north in parallel to the canal. This will take you several blocks ahead to Naresuan Road. You should be able to spot Wat Langka once again. Turn right and head back to the Chao Phrom market. Turn left on the next road on your left hand side. This will take you back to the starting point. However, this bike route doesn't finish here. There is a small ruin located on this busy tourist street. Thousands of visitors and locals walk by it every day without ever knowing it is there. On the right hand side of the road, just after Tony's place, you will see a small side road. Ride your bike all the way to the chain fence at the end of the alley. On the other side of the fence you will see the final historic site of the Hidden Temple Bike Route.*

Wat Khok Ma's primary feature is a badly dilapidated chedi with a Buddha image in a meditating pose on top. It is more of a shrine with a tin roof to protect it from the elements. A second structure on the premises appears to be a small and heavily eroded chedi. This monastery is covered by a lot of vegetation, but there are hints of some boundary walls.

This ruin is named after a horse stable that was once located at this site. The horses used to bathe at the Pa Sak River and Khlong Maprao. The Siamese military ranked the cavalry (Krom Brah Asvaraja) as a lesser subdivision of the Elephant Department (Krom Brah Gajapala). Persian traders brought Arabian-bred horses to Siam as gifts. However, the Persians were appalled at the Siamese treatment of their beloved animals. One Persian envoy, Ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, writes that the Siamese cut the manes and tails off horses since they were consider bad luck. Siamese also forced horses into a submissive posture with their heads

AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK III (The Hidden Ruins Loop)

tucked between their front legs because it was considered insulting for horses to raise their heads.

Several guesthouse owners have recently expressed interest in formally renaming the “Farang Street” after this monastery.



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