

AYUTTHAYA HISTORICAL RESEARCH [AHR]

# Ayutthaya City Island Bicycle Track II

The Historical Park Loop  
By Ken May & Tricky Vandenberg

2010

[WWW.AYUTTHAYA-HISTORY.COM](http://WWW.AYUTTHAYA-HISTORY.COM)

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

This bicycle tour has been designed to present the most important sites within the Ayutthaya Historical Park and more. This route will include territory designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, and some of the more breathtaking and historically relevant ruins on the main city island. This bicycle route will not only lead you to many of the sites listed by travel guidebooks and Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) brochures, but it was also go one step further by leading you through some of the lesser known ruins within the Ayutthaya Historical Park. This is the bike route to take if you will only stay in Ayutthaya for one day or less.

Ayutthaya is registered with UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. It was voted to this list on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 1991 at Carthage, Tunisia. There are approximately 221 historical structures in Ayutthaya that have been registered as cultural heritage sites, and many of these ruins are highly concentrated in a government protected section known as Ayutthaya Historic Park, which includes the site of the former Royal Palace.

Ayutthaya Historical Park is situated in an old swampy area called Bung Phra Ram, which is where King U-Thong is believed to have established his kingdom in 1351. This section of the city lay in ruins after the Burmese invaded in 1767, and for many decades it had been plundered and looted. However, it was restored into a city park as early as 1956, during the reign of Field Marshall Phibun Songkhram. Many laws have since been passed to protect this zone from modern development, including attempts to relocate squatters into other sections of the city.

Thailand became a member of UNESCO's Convention for the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1987. Shortly after being registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and increased funding had been made available, the Thai government began its master plan to further develop and conserve sections of the historic city. The Fine Arts Department is now responsible for the maintenance of the Ayutthaya Historic Park, which covers 1/3 of the city island (nearly 3 square kilometers). Meanwhile, other sections of the main city island were set aside for government offices, schools, businesses, and residential neighborhoods.

The tour will take 4-5 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.

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).

### **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 II (The Historical Park 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](http://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*

*AHR will not be held liable for any loss or damage whatsoever for any suggestions made in relation to the site's promotion of ecotourism. It is the responsibility of the user of the site to take the necessary precautions to avoid any physical injury, traffic incident, animal attack, theft, and damage to equipment. Any reliance on the site's information is therefore strictly at your own risk. Read our full disclaimer at website [www.ayutthaya-history.com](http://www.ayutthaya-history.com)*

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)



## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park 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 will have to walk your bike to the opposite side of the road). After turning right, go in the direction west for two blocks. You will arrive at Chikun Road in about 5 minutes. On your right you will see two small chedi and the ruins of a former bridge (Saphan Pa Than). This marks the entrance point to the Ayutthaya Historical Park. A large Khmer-style prang will be clearly visible. Turn right and visit this first Point of Interest.*

**Wat Rachaburana** was established in 1424 by King Borommaracha II after two of his brothers died in battle on elephants while fighting to claim the throne. The two brothers were cremated at the site of the two chedi, and Wat Rachaburana was constructed the same year as a memorial. In 1957, organized looters dug into the crypt and stole many precious items, so a local branch of the Fine Arts Department was created to protect local ruins while preserving the nation's cultural treasures. In 1958, the Fine Arts Department built a staircase leading down to the main crypt. The following year they established the Chao Sam Phraya National Museum to display ancient relics found at Wat Rachaburana and Wat Maha That. There are some very old Chinese-influenced murals located at the very bottom dating back to 1424. This is worth having a look as it is the only Khmer-style prang in the city allowing access to its crypt. (\*)(\$)

- ❖ *Return to Naresuan Road and turn right onto the previous course. This will allow you to enter the Ayutthaya Historical Park. Continue cycling west. In only 1-2 minutes you will come to two ruins on either side of the road. Wat Langka Khao will be on your left; and Wat Chum Saeng will be on your right.*

**Wat Langka Khao** is marked by a single bell-shaped chedi with an octagonal base and several layers leading to its relic chamber. There are no other structures viewable at this site other than traces of a brick mound where a sermon hall once stood. There is an entrance on the eastern side of the chedi. The inner chamber is hollow and full of bats. Its name refers to the white tiles that once covered its roof. This monastery was surrounded by water at one time, but it was covered with landfill while constructing the Historical Park during the 1950s-1960s. It has been renovated by the Fine Arts Department.

**Wat Chum Saeng's** primary feature is a large bell-shaped tower. This has eroded over the years, but parts of its spire are intact. A sermon hall and portions of foundation are still visible east of this chedi. A large Buddha image sits on the altar, but its arms and head remain missing. The boundary walls of Wat Chum Saeng are visible at ground level. There are also traces of a moat. Wat Chum Saeng was situated along a canal that brought water from Khlong Muang (the old Lopburi River) to Bung Phra Ram. The architectural style of its bell-tower chedi suggests that this monastery was built in the Middle Ayutthaya period.

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

- ❖ *Continue west for only one minute. On your right hand side is an active Buddhist monastery. This is worth seeing even though it is technically situated outside of the Ayutthaya Historic Park. It will be the only active temple with Buddhist monks on this route. Turn right and go down the dirt path. However, please be advised that it is proper to dismount from your bike while actually on this monastery's property.*

**Wat Thammikarat** is distinguished by its bell-shaped chedi, which is encircled by a large number of lion figures (*singh*) and graced with multi-headed Naga at its staircases. Other structures include a massive 19 x 53 meters ordination hall. Large columns, staircases, and entrance porticos are still intact. There is also a sermon hall housing a beautiful reclining Buddha image. Traces of an old brick road can be seen behind Wat Thammikarat, right beside the former Royal Palace. A replica of a giant bronze head is also in situ. The original dates to the U-Thong period and is now located at Chao Sam Phraya Museum in Ayutthaya.

Wat Thammikarat likely pre-dates the founding of Ayutthaya by King U-Thong in 1351. Northern Thai chronicles state that Phraya Thammikarat, who was son of King Sai Nam Phung, constructed this monastery. Two centuries later, Prince Si Sin, the younger brother of 11-year-old King Yot Fa (who was executed in 1548), was once imprisoned at or near Wat Thammikarat by King Chakkraphat. Prince Si Sin launched a surprise attack on the Royal Palace at the Sao Thong Chai Gate (next to Wat Thammikarat). King Chakkraphat was forced to flee the palace, but Prince Si Sin was killed in battle by gunfire. As a warning against future rebellions, the prince's colleagues and some of their wives were executed and impaled next to his body. In addition, in 1758, a revered monk from this temple helped prevent a civil war from breaking out by convincing King Uthumphon to abdicate the throne. Documents indicate that this monastery was badly damaged by fire during the Burmese attack in 1767. Foreign maps show that elephants were housed in the area from Wat Thammikarat to Wat Rachaburana. This would have been the old city boundaries before the walls were expanded.

- ❖ *Continue heading west until the road turns southward. This will curve around a modern statue of King U-Thong, which will be on your right. At this point you will probably see colorfully decorated elephant providing rides to tourists. Turn right with the paved road, and then hop onto the brick street leading toward Wat Phra Si Sanphet (its three bell-shaped chedi will be in clear view). On your left hand side you will bypass a small ruin that once played an important role in Thai history.*

**Viharn Klaeb** was built around 1538 by King Chairacha as part of a large royal temple. Only the foundation of a single sermon hall and its brick walls remain. However, this monastery once had the highest building in Siam and housed an enormous amount of treasure. Its former name was Wat Chi Chiang Sai. Dutch trader Jeremias Van Vliet wrote in 1638 that its pillars were over three fathoms thick, approximately 18 feet, and an enormous amount of treasure was buried in its crypt. Wat Chi Chiang Sai was damaged by lightning and in poor condition when Van Vliet arrived, but its repair was prevented by a prophesy that only a pure king from the old blood line could restore it. It was said that chiefs, overseers, and laborers were stricken blind or driven to insanity when attempting this task.

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

However, in 1639, it was the Buddhist millennial year. Brahmin priests predicted that the whole country would be annihilated and later reborn. King Prasat Thong decided that he would prevent this upcoming destruction by launching a merit-making project to construct and renovate monasteries. King Prasat Thong financed this campaign by razing this temple to the ground to acquire the treasure beneath it. The bronze Buddha image inside of Wat Chi Chiang Sai was moved to Viharn Phra Mongkhon Bophit and a new monastery built to house it.

- ❖ *The next Point of Interest is located directly opposite of Viharn Klaeb. It is on the right hand side of the brick street. Although Wat Phra Si Sanphet is the next Point of Interest, it should be clear that the admission fee includes entrance to the remains of the former Royal Palace.*

**Wat Phra Si Sanphet** - This is was the original site of the Grand Palace. Monks didn't live here because it was considered a royal temple. The first two bell-shaped chedis were built in 1492 by King Ramathibodhi II. The eastern chedi contains the ashes of his father, King Borommatrailokanat (Trailok). The middle chedi contain the ashes of his elder brother, King Borommaracha III. The western chedi, contains his own remains. At one time, each of the three bell-shaped chedis had a viharn structure built in between, but only the staircases are remaining. The three chedi can be entered on their eastern side. A few have hidden shrines and niches, but the smell of bat guano can be rather strong. A sermon hall was built in 1499, which contained a standing bronze Buddha image that was totally covered with gold. This has been written about by several foreign visitors. However, in 1767, the Burmese melted down the 16-meter high Buddha image for its gold. King Rama I had the remaining statue taken to Bangkok in pieces and reassembled, however the damage was too great to save it. (\*)(\$)

**The Royal Palace** (Wang Luang in Thai) was built by King U-Thong shortly after establishing his kingdom in 1351. The remains of the Royal Palace are situated just in a large field just north of Wat Phra Si Sanphet. Official entrances to the Royal Palace can be found at the western and northern sides. The Royal Palace has mostly been destroyed with the Burmese invasion of 1767. However, there are a few structures remaining. These include the Pavilion of the Rabbit Garden, the Suriyat-Amarindra building, the Vihara Somdet building, the Sanphet-Prasat building, the Chakravat-Phaichayon building, the Traimuk building, and the Banyong-Ratanat building. In addition, there are the remains of several walls, fortress gates, and brick terraces for boarding royal boats. Wat Mai Chai Wichit is a Ratanakosin-period monastery within the boundaries of the former Royal Palace. (\*)(\$)

- ❖ *The next Point of Interest is directly south of Wat Phra Si Sanphet and the Royal Palace. It is situated at the end of the brick road and will be obvious to the eye.*

**Viharn Phra Mongkhon Bophit** was created as a specific site for royal cremation ceremonies, but monks were not allowed to reside here. In 1610, King Songtham ordered that a large Buddha image be moved from Wat Chi Chiang Sai to this present location. The Buddha image was originally sculptured in 1538 by King Chairacha. A viharn was then established at this site in 1612 to house and protect the Buddha image. During King Sua's

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

reign (1688-1703) lightning struck this temple and it had to be rebuilt. King Borommakot restored it during his reign (1732-1758), but it was destroyed shortly thereafter by the Burmese in 1767. The structure was left in ruins until King Rama VI repaired it in 1920. In one renovation, a number of Buddha images were found concealed inside a hollow cavity of the large meditating Buddha image. Many of these can be seen in the Chao Sam Phraya Museum and the National Museum in Bangkok. (\*)

- ❖ *There is a large market on the southern side of Viharn Phra Mongkhon Bopit. This may be worthwhile for cyclists seeking souvenirs or a quick lunch. However, the actual route of this bike trek curves around the market toward a large pool of water containing a fountain. This will be easy to see south of the viharn. An old water tank will be seen on the right hand side of this pathway.*

**Ancient Water Tank** - The Royal Palace had an elaborate irrigation system - including bronze and terracotta water pipes, plumbing trenches, waterwheels, and several pools for storing water or bathing. A large water tank made from brick and mortar has survived destruction seen elsewhere at the Royal Palace. This single, cube-like, structure is complimented by a small Buddha image sitting in a meditating position. This image is framed by a large Bodhi tree, which has grown over a large portion of the water tank. Records show that a second water tank was once located inside the inner palace.

- ❖ *Curve around the southern side of the market. This will take you along the area where the ancient prison once stood. It had approximately eight cells for incarceration, as well as attached cells to hold the family members of convicts. You will be able to see and an old Thai-style house made from teakwood on the horizon. This is called the Khun Phaen's house. It was named after a local legend that spent time incarcerated in the Ayutthaya prison. However, the teakwood house is only a modern model. Further around the curve you will also see the basic foundation of a former monastery.*

**Wat Khae** is a ruin situated near the site of the ancient prison. There are only the ground-level remains of an old foundation, walls, and stubs of chedi surviving. The monastery was constructed of brick-and-mortar. There is little known about its history, but it could have been used by prisoners.

- ❖ *The path will curve around the market and arrive at the back parking lot. Go to the end of the parking lot and you will see a canal with small paved roads on either side. This canal is presently known as Khlong Tho, but its previous name was Khlong Chakrai Yai. This canal provided access to the Royal Palace and led to important sites such as the Royal boat dock and Wat Phutthaisawan.*
- ❖ *You can walk your bike to the opposite side of the canal by using one of the wooden foot bridges. If this seems too unstable for your tastes, simply bike ½ a block down the road and make a U-turn. You need to bike north on the opposite side of the canal. This will shortly lead you to an extension of the Ayutthaya Historical Park. Look for a side*



## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

*road to your left (Soi 13). The Royal Palace will be on the opposite side of the canal. The small street will curve around the next three Points of Interest, and the first ruin should be visible from the road.*

**Wat Rakhang** (Monastery of the Bell), also known as Wat Worapho, is an enormous ruin with several sections of structures in situ. Its primary stupa is a Khmer-influenced prang that has eroded from the point of its relic chamber. This prang has staircases in all the cardinal directions, and its defining characteristic is heavily redented corners. There is also a large sermon hall, an ordination hall, and traces of a gallery of Buddha images. On the monastery's northernmost side is a two-tiered chedi with a terrace allowing worshippers to walk around it three times for ceremonies of worship. A large, crowned, Buddha image in the Taming Mara pose sits proudly in great condition, and this is accompanied by other images as well.

Wat Rakhang is first associated with King Songtham, who served as a high ranking monk at this monastery under the title of “Phra Phimontham Anantapricha”. As a monk, he was revered as a Buddhist scholar, which enabled him to form a clique of nobles and disciples. This support allowed him to leave the monkhood to claim the throne from the one-eyed King Si Saowaphak, who was executed with a sandalwood club at Wat Khok Phraya.

In 1662, Burmese troops tricked 500 Siamese soldiers by pretending to withdraw to their stockade in defeat. With this tactic, the Burmese captured the Siamese and their leader Si Ratcha Decho. King Narai asked the Royal abbot of the Monastery of the Bell, who was skilled at divination, to predict the status of Si Ratcha Decho. The Royal abbot foresaw that the military leader would escape capture and gain a victory over the Burmese troops. When the Royal abbot's prediction came true, King Narai praised him and presented him with holy rewards.

Borommakot (1733-1758) renewed diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Siam by sending monks and clerics to the country ordain noble youths and perpetuate Buddhism. It is believed that the Singhalese embassy presented King Borommakot with a special tree in gratitude for sending these Siamese monks. After this tree was planted at this monastery, the King then changed its name to Wat Worapho. (\*)

❖ *Turn left at Wat Rakhang and continue down the same curving road. The next historic site is situated directly west of it.*

**Wat Worachetharam** is a large restored ruin with many architectural structures in situ. One of its primary features is a large bell-shaped chedi that is constructed in the classic middle-Ayutthaya period style. A large Buddha image in the Taming Mara pose sits on the altar of the sermon hall in front of it. The ordination hall lies to the north. This roofless building has all its walls intact, and there is evidence that ceramic plates were once placed within the stucco of the gable. A second Buddha image sits on the altar in the Taming Mara pose inside. A gallery of fragmented Buddha images can be seen along the walls. There are several other structures in situ as well.

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

Wat Worachetharam is often confused with a monastery sharing a similar name that is located west of the city island. This has led to many complications when interpreting history as it relates to the two monasteries. Both monasteries are listed as possible sites for containing King Naresuan's ashes. Royal Chronicles refer to an enormous and widely attended funeral ceremony held in honor for King Naresuan in 1605 by his brother King Ekathotsarot. A temple was built on the site of his cremation, which had a great stupa with a holy relic of the Buddha, dormitories, a wall-appropriate for the forest-dwelling sect of Buddhists, and a complete edition of the Tripitaka. Forest monks were invited to live inside this chief temple and supported with alms so that they would be supplied with food daily without fail.

In recent times, Thai visitors often place ceramic roosters on the large bell-shaped chedi at Wat Worachetharam. This symbolizes King Naresuan's enjoyment of cockfighting and reflects the popular nationalistic legend that, while still a young boy forced to live in Burma, he waged a bet with a Burmese prince for Ayutthaya's freedom. The two youngsters staged a cockfight to determine the city's outcome, and the Burmese prince lost the bet. These roosters started appearing after a popular movie about King Naresuan was released. (\*)

- ❖ *Continue biking along the naturally curve of this road. It will start moving west towards a large ruin. You will be able to see it from the previous site without any problems. This is the location of a large reclining Buddha image that has become very popular among tour groups.*

**Wat Lokaya Sutharam** is a massive temple ruin designed in the late-Ayutthaya period style. At the eastern entrance are the remnants of three vihara. Behind these sermon halls is a large 30 meters high Khmer-style prang with a hollow entrance on its eastern side. However, the highlight of this former monastery is its enormous reclining Buddha image (42 meters in length and 8 meters high), which has been named Phra Buddha Sai Yat. All the Buddha's toes are of equal lengths. The arm supporting the head is vertical, instead of being folded as in the early Ayutthaya and U-Thong periods. This vertical arm is a characteristic of reclining images made in the middle Ayutthaya period - after the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The reclining Buddha image is usually wrapped in brightly colored orange cloth. Many people have covered parts of the reclining Buddha image in gold leaf.

There is an interesting Lanna-style chedi northwest of the reclining Buddha image. This chedi has an octagonal base and many niches still standing Buddha images. There are also several meditating Buddha images near the spire. This type of architectural is sometimes associated with the Haripunchai Kingdom in Lamphun.

The reclining Buddha image was restored in 1954 by the Alcoholic Beverages Factory. It was restored again in 1956 when Field Marshall Phibun Songkhram was developing the city park. In 1989, the family of former Prime Minister Luang Thamrongwasawat (1946-1947) contributed to renovations at this monastery. The Fine Arts department has continued to maintain it since then. (\*)

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

- ❖ *Wat Lokaya Sutharam marks an important turning point of this route. Bikers can use this site to connect with the Queen Sri Nakarin Park loop (also featured on this website as bike tour). This extension could be done as a full day tour. However, if time and energy are limited, stick with the “official” route listed for this trip.*
- ❖ *Turn around and go in the opposite direction. You will return to the Khlong Tho, the canal that you have previously explored. You can either return from the same road (Soi 13), or you can take the short cut by heading directly east from the small side street directly in front of Wat Lokaya Sutharam. From the canal turn right and head south. You will shortly come to an important intersection. The remains of an old bridge (Saphan Lam Hoei) will be on the right.*
- ❖ *Turn left and go over the bridge in the direction east. This street (known as Pa Thon Road) will lead you along the southern side of Ayutthaya Historic Park. On your left hand side, you will first bypass a small elephant kraal offering rides to tourists. You will soon come to a roundabout in the middle of the road, but don't cross it. On the corner, a pyramid-shaped ruin will be visible on your left hand side. Stop here and have a look.*

**Wat Ket** is located near the ancient prison and one of the sites used for executions. This monastery was used by convicts to say final prayers before execution, while other prisoners used this temple to plea for clemency. There were 21 ways of putting an offender to death as prescribed in the Treason's Act. Executions were delivered with various atrocities including beheading, disembowelment, impalement, trampling by elephants, and other torturous means. However, Royal executions were usually done at Wat Khok Phraya and involved stuffing individuals in a velvet sack and beating them with a sandalwood club. Lesser forms of punishment included lashings, floggings, foot burnings, public shaming, forced labor such as cutting elephant grass, the paying of fines, the seizure of property (including family members), and dropping swords on someone's head at various heights. A ceremonial pool for containing water is located beside the main pyramidal chedi.

- ❖ *The next two reference points are situated directly south of Wat Ket on the opposite side of Pa Thon Road. Both sites should be in clear view. It may be easy to simply walk your bike across the street to see them.*

**The City Pillar**, or Lak Muang, is a shrine marking the center of the ancient city before its walls were expanded. The pillar is a Brahmin symbol signifying the creative energy of the phallus (lingam). It was originally situated at the site of a Brahmin temple, San Phra Khran. The new city pillar is a modern construction. Local legend suggests that only the pure of heart can touch this pillar without ill-fated consequences happening as a result.

**San Phra Khran** was constructed in the early Ayutthaya period for the use of Brahmin priests, who played an important role in religious and political ceremonies. The Brahmins also participated in making judicial decisions and setting methods for punishments. In 1636, King Prasat Thong relocated the Brahmin priests to the area around Thewa Sathan. The king gave them 100 cows and 100 horses as alms, which they returned to the monarch because they

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

lacked the slaves to take care of them. The Fine Arts Department partially restored this building in 1969. Excavations revealed various artifacts such as images of Hindi deities. In modern times, this site is covered with dozens of elaborately decorated silver poles and hundreds of broken religious figurines.

- ❖ *You will see a large Khmer-style prang directly east from Wat Ket, on the opposite side of the road. This is the next Point of Interest. The admission gate for paying fees is situated on its western side.*

**Wat Phra Ram** - Royal Chronicles date Wat Phra Ram to 1369. King Ramesuan ordered the construction of this monastery as a crematory site for his father, King U-Thong (also known as Ramathibodhi), who was the founder of the Ayutthaya kingdom. However, Wat Phra Ram temple was probably not completed until the reign of Borommaracha I (1370-1388). Wat Phra Ram was restored once by King Borommatrailokanat (1448-1488) and once again by King Borommakot in 1741. Wat Phra Ram is a beautiful sight to behold, especially when its Khmer-style prang temple is reflected by the lotus-filled ponds of Bung Phra Ram. There are also many mythological images preserved in stucco on site. (\*) (\$)

- ❖ *Bike to the eastern side of Wat Phra Ram This can be done by either heading to the roundabout and making a left hand turn, followed by a second left hand turn at the first road you come across. Alternatively, you can use the small road north of Wat Phra Ram. In this case, keep turning right until you have arrived to the eastern side of the monastery. Either way, you will arrive at a brick road surrounded by a grassy park that prohibits motor vehicles. This is the area known as Bung Wat Phra Ram. This is the scenic path you want to take for the last leg of the bike route. Immediately on the right hand side of the brick road you will see an old ruin.*

**Wat Traitrung** was most likely constructed in the Early Ayutthaya period although little is known about its history. It was once distinguished by its large Khmer-style prang, similar to the one at Wat Phra Ram, but it has crumbled to its barest foundation layers. There are traces of a staircase on its eastern-side and a former sermon hall.

- ❖ *Keep heading east on the brick road for the rest of this bike route. This will bring you near an option detour on your left hand side. Bung Phra Ram is filled with several tiny islands leading to small and little known sites. You can take the bridge on your left to the next two optional Reference Points.*

**Wat Maha Prasat** is a Buddhist shrine to King U-Thong in the middle of Bung Phra Ram. It is located on its own islet and can only be reached by footbridge. It is characterized by three spires that reflect the provincial seal of Ayutthaya. According to legend, Brahmin priests discovered a conch shell under a Man tree (*Cordia dichroma*) when performing the foundation ceremony for the city. This new structure was built during the Ratanakosin period in recognition of the city's origins.

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

- ❖ *Continue using the small bridges connecting the islets. This will lead you to a statue of Torani - the earth goddess that saved Buddha from the temptations of Mara by wringing out her wet hair. Take the bridge east of this statue to visit a small ruin that is seldom seen.*

**Wat Jan** is a brick mound with a modern shrine built on its remains. The shrine includes a long stone structure with a staircase leading something resembling an artificial mountain. A Buddha image exists at its peak, while an elephant and monkey bow in reverence. A small cave is situated on the opposite side, giving a clear view of Viharn Phra Mongkhon Bophit. The history of this secluded island monastery is unclear, but there is a large amount of broken ceramics on site.

- ❖ *Back track from the two option reference points if you had chosen to explore them. Return to the brick road and continue east. You will arrive at the next Reference Point in only one minute. You will see a cement, rectangular, structure crowned by a statue of Torani - an earth Goddess who assisted Buddha while he was obtaining enlightenment. If you look closely, you will also see a tree that has swallowed a small brick structure resembling a chedi.*

**Tuk Din** was originally built during the reign of King Narai (1656-1688) for the purpose of watching boat campaigns. During the rainy season, a boat racing festival was held while the water ran strong. The festival (*Pleng Sakkava*) is named after a type of boat song. Former Thai Prime Minister Phibun Songkhram restored this building around the same time that he turned Bung Phra Ram into a city park. There are still traces of its original foundation.

- ❖ *Continue east for another minute and you will arrive at a crossroad. This is the location of an ancient canal alignment. If you continue east, you will have access to Wat Phong, an interesting ruin on the left hand side of the brick road. It can be clearly seen on the corner at a distance away. This site is worth a quick stop because of its unique chedi that hosts several standing Buddha images in its niches. However, don't forget to return to the crossroad afterward.*

**Wat Phong** was once secluded on a grassy islet and surrounded by a moat. Its highlight is an unusually shaped chedi suggesting a cross-cultural fusion. Standing Buddha images are situated in niches at each of the cardinal directions, and stucco figurines of mythological figures can be seen higher up the main chedi. The upper level takes the shape of a rounded bell, but it is designed in a way that is untypical of other monasteries in the city. A Khymer-style prang from the late-Ayutthaya is also in situ. There are also traces of an old sermon hall and several boundary walls on site.

Phraya Boran Rachathanin believed that Wat Phong was associated with Mon residents who had a market near this site. According to the Royal Chronicles, King Maha Thammaracha persuaded the family of a highly revered Mon monk to live in the vicinity around 1584, and

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

this monastery may have been used by this Mon community. Wat Phong was restored in 1995, and excavations revealed brass containers, spoons, and forks.

- ❖ *Return from Wat Phong to the crossroads situated just west of it. This time turn left and head north for a second or two. You will immediately be facing Wat Sangkha Pat. It is surrounded by trees, which makes it a nice shady spot to relax.*

**Wat Sangkha Pat** - There is only one structure in situ at Wat Sangkha Phat. This is a chedi that has been constructed in a style associated with the Haripunchai or Lanna kingdoms. Its architecture includes an octagonal base and multiple layers that get smaller as they taper upward. A number of arched niches showcase standing Buddha images at the upper level. There is an arched entrance on the eastern side. There is little known about the history of Wat Sangkha Pat. This monastery was situated along an old canal bringing water to Bung Phra Ram from Khlong Muang (the old Lopburi River).

- ❖ *Continue biking north for a few seconds. The next Reference Point will be a restored ruin on your left.*

**Wat Langkha Dam** - There are three main structures at Wat Langkha Dam. In front is a small sermon hall. The entrance is on the eastern side and there are a few small windows for ventilation. Behind this sermon hall is a bell-shaped chedi from the middle-Ayutthaya period. It has an octagonal base with several layers leading to its relic chamber. A second chedi can be found on the northwestern side of the sermon hall. Its architectural style dates to the late-Ayutthaya period. Although this chedi has significantly eroded, there are hints of a Khmer influence. Wat Langkha Dam was named after the black tiles on its roof. Given the similarity in names, this monastery probably had some connection with Wat Langkha Kao. The two temples were separated by a small moat, and the same road passed in front of both monasteries.

- ❖ *Continue biking north for a few seconds. You will come to a small path aligned from an east to west axis. Turn left and head east. You will clearly see Wat Maha That just ahead. However, the next Point of Interest is a restored ruin directly beside it, on Wat Maha That's southwestern corner. You can have a quick look at it before proceeding on to the grand finale of this bike route - Wat Maha That.*

In situ at **Wat Nok** are the remains of an ordination hall and a large prang-like chedi. The ordination hall consists of a basic foundation with renovated walls and pillars. There are several headless Buddha images on its altar – all in Taming Mara poses. The prang-like chedi reflects the Khmer style, but its multiple redented corners and elaborate portico (with secondary prang) are suggestive of the late-Ayutthaya period. There is a staircase leading to an entrance on the eastern side. The prang has some of the best preserved stucco in the city. There are many geometric designs visible and a number of preserved images. A few niches have remains of standing Buddha images. Other stucco images portray mythological figures such as Rahu eating the sun.

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

King Maha Thammaracha persuaded a Mon monk to live at this monastery in 1584. Royal Chronicles describe this story in great detail. While still technically allied with Burma, Prince Naresuan marched his troops to the city of Khraeng, where they encamped near the monastery of the Great Holy Thera Khan Chong. In the meantime, the Burmese planned to betray Prince Naresuan and send out an army of 10,000 to kill him. Two Mon military leaders, Phraya Khiat and Phraya Ram, were ordered to attack Prince Naresuan's troops and execute him. However, the Great Holy Thera Khan Chong was informed of this treachery and arranged a meeting with Prince Naresuan in which all was revealed. As a result, Prince Naresuan declared revenge and announced Ayutthaya's independence from the Burmese.

Prince Naresuan promised to escort the two Mon leaders, the Holy reverent, and their families to Ayutthaya for safety. On the way, Prince Naresuan defeated the Burmese in battle and independence was won. King Maha Thammaracha (1569-1590), the father of Prince Naresuan, rewarded the Mon for their role in this victory. The relatives of Thera Khan Chong were sent to live in a village behind Wat Nok, and it is likely that he served as the abbot of Wat Nok.

**Wat Maha That** has become famous as the site where a Buddha's head peeks out from inside a tree. Locals like to say that the tree is lifting Buddha's head off the ground since the relic is so holy. However, there are many other structures at this former monastery that are also worth a look.

There is evidence that a 12<sup>th</sup> century Dvaravati settlement existed at the site of Wat Maha That prior to King U-Thong's arrival in 1350. However, the actual construction date is recorded as starting in 1374 and ending in 1388. King Borommaracha I (1370-1388) founded this temple as the city's spiritual center, and the monastery was used by the Supreme Patriarch of a forest-sect of Buddhism. Wat Maha That's construction was finished during King Ramesuan's second reign (1388-1395). Wat Maha That's was originally built with a 38-meter high Khmer-style prang, but it collapsed during King Songtham's reign (1610-1628). King Prasat Thong (1629-1656) restored it to become the highest monument in Ayutthaya's history - a record breaking 51 meters. However, the Burmese set it on fire when they invaded in 1767.

Wat Maha That, also referred to as Wat Nopphathat, remained in ruins after the fall of Ayutthaya. The Khmer-style prang finally collapsed sometime between 1904 and 1911 (depending on the source). Looters plundered Wat Maha That for years afterward. Photographs have survived showing its structure intact, taken from a floating market at a canal that has since been turned into Chikun Road. (\*) (\$)

- ❖ *Wat Maha That marks the boundary of the old city walls before they were expanded east toward the Pa Sak River. However, in modern times, Wat Maha That signifies the border of the Ayutthaya Historical Park. Therefore, this route will return to the starting point by cutting through the urban center once again. However, instead of taking Naresuan Road, we recommend a different option that cuts down on traffic.*

## AYUTTHAYA – CITY ISLAND BICYCLE TRACK II (The Historical Park Loop)

---

- ❖ *From the parking lot of Wat Maha That, directly cross to the opposite side of the road and bike east. This will take you down a street paralleling Naresuan Road. Within the first block, in only a moment, there will be a large bell-shaped chedi hiding in a residential section. It will be on the left hand side of the road. This little known site might be worth visiting also.*

**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. Its date of 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. Wat Rachaburana was founded the same year. An ancient canal known as Khlong Pratu Khao Pluak once passed beside the western side of Wat Lad, further dividing it from Wat Maha That.

- ❖ *Continue biking east on the same road. On the next block you will pass a small ruin on the right hand side of the road.*

**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 perfectly aligned on the western side. This has a staircase and several redented corners. Wat Khok Muang has been renovated by the Fine Arts Department. Its architectural style suggests that it was constructed in the Late Ayutthaya period.

- ❖ *Keep biking east until you arrive at a canal with two roads on either side. This canal is presently known as Khlong Makhm Riang, but it was called Khlong Nai Kai during the Ayutthaya period. Turn left and bike north for one block. If you look close you will see Wat Lanka on the opposite side of the canal. When you have hit the intersection turn right onto Naresuan Road once again. You will continue east until you come to the first turning point on your left hand side. When you see it, make a right. You will have returned to the original starting point and completed the Ayutthaya Historical Park route.*



### *Disclaimer*

*AHR will not be held liable for any loss or damage whatsoever for any suggestions made in relation to the site's promotion of ecotourism. It is the responsibility of the user of the site to take the necessary precautions to avoid any physical injury, traffic incident, animal attack, theft, and damage to equipment. Any reliance on the site's information is therefore strictly at your own risk. Read our disclaimer at website [www.ayutthaya-history.com](http://www.ayutthaya-history.com).*