

AYUTTHAYA HISTORICAL RESEARCH [AHR]

AYUTTHAYA  
NORTHERN  
BICYCLE TRACK

KHLONG SRA BUA LOOP

By Ken May & Tricky Vandenberg

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# AYUTTHAYA - NORTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (Khlong Sra Bua Loop)

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This bicycle tour is designed to bring you beside some of the most important **restored ruins** in the northern rim of Ayutthaya's city island. The tour will take 3 to 4 hours depending on the time spent at each location point. Riders may not want to stop at every highlight listed on this tour itinerary. A few sites have been listed more for the sake of smoother navigation. 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 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.

Be cautious as traffic in and around Ayutthaya is sometimes dense and chaotic. Motor vehicles often fail to see cyclists and pedestrians, so you must closely watch out for *them*. Motorcycles are a particular 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.

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

If you would like some information about lodging and restaurant options, please visit: [www.ayutthaya-info.com](http://www.ayutthaya-info.com).

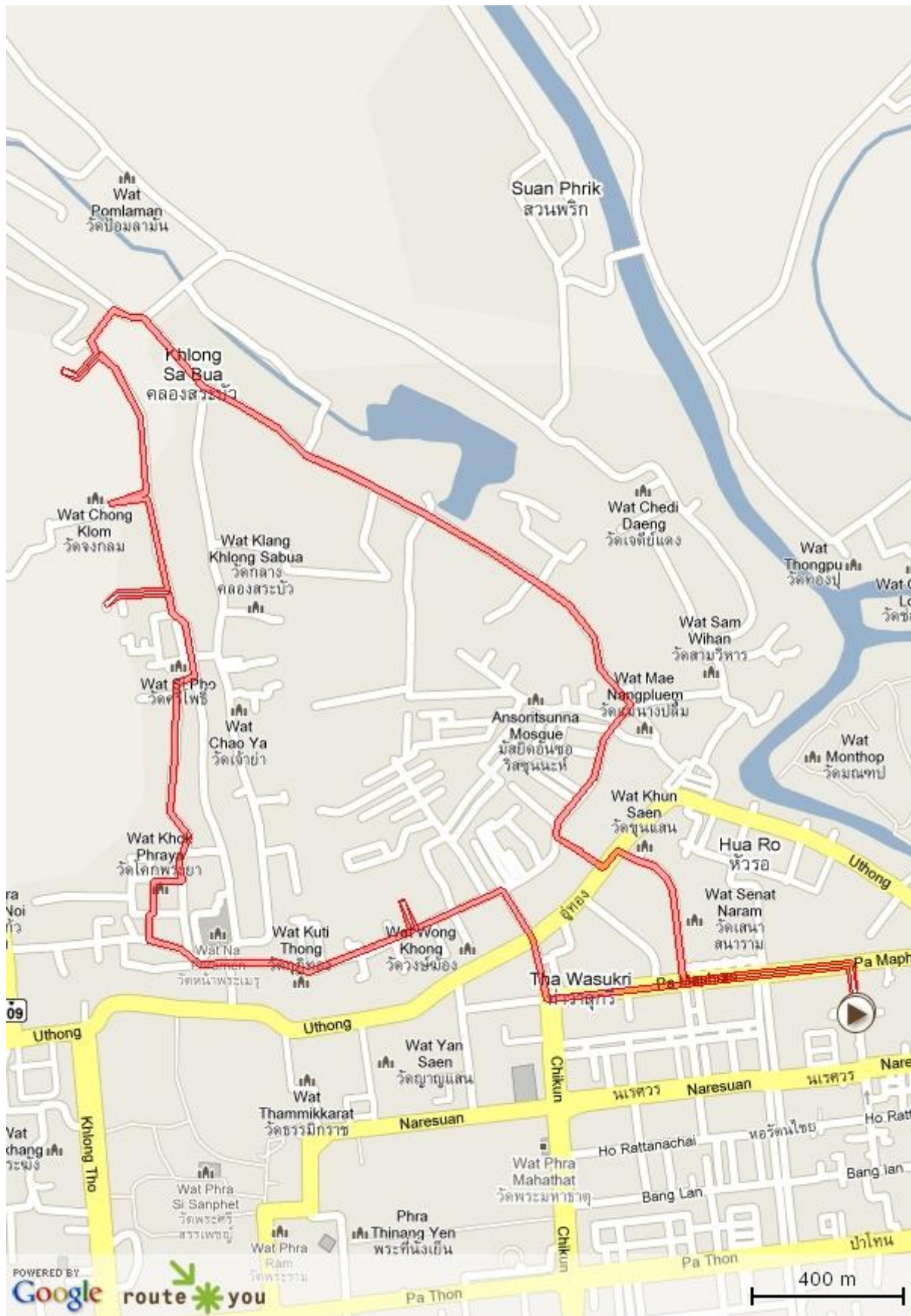
## **Who are we?**

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: 035/241446, 035/242352 or 1155.

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## The route

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

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

- ❖ *From the starting point (Soi 2 Naresuan Road), go to Pa Maphrao Road and turn left (West). Take Pa Maphrao Road until you arrive at the corner of Chikun Road.*

The first destination is a restored ruin named **Wat Phlabphla Chai**, which can be seen on the southwestern corner of the intersection. It is roughly situated between Wat Rachaburana and Wat Suwandawat. Following the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya it was here that Prince Ay Phraya one of the sons of King Intharacha set up his army in a combat for the crown after his father died. The story suggests that this ruin dates from the Early Ayutthaya Period (1351 - 1491), but it was likely restored many times during the Ayutthaya Era.

- ❖ *From Wat Phlabphla Chai, go North on Chikun Road. The next site is only one block away.*

**Wat Suwan Dawat** is a restored ruin. In situ are an ordination hall and a sermon hall with a large bell-shaped chedi. There are several chedi in various states of erosion and a two-tiered bell tower on site. The architecture of Wat Suwandawat suggests the Middle and Late Ayutthaya period. Wat Suwandawat was restored by King Mongkut (1851-1868). A partially defaced Buddha image is visible through the entry of one of the halls. (\*)

- ❖ *The next stop is directly across the street from Wat Suwan Dawat on the East side of the road. Be cautious of traffic when crossing this street.*

**Wat Rachapraditsathan** is an active temple, located next to the Pratu Khao Pluak canal, which once separated it from Wat Tha Sai (on the opposite side of the canal). This canal has been filled in for the most part, leaving a small pond on the premises. Traces of a fortress (Pom Khao Pluak) and a water gate (Pratu Khao Pluak) can still be seen in situ. Wat Tha Sai has since been annexed by Wat Rachapraditsathan and is now considered a single temple. Wat Rachapraditsathan was closely associated with King Chakkraphat (1548-1569), who served as a monk at this temple prior to accepting the throne.

- ❖ *Continue north on Chikun Road until you go cross the bridge. This will take you off the main city island and place you in the northern part of the city. The next temple is easily viewable immediately after the bridge on the other side.*

**Wat Wong Khong** is an active monastery, cut through in the center by a road. It is situated north of the city canal - the old Lopburi River - 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

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temple. During the Ayutthaya period, Wat Wong Khong was an important ferry crossing point towards Pratu Khao Pluak.

There are two small chedi directly beside the road. Turn left at these two chedi and follow the unnamed road toward the West. This road parallels Klong Muang (the old Lopburi River), so it is easy to follow.

- ❖ *Look for the first 5-storey building on the left-hand side of the unnamed road. A restored ruin is hidden behind a forested area on the opposite side of the building. A narrow dirt path will lead you to the historic site.*

**Wat Pho** is a restored ruin. In situ are the ruins of an ordination hall, a sermon hall, a residence hall and a chedi. The architecture is indicative of the Late Ayutthaya period (1629 - 1767) and bears traces of a Persian influence.

- ❖ *From Wat Po, continue on the same unnamed road in the direction west.*

The next stop is **Wat Kuti Thong**, which is an active temple. This monastery is also split into two parts by a road that runs through the center of the monastery. The monks live in the buildings closest to the canal. The rest of the monastery, including its ancient ruins, can be seen on the opposite side of the road. The monastery is framed by ancient walls and an arched entrance gateway. The ordination hall sits on top of a large mound, which may have been the remains of an older building. Also in situ are two large chedi behind the main ordination hall. You can bike in a circle around this temple.

- ❖ *Stay on the same unnamed road and continue west until you arrive at the next destination. The road will lead you directly to it.*

**Wat Mai Klong Sra Bua** is a restored ruin located on the junction of Klong Sra Bua and Klong Muang (opposite respectively Wat Na Phra Men and the Grand Palace). The temple complex faces south towards the Lopburi River as most of the temples along this city canal. In situ are the remains of an ordination hall, a number of satellite chedi and an interesting bell tower. According to archeological evidence the monastery dates from the Late Ayutthaya period (1629-1767). (\*)

- ❖ *This temple marks a dead end in the road that you have been riding on. However, there is a small gateway leading westward to another main road nearby. Walk your bike on the dirt path between the houses and cross the footbridge (over Klong Sra Bua) to the road on the other side (see the map if you have difficulty finding it).*
- ❖ *The next temple is large and should be easily viewable from the “new” main road. This road continues to parallel Klong Muang (also known as the old Lopburi River).*

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**Wat Na Phra Men** is an active temple, situated north of Khlong Muang and west of Khlong Sra Bua. The temple was constructed in 1503 during the reign of King Ramathibodi II (r. 1491-1529), the 10th king of the Ayutthaya (Suphannaphum/Suphanburi dynasty), and originally received the name Wat Phra Meru Rachikaram. Wat Na Phra Men occupied a prominent place in front of the Royal Palace and was once a Royal cremation ground. The highlight here is the crowned Buddha in the ordination hall and the Dvaravati-style Buddha in the adjacent vihara, which once stood at Wat Maha That. (\*)(\$)

- ❖ *The next site can be seen from the road immediately west of and next to Wat Na Phra Men.*

**Wat Hatdawat** is a restored ruin located west of Wat Na Phra Men. The monastery is aligned on an east/west axis. It is comprised of three primary structures. There is a reconstructed sermon hall with a bell-shaped chedi. A second bell-shaped chedi rests at the back of the sermon hall. There is still part of a moat surrounding Wat Hatdawat. Records show that this temple served as site of an armistice treaty between Burma and Siam in 1549 during the reign of King Chakkraphat. (\*)

- ❖ *The next site may be a little difficult to find, since it is situated in a residential area. It is situated just a little northwest of Wat Hatdawat. It should take only 4-5 minutes to get there. Ask a local resident for help if you still can't see it.*

**Wat Khok Phraya** is a restored ruin. It was built in the early Ayutthaya period. The ruin consists of a walled assembly hall with a bell shaped chedi on octagonal base. There are several satellite chedi in situ. The location was witness to many punishments and executions of Kings and Royal family members of Ayutthaya. The method used in Ayutthaya in that time was to tie the victim in a velvet sack, and dashed in its chest with a club of sandal-wood. By this means the royal body was not touched. This place has been the killing ground for five dynasties of Kings starting from U-Thong and ending with the Ban Phlu Luang Dynasty, Ayutthaya's last. Many locals believe that this place is still haunted. (\*)

- ❖ *After visiting Wat Khok Phraya, head eastward to the small road running slightly parallel to Khlong Sra Bua. Then Turn left. This road runs north and you will stay with it for the next few locations. The next site should only take a few minutes to reach.*

**Wat Takrai** or the "Monastery of the Scissors" is a restored ruin located west of Khlong Sra Bua (Lit: canal of the Lilly Pond). The substantial site consists of an ordination hall, a vihara with large chedi, a prang and several satellite chedis. Wat Takrai was probably also a crematory temple. The monastery is mentioned in an ancient Ayutthayan poem "Khun Chang Khun Phaen" as the place where Wanthong was cremated after being executed (possibly at Wat Khok Phraya) by royal order. The temple has been used again in the reigns of King Rama IV (Mongkut) and Rama V (Chulalongkorn). (\*)

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- ❖ *Continue north from Wat Takrai. The road will lead directly to an active temple named **Wat Sri Pho** (Lit: Monastery of the Magnificent Bodhi Tree). This site serves as a good reference point. There is a fork in the road at this temple's main entrance gate. There is a bridge in one direction. Do not cross this bridge (unless you want to quit the tour and return early) as it will lead to the opposite side of Khlong Sra Bua. The correct road to take is the one leading north, away from the bridge.*
- ❖ *Continue on the road leading north. Then turn left at small road sign on your left-hand side. This small side road will lead west until you pass a house where some interesting sculptures are carved. The next site is slightly further down this side road.*

**Wat Phra Ngam** (Lit: The Monastery of the Beautiful Buddha) is a restored ruin situated in an area called Thung Khwan. The temple is also known as Wat Cha Ram. On the site is a walled monastic complex consisting of an ordination hall with a principal chedi on an elevated base and a number of satellite chedis. The photographic highlight is the eastern entry gate covered in a Bodhi tree. (\*)

- ❖ *Backtrack down the same side road until you return to the original street. Turn left and continue in the direction north. You will come to another road sign leading to a small side road on your left-hand side. Turn left here. On weekends this site will be obvious.*

**Wat Jong Klom** is a restored ruin located north of Wat Sri Pho and west of Khlong Sra Bua. There are several structures viewable at Wat Jong Klom, which has an east/west alignment. Its central feature is a large chedi tower. This chedi is unique to the city. Its base is octagonal leading up to a bell-shaped relic chamber. The most intriguing element about this chedi tower is its inner chamber. This chedi is hollow inside. There is essentially a chedi hidden within the chedi. The inner walls are encircled with niches for Buddha images. On the small road towards the temple there is an entry to a popular floating market open on Friday and the weekends. This increasingly popular weekend market makes can be a useful and entertaining rest stop. (\*)

- ❖ *Return to the main road and continue north. You will arrive at another side road on the left hand side. This is usually marked with a clear road sign for finding it.*

**Wat Phraya Maen** is a restored ruin located west of Khlong Sra Bua. It is a large site surrounded by a moat. King Phetracha (r. 1688-1703) is supposed to have entered the monkhood here. The abbot predicted his future greatness. King Phetracha recognized Wat Phraya Maen as a Royal temple in 1694 to celebrate his victory against rebellions in Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Nakhon Rachasima; uprisings sparked due to his usurpation of the throne from King Narai. Phetracha subsequently restored and embellished the monastery. This temple had a graveyard and likely was a crematory temple at par with Wat Takrai. Mun

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Cantharat, a master glazier, casted the yellow-colored tiles to cover the roof of the recitation hall. There is evidence that this temple had water pipes and an irrigation system. (\*)

- ❖ *Continue going north on the main road until you arrive at a crossroad leading from east to west. Turn right on this unnamed road and go eastward. Note: There is a small ruin on the opposite side of the road known as **Wat Si Liam** (though few locals know its actual name). This ruin serves as a reference point to turn in case you are doing this tour in the opposite direction. However, this ruin is small and easy to miss.*
- ❖ *Continue eastward on the “new” road until you arrive at another active temple named Wat Krutharam (Lit: The Monastery of the Garuda). It should only take a few minutes before reaching it. Wat Krutharam is located along Khlong Sra Bua and it is an important reference point. There is a fork in the road in front of this active temple. If you turn right, it will lead to a temple named Wat Chao Yaa and ultimately back to Wat Na Phra Men. However, we recommend that cyclists stay on the left hand side of the road. Do not turn yet.*
- ❖ *The road will start leading you diagonally toward the southeastern direction. This road runs parallel to a canal known as Khlong Bang Khoat. On the left hand side of the road, you will come to the next destination. It is hard to miss because it is situated directly beside the road.*

**Wat Khae** (Lit": The Monastery of the Trumpet Tree) is a large restored ruin. The monastery consists of four principal pagodas, an ordination hall, two viharas, some small pagodas and other buildings surrounded by a wall. The center chedi is constructed in the Lanna style. All buildings have been restored several times. Archeological research situates the construction of the temple in the Early Ayutthaya period (1350 - 1485). (\*)

- ❖ *Continue on the same road for about 10-15 minutes. It will start turning more southward until it hits another crossroad. Turn right at this crossroad and start cycling west. You will be traveling once again on the same road that parallels Khlong Muang (the Lopburi River). In only a few minutes you will arrive at the next destination (now on your right-hand side, or northern side of the road).*

**Wat Mae Nang Plum** is an active monastery established in 1377. The monastery bears the name of a certain Lady Plum, an old woman being visited by King Naresuan (r. 1590-1605) during one night, following a local legend. Following the *tamnan* history, this temple was repaired by King Naresuan and renamed as Wat Mae Nang Plum, in commemoration of the old lady. The most important features are: the chedi surrounded with decorative stucco lions. There is also a beautiful Buddha image in the ordination hall called Luang Phor Khao or the White Buddha. (\*)



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- ❖ *Continue on the same road heading west until you arrive at **Wat Intharam** (Lit: The Monastery of the God Indra). It will be situated on the northern or right-hand side of the road. This active temple is an important reference point.*

It you continue west on this road, it will ultimately lead back to the bridge in front of Wat Wong Khong (which you have already visited). However, we recommend taking a small foot bridge instead. You have to carry your bike across a few steps, but this foot bridge helps to avoid a lot of traffic. The way to find this foot bridge is to stop immediately at Wat Intharam. Look for a small path on the left that runs between some residential houses. You will be able to see the canal and a small foot bridge. Cross over the bridge back to the main city island.

- ❖ *You will come out in front of **Wat Viharn Kian**. Then turn left in the direction east. This will lead you to the final historic site. It is situated beside the road on your right-hand side and can't be missed. However, to cut back on traffic, we recommend taking the first (small) road to your right.*

**Wat Khun Saen** is a restored ruin located on U-Thong Road west of the Hua Ro market. The highlight here is a large bell-shaped chedi that has been expanded over the years, which creates the unique appearance of a small chedi being consumed by a larger one. There is also the foundation of an ordination hall and portions of a wall surrounding the monastery. King Rama IV (1851-1868) ordered the restoration of Wat Khun Saen and enlarged its central bell-shaped chedi. However, King Mongkut died before this project could be finished. As a result, the restoration of Wat Khun Saen was permanently halted and the monastery has remained inactive ever since. (\*)

- ❖ *From Wat Khun Saen, continue south down the small side road that we recommended. It will shortly lead you back to Pa Maprao Road. Turn left on this Road and continue east once again. You will arrive at the starting point in about 5 minutes.*



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