

AYUTTHAYA HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Ayutthaya Southern Bicycle Track

History of Ayutthaya

Ken May & Tricky Vandenberg

2010

WWW.AYUTTHAYA-HISTORY.COM

AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK

(The Foreign Settlements Loop)

This bicycle tour highlights old foreign settlements and important historical sites south of Ayutthaya's main city island. This culturally diverse area will introduce you to a potpourri of churches, mosques and monasteries. The route tends to be peaceful and quiet with limited traffic, making it ideal for those wanting to get off-the-beaten track for some natural scenery as well. This southern area is shaped by the borders of Khlong Takhian and the Chao Phraya River and split into two parts by Khlong Khu Cham.

The western section was inhabited by the Cochin Chinese - mostly Christian communities of Tonkinese, Annamese and Cochin Chinese. This is where the French made their quarters in the 17th century. The French referred to Khlong Takhian as "Canal du Grand Cochon", and they established a church at its upper mouth. The French settlement was dominated by priests and thus focused more on religion than trade. Mon refugees settled in the area on the opposite side of the canal.

The eastern section was populated by the Chinese (around Bang Kaja) and the trading community of the "Portugals", which included three neighborhoods with churches along the west bank of the Chao Phraya. In addition, the eastern section included Buddhist temples pre-dating the foundation of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, which have yielded relics dating to the late-Dvaravati period.

Muslims had foreign settlements throughout the area. The southern part was occupied by the Malay and Pattani Muslims, who also had neighborhoods and markets in the north along the Chao Phraya River. Opposite Khlong Takhian, on its south bank, was the location of the Makassarese refugees before they were killed for uprising against the throne. Cham Muslims from Cambodia and Vietnam lived beside Khlong Khu Cham (known as "Le Canal du Petit Cochon" by the French). In addition, Muslims from Persia and India settled in this area as well. These Muslims communities were sometimes collectively labeled as Moors by early Westerners.

The tour will take 4-5 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.

Tips and Warnings

Bicycles can be rented in different locations on Soi 2 Naresuan Rd, which is the starting point of this tour. It is also possible to rent bikes near the train station, which is closer to the area 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 - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (The Foreign Settlements 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 common 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 keep 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.

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.

AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (The Foreign Settlements Loop)



AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK

(The Foreign Settlements Loop)

The route

Historical signboard in situ is marked as ()*

Entry fee required is marked as (\$)

- ❖ *From the starting point, go south toward Chao Phrom Market and turn right (you will have to walk your bike to the opposite side of the road). Head west along Naresuan Road until you arrive at Chikun Road. You will see two memorial chedi and the ruins of a bricked bridge (Sapan Pathan) in the middle of the road. This is the gateway to the Ayutthaya Historic Park. Do not enter the park; turn left on Chikun Road instead and continue south. You will pass a roundabout and the leftover ruin of a bridge (Sapan Chikun). Keep going forward until you come to the end of the road. There is the location of a ferry boat that provides services to the opposite side of the Chao Phraya River. Bicycles and motorcycles can use this ferry boat for only a few baht. The first reference point is on the opposite side of the river.*

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

- ❖ *(Go south from Wat Khun Phrom until you arrive at the main road (#3469). Turn left and head east. In only a few minutes you will see a road on your left-hand side. This is clearly marked with a billboard advertising the first Point of Interest (look for the photo of a smiling Buddha image). Turn left and bike toward the Chao Phraya River. You will see Wat Nang Kui within seconds.)*

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

- ❖ *You do not have to return to the main road yet. Turn left on the first road immediately beside Wat Nang Kui. This will curve around directly to the next Point of Interest, Wat Bang Kaja.*

Wat Bang Kaja (Monastery of the Kacha Village), spelled also as Kacha or Kaca, had fallen into decay before being repaired and renamed with the title, Wat Mai (New Monastery). It is strategically located on the confluence of the Chao Phraya River and the Pa Sak River, just opposite the Phet Fortress and the old harbor. This was a densely populated Chinese area close to many floating markets. In earlier times, the important Bang Kaja floating market was

AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (The Foreign Settlements Loop)

held in the vicinity. The temple's highlights include an elaborately decorated open-air sermon hall and a rather large chedi. Traces of the original buildings can be seen behind the sermon hall and further east. The head from an old Buddha images is viewable on the eastern side of the sermon hall.

- ❖ *Go back to the main road from Wat Bang Kaja. The main road will curve south and parallel the Chao Phraya River. This will be a longer stretch of biking, 5-15 minutes depending on your speed. You will see rice fields and jungles on your right. This is the area of an ancient settlement where late-Dvaravati images were discovered, but they are impossible to view on bicycle. Continue south until you see a ruin directly beside the road on your left-hand side. This is the Dominican Portuguese settlement.*

The ruins of the Dominican Church of San Petro were located within the Portuguese settlement. Portuguese came to Siam as early as 1511. Their ships arrived at the port of Ayutthaya with merchants, shipbuilders, and soldiers of fortune. The first Dominican missionaries arrived in Siam in 1567 and were given residence in one of the best locations in the city. After the Burmese attack of Ayutthaya in 1569, new priests arrived and the Roman Catholic parish grew. The church of San Petro for the Dominican sect (locally called Ban Jacobin) was one of the three parishes set up in the Portuguese settlement. The settlement was destroyed during the Burmese attack of Ayutthaya in 1767. On 21 March 1767, the Dominican parish priest surrendered to the Burmese together with its Christians. Two days later the Dominican church was plundered.

The remains of the church are still viewable at the foundation level. However, the highlight of this site is the graveyard containing a large number of skeletons. The skeletons include males, females, and children in layered positions that can be almost surrealistic to view. These excavations were done starting in the 1970s. A curious cross-cultural view is a spirit house with Christian figures inside. This area is considered haunted by some residents. (*)

- ❖ *Get back on the main road and continue south for about five minutes. On the right, you will come to a small residential area, but first you will see a thin dirt road (Soi 6). Turn right and go halfway down this dirt road. On the left, you will see a dirt path behind some houses. Bicycle down the smaller path and you will see the Jesuit Portuguese site.*

The ruins of the Jesuit Church of San Paolo were also located within the former Portuguese settlement. In 1625, Friar Pedro de Morejon, a Spanish Jesuit, received the tasks of releasing Spanish prisoners held in Siam and helping to start a Jesuit mission. The small Jesuit community came rather quickly to an end in 1632. The founder of the second Jesuit residence was Fr. Tomaso Valguarnera (1608-1677) from Sicily. He arrived from Macau in 1655 and remained in Siam for fifteen years. He later returned to Siam in 1675 because Christians, many of them Japanese, urgently requested a priest of this faith. He built a residence and the San Paolo church in the Portuguese settlement. Valguarnera died there in 1677. The church of San Paolo for the Jesuit sect (locally called Ban Jesuit) was one of the three parishes set up in the Portuguese settlement.

AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (The Foreign Settlements Loop)

In March 1767, the Portuguese settlement and the St Joseph church were attacked, isolated and surrounded by the Burmese. The Christians fought bravely, but they were few and short of ammunition. The Portuguese surrendered to the Burmese on 21 March. For two days the churches and property were protected in order to persuade the French Bishop Brigot with his Christians to surrender. After the French Bishop Brigot surrendered on 23 March, the St Joseph church and seminary, as well as the San Pietro and San Paolo churches, were plundered. The catholic priests were taken prisoners and during the month of May sent to Tavoy in Burma.

The remains of this church are currently being excavated. There are a number of walls visible and traces of the basic foundation layer. There is only enough viewable to get a general idea of the church's size and design. Unlike the Dominican Portuguese site, the burial grounds at this church have remained untouched.

- ❖ *Return to the main road and continue south for some distance. You will pass a Muslim neighborhood and its school before the road comes to an arched bridge. This is your first view of Khlong Takhian on this route. Go over the bridge and continue south on the same road. You will be cycling in the area where the Makassarese refugees once lived before being killed for rebelling against King Narai in 1686. Continue south until hitting a small fork in the road turning in either direction. Both will lead to the next Point of Interest, but it is better to turn right. You will see a road leading to mosque in the direction of the Chao Phraya River. The historic site is a mosque that was originally built 400 years ago.*

Masjid Takia Yokin, also known as Masjid Tiki, was established in 1610 by a Muslim Shiite from India (who embraced elements of Sufism). The mosque is named after a Buddhist monk who converted to Islam after being dazzled by magical feats performed by the mystical Muslim cleric. According to local legend, the Muslim performed a series of miracles such as cracking up a fresh coconut to reveal live shrimp inside. The body of Muslim mystic is said to be still entombed on site in an octagonal shrine marked by a domed roof. Thai Buddhists sometimes visit this shrine to pray for their wishes to be granted. If one comes true, the Buddhist will sometimes donate a few goats to the mosque. At one point, this mosque was a temple known as Wat Chetupol. King Chulalongkorn visited the site while boating down Khlong Takhian and had it repaired for the Sunna Muslims who had lived there since the reign of King Mongkut. He donated a ceremonial cabinet to the mosque that is still on site.

- ❖ *Take the exit leading west when leaving Masjid Takei Yokin. Turn right when you arrive at the next road and start cycling north. In a few minutes, it will merge with road #3469 – which you had been previously biking on. Continue north until you cross a small bridge leading to a different Muslim neighborhood (there may be a market depending on which day of the week). Khlong Khu Cham will be visible on your left. Take the first immediate left turn and go over Khlong Khu Cham. If you continue straight it will parallel Khlong Khu Cham and lead to the final Point of Interest on*

AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (The Foreign Settlements Loop)

this route. However, there are some amazing sites and beautiful natural scenery that can only be seen taking the left turn.

- ❖ *Once you have crossed Khlong Khu Cham, start biking west. The small road will have a slight turn in it before arriving at the next destination. This Point of Interest highlights the cultural diversity of Khlong Takhian with a panoramic view of a mosque and temple in alignment. It is quite common to hear Buddhist monks chanting and Muslims call congregations to prayer.*

Wat Khok Jindaram is an active Buddhist monastery situated on the opposite of Khlong Takhian from Masjid Hidayatun Islam. Most structures in situ reflect the Ratanakosin period. Mirrored-tiles and large white walls are consistent features. The monastery's windows, gables, doorways, and roof are elaborately decorated in red, green, and blue and adorned with golden ornamentation. Golden images are placed above each window frame, and sema boundary markers are highlighted with a Wheel of Dharma. Curiously, there are two ordinations halls on site. Other stone carvings include a number of lions (*Singh*) on the staircase. A small golden Buddha image has been placed at its entrance, and a beautifully carved Buddha image can be found on one side of the ordination hall. Several small chedi are scattered around monastery premises.

Masjid Yami Ul-Islam - This mosque is distinguished by its tall minarets, which is a rare feature among the mosques of Ayutthaya. It was founded beside Khlong Takhian in 1877 under the name of Masjid Al-Iqwan during the reign of Chulalongkorn. It was originally made of wood and much smaller, but the Mustapha, called Kru Pa by most people, thought the building was getting old and damaged, so he raised a budget of approximately 500,000 baht for repairs. This expanded the mosque to multiple levels and added its distinctive minarets. It was then formally registered in July 1956. The size of its congregation expanded so much that prayer areas were set up outside in 1996. It can be visited from Wat Khok Jindaram by simply crossing the bridge between sites and making the first right hand turn.

- ❖ *From the Wat Khok Jindaram exit continue to head west (without crossing the bridge to Masjid Yami Ul-Islam). Your route will have Khlong Takhian on your left hand side, which will only be glimpsed in a few places, and on the right hand side will be some scenic rice fields. This beautiful and colorful stretch of land will continue for about 10-15 minutes. The road will briefly turn in a few places before coming to a fork, but keep right and you will arrive at the next destination with no problem. Actually, the next Point of Interest can be spotted at a long distance away because it stands out amongst the panorama of rice fields. The road will take you right to it, and it will be on the left hand side.*

Wat Samphao Lom or the "Monastery of the Capsized Junk" is an active temple with Buddhist clergy. The large ordination hall or ubosot has been completely renovated, though traces of its brick foundation and interior walls are still observable. This monastery's highlights are its beautifully decorated 3-D murals, and some of this artwork quite literally reaches out at you. Many scenes from Buddha's life (*jakatas*) are elaborately portrayed in

AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (The Foreign Settlements Loop)

intricate detail. This monastery was built when people moved here from Bang Kaja, where the sinking of boats was a problem due to the fast moving confluence of Pa Sak and Chao Phraya rivers. Wat Samphao Lom's name refers to sunken boats, but it is also known as Wat Tham Mai (newly made monastery).

- ❖ *Turn left at Wat Samphao Lom's exit at go north. This route still parallels Khlong Takhian though you will seldom see it. Continue north until you arrive at the main road #3469. Turn left and go forward for just a moment. You will hit a busy crossroad. Turn right and go north once again (if you see a bridge, you have come too far on #3469 road). The road will veer to your right and start heading east. Take the first left hand turn and continue until you reach the Chao Phraya River. This is the location of the nest Point of Interest.*

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

- ❖ *Return to the main road from Saint Joseph Church. turn left, and continue biking east. You will easily see Wat Phutthaisawan on the left-hand side of the road. Its large white prang-chedi can be seen from kilometers away. Turn left and you can explore this active monastery.*

Wat Phutthaisawan is situated opposite the mouth of Khlong Chakrai Yai, presently called Khlong Tho, a canal linking the former Lopburi River (presently Khlong Muang) with the Chao Phraya River and runs adjacent the former Royal Palace grounds. The temple was built in 1353 AD by King Ramathibodi I at the royal residence of "Wiang Lek", the site where he first settled before establishing Ayutthaya as the capital city in 1350. The temple was constructed after his elder brother defeated the Khmers and brought war captives back in 1352. The monastery was possibly one of the first temples constructed in the Ayutthaya Kingdom and has a preaching hall and a great holy reliquary. The Royal Chronicles of

AYUTTHAYA - SOUTHERN BICYCLE TRACK (The Foreign Settlements Loop)

Ayutthaya mention that the army of the King of Ava invaded Ayutthaya in 1549 and set up a stockade in this area. It was taken by the Burmese during the fall of Ayutthaya in 1767. (*)

- ❖ *Turn left at the exit of Wat Phuthaisawan and head east once again. On the right hand, side of the road you will see a Muslim shrine with a domed roof. This is the location of an old mosque that has also been used as a Buddhist temple at one point. It presently functions as a graveyard.*

Chao Kun Khu Cham Cemetery - The Tomb of the 4th Chula Rachamontri named "Chen" is located on an ancient Muslim graveyard called Chao Kun Khu Cham. The cemetery is situated on the west bank of the Khu Cham canal in an area largely populated by Muslims. Chen, a Persian Muslim, was the Phraya Chula Rachamontri in the reign of King Suriyamarin (r. 1758-1767). He was the last Chula Rachamontri of the Ayutthayan era. Chen's family home stood at the mouth of the Khu Cham canal. The Chula Rachamontri controlled from the 17th century onwards the Department of Western Maritime Affairs known in Siam as the Krom Tha Khwa.

- ❖ *Return Route: You have two options for returning. One option is to turn right and explore historic sites along Khlong Ku Cham. This area was once well-populated with dozens of monasteries. However, many of these historic sites have been destroyed. Ruins that are still viewable include Wat Tawet, Wat Bandai Nak, Wat Kaew Fa, and others. These can be very difficult to find even with a local guide. Therefore, we recommend that you continue going east and complete the loop to Wat Khun Phrom. Turn left (at Soi 3) and take the return ferry boat. If you are curious about hard-to-find historic sites in the Khlong Takhian area, visit our website for detailed descriptions and photographs: www.ayutthaya-history.com.*
- ❖ *The ferry boat will deliver you on the opposite side of the Chao Phraya River, back on the main island. The best return route back is to turn right on U-Thong Road and continue east. This route will bypass Pom Phet and Wat Jin on your right and Wat Suwan Dararam to the left. U-Thong road will turn with the natural contours of the island and go north, parallel to the Pa Sak River. You will pass underneath the Pridi Phanomyong Bridge and see traces of old city walls to your right. Continue to Chao Phrom Market and go one block past it. Make a left onto Pa Maprao Road; then take the first road on your left. This will return you to the starting point.*



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.