

AYUTTHAYA HISTORICAL RESEARCH

AYUTTHAYA - BANG PA-IN BICYCLE TRACK

History of Ayutthaya

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AYUTTHAYA – BANG PA-IN BICYCLE TRACK

(Trip to Bang Pa-In)

This bicycle tour has been designed to bring you from Ayutthaya to Bang Pa-In in the most economic way. The bicycle track is about 40 Km long and is paved all the way. You will use two different boat ferries, the first one in the south of Ayutthaya, the second one in the east. The first part of the track brings you along the Portuguese settlement and the return way goes over the Japanese and Dutch settlements. Biking takes about 2-3 hours, but visiting all the Points of Interest will occupy you the whole day. The main target of this track is a visit to the Bang Pa-In Summer Palace and Wat Niwet Thammaprawat, so avoid losing too much time on the way visiting less important reference points. The Bang Pa-In Summer Palace starts blocking visitor entry at 15.00 Hr as it closes an hour later. Wear proper dress, covering arms and legs, when visiting the palace. Be aware there is an entrance fee.

Bang Pa-In Palace is situated by the riverside of the Chao Phraya River, south of the former capital of Thailand, Ayutthaya, and about 60 Km north of Bangkok. The original royal summer palace dates back to the Late Ayutthaya period, during the reign of King Prasat Thong (r. 1629-1656). In 1652, he commissioned the palace to be built as a summer retreat. This original palace was the Isuan Thippaya Ahsana Pavilion, surrounded by royal residences. Soon after, Wat Chumpon Nikayaram was erected as a temple built to commemorate the King's mother, Nang Or-In, who was a native of this village. The temple functioned as a center where royal ceremonies were conducted.

The palace was very popular as a summer retreat by the monarchs until the end of the Ayutthaya period in 1782, when the capital of Siam moved from Ayutthaya to Bangkok. During the Early Ratanakosin period, the palace was deserted. Some eight years later King Rama IV (r.1851-1868) re-activated the palace site. The king commissioned Phraya Ponlathep to restore the palace and subsequently to add three new buildings to the palace compound. He changed the name of the river island from Bang Nang In or Bang Or-In to Bang Pa-In, for aesthetic reasons and out of respect for the name of King Prasat Thong's mother. The present major palace buildings were mostly added under the commission of his son, King Chulalongkorn (r.1868- 1910).

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 taste and time constraints.

If you are interested in viewing photographs of the temples in advance or would like additional historic information about some reference points, 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 40 baht 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.

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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 not recommended 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.

Who are we?

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

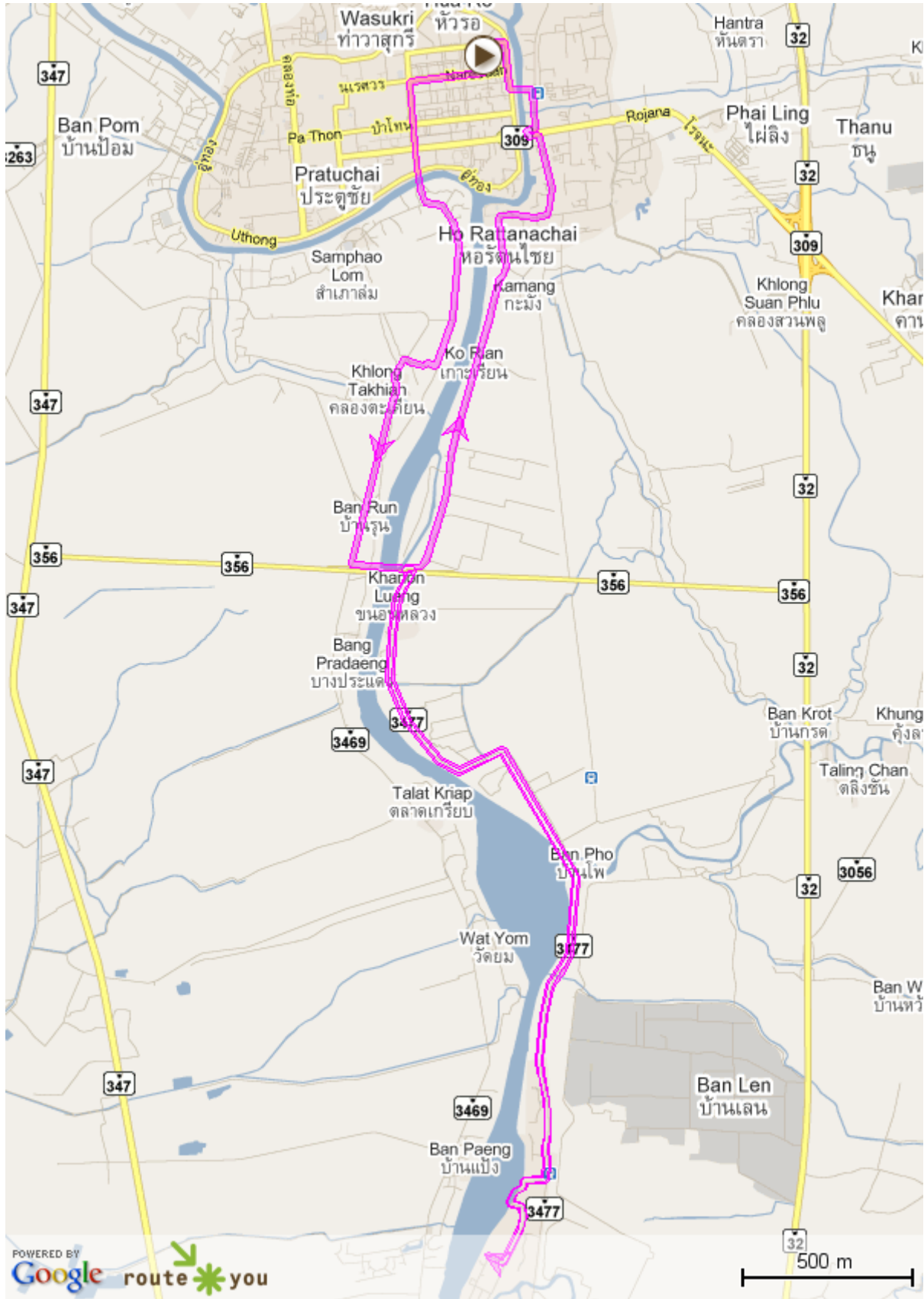
In case of emergency or accident:

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

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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 (Saphan Pa Than) in the middle of the road. This is the gateway to the Ayutthaya Historical 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 (Saphan 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 for only a few baht. The ferry already existed in the Ayutthayan era, but the boats were paddled, not motorized. It was one of the six ferries on the southern side of the city, connecting the landing near Phraya Racha Wangsan's residence to the landing of Wat Khun Phrom. Before there were twenty-two ferry routes between the main land and the city island. 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. 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 on your right. Continue south until you see a ruin directly beside the road on your left-hand side. This is the Dominican Portuguese settlement.*

The ruin of the Dominican Church of San Petro was 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,

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females, and children in layered positions that can be almost surrealistic to view. These excavations were done starting in the 1980s. A curious cross-cultural view is a spirit house with Christian figures inside. (*)

- ❖ *Get back on the main road and continue south for some distance. You will pass a Muslim graveyard and its mosque before the road comes to the bridge over Khlong Takhian.*

The Kudi Cho Fa Mosque is an old Muslim religious site situated along Khlong Takhian, a canal named after the Malabar Ironwood. It was situated close to the mouth of Khlong Takhian and the Marine Vessel Dockyard which housed 30 marine warships and 100 more smaller fighting vessels under the supervision of Phraya Racha Wangsan.

- ❖ *Go over the bridge and continue south on the same road. You will be cycling in the area where the Makassar refugees once lived before being killed for rebelling against King Narai in 1686. After a while you will find a Buddhist temple on your left hand side.*

Wat Kaitia is the last temple before crossing the Chao Phraya River. The monastery is located in Ban Run sub-district, the southernmost sub-district of Ayutthaya. The name of the monastery being "Kaitia" is derived from the Sanskrit word "Caitya" meaning "that which is worthy to be gazed upon," thus "worshipful". The monastery has a small museum displaying a large quantity of ceramic pottery, terracotta kitchenware, and a variety of forged knives and blades. The premises of this temple harbors a few old and huge Siamese anchors.

- ❖ *Continue south until you reach the Road # 356 leading east to the Asian Highway. Turn left onto this road and cross the bridge over the Chao Phraya River. After having crossed the river, get immediately off the road, turn right and continue south on road # 3477 along the east bank of the Chao Phraya River. As you are biking on the left side of the road, there are no points of interest for a few kilometers until you arrive at Bang Pa-In railway station.*

Bang Pa-In Railway Station is the first special station built by order of King Rama V as his rest pavilion on his journey to Bang Pa-In Palace. The pavilion was built entirely of teakwood in a western-styled architecture. Stained-glass panels from Italy were used above the doors and windows as decoration. When the first railroad of Thailand - the track Bangkok - Nakhon Rachasima - was completed up to Ayutthaya on 9 March 1894, the king presided over the official opening ceremony of the Thai Railway Service. Bang Pa-In station was inaugurated on 26 March 1896.

- ❖ *Continue on the road for a few tens of meters and turn right into the road leading to the backside of the palace. Follow this road until you arrive at Wat Chumphon Nikayaram.*

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Wat Chumphon Nikayaram was built in 1632 by King Prasat Thong (r. 1629-1656) at Bang Pa-In, which was Prasat Thong's birthplace. The monastery was presumably built on the site of Prasat Thong's real mother's residence.

- ❖ *Continue on the road curling around Wat Chumphon Nikayaram and follow the east wall of the palace until arriving at the entry. You can leave your bike on the parking lot south of the entry. Do not forget to secure your bike.*

Bang Pa-in Palace dates to the 17th century when King Prasat Thong originally constructed a palace on Bang Pa-In Island in the Chao Phraya River. It is not known how long the palace was used before the Burmese invaded Ayutthaya in 1767 but nothing remained in 1807. King Rama IV, better known as King Mongkut (1851 - 1868) had a residence, Wat Niwet Thamprawat, constructed on the outer island which was built by his son and heir King Chulalongkorn. The present palace dates from King Chulalongkorn (1868 - 1910). Most of the palace buildings still standing today date to the period 1872 - 1889. No longer used as a summer palace by the current royal family Bang Pa-in is occasionally used for receptions and banquets.

- ❖ *Walk behind the parking lot south of the palace entry and take the cable ferry crossing the canal to Wat Niwet Thammaprawat.*

Wat Niwet Thammaprawat lies immediately south of the island on which the Bang Pa-In Palace stands. King Chulalongkorn (r.1868 - 1910) wanted it built in a different architectural style than other Thai Buddhist monasteries. The ordination hall is in the style of a Neo-Gothic Christian church. The windows and doors are stain-glassed. Above the door there is a picture of King Chulalongkorn in royal attire. He named the presiding Buddha image inside Phra Phutthananarumon Thammophat. The completed monastery was dedicated in 1878. The King declared it a royal monastery for the reformed sect of King Mongkut.

- ❖ *Pick up your bike and return to Ayutthaya via the same road in opposite direction. You will arrive on Road # 3477 again. Continue north. After passing the Bang Pa-In Railway station on your right hand side, the next reference point will be Wat Ban Phat.*

Wat Ban Phat is an active monastery located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River at Ban Pho in Bang Pa-In district. The premises feature a venerated Takhian tree or Hopea Odorata, a species of plant in the Dipterocarpaceae family. The large tree is believed to contain a female spirit called Chao Mae Takhian Thong. People expect that the spirit shall give them a lucky lottery number. When making a pledge people should hold to their promise as otherwise they face a curse of the spirit. Mostly people offers nice dresses if their request has been met.

- ❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477, the next reference point will be Wat Pho.*

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Wat Pho or the "Monastery of the Bodhi Tree" is an active monastery located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River at Ban Pho in Bang Pa-In district. The temple features the classical monastic Buddhist structures as ordination hall with chedi, vihara and bell tower. The vihara is in the Late Ayutthaya style with a three-tiered roof and two porches.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477, the next reference point will be Wat Ban Len.*

Wat Ban Len or the "Monastery of Mud Village" is an active monastery located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River at Ban Pho in Bang Pa-In district. The temple features the classical monastic Buddhist structures as ordination hall with chedi, vihara and bell tower. The vihara is in the Late Ayutthaya style with a three-tiered roof and two porches with each a double tiered roof. In front of the monk's living quarters, stands a Buddha image in the open.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477 until you arrive at the location of an "old" land market.*

Talad Kong Khong is an "old styled" market in Khanon Luang sub-district of Bang Pa-In. The market features traditional food and sweets stalls and other commodities as pots and pans, knives, etc. It is a nice stop for a drink and a quick snack. The market is open on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The place is known for its famous noodle shop.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477, the next reference point will be Wat Thong Bo.*

Wat Thong Bo or the "Monastery of the Golden Pond" is an active monastery located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River in Bang Pa-In district. During the Ayutthayan era, a Mon community settled here in an area called Kwan Prasat. The temple at that time was named Pay Prasat. The monastery was located in close proximity of the Main Royal Customs house, where many junks anchored before inspection. It is believed that one of these junks sunk in front of the temple. The large mast was recuperated and still can be seen at the premises. The village was renamed thereafter Ban Sao Kradong, the Village of the Mast. Also the temple's name was changed into Wat Thong Bo or Pay Toplang in the Mon language. The main stupa in a kind of Lanna style, dates back from the Late Ayutthaya period. The chedi is square shaped, built with bricks and lime and has a stairway on the west side. There is a museum in situ.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477, the next reference point will be Wat Prot Sat.*

Near **Wat Prot Sat** in Khanon Luang sub-district, was one of the four main customs houses located, called the Royal Customs Posts of the Four Directions. It was the largest of all tax stations, controlling the incoming and outgoing sea vessels. At the customs houses goods were checked for prohibited items and weapons as prescribed by law, urgent dispatches were sent to the capital, and import and export duty was collected from ships coming and going to the capital. Customs houses were situated on all important waterways around the capital.

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It was here in the last Siam-Burmese War of 1767, that the advance force of the southern Burmese army under Mang Maha Noratha was made to march and established its camp. The Siamese King Ekathat ordered Phraya Taksin (the later King Taksin) to take out a force and attack the Burmese fortification. Phraya Taksin captured the fortification at that time the Burmese received the reinforcements from the southern army. Phraya Taksin found that his forces were insufficient to hold the Burmese fortification, thus abandoned it and reentered the city of Ayutthaya.

In 1670, King Narai gave the head of the Dutch Settlement a small plot of land at Wat Prot Sat to make a garden and a place for holidays or excursions. There stood a small brick house on this plot which was marked as property of the VOC in Siam. By 1697 it was turned into a place for storing and sawing sappan wood to replace the workshop at Ban Chao Phraya.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477, the next reference point is Wat Thamle Thai.*

Wat Thamle Thai or the "Monastery of the Thai Locality" is an active monastery located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River in Bang Pa-In district. The classic temple has an ordination hall and two vihara within the inner boundary wall. The ubosot was built in the Late Ayutthayan style with a three-tiered roof with two porches.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477. Soon you arrive at the bridge crossing the Chao Phraya River. Keep left and take the U-turn under the bridge. Take left and continue north along Road # 3477, the next reference point will be Wat Chang Thong.*

Wat Chang Thong or the "Monastery of the Golden Elephant" is an active monastery located on Khlong Ko Rian in Bang Pa-In district. The temple features the classical monastic Buddhist structures as ordination hall with chedi, vihara and bell tower. Close to the waterside is an old walled funerary chedi.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477, the next active monastery will be Wat Song Kuson.*

Wat Song Kuson or the "Monastery upholding Benevolence" is located on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River, just south of the Japanese settlement. It has the classic monastic structures in situ (ubosot, vihara, bell tower, etc). Wat Song Kuson is a post-Ayutthayan era temple.

❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477, the next point of interest is the Japanese settlement.*

The Japanese settlement is situated on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River in an area called Ko Rian. It was located opposite the Portuguese settlement and was separated from the English and Dutch settlement by the Suan Phlu canal to the north. The Japanese village ran one Km along the river, and extended about half a kilometer inland. The settlement was

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surrounded by canals on the three sides. Its population numbered at the peak of the Siamese-Japanese trade in the first part of the 17th century around 1,500. Trade export consisted of sappan wood, used as dye, lead, tin, forest products and deer hides, used by Japanese warriors to make coats, gloves and firearm cases.

- ❖ *Continue north along Road # 3477. The road will cross a bridge over Khlong Suan phlu. On the left hand side of the road, there is a ship yard; turn left into the boat construction site and make a sharp left southward. This dirt path will lead to the Dutch Settlement (Baan Hollanda). Occasionally, a small gate will block this road from bicycles. If this occurs while you are visiting, simply walk your bike a short distance through the boat yard. The Dutch Settlement is to the south.*

Dutch Settlement - In April, 1633, Joost Schouten, the Dutch VOC Chief-trader, was instructed to build a permanent trading post at Ayutthaya. One year later a two-storey brick building enclosed by a stockade was ready and was called "the lodge". The lodge was special because it was a stone construction, which gave it a "high-status", as in Ayutthaya only the monasteries and palaces were made of stone. The VOC-factory was located north of the English trading post and the Japanese settlement – outside the city walls of Ayutthaya.

By 1732, the territory of the company accommodated 240 families, in total 1,443 people. The Burmese attacked Siam's capital in 1760, and the VOC's trading post was greatly plundered. However, the post continued to serve its purpose until the end of the company's presence in Ayutthaya in 1765. The last VOC ships left Ayutthaya in November 1765. The area of the Dutch lodge was later on a scene of heavy fighting against the Burmese in 1767.

A memorial was built at the old VOC settlement during modern times. Some of the foundations of the destroyed factory have been excavated, but most of the remnants still remain buried as unexplored witnesses of a Dutch adventurous past. The Dutch Government constructed an Information Center on site called "Baan Hollanda".

- ❖ *Return to the main road and continue for a few meters. You will arrive at Wat Phanan Choeng.*

Wat Phanan Choeng - Following the Luang Prasoet version of the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya, Phra Phanan Choeng was built in 1324 (26 years before King U-Thong founded Ayutthaya). The Buddha image originally stood in the open. The Buddha image - made of brick and mortar and covered with stucco - sits in the classic posture of Subduing Mara. It measures (approx) 14 meters at the lap and 19 meters in height including the ornament above the head. Thai people call it "Luang Phor To" or "Great Reverend Father", Chinese or Thais of Chinese origin call it "Sam Po Kong". It is one of the largest, oldest, most beautiful and revered Buddha images of Thailand. The story goes that the image shed tears when the Burmese took Ayutthaya in 1767.

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- ❖ *The next reference point can be seen directly across the street from the Wat Phanan Choeng exit. It is shown on this route simply because people will see it and may wonder about this site.*

Wat Monthop was a ruin situated closely southeast of Wat Phanan Choeng. It is now viewed as part of the larger temple. In situ are a very large Chinese graveyard and a small Chinese shrine. The remains of the ruin known as Wat Monthop have been placed at an open-air structure in the center of the graveyard. Its Buddha image can be seen from the road.

- ❖ *Continue along the main road until you arrive at the busy intersection near the railroad tracks once again. Do not cross the railroad tracks. Make a left and start heading north. You will continue biking in parallel with the railroad tracks (on the eastern side). In a few minutes, you will cross over a small bridge above Khlong Khanom Than. Shortly after, on the left hand side of the road, you will see the entrance gate to Wat Ko Kaeo.*

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

- ❖ *Continue on the same road north. You will cross a small bridge over Khlong Khao San before coming to the next Reference Point. You will see a small active temple on the left hand side of the road.*

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

- ❖ *Continue north on the same road until arriving at Rojana Road (also the Pridi Banomyong Bridge). For safety reasons, it is advisable to turn left and curve around the bridge toward Krung Sri River Hotel. Then make a second left at the first road you come to. Resume biking north. If you prefer, it is also possible to keep going forward and go directly under the bridge to the other side. Either way, the next reference point will be on the left hand side of the road.*

Wat Phichai Songkhram or the "Monastery of War Victory" is a temple still in use by the monastic clergy. It is a classic built temple with an ordination and sermon hall. A copper plate at the monastery indicates that it was built shortly before the final war between Burma and Ayutthaya in 1765. The temple is mentioned in the Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya as being the place where the Phraya of Kamphaeng Phet (later King Taksin) with his followers set up

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camp in December 1766. Phraya Kamphaeng Phet, convinced that Ayutthaya would soon be lost to the Burmese, decided to seek his fortune by escaping south. Folk tale states that he went to pray at Wat Phichai to seek good fortune in his planned escape to the south.

- ❖ *Continue north from Wat Phichai Songkhram. You will bike over a bridge above Khlong Ban Bat. Keep going north until you see “The Seven Seas” restaurant. Then turn left just ahead at the train station. This will lead you to the ferry.*
- ❖ *After crossing the Pa Sak River with the ferry, go to U-Thong Road and turn right bypassing Chao Phrom Market. Head north for one block and then turn left on Pa Maprao Road. You will then turn left at the first road you come past. This returns you to the starting point.*



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