

# Thailand Capitals: Bangkok and Ayutthaya

Presentation by Paul Pacter  
Baker Senior Center

[www.PaulVisits.com](http://www.PaulVisits.com)

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## Top 20 Cities for International Visitors 2018

- |                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Bangkok - 22.8 million | 11 Seoul - 11.3            |
| 2 Paris - 19.1           | 12 Osaka - 10.1            |
| 3 London - 19.1          | 13 Makkah (Mecca) - 10.0   |
| 4 Dubai - 15.9           | 14 Phuket - 9.9            |
| 5 Singapore - 14.7       | 15 Pattaya - 9.4           |
| 6 Kuala Lumpur - 13.8    | 16 Milan - 9.1             |
| 7 New York - 13.6        | 17 Barcelona - 9.1         |
| 8 Istanbul - 13.4        | 18 Palma de Mallorca - 9.0 |
| 9 Tokyo - 12.9           | 19 Bali - 8.3              |
| 10 Antalya - 12.4        | 20 Hong Kong SAR - 8.2     |

<https://www.mastercard.com/news/press/2019/september/bangkok-tops-mastercard-s-global-destination-cities-index-for-the-fourth-consecutive-year/>

## Brief History of Thailand

- Before 1238: Collection of city-states with their own kings.
- 1238 United by King Sri Indraditya.
- 1238 to 1700s prosperity.
  - Ayutthaya is capital. By 1700 largest city in the world (pop. 1,000,000).
- 1767 Conquered by Burma.
- 1782 Kingdom reunited.
  - King Rama I. 1782-1809 → 
  - Bangkok is the capital.

## Political History of Thailand

- 1238 to 1932 Absolute monarchy. No parliament.
  - 1932 Democratic revolution. First constitution plus monarchy.
  - 1933 Uprisings by communists, poor, students. Military coup.
  - 1932 to today: 20 constitutions each following military coups.
- US has generally supported the military coups because they brought stability.**

## The Thai Monarchy

- Thailand was reunited 1782. Rama I became first king of current dynasty.
- Kings are revered in Thailand.
- Lèse-majesté – offense against the dignity of a reigning sovereign.

**"Whoever defames, insults or threatens the King, Queen, the Heir-apparent or the Regent, shall be punished with imprisonment of three to fifteen years."**

## The Last Four Thai Kings

**Rama VII 1925-1935.** Last absolute monarch and first constitutional monarch. Constant fighting with parliament. Abdicated 1935.

**Rama VIII Ananda Mahidol 1935-1946.** Became king as 9-year-old boy living in Switzerland. Died age 19 of gunshot in palace. Brother Bhumibol was last person to visit him.

**Rama IX Bhumibol Adyuleyey 1946-2016.** Reigned 70 years. Revered.

**Rama X Vajiralongkorn.** 2016 to present.



**King Bhumibol - Rama IX**  
1946-2016

**King Bhumibol and then Crown Prince Vajiralongkorn**



**King Vajiralongkorn - Rama X**  
Since 2016

## King Rama X

**Full royal name:** Somdet Phra Boromma-orasathirat Chao Fa Maha Vajiralongkorn Bodindradebayavarangkun Sirikittayasombun-sawangwat Worakuttiyaraajsantiwong Mahitalaphong Adulayadet Chakkrinaresyuppharajvisut Sayammakutrachakuman.



**Short royal name:** Rama X.

**Education:** Primary: Thailand. Secondary: UK. University: Australia. Law Degree: Thailand.

**Oldest Thai monarch to ascend to throne:** Age 64.

**World's wealthiest monarch:** US\$30-70 billion est.

**Current Residence as Thai King:** Germany.

## Succession Problem?

- Under Thai law, the monarch designates his own successor.
- Vajiralongkorn has not done.
- **King has 4 estranged sons living in USA, and one daughter in a coma.**
- In August 2023, this son suddenly turned up in Thailand after 27-year absence. Speculation.



Vacharaesorn Vivacharawongse

## Some Facts about Thailand – 1

- Population 72 million (USA 330 million)
- Area 190,000 sq mi (Florida 66,000 sq mi)
- Ethnic groups
  - Ethnic Thai 74%
  - Thai Chinese 14%
  - Others (Malay, Hill Tribes) 12%
- Capital Bangkok



Tuk-Tuk and Driver, Bangkok

## Some Facts about Thailand – 2

- Money: Thai Baht  
**฿37 = US\$1**
- Language: Thai
- Religion:
  - Buddhism 93%
  - Islam 6%
  - Others 1%
- Drive on the left



สุขสันต์วันเกิด Happy Birthday to You

Left to Right.  
No spaces between words.



Wat Saket, Bangkok

## Thai Government Today

**Officially:** Bi-cameral constitutional parliamentary monarchy.

**2014-2023:** Army Commander-in-Chief (Prayut Chan-o-cha) seized control in military coup and became “interim” Prime Minister. Remained 9 years.

**Aug 2023:** Parliament elected real-estate developer Srettha Thavisin as PM.

## Prayut Chan-o-cha

- Former PM 2014-2023.
- Seized power in 2014 military coup.
- Parliament voted him out August 2023.

Wikipedia (2023):



"Prayut leads an authoritarian regime in Thailand. After seizing power, Prayut's government oversaw a significant crackdown on dissent.... Measures were implemented to limit public discussions about democracy and criticism of the government, including increases in Internet and media censorship."

## Thailand's New PM Aug 2023: Srettha Thavisin

Real estate developer.

Billionaire. US Educated:

- UMass and Claremont MBA.

Strong supporter of

Thailand's last two private sector PMs:

- Thaksin Shinawatra 2001-2006:  
Overwhelmingly elected, but now in jail in Thailand.
- Yingluck Shinawatra 2011-2014:  
Fled to London.

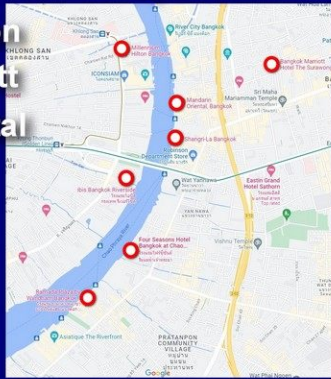


## Bangkok Facts

- Population: 11 million (metro area 16 mil.)
- Area: 606 sq mi.
- On the Chao Phraya River.
  - Many canals throughout Bangkok.
- Flat land: All sea level. Prone to flooding.
- Tropical climate: Mean temperature 82 degrees F 12 months a year.
- Rainy season: May through October. Other six months very dry and sunny.
- Non-stop flights from USA: None.

## Major Bangkok Hotels Are Mostly On or Near the Chao Phraya River

- Millennium Hilton
- Bangkok Marriott
- Mandarin Oriental
- Shangri-La
- Ibis Riverside
- Four Seasons
- Ramada Plaza



**Transportation in Bangkok**  
Underground subway (MRT) and Elevated Skytrain (BRT). Very good, but they do not go near many tourist attractions or hotels. **See next slide.**

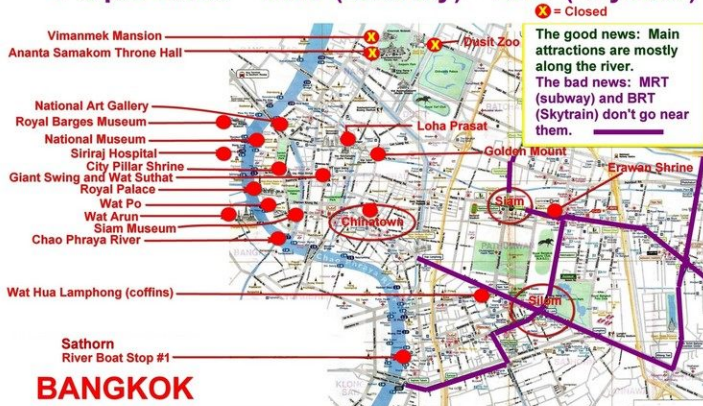
**Airport Train:** Does not stop near tourist hotels.

**Tuk-tuks (Motorized rickshaws):** Good, but you **MUST** agree on price before you get in.

**Taxis:** Very good and inexpensive (less than tuk-tuk). Be sure meter is on.

**River boats:** Outstanding. Stops near most tourist attractions. Inexpensive.

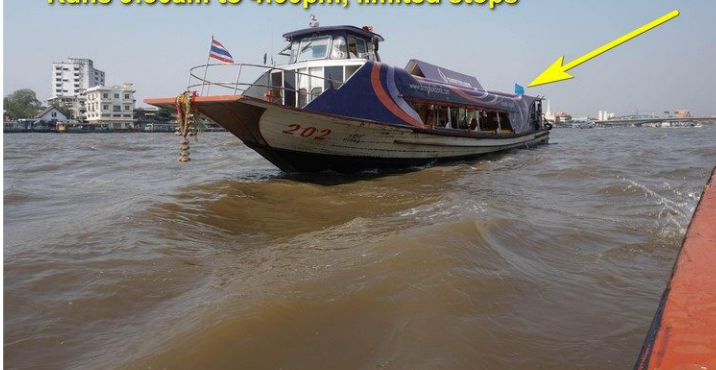
- **Red Dots = Bangkok's Main Tourist Attractions**
- **Purple Lines = MRT (Subway) + BRT (Skytrain)**



**Chao Phraya Water Taxi**  
Orange Flag boats are quite useful for tourists.



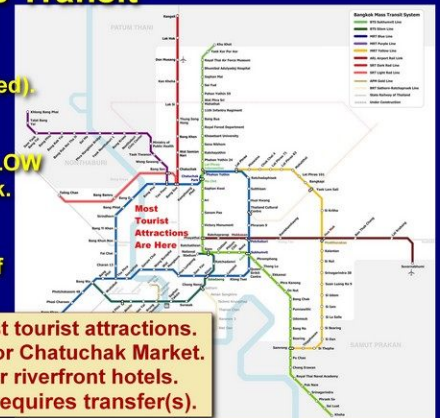
**Chao Phraya River Tourist Boat - Blue Flag**  
150 Bhat for one day unlimited hop-on, hop-off  
Runs 9:30am to 4:00pm, limited stops



## Bangkok Mass Transit

3 separate systems!  
Separate tickets!

- BTS = Skytrain (elevated), GREEN**
- MRT = Subway, BLUE-PURPLE-YELLOW**
- ARL = Airport Rail Link, BROWN**
- Also: Commuter: SRT = State Railway of Thailand, RED**



Not convenient to most tourist attractions. But use BTS or MRT for Chatuchak Market. ARL not convenient for riverfront hotels. ARL for other hotels requires transfer(s).

MRT (Subway Train) Station Entrance



MRT Train  
One long train.  
Open between cars.



BTS Skytrain



Transportation - Tuk-tuks  
Taxis are cheaper and less hassle



Must agree on price before you get in!

Tuk-tuk  
Get in and out  
from left side



### Bangkok Taxis

- Many colors (green and yellow an example)
- Required to turn on meter, but some will try for fixed fee.
- Airport to city: About 300 - 400 Baht.
- In town: 35 Baht first 3km.
- Tipping: No, but round up.
- Change: Bring small notes.



Buses in Bangkok  
Not convenient for tourists



Crowded. No English.

Songthaew - Pickup truck shared taxi  
Not convenient for tourists in Bangkok



Pick-up Truck  
Shared Taxi  
Confusing

Grand Palace - Bangkok  
Residence of King  
since 1782.

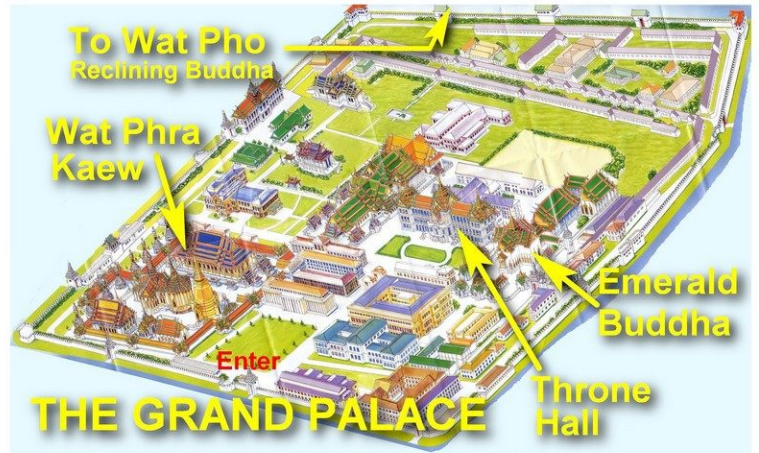
Many buildings, not  
just one "palace"

Wat Pho is  
next door.

Need gov't  
issued photo ID.  
Dress modestly.

Ticket US\$15,  
Daily 8:30a-3:30p.

Most important  
place to visit in  
Bangkok!



Grand Palace  
Wat Phra Kaew  
1784  
Most sacred  
temple in  
Thailand



Grand Palace  
Golden Chedi  
Also called Stupa  
1855



Why is there a model of Cambodia's Angkor  
Wat Temple in Thailand's Royal Palace?

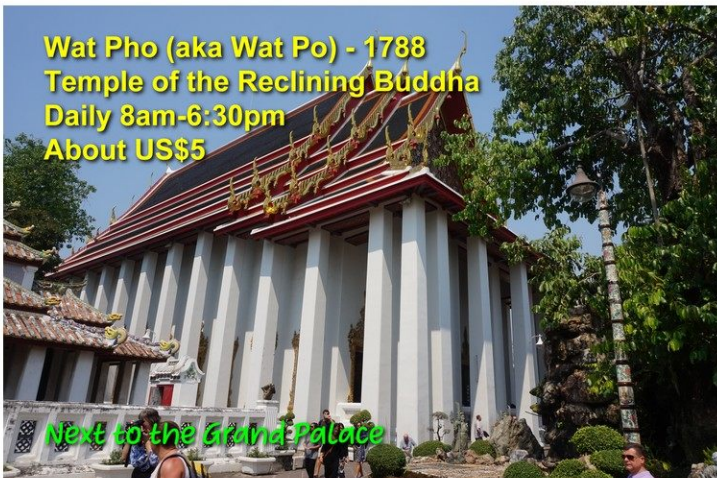


In 1860, Cambodia was under Thai rule. Thai King Rama IV sent 2000 soldiers to dismantle Angkor and bring it to Bangkok brick by brick. They could not do it. So Rama IV built this model instead.

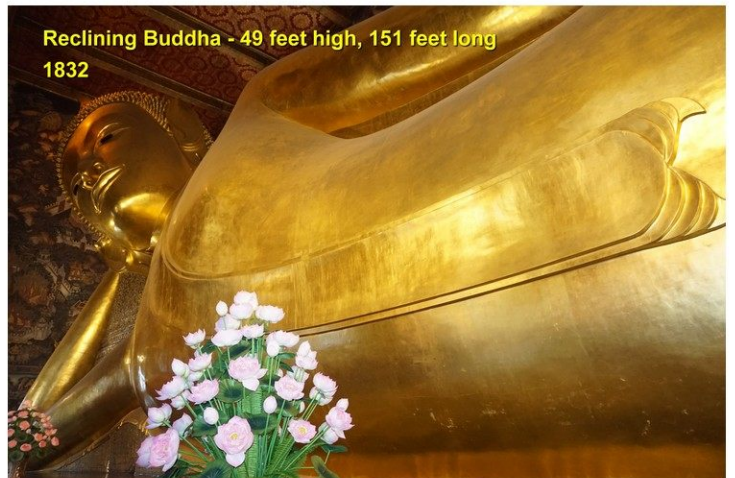
Royal Palace  
Temple of the  
Emerald Buddha  
1783

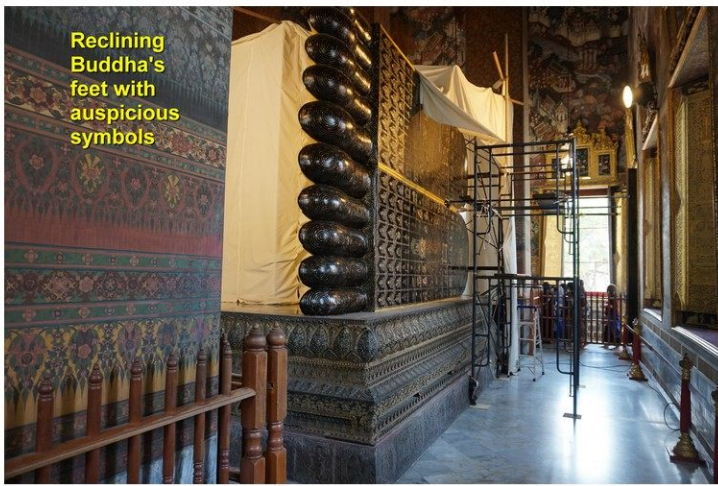


Wat Pho (aka Wat Po) - 1788  
Temple of the Reclining Buddha  
Daily 8am-6:30pm  
About US\$5



Reclining Buddha - 49 feet high, 151 feet long  
1832





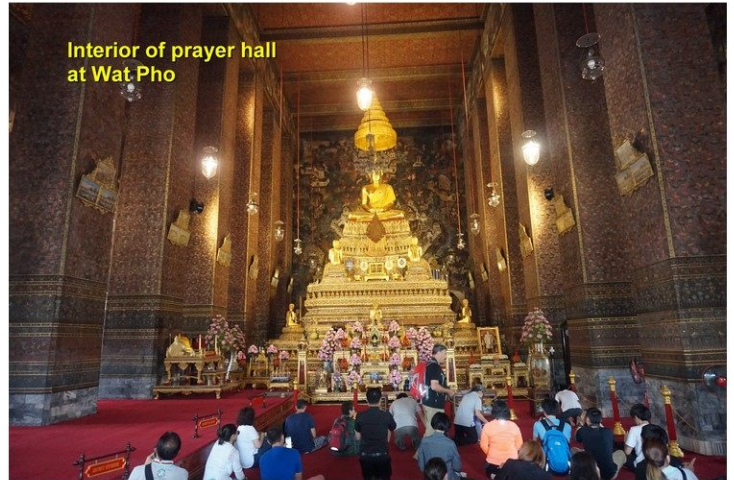
Reclining Buddha's feet with auspicious symbols



Memorial to King Bhumibol at Wat Pho  
Born 1927  
Died 2016  
Reigned 1946-2016  
Queen Elizabeth also reigned 70 years



Wat Pho Phra Maha Chedi



Interior of prayer hall at Wat Pho



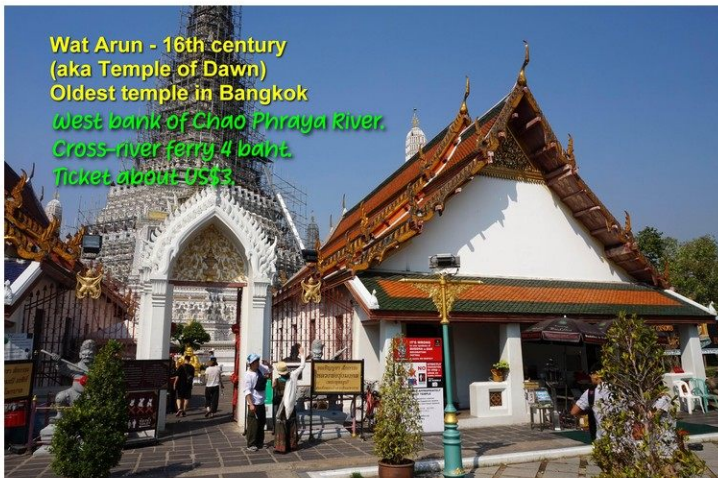
Wat Pho Thai Traditional Medical and Massage School  
Body or foot massage  
420 Baht one hour  
280 Baht 30 minutes  
08:00 to 18:00

Comment: They will provide a gown.  
Some people find Thai massage painful.



**Sightseeing Near the Grand Palace**

- National Art Gallery
- National Museum
- Wat Mahatat
- City Pillar
- Emerald Buddha
- Grand Palace
- Giant Swing-Golden Mt.
- Wat Pho
- Siam Museum
- Wat Arun
- Chinatown



Wat Arun - 16th century (aka Temple of Dawn)  
Oldest temple in Bangkok  
West bank of Chao Phraya River.  
Cross-river ferry 4 baht.  
Ticket about 155฿.



Wat Arun 16th century



Wat Arun  
16th century



Wat Arun  
16th century



Gate Guardians  
Wat Arun



Need half a day, maybe more  
40 Baht.  
**IMPORTANT: Closed Mondays  
and Tuesdays!**

**National Museum collection includes both artifacts and buildings.**

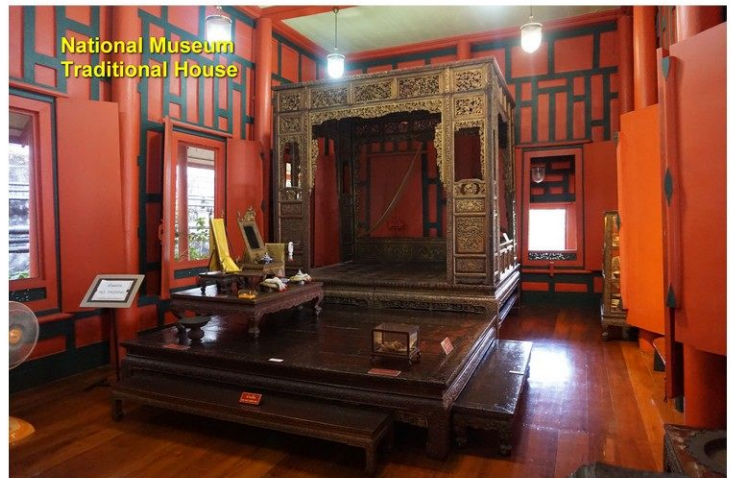
- Thai history gallery.
- Archaeological and art history collections.
- Pre-history gallery.
- Sculptures from 6th to 18th centuries.
- Gold, precious stones, costumes, textiles, ceramics, ivory, royal transportation, weapons.
- Non-Thai Asian art – especially Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Cambodian.
- Historic buildings moved to museum site include several relating to Rama I, including several temples, teak house, and pavilion.



National Museum of Thailand



National Museum  
12th C Visnu Lintel



National Museum  
Traditional House



National Museum  
Historic Wat (Temple)



National Museum  
Historic Wat



National Museum of Thailand



National Museum



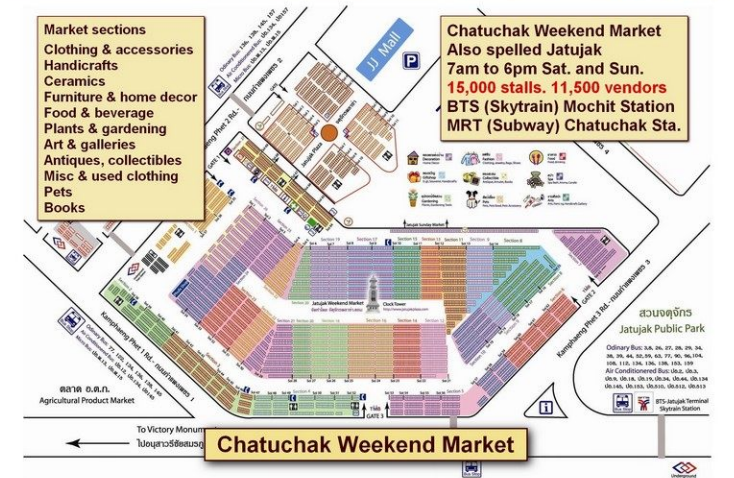
National Museum  
Royal Chariots



National Museum  
Royal Carriage



Student field  
trip to the  
National  
Museum





**Chatuchak Weekend Market**  
To get there: BTS to Mochit, or  
Skytrain to Chatuchak Park



**"World's largest and most diverse weekend market."**  
Over 200,000 visitors each weekend.

**Chatuchak Weekend Market**



**Chatuchak Weekend Market**



**Chatuchak Weekend Market**



**Chatuchak Weekend Market**



**Chatuchak Weekend Market**



**Chatuchak Weekend Market**



**Chatuchak Weekend Market**





17-8270  
Chatuchak Weekend Market



City Pillar Shrine  
Bangkok  
City pillars are the "Soul" of a Thai city.  
Symbolize "Harmonious Living"



City Pillar Shrine  
Bangkok  
Pillar built by King Rama I in 1782



Erawan Shrine  
Hindu, 1956  
Chitlom



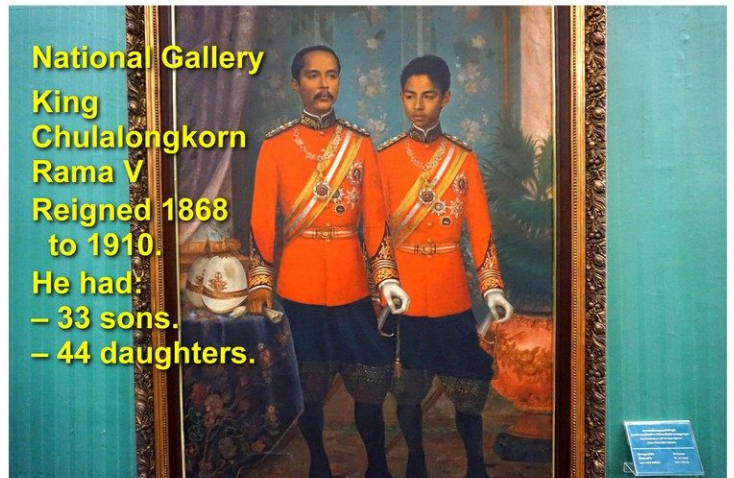
Erawan Shrine  
17 August 2015  
bombing killed 20, injured 125.



Giant Swing - 1784  
Until 1935 daring men swing and catch bags of money with their teeth - dangerous and deadly religious ceremony.



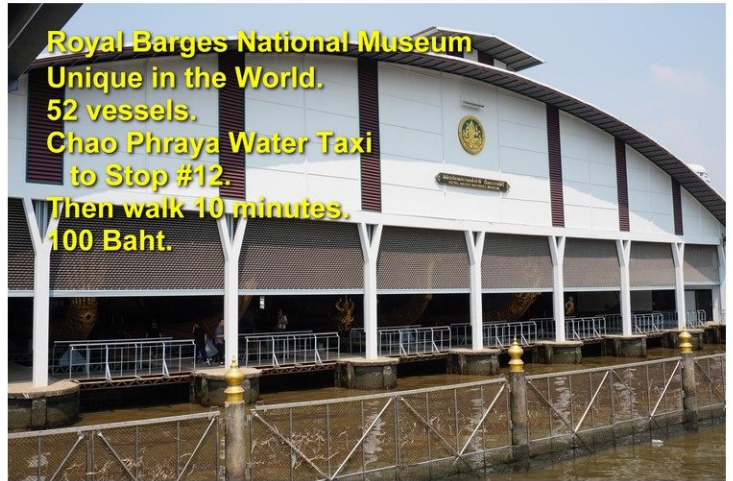
National Gallery of Art  
1902-1974 building was the Royal Mint



National Gallery  
King Chulalongkorn Rama V  
Reigned 1868 to 1910.  
He had  
- 33 sons.  
- 44 daughters.



**National Gallery of Art, Bangkok**



**Royal Barges National Museum**  
Unique in the World.  
52 vessels.  
Chao Phraya Water Taxi to Stop #12.  
Then walk 10 minutes.  
100 Baht.

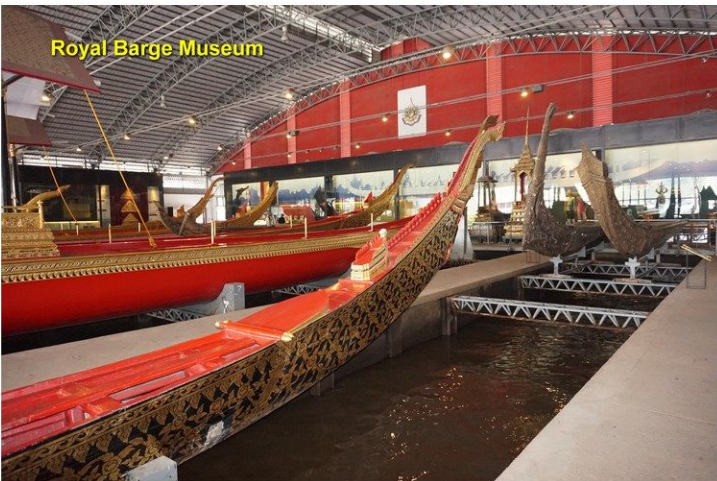


**Royal Barge Museum**  
52 barges on display

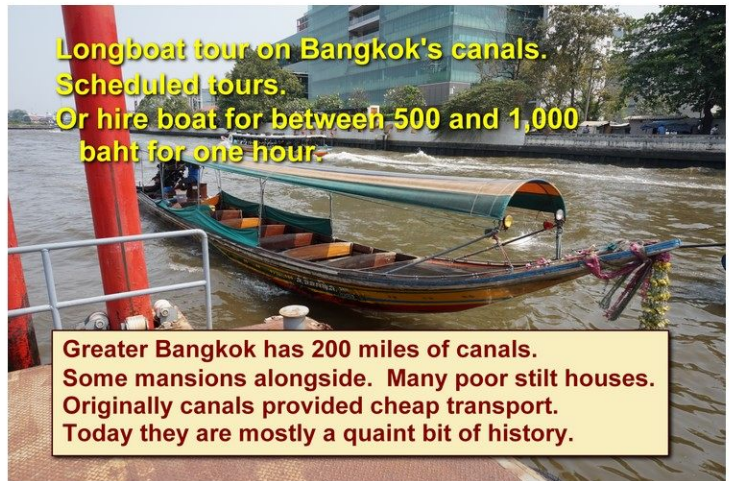
This one, dating from 1911, is the most important. 46 metres long. King's barge today.



Barges up to 200 years old



**Royal Barge Museum**



**Longboat tour on Bangkok's canals.**  
Scheduled tours.  
Or hire boat for between 500 and 1,000 baht for one hour.

Greater Bangkok has 200 miles of canals. Some mansions alongside. Many poor stilt houses. Originally canals provided cheap transport. Today they are mostly a quaint bit of history.



**Canal Boat Trip**  
Stilt Houses



**Canal Boat Trip**  
Asian Water Monitor Lizard (aka Varanus)  
Adults 5-6 feet long  
Carnivorous



Internet Photo



Canal Boat Trip



Nonthaburi - Express Boat Stop #30 Market, Chinese Temple, Provincial Museum



Nonthaburi Food Market



Nonthaburi Food Market

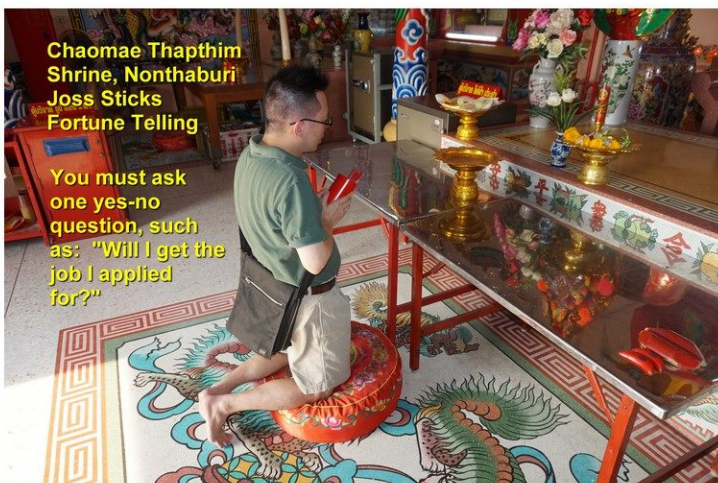


Kids getting out of school Nonthaburi

Every kid in the world does a science project about the planets!

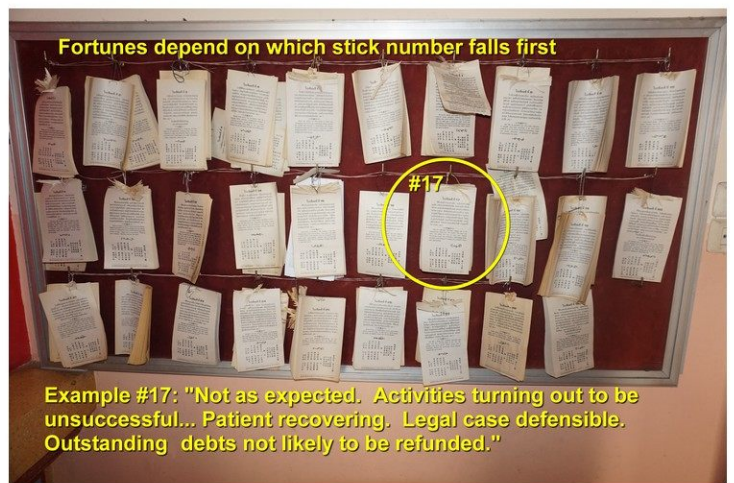


Chaomae Thapthim Shrine, Nonthaburi



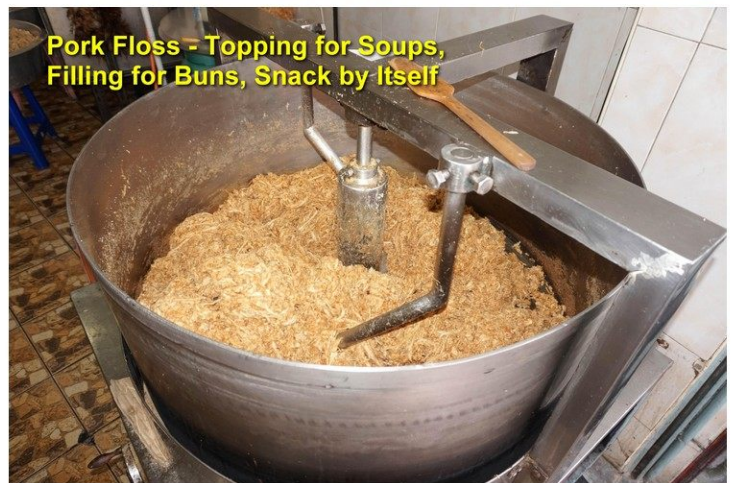
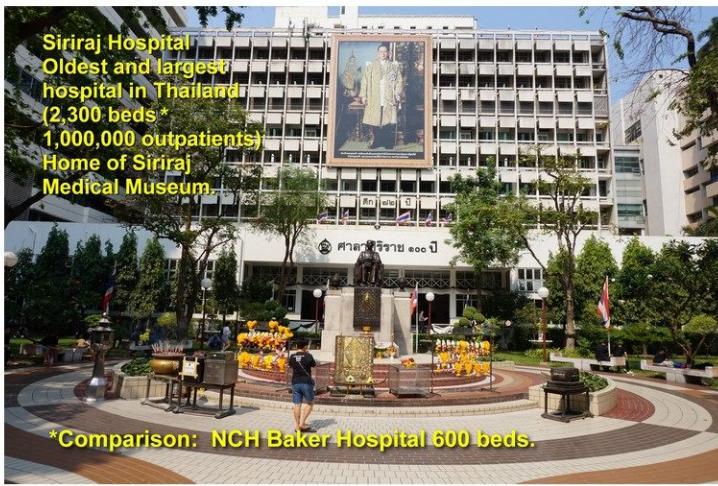
Chaomae Thapthim Shrine, Nonthaburi Joss Sticks Fortune Telling

You must ask one yes-no question, such as: "Will I get the job I applied for?"



Fortunes depend on which stick number falls first

Example #17: "Not as expected. Activities turning out to be unsuccessful... Patient recovering. Legal case defensible. Outstanding debts not likely to be refunded."





Chinatown  
Coffins for sale



Chinatown - grilled bananas



Chinatown Market  
Crabs and Tiny Clams



Chinatown Market  
Durians

ASK Smithsonian

Why Does the Durian Fruit Smell So Terrible?

Scientists examine what chemicals make the Asian fruit smell like "turpentine and onions, garnished with a gym sock"



NO Durians  
allowed inside!



Chinatown - Bangkok  
Chua Tute Temple



Chinatown - Bangkok  
Chua Tute Temple



Chinatown - Bangkok  
Pork drying in the sun



Chiu Ying Chinese Temple  
Bangkok



Thai calendar  
begins 543 BC  
– death of the  
Buddha.  
So Thai year is  
Western year  
+ 543.  
2017 + 543 =  
2560.

Thais would  
write 2560 BE.  
BE stands for  
Buddhist Era.



Sao Ching Cha Buddhist Market  
Near the giant swing

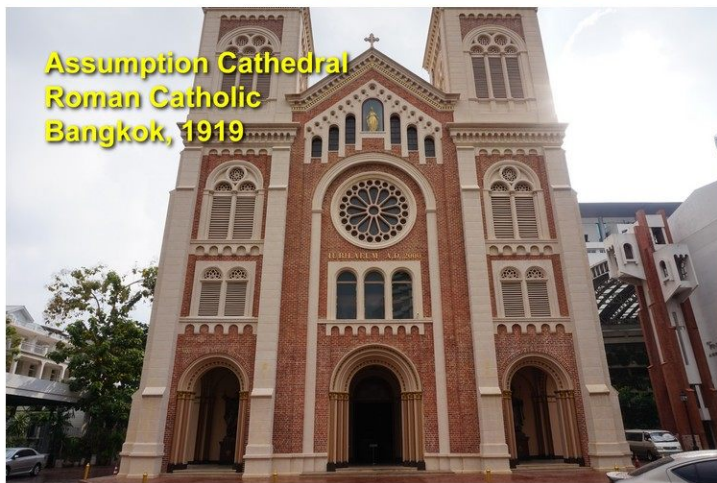


Sao Ching Cha Buddhist Market



Museum of Siam  
19th century  
Former government building

Created in 2007 to teach the national identity and history of the people of Thailand, and their relationships with neighboring cultures.



Assumption Cathedral  
Roman Catholic  
Bangkok, 1919



Assumption Cathedral  
Bangkok, 1919  
Bangrak (Sathorn)  
District



Motorcycle  
Brush  
Seller







Wat Hua Lamphong  
Feeding cows  
(sustaining living things)



Wat Hua Lamphong



Wat Hua Lamphong  
Shrine



Donating a coffin for the poor  
At Wat Hua Lamphong



Donating a coffin for the poor at Wat Hua Lamphong  
Glue paper onto coffin



Certificate for  
Coffin Donation

4 / 3 / 60  
March 4, 2560



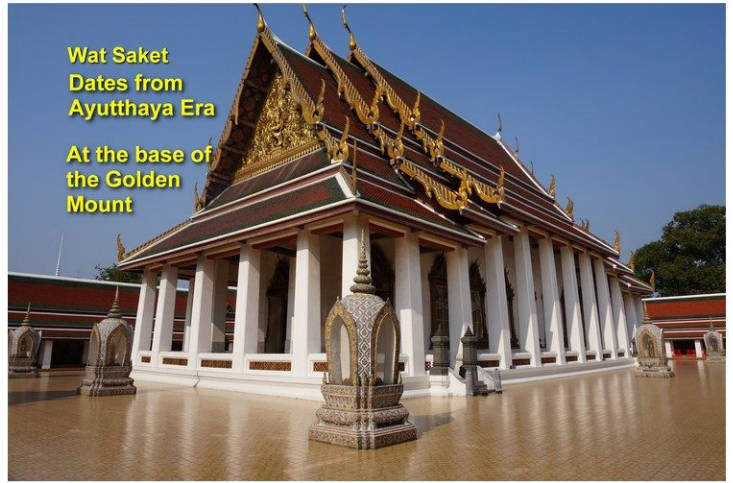
Wat Mahathat - 1700s



Wat Mahathat  
Royal Temple



Wat Mahathat  
Royal Temple



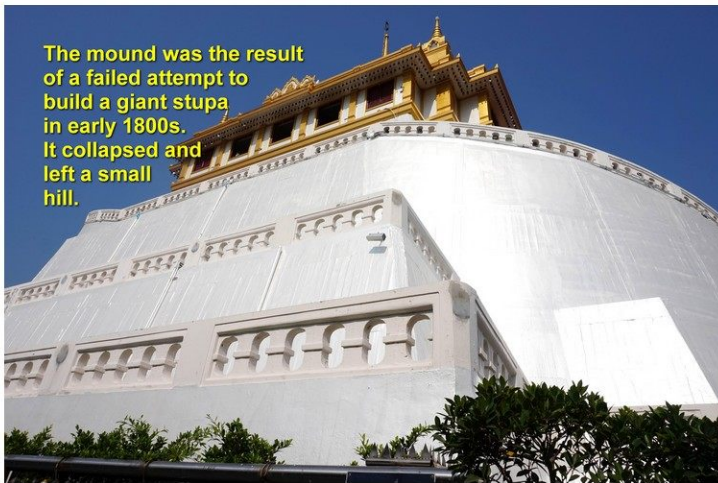
Wat Saket  
Dates from  
Ayutthaya Era  
  
At the base of  
the Golden  
Mount



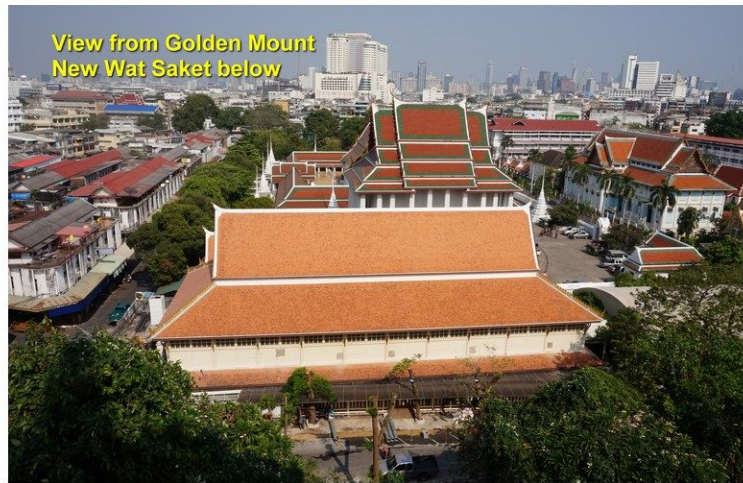
Wat Saket  
Effigy of former  
Head Monk



Golden Mount  
Wat Saket  
Artificial hill



The mound was the result  
of a failed attempt to  
build a giant stupa  
in early 1800s.  
It collapsed and  
left a small  
hill.



View from Golden Mount  
New Wat Saket below



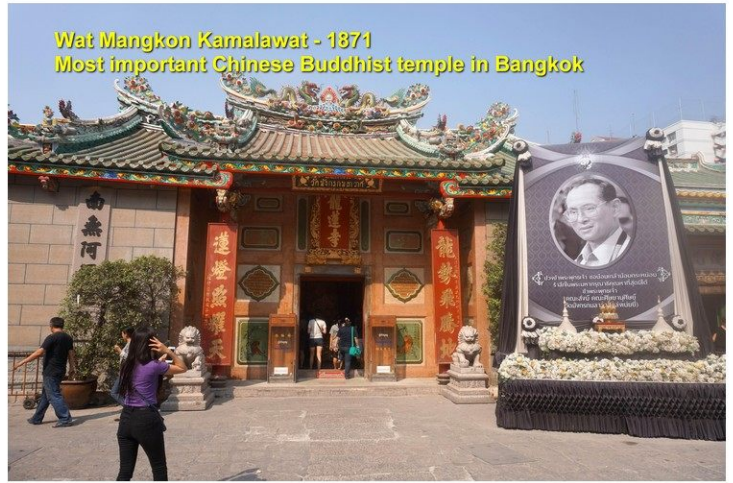
Shrine at top of  
Golden Mount



Wat Ratchanadda - 1846  
(near Golden Mount)



Wat Ratchanadda



Wat Mangkon Kamalawat - 1871  
Most important Chinese Buddhist temple in Bangkok



Wat Mangkon Kamalawat - 1871



Wat Suthat  
Built 1807-1847



Wat Suthat  
Buddha Images



Wat Suthat - Prayers

## Thai Cuisine

- Aromatic
- Spicy
- Sour or sweet
- Salty
- Bitter

Oh yes – did I mention spicy?

Wikipedia:

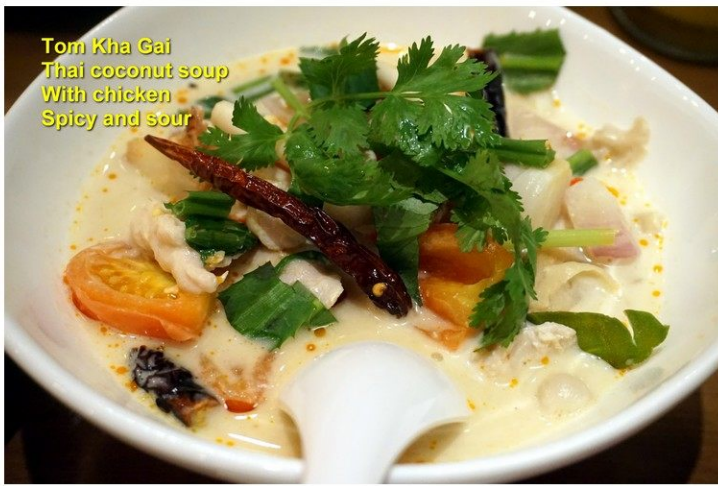
"Seven of Thailand's popular dishes appeared on the list of the 'World's 50 Most Delicious Foods (Readers' Pick)' – a worldwide online poll of 35,000 people by CNN Travel. Thailand had more dishes on the list than any other country."



Green Curry



Pad Thai  
Fried rice noodles  
With chicken or beef or pork  
Bean sprouts  
Egg





Thai Roasted Chicken



Thai Oyster Omelette  
Shopping Mall  
Food Court  
About US\$2



Tom Yum Goong  
Hot and Sour Soup  
Chicken or Seafood



245 McDonald's  
in Thailand

\*BTW: 409 Starbucks in Thailand



## Ayutthaya

About 80km north of Bangkok.

Settled 1300s.

Became a huge and prosperous trading city.

By 1700, population of Ayutthaya was 1,000,000.

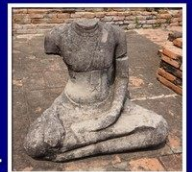
- Largest city in the world!
- Bigger than London, Paris, Rome.

Ayutthaya was a warring state. Conquered many surrounding regions, including Sukkothai, Chiang Mai, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia.

Ayutthaya and Burma had many wars.

Finally Burma conquered Ayutthaya 1767.

- Ayutthaya was completely destroyed.
- Ruins are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



## Why didn't the Thais rebuild Ayutthaya?

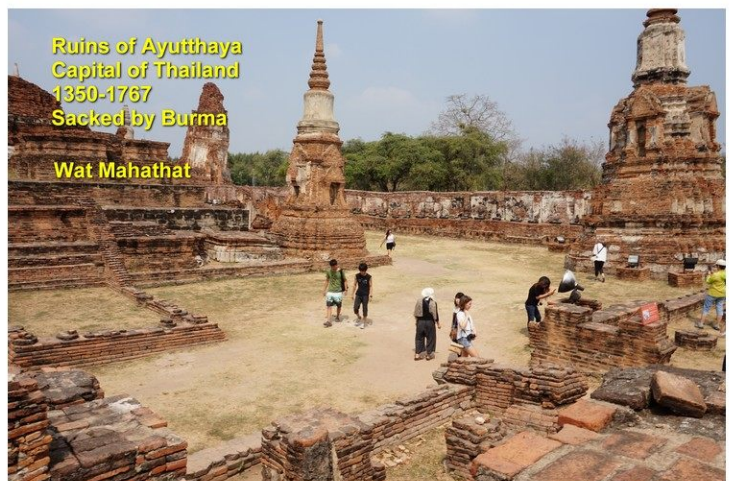
1. Too far in the hinterlands for defense purposes.
2. Too far from sea transport for commerce.

So in 1768, the Thai King made Thonburi (north part of today's Bangkok) the new capital.

In 1782 King Rama I moved the capital to Bangkok (called Rattanakosin at that time). Rama I was first monarch of the dynasty that continues to rule Thailand today.

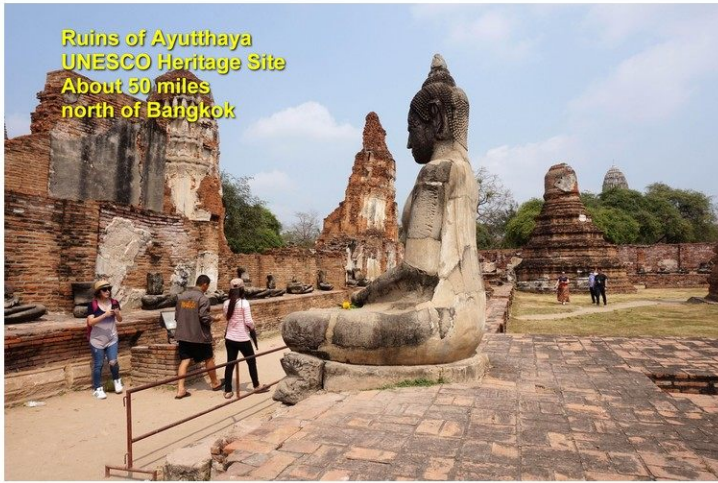


Rama 1 and Ramas 2-10



Ruins of Ayutthaya  
Capital of Thailand  
1350-1767  
Sacked by Burma

Wat Mahathat



Ruins of Ayutthaya  
UNESCO Heritage Site  
About 50 miles  
north of Bangkok



Ayutthaya  
This kind of tower  
is called a prang.

Wat Mahathat



Ayutthaya  
Meditation Chamber



Ayutthaya  
Wat Naphramane  
1503

Not destroyed in 1767 because  
Burmese used it as their army  
headquarters



Wat Naphramane  
Phra Khantharat Buddha  
Around 1600  
6 metres high



Ayutthaya  
Reclining Buddha, 1500s  
Wat Lokayasutharam  
37 metres long, 8 metres high



Lunch on two-hour river cruise  
Ayutthaya to Bangkok

### Bang Pa-in Royal Palace (Summer Palace)

- In Ayutthaya Province.
- Built 1632.
- Fell into ruins in mid-1700s.
- Restored late 1800s.
- Still used by Royal Family for special occasions.





Bang Pa-in Royal Palace, 1632  
Also called Summer Palace



Bang Pa-in Royal Palace  
Also called Summer Palace



Bang Pa-in Royal Palace  
Aisawan Dhiphya-Asana  
Pavilion



Monitor Lizard  
on grounds of  
Bang Pa-in Royal Palace

*At least 5 feet long*



**THE END**  
of our visit to Thai Capitals:  
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