



89 Soi Wat Suan Plu, New Road, Bangrak, Bangkok 10500, Thailand.

Tel : (662) 236 7777 Fax : (662) 237 3688

slbk@shangri-la.com www.shangri-la.com/bangkok

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Horizon Cruise Guidebook

Cruising along the River of Kings



The magic of cruising along the Chao Phraya River

lies in the history and cultural landmarks located along the river.

After he seized power and assumed the throne, Phrabat Somdet Phra Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke (King Rama I) decided to move the capital city from one side of the Chao Phraya River to the other. Communities were resettled to the new eastern city.

Historical landmarks are located on both sides and can be seen from the river. The east bank is the side where Shangri-La Hotel, Bangkok, is located, while the west bank, the opposite side, is known as Thonburi.

Commencing from the Shangri-La pier, the Horizon Cruise will take you north to witness the magic and charm of old Siam.



I. River City Shopping Complex

River City opened in 1984 as the city's first riverside shopping complex. Easily accessible by Si Phraya Pier, River City is well known as a centre for Asian art and antiques. Over a hundred shops feature rare Buddha images, old Chinese porcelain, wood crafted décor and a great variety of jewellery. On the first Saturday of each month, River City conducts an auction for art and antique goods with appraisals from trustworthy experts.

River City opens daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Antique shops may close as early as 7 p.m.



2. Holy Rosary Catholic Church (The Kalawar Church)

The Portuguese missionaries established Holy Rosary Church in 1786, following a land grant by King Rama I. The wonderful Neo-Gothic style architecture seen today is the result of rebuilding work carried out between 1891 and 1898. It is known as Kalawar church among the local people. The word Kalawar is derived from Calvary, the name of the hill near Jerusalem where Jesus Christ was crucified. Holy Rosary Church is one of the oldest of the 67 churches in Bangkok.



3. Guan Yu Shrine

The Guan Yu Shrine is dedicated to the ancient Chinese god of war, a legacy of the early Chinese immigrants who settled during the Ayutthaya era.

Guan Yu, an ancient Chinese general in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, played a pivotal role in the civil wars of the warring kingdoms of China. He is immortalised in the Chinese classic Romance of the Three Kingdoms.

Renowned for his courage, integrity, loyalty and righteousness, Guan Yu was elevated to a deity after his death, and the Guan Yu Shrine became an institution in Chinese culture.



7. Santa Cruz Church

Built in 1770 after the fall of Ayutthaya, the Church of the Holy Cross is a legacy of Thai-Portuguese relations that dates back to the 16th century.

King Taksin granted the Portuguese Catholics a plot of land to build a church in this area. The church fell into a state of disrepair. It was rebuilt in 1835. The new church had a rather Chinese design, so the villagers named it “Wat Kudi Jeen”, or Chinese church.

In 1916, the third version of Santa Cruz Church was built during the reign of King Rama VI and remains in operation today.



8. Chakrabongse House

Chakrabongse House was originally called “Wang Tha Tian” (Tha Tian Palace). It was built in late 1909 as a riverside pavilion for Prince Chakrabongsebhuvanat and Lady Kathrin, his wife. It was also intended to be a house for their son, Prince Chulachakrabongse.

The architectural style is Domestic Revival. The building has 2 floors at the front and three floors in the left wing and a tower. The tower houses the relics of King Rama V, Queen Si Patcharinthra, Prince Chakrabongsebhuvanat, and Prince Chulachakrabongse.

The house belongs to Mom Ratchawong Narisa Chakrabongse, the only daughter of Prince Chulachakrabongse.



4. Kiang Au Keng Shrine

When King Taksin the Great established Thonburi as the new capital city on the west side of the Chao Phraya River, Chinese people willingly followed him and resettled their home there. In Chinese belief, it is good fortune to live near a shrine. The community, therefore, built two shrines alongside the river, which were rebuilt as pagodas during the reign of King Rama III.



5. Phra Pok Klao Bridge

A bridge crossing the Chao Phraya River has been named after King Rama VII, and is therefore called “Rama VII Bridge”. It was designed to alleviate traffic congestion on the adjacent Memorial Bridge.



6. Phra Buddha Yodfa Bridge

Phra Buddha Yodfa Bridge is a bridge over the Chao Phraya River, connecting the districts of Phra Nakhon and Thonburi. The bridge was opened on 6 April 1932 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Chakri Dynasty. In English, the bridge is commonly known as Memorial Bridge. However, in Thai it is most commonly known as Phra Buddha Yodfa Bridge, after King Buddha Yodfa (Rama I), the first king of the Chakri Dynasty.



9. Wat Kalayanamitr

The Kalayanamitr temple was established in 1825 by a high-ranking officer, Chaophraya Nikornbadin or “To”, who donated his land for building the temple. Later, he presented it to King Rama III, who named the temple “Kalayanamitr”, which means “a good friend”.

“KALAYANAMITR”,
WHICH MEANS
“A GOOD FRIEND”.

The King contributed to the temple by building a hall where the principle Buddha image is now enshrined.



10. Wat Arun, Temple of the Dawn

Wat Arun, the Temple of Dawn, is one of Bangkok's best known landmarks. It stands on the west bank of the Chao Phraya River in Thon Buri. The outstanding feature of Wat Arun is its central 82-metre-high prang, a Khmer-style pagoda that is reflected off the first light of the morning with a pearly iridescence.

The monastery has existed for many years, since the days when Ayutthaya was the capital of Thailand. It was then named Wat Mokok.

The name of the temple changed a few times, until King Rama IV gave the temple its present name, Wat Arunratchawararam.



"WICHAIYEN
FORT"

11. The Wichai Prasit Fort

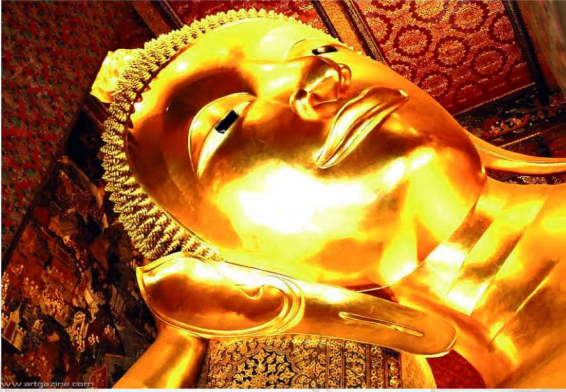
Originally, this fort's name was "Wichaiyen fort". The fort was built in the reign of King Narai the Great and was badly damaged during a war between Thailand and France during the reign of King Paitraja. After King Tak Sin resurrected the independence for the Kingdom, he ordered the rehabilitation of the fort and renamed it as "Wichai Prasit Fort" in 2314.

The fortress, which once hosted artillery pieces, has now become a place to fire celebration gun salutes.

12. The Royal Thai Navy Convention Hall

Thailand was chosen to host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting (APEC 2003) with 21 participating country delegations. To prepare for the conference, the Thai Government issued a cabinet resolution on 23 April 2002 for the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) to prepare a conference venue at which to hold a grand dinner for the participants together with viewing facilities for the Royal Barge Procession. The RTN built the Convention Hall on the areas of the RTN Military Police Department because the site was on the bank of the Chao Praya River and opposite to the Royal Palace, which provides wonderful scenery.





13. Wat Pho

The official name of Wat Pho is Wat Phra Chetuphon, but it is popularly known as the Temple of the Reclining Buddha. Originally built in the reign of King Phetracha during the Ayutthaya Kingdom, it is one of the oldest and largest Buddhist temples in Thailand.

King Rama III instructed that Wat Pho be used to reconstitute the Siamese heritage. One result was 1,360 inscriptions recounting science, medicine, literature, botany, geography, history and astrology. This visual archive helped perpetuate important components of Siamese wisdom. Therefore, it is regarded as Thailand's first university and a centre for traditional Thai massage.

14. The Grand Palace and Royal Temple

One of the most visited landmarks in Bangkok, The Grand Palace was built in 1782 by King Rama I after Bangkok was established as the new capital of Thailand, to serve as a residence and offices for the royal family.

Within The Grand Palace walls is the royal temple, Wat Phra Kaew, which houses the world-renowned Emerald Buddha. The Emerald Buddha is regarded as Thailand's most sacred Buddha image and hundreds of Thais visit each day to pray before it.

Parts of the complex are still used for state functions and ceremonies.





15. Wat Rakhang Kositaram

On the west bank across the river from Maharaj Pier stands the Temple of the Golden Bell. The temple was built during the great Ayutthaya period. It was restored and appointed as a royal temple by King Taksin as well as the centre of the revision of the “Tripitaka,” the Buddhist scriptures that were taken from Nakhon Si Thammarat province. King Taksin named the temple “Golden Bell” after finding a melodious bell hidden in the temple area.

16. Somdej Phra Pin Klao Bridge

With the cooperation and financial support from the Government of Japan, the Somdej Phra Pin Klao Bridge was built in 1971 to help relieve the traffic congestion. The name “Somdej Phra Pin Klao” was given to the bridge to commemorate the last deputy king in Thai history, Somdej Phra Pin Klao, who was the younger brother of King Mongkut (Rama IV).





17. Tha Phra Athit

Tha Phra Athit is well-known to many foreigners as it leads to Kao San Road, the road made famous by the many backpackers it attracts. There are also several trendy bars in the area. Tha Phra Athit was named after the Phra Athit Road, where artists would gather and display their works.



18. Santi Chai Prakarn Pavilion and Public Park

Santi Chai Prakarn Pavilion and Public Park commemorates the auspicious occasion of the sixth cycle birthday anniversary of His Majesty the King on 5 December 1999. It is near Phra Sumen Fort and was constructed with the cooperation of the Royal Thai Government and the public. With scenic views of the Chao Phraya River and the Rama VIII Bridge, the spacious area is popular with Thais and foreigners, especially those from the nearby Bang Lamphu community.

19. Wat Rachathiwas

Located near the Krunghthon Bridge on the east bank of the Chao Phraya River, the temple's original name was Samorrai Temple. King Rama IV resided at the temple during his time as a monk. King Rama IV ordered the renovation of the temple and gave it its present name, Rachathiwas, which means "the residence of the King."



20. Bangkokunprom Palace

Situated on the banks of the Chao Phraya River, Bangkokunprom Palace is significant in terms of architecture, art and history, and is renowned for its sublime stucco, rococo, baroque and German art nouveau architecture.

Completed in 1906 on King Chulalongkorn's command, the palace was the home of King Chulalongkorn's 33rd son, HRH Prince Paribatra Sukhumbhand for 30 years and was turned into government offices after the 1932 revolution. The palace became the office of the central bank in 1945, and the abode of the Bank of Thailand Museum in 1992, with exhibits featuring the prince's life, the history of the central bank and Thai and foreign currencies.



21. Wat Poramai Yikawat

This old monastery, located in Ko Kret (Kret Island), was constructed in the Mon style about 200 years ago. The temple was renovated by the royal order of King Rama V. The main attractions are a large reclining Buddha, mural paintings, a Mon style marble carved pagoda, the museum and the principal image in the Ubosot. There is a village on Ko Kret, where the villagers produce ancient Mon style pottery called Kwan Arman. It is accessible by a ferry from Wat Sanam Nua which is located not far from the Amphoe Pak Kret office.

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