

BANGKOK



Grand Palace

The Grand Palace has an area of 218,400 sq. meters and is surrounded by walls built in 1782. The length of the four walls is 1,900 meters. Within these walls are situated government offices and the Chapel Royal of the Emerald Buddha besides the royal residences.

When Siam restored law and order after the fall of Ayutthaya the monarch lived in Thonburi on the west side of the river. Rama I, on ascending the throne, moved the centre of administration to this side of the Chao Phraya; and, after erecting public monuments such as fortifications and monasteries, built a palace to serve not only as his residence but also his offices--the various ministries, only one of which remains in the palace walls.

This palace came to be known as the Grand Palace, in which the earliest edifices contemporary with the foundation of Bangkok were the two groups of residences named the Dusit Maha Prasat and the Phra Maha Monthian.

Emerald Buddha Temple(Wat Phra Kaew)

Wat Phra Kaew (วัดพระแก้ว), the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, and the adjoining **Grand Palace** together form perhaps the greatest spectacle for the visitor to Bangkok. Despite the fact that the whole compound is so full of tourists you spend half the time trying to avoid getting in people's photos, it's still a pretty amazing place to visit. It consists of over 100 brightly colored buildings, golden spires and glittering mosaics, and dates back to 1782, when Bangkok was founded. When you enter the compound, you first of all see Wat Phra Kaew and the nearby attractions, and then move on to the **Grand Palace** afterwards. Wat Phra Kaew itself, generally known to



the Thais as Wat Phra Si Rattana Satsadaram, is perhaps the main attraction. This is Thailand's most important and sacred temple, so you're expected to act with due respect inside it. It houses the tiny (between 60 and 75 cm) Emerald Buddha, which is located high above the heads of the worshippers and tourists. Not much is known for certain about the statue,



except that it isn't actually made of emerald but rather of green jade or jasper. Getting a good look at it is difficult as photography is forbidden inside the temple, and it's perched so high up inside its glass box that it's difficult to really see.

It's thought to have been made in the 15th century and was the cause of several wars before ending up for good in Bangkok in 1782. The image is considered a talisman and holds tremendous significance for Thailand and the Thais. The 'robe' that it wears is changed 3 times each year by the King himself, at the start of each season: A diamond encrusted gold robe during the hot season, a solid gold robe in the cool

season and a gilded monk's robe in the rainy season. There are also many other Buddha images inside the temple.

Round the interior walls are murals depicting the jataka stories. These are located according to the typical Thai conventions inside temples. The ones facing the altar depict the victory of the Buddha over the evil demon Mara, as he subdues her and

achieves enlightenment. As is normal for Thai temples, shoes must be taken off before entering into the temple.

Despite its national importance, Wat Phra Kaew is the only temple in Thailand that doesn't have any resident monks, and so is not a seat of Buddhist learning in the same way as the likes of **Wat Pho** and **Wat Mahathat**.

A cloister surrounds the temple, and depicted along here is an extensive mural of the Ramakian, the Thai version of the famous Indian epic, the Ramayana. In total there are 178 sections, and although they date from the reign of King Mongkut (Rama IV 1825-1850) they have since been restored on numerous occasions. The explanatory texts across from each were devised by King Chulalongkorn (Rama V).

Wat Po(Reclining Buddha Temple)



Just behind the opulent extravagance of the Temple of the Emerald Buddha stands Wat Phra Chetuphon, which is more commonly known by its old name of Wat Po. Most western tourists don't get past the temple's huge reclining Buddha, but there is actually much more to see than the one colossal statue.

The temple is actually much older than the city of Bangkok itself. It was founded in the 17th century, making it the oldest temple in Bangkok. The name Wat Po comes from its original name of Wat Potaram. King Rama I, the founder of Bangkok, enlarged the temple, installed many statues and other artefacts recovered from Ayuthaya, and renamed the temple Wat Phra

Chetuphon in 1801.

Rama III enlarged the temple in 1832 and turned the temple into a center of learning, making it in essence Thailand's first university. Rama III is also responsible for the construction of the reclining Buddha. The **Wiharn** housing the reclining Buddha is just barely big enough to hold the statue, which is why you never seen any wide shots of the whole thing.



In addition to the fine features of the Buddha's face, also of note are the soles of the Buddha's feet, 45 meters (150 feet) away from the head, which have been inlaid with mother-of-pearl to display the 108 auspicious signs which distinguish a true Buddha.

Wat Arun(Temple of the Dawn)



It's the star of many a "visit Thailand" poster. Perhaps a better known symbol of Bangkok than the Grand Palace. It's Wat Arun, "the Temple of the Dawn." Unfortunately, being a cover model has its drawbacks, and the temple is probably a little too popular for its own good, but it's still such an outstanding monument that it's worth a visit.

The towering prang with its four smaller siblings was started by Rama II in the early part of the 19th century, and completed by his successor Rama III. The temple in which the prang sits is actually much older. It dates from the Ayuthaya period. During King Taksin's reign, just before the founding of Bangkok, the temple served as part of his **palace**.

The prang is not only unique in its design, which is a blend of Khmer and Thai styles, but also in decoration. Over the brick core, a layer of plaster was applied and then decorated with bits of Chinese porcelain and glazed ceramic tiles. Using porcelain from China isn't as extravagant as it might sound. In the early days of Bangkok, Chinese trading ships calling on the Siamese capital used tons of porcelain as ballast. The temple is just an early example of the Thai approach to "recycling."



Like the bell shaped chedi, the central Prang represents Mount Meru, home of the gods. The four smaller prangs symbolize the four winds. High up on the four smaller towers, you can see a statue of Pai, god of the winds, on his horse.

In the middle of each side of the square formed by the smaller prangs are pavilions containing Buddha images depicting

the four stages of the Buddha's life, birth, meditation, preaching and enlightenment. These guard the stairways to the second and third levels of the big prang. Unfortunately, you can only climb up to the first level. The second and third levels are now closed to the public, probably because the stairways were so steep there were many accidents. Behind the prang is the temple complex proper. The bot is interesting and decorated on the inside similar to the prang. There are several other small prangs and beautiful gardens in the temple grounds.

Wat Traimit

At one end of Chinatown, in the otherwise unremarkable temple of Wat Traimit, is hidden the world's largest solid gold Buddha image. Weighing in at five and a half tons, the 15-foot tall seated image is worth in the neighborhood of US\$14 Million. That's some neighborhood!

The image has a colorful history, which is recounted in a free pamphlet distributed with your paid admission.

The Golden Buddha was cast sometime in the 13th century and is an excellent example of the gracious Sukhothai style that is still very much in favor to this day. At some point, it was covered in plaster, most likely in an attempt to hide the valuable icon from thieves or looters.



The disguise was so good that everyone apparently forgot about what was hidden beneath. King Rama III had the statue moved to Bangkok and installed in a temple near where the Oriental Hotel is today. That temple fell into disuse and was completely abandoned around 1931.

The true nature of the Golden Buddha wasn't discovered until it was moved to its present location at Wat Traimit in 1955. When the image was being prepared for its move, some of the plaster was chipped off, revealing the gold underneath. Bits of the plaster can be seen in a case to the left of the statue.

The statue sits in a plain building just barely big enough to hold it within the temple compound. On the terrace outside of the room housing the Golden Buddha are some interesting fortune-telling machines. You drop a coin in the slot and a sequence of lights indicating numbers flash around in a circle, wheel of fortune style, eventually stopping on a number. You can retrieve your fortune from the marked boxes below the machine. The fortune slips are in English as well as Thai and Chinese.

Ayutthaya

Just 80 kilometers (50 miles) north of Bangkok is the old capitol of Ayutthaya (or Ayuthaya, or even Ayodhya. No matter how you spell it, its pronounced ah-you-tah-ya.) The city became Thailand's capitol in the mid-14th century and remained the capitol until the late 18th century. About the time that Americans were tossing tea into Boston harbor, the Burmese attacked and sacked Ayutthaya.



The Ayutthaya period is looked on by many as the time when much of what is now thought of as "Thai style" was developed. In temples, this is when you see a marked transition from the Khmer style "prangs" to the bell shaped "chedi." While Sukhothai further north is seen as the birth of the Thai kingdom, Ayutthaya is seen today as its high point. Around Ayutthaya are signs of the Japanese, French, Dutch and Portuguese traders that came to the Thai court. Ayutthaya is a relatively low-key site. You can spend a leisurely day here, or a quick stop, all with relatively low pressure compared to many other tourist sites. From Ayutthaya you can quickly get on an expressway and be back in Bangkok in about an hour.

Airfare to Bangkok, Thailand

Hiroshima departure

JUL01st – AUG04th departure : **46,000yen~**+ TAX(Approx.19500yen) for up to 1month travel

AUG12th – AUG31st departure : **46,000yen~**+ TAX(Approx.19500yen) for up to 1month travel

Fukuoka departure

JUL01th – JUL14th departure : **39,800yen~** + TAX(Approx.17300yen) for up to 11days

※ Arrivals in Japan on Sunday: 4,000yen UP

JUL01st – JUL14th departure: **42,000yen~** + TAX(Approx.18300yen) for up to 1month travel

Fukuoka departure to PHUKET, Thailand

JUL01st – JUL14th departure: **33,800yen~** + TAX(Approx.39500yen) for up to 7days travel

※ Minimum required number of traveler: 2people or more with the same schedule.

※ Above price is per person price.



For more information, Please feel free to contact Academy Travel Inc.

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