

The route

Historical signboard in situ is marked as ()
Entry fee required is marked as (\$)*

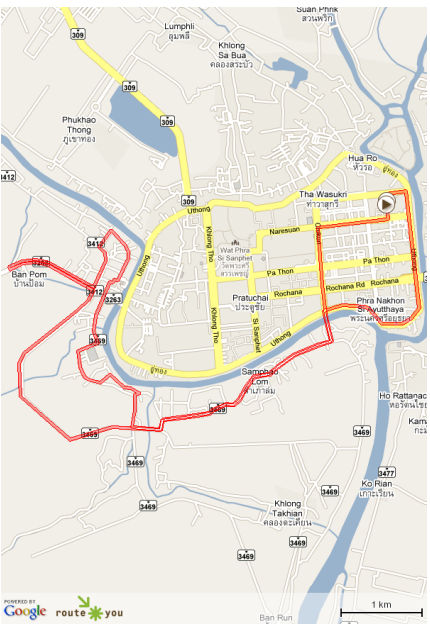
- From the starting point, go south toward Chao Phrom Market and turn right (you will have to walk your bike to the opposite side of the road). Head west along Naresuan Road until you arrive at Chakun Road. You will see two memorial chedi and the ruins of a bricked bridge (Saphan Pa Than) in the middle of the road. This is the gateway to the Ayutthaya Historic Park. Do not enter the park; turn left on Chakun 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. This is the location of a ferry boat that provides services to the opposite side of the Chao Phraya River. Bicycles and motorcycles can use the ferry for only a few baht. The first reference point is on the opposite side of the river.

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- Go to the main road from Wat Khun Phrom and turn right. This street does not have a name listed on road signs, but it is roughly considered part of Highway 3469. You will bike in the direction west for a few minutes before arriving at a Muslim shrine on the left-hand side of the road. This site is situated on the corner of a fork in the road. Keep going forward in the direction west.

The Tomb of the 4th Chula Rachamontri named "Cher" 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 Piraya 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. Chen obtained first the rank of Phraya Wichai Narong and was later promoted to Phraya Chula Rachamontri. Chen was also given charge of the Royal Treasury, but apparently not given the title of Chao Phraya Phra Kilang, which usually came with this position. The Chula Rachamontri controlled from the 17th century onwards the Department of Western Maritime Affairs known in Siam as the Krom Tha Khwa.

- Continue to head west for 5-10 minutes until you arrive at a fork on the road. This will briefly curve left in the direction south, then immediately lead to a second fork in the road. It is important to take the next right hand turn and head west. Go over the bridge! This will take you over Khlong Takhian, and you will officially have touched ground for the first time on the western section of the city – the area emphasized with this bike route.



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 historic sites 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.

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This bicycle tour has been designed for the exploration of some of the most important historical sites along the western rim of Ayutthaya (just off the main city island). Many ruins in this western section are historically linked to warfare against the Burmese, and some of them distinctively mark sites of important battle. This off-the-beaten-track route will lead you to many magnificent ruins and some seldom seen by tourists.

These western Ayutthaya neighborhoods are bordered in the north by the Chao Phraya River and in the east by Khlong Takhian - called "Canal du Grand Cochon" by early French visitors. Highway #3060 loosely frames its western boundary. Geographically, the nearly defunct Khlong Klach, running north of Wat Chai Watthanaram, more or less indicates the border between two important fields – Thung Prachet and Thung Pak Kran. The Thung Prachet field is in the north, and the Thung Pak Kran field is in the south.

This section of the city was the least populated area during the Ayutthayan period. One reason for this may be the local belief that the West is considered inauspicious and represents death, impurity and the setting sun. Ghosts are said to gravitate toward the west, and a number of the sites on this route are still considered haunted by locals. Burma caused much destruction in this area during numerous military invasions of the past. Therefore, it is perhaps appropriate to associate the west side of Ayutthaya with death, ghosts, and war atrocities. Much of this land in the west is still undeveloped. Rice fields, small forests, and jungles of wild vegetation are typical views. A modern population has grown here during recent times. There are now large Buddhist and Muslim communities especially along the Chao Phraya River.

The tour will take 4 to 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. 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.

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 particularly hazardous cause of local accidents. Dogs and potholes can also be dangerous, especially in remote areas. Weather can be 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 and occasional recklessness of motor traffic.

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Wat Lot Chong is an active temple with Buddhist monks. There is an ordination hall in situ. An open-sided vihara with several Buddha statues, and other monks' structures. The ubosoth was built in the early Ayutthaya style (1511-1491), and its construction dates to the reign of King Narai (1656-1688). The ordination hall is a simple structure, but the ubosoth is a fine example of a traditional Thai style.

Wat Phnom is a small temple situated close to the Chao Phraya River on the west side of the city. It is located on residential property and may be difficult to find. It consists of a single stupa. The stupa is a simple structure, but it is a fine example of a traditional Thai style.

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AYUTTHAYA - WESTERN BICYCLE TRACK
(The Thung Prachet and Pak Kran Loop)

from the late-Ayutthaya period, but were incorporated into the temple's design in modern times. Some portions of the temple's outer walls still exist. However, the most significant structure in site is an old memorial chedi reflecting the Burmese-Mon style. This was built in the Mid-Ayutthaya period for Burmese soldiers that had died in battle. In the latter years of the Ayutthaya Kingdom, a monastery was founded on the site.

- ❖ *Go back to the main road and continue in the eastern direction. You will arrive at an active temple beside Khlong Takhian and the Chao Phraya River. In front of the temple's entrance are two distinctive Taksa guarding the entrance gate.*

Wat Klang Khlong Takhian is situated at the confluence of the Chao Phraya River and Khlong Takhian. There are all the standard monastic structures providing services by Buddhist clergy. The ordination hall was built in the Late Ayutthaya style (1629-1767). Some of the current attractions include a large piece of Takhian wood that is believed to have a female ghost residing in it. There is also a merry-go-round structure that involves replicators of Buddhist monks proceeding in a circle with begging bowls in hand for alms giving.

- ❖ *The next reference point is a ruin located directly across from the exit of previous site. It can be spotted on the right-hand side of the road.*

Wat Klang is an ancient monastery lying adjacent to the active temple Wat Klang Khlong Takhian. In situ is a brick mound with a damaged Buddhist image. Near Wat Klang was a ferry crossing across the Chao Phraya River, linking the monasteries with Tha Wang Chai. The marine vessel dockyard was situated near the mouth of Khlong Takhian and housed 30 marine warships and over 100 smaller fighting vessels under the supervision of the Phraya Rachawangsan.

- ❖ *Return route: Continue on the same road. It will bypass a school with several astrological symbols at its gate - rabbits, tigers, oxen, snakes, etc. Shortly afterward, you will arrive at an intersection leading to a bridge. This will link you back to Bike Route #6. Once you have crossed over the bridge, you will have finished with the official Western loop. Bike east from this point onward.*

- ❖ *Continue heading east on the same road. This will lead you near an old Christian church that is still active and partially viewable from the road. To see it, you will have to turn left and go down a small side road towards the Chao Phraya River. However, on this particular route, this site serves only as a reference point for an upcoming turn in the road.*

St. Joseph's Church is situated on the south bank of the Chao Phraya River beside Khlong Takhian. In 1665, the Siamese King granted the French bishops a spot near the Chao Phraya River in the Cochin Chinese quarter called "Ban Pia Hie". In 1665-1666 they built the Seminary of Saint Joseph, later renamed the "Seminary of the Holy Angels". Between 1665 and 1695 the original wooden church was rebuilt in bricks in European style. In March 1767

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AYUTTHAYA - WESTERN BICYCLE TRACK
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the Portuguese settlement and the St Joseph seminary were isolated and surrounded by attacking Burmese. 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 were burned down, and the fire spread to the church and seminary, which were both reduced to ashes. In 1831 Father Jean-Baptist Pallegrix began restoration of the church, which was completed in 1847.

- ❖ *Continue going east for a few more minutes. On the left hand side of the road, you will be able to see a large white prang (Khmer-style chedi) from a distance away. This is the next reference point. Many cyclists may enjoy a stop at this active temple, but it is not listed as a Point of Interest on this particular route.*

Wat Phuttasawan faces east and is bordered on the north by the Chao Phraya River. 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 them back under the control of Ayutthaya in 1352. The monastery was one of the first temples constructed in the Ayutthaya kingdom. This area has been regularly part of a war theatre. The Royal Chronicles of Ayutthaya mention that the army of the King of Ava invading Ayutthaya in 1549 and setting up a stockade in this area.

- ❖ *Continue biking east from Wat Phuttasawan. You will bypass Chao Kun Khu Cham Cemetery, which you have already seen earlier, only this time it will be on the right hand side of the road. Keep back tracking east until you arrive at the turn off for Wat Khun Phrom. This is the location of the ferry boat that you have already used.*

- ❖ *The ferry boat will deliver you to the opposite side of the Chao Phraya River, back on the main island. The best return route is to turn right on U-Thong Road and continue east. This route will bypass Pom Phet, which will be situated on the right hand side of the road.*

Pom Phet or the Diamond Fortress was one of the sixteen fortresses along the city walls of Ayutthaya. Situated in the southeast, at the confluence of the Pa Sak River and the Chao Phraya River in Bang Kaja area and on the east bank of the Nai Kai canal, Pom Phet was the most important fortress, protecting the harbour where foreign ships were forced to anchor for inspection and unloading. No foreign ships travelling up the Chao Phraya River before were allowed beyond this point. Pom Phet is the one of the two remnants of old fortresses and now a public park. The site has been recently renovated, since serious damage occurred from water erosion to the river banks.

- ❖ *Keep heading east along U-Thong Road. It will shortly turn past an active temple named Wat Ratanaachat, or Wat Jin, on your right hand side. On the opposite side of the road, to your left, you will see a small side road for entering Wat Suwan Dararam.*

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Wat Ratamachai is more commonly known under the name of Wat Jin today, because many Teochiu Chinese migrated to this part of the city in the latest century. As an active monastery, Wat Ratamachai has all the basic architecture structures of a Buddhist temple: sermon hall, bell tower, monk quarters, crematory furnace, and a number of chedi. Nearly all of these architectural structures date to the Ratanakosin period. The highlight of this monastery is its central bell shaped chedi, which has been painted white. A well-preserved pointed vault gate (Pratu Chang Kud) can be seen next to Wat Ratamachai. To visit it, you must enter the school west of this temple.

- ❖ *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 Banomyong 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.*



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Traces of restoration include the bell-shaped chedis inside the arches, which earlier contained Buddha images. The temple was renovated in the first reign of the Ratanakosin Period (1782-1809) by Prince Khrom Khan Isanurak, a nephew of King Rama I. The renovation was in essence a complete overhaul of the temple. The temple at that time changed names from Wat Kasatri to Wat Kasatriharat.

- ❖ *Continue biking south until you reach Highway 3263 once again. Turn left and head toward the bridge. However, go underneath the bridge instead of crossing it. There is a small side road on the left that will lead you safely under and around the bridge to the opposite side of Highway 3263. You will have to take the left hand turn and continue in the direction south. (a 7-11 convenience store will be near the corner). This new road parallels the Chao Phraya River.*

- ❖ *You will soon pass the front side of Wat Lat Chong, when you have already seen from its rear entrance. Stay with the natural flow of the road and it will lead you to one of the greater sites in the city. Wat Chai Watmanam. If you are making a detour you might also see on road an ancient "love sock" used by King Prasat Thong during the construction of this temple.*

Wat Chai Watmanam was built in the 1630 by King Prasat Thong, who believed that the Khmer-style Prang would reflect Ayutthaya's historical significance at the end of a Buddhist millennium year. This temple is unique as it has a unique form and architectural design in the city. One theory is that Wat Chai Watmanam was built on the spot of King Prasat Thong's former home, and that it was constructed to make merit for his mother - or possibly his depository. Popular folklore suggests King Prasat Thong had a childhood dream in which he dreamed of a golden tower was buried inside an anthill at this location. When the Buddha mosaic excavated it proved the dream a prophetic revelation. Another theory is that Buddha mosaic predicted the establishment of Ayutthaya at the end of the Buddhist millennium year enough merit had been accumulated, so King Prasat Thong launched a massive campaign to build and renovate temples across the city. Whatever the reason, the return of the Khmer-style Prang marked a new era of architecture in Ayutthaya.

Like other temples in the west, Wat Chai Watmanam ultimately fell the burden of war. The Burmese besieged this monastery in 1767 and used it as an army camp while staging attacks on the main island. Excavations revealed evidence of damage by cannon balls. After 1767, Wat Chai Watmanam was abandoned and looted for decades afterward. The Fine Arts Department renovated Wat Chai Watmanam between 1987 and 1992. It remains one of the most breathtaking tourist sites today.

- ❖ *Continue on the main road. Make the next left hand turn to the next Point of Interest.*

Wat Suwan Chai is an active temple located beside the Chao Phraya River in close proximity to Wat Chai Watmanam. A number of ceramic plates from China decorate the front entrance of its western hall. According to monks at this temple, these plates originated

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