

Suggested attractions & activities for Ayutthaya

Ayutthaya (also known as Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya) is one of Thailand's historical and majestic highlights. This former capital of Thailand which used to be one of the biggest cities in Southeast Asia is renowned for its temple ruins and historical sites.

With just 1hr drive from Bangkok, visitors can easily come here on a day tour. Many tour operators also offer an option of travelling one way by boat along Chao Phraya River and one way by car. For a more local experience, visitors may take a train from Bangkok Hua Lampong Train Station to Ayutthaya. From the train station, you can rent a bicycle or jump on a Tuk Tuk to travel around.

It is recommended that visitors should head first to **Ayutthaya Historical Park**, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, for a comprehensive overview of the city's history and past glory. Surrounded by these ruins, it's not difficult to imagine the grandeur that once was the kingdom of Ayutthaya. Ayutthaya Historical Park comprises several temples including Wat Phra Si Sanphet, Wat Mahathat, Wat Ratchaburana and the Royal Palace.



Ayutthaya Historical Park



Wat Chai Wattanaram

Wat Mahathat is the site of the lone Buddha's head entrapped by the roots of an overgrown banyan tree – today a popular icon of Ayutthaya. Wat Mahathat was the royal ceremonial ground for both religious and non-religious affairs before it was replaced by Wat Phra Si Sanphet. When the kingdom failed in 1767, Wat Phra Mahathat was severely damaged by fire and was since abandoned.

Wat Phra Si Sanphet occupies expansive grounds inside the walls of the now-collapsed Royal Palace. The three iconic chedis – housing the royal relics of three Ayutthaya Kings – are among the few structures left standing in the temple grounds. On the empty space that now exists between the three chedis, there once stood two mandapas for storing Buddhist scriptures and religious relics. East of the chedis are the remains of the main chapel's concrete columns.

Set across the river, facing the inner city, **Wat Chai Wattanaram** is one of the most elaborate interpretations of the Mount Meru concept in ancient Khmer architecture. The principal prang, modelled after the Ancient Khmer prangs, symbolises the centre of the

universe, while the surrounding chedis depict the four continents and the outer universe. Each corner chedi houses two huge Buddha images set inside a wooden frame. The surrounding galleries contain eight smaller chedis and feature ornate relief patterns.



Ayutthaya Tuk Tuk



Bang Pa-In Summer Palace

Other attractions & activities in Ayutthaya include:

- **Wat Yai Chaimongkol:** One of the best-preserved ancient royal monasteries, Wat Yai Chaimongkol is famous for its large reclining Buddha and a 62m inverted bell-shaped chedi built to commemorate King Naresuan's victory over the Burmese. Surrounding the principal chedi are cloister walls lined with several Buddha images – a unique architectural feature of the early Ayutthaya period.
- **Wat Phanunchoeng:** Built long before King U-Thong founded the Ayutthaya Kingdom, Wat Phanunchoeng houses a revered Buddha image dating back to 1324 and an ornate Chinese shrine dedicated to an Ayodhya Queen. This area used to be frequented by Chinese merchants, who transformed it into a lively commercial area with goods from China including gold, porcelain and Chinese silk. The temple contains a large bronze Buddha image – the oldest in Ayutthaya – built in 1325. Walk around the main chapel to the riverside and pay respect to the Queen at the Chinese shrine.
- **Wat Phuttai Sawan:** Built during the reign of King U-Thong (1351–1369), Wat Phuttai Sawan's principal prang is clearly visible across the river from the inner city area. Highlights include rare murals painted in the Late Ayutthaya Period, a replica of the Buddha's footprint inside the prang and ruins of an old chapel that houses a reclining Buddha. The mural describes the close religious ties between Ayutthaya and Langka (today's Pattani in southern Thailand).



Wat Phuttai Sawan



Cycling in Ayutthaya

- **Wat Na Phramen:** This was the only temple left intact at the time Ayutthaya fell, as it was used as a military headquarters by the Burmese army. It houses a beautiful Buddha image, fully decorated in regal attire, the signature style of the late Ayutthaya period. The main chapel boasts an ornate hand-carved wooden gable and baluster windows, a unique architectural feature of the mid Ayutthaya period (1488 – 1629).
- **Bang Pa-In Summer Palace:** Situated 60km north of Bangkok on the bank of Chao Phraya River in Bang Pa-in District, Bang Pa-In Palace was used as a summer dwelling by Siamese royalty and their consorts. Originally built in 1632 under the reign of King Prasat Thong, the complex comprises several iconic buildings dotted around a large park.
- **River Cruise:** Lots of local tour operators in Bangkok offer a day tour from Bangkok to Ayutthaya, with many of them travelling one way by boat along Chao Phraya River and one way by car. There are many ruins and temples along the river so the cruise is usually relaxing. Several restaurants along the river also offer dinner cruise.
- **Cycling:** Ayutthaya is very flat so it's easy to ride a bicycle around. Visitors can simply join one of the small group cycling tours or rent a bicycle and ride around at your own pace. Example cycling tour operators include <https://www.grasshopperadventures.com/> <https://www.spiceroads.com/>, <https://thailandbiking.com/>
- **Sample River Prawn and Roti Sai Mai:** Ayutthaya is famous for BBQ river prawns served with spicy chilli sauce and Roti Sai Mai (cotton candy is rolled in paper-thin roti sheet). Most of the restaurants serving river prawn are located along the bank of the river, whereas most of the Roti Sai Mai stalls are located along the road in front of the hospital.