Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya

Straddling the Chao Phraya River, the nation’s principal waterway, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya or Ayutthaya was the former glorious royal capital of Thailand for 417 years. During the period when Ayutthaya was capital, 33 kings and several dynasties ruled the kingdom, until the glittering city was sacked by the Burmese in 1767, ruined and abandoned. The extensive ruins and the historical records demonstrate that Ayutthaya was one of Southeast Asia’s most prosperous cities, and the remains of this island city are of extreme archaeological importance. In recognition of its historical and cultural importance, Ayutthaya Historical Park, the location of the ruins adjacent to today’s city, was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991. Visitors can marvel at its grandeur reflected through numerous magnificent structures and ruins concentrated in and around the city surrounded by Chao Phraya River, Pa Sak River, and Lop Buri River.
Ayutthaya Historical Park

Ayutthaya Historical Park comprises of several historical sites; such as, the ruins of the palaces and numerous Buddhist temples that portrayed the precious treasures that cannot be found anywhere else in the world.

Ayutthaya's historic sites are scattered throughout this once magnificent city and along the encircling rivers. Rich in extraordinary history, the glorious remnant of the 417-years-old royal capital at the Ayutthaya Historical Park is a great place to start the journey to the historical treasure.

Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya
World Heritage Fair

The extensive collection of ruins and records indicating the historical and cultural wealth of Ayutthaya earned this park recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. To celebrate this status, the Fair is organised annually in December at Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Historical Park and features light and sound shows of its glorious years, exhibitions of Ayutthaya as a World Heritage Site, cultural performances, and beauty pageant contests.

Remark: For the exact date of the event, please contact TAT Call Centre at 1672, TAT Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office at Tel. 0 3524 6076-7 or visit www.tourismthailand.org.
Things to remember while visiting the sacred places

**Buddhist temples are places of worship on holy ground, thus it is important that visitors respect the following temple etiquette:**

- Buddha statues and Buddha images are religious objects, and visitors are expected to treat them with the utmost respect, and not lean on, sit on, touch, or point their feet towards them.
- Women are not allowed to touch monks, monks' robes, or hand any objects directly to monks.
- Ensure that your clothes cover your shoulders and your knees. Avoid sleeveless shirts, short pants, and short skirts. Some temples do not allow improperly dressed visitors to enter, and some provide sarongs for visitors to wear in case of unacceptable clothing.
- Remove shoes before entering the ubosot or wihan of the temple.
Grand Palace

Currently called “The Ancient Palace”, this residential dwelling for every king was located close to the city wall of Ayutthaya. The Grand Palace takes visitor to absorb the powerful atmosphere and explore the exquisite art and architecture of this royal city through the remains of the magnificent edifices in the palace compound.

**Opening Hours:** Everyday from 6.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.

**Location:** Si Sanphet Road, within the city wall.
The structure of the Grand Palace comprises of several buildings and is divided into three main quarters; including, outer court, central court, and inner court. The outer court serves as the seat of the royal government, the central court is where the residential and state buildings are located, whereas the inner court is closed to the public as it is reserves exclusively as a residence of the royal consorts.
Along the bank of Pa Sak River, this palace was built as a residence for King Naresuan. The palace was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767 and left unrepaired for a long time. In the mid-19th century, King Rama IV of the present Chakri dynasty ordered to rebuild it as a residence for his occasional visits to Ayutthaya. The palace is now used as a national museum. It has been decorated for demonstration of antiques; such as, Chinaware, ancient weapons, Buddha images, sculptures, votive tablets of different times, and personal effects of King Rama IV.

**Opening Hours:** Wednesday - Sunday from 9.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

**Location:** U-Thong Road.
Some of the interesting sites within the Palace are:

• Palace Wall and Gate: newly constructed by King Rama IV, the foundation of the wall has been discovered through the excavation, revealing that the original area was much larger than what it is seen today.

• Phlappha Chaturamuk: the wooden four-gabled pavilion that was a residence of King Rama IV during his visits to Ayutthaya.

• Phiman Rattaya Hall: a group of buildings located amidst the compound of the palace, which once served as government offices and the Provincial Administrative Building.

• Phisai Sanyalak Hall: a four-storey tower that was built under the reign of King Narai the Great, but destroyed during the second fall of Ayutthaya. King Rama IV reconstructed the building based on the original foundation and used the tower as a star observatory.
Since the temple was built by King Borommaratchathirat II (Chao Sam Phraya), the museum was named after him. It was the first museum in the country to present a new form of exhibition, displaying not too many objects in an interesting presentation. Chao Sam Phraya Museum houses antique bronze Buddha images, local artefacts, and other art objects dated back to more than 500 years ago.

Opening Hours: Wednesday – Sunday from 8.30 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.
Location: Rotchana Road, opposite the city wall.
Apart from exploring the history of Ayutthaya and the ancient artefacts, the museum also provides visitors with the opportunity to learn about the people’s lifestyle in the past. The model of traditional Thai houses exhibits the household equipment and utensils used in the daily life to reflect the way of life of the Thai people.
Ancient Temples

The evidence of numerous temple ruins that scattered around the Ayutthaya Historical Park reveals that this capital was once the centre of Buddhist faith. The following are some beautiful temples with magnificent architectures and extraordinary history:

Wat Phra Si Sanphet

Originally used as a royal chapel for royal ceremonies, Wat Phra Si Sanphet is the largest temple in Ayutthaya situated within the grounds of the former royal palace. The principal wihan which was constructed in 1499, housed a 16-metre-high standing bronze Buddha image, covered in gold, named Phra Si Sanphet. However, when the Burmese sacked Ayutthaya in 1767, the Buddha image was set on fire to melt the gold and destroy the temple. The temple is known for the distinctive three main chedis, which are still standing prominently today and containing the ashes of three Ayutthaya kings.

Opening Hours: Everyday from 8.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Location: Northern end of Si Sanphet Road, within the compound of the Grand Palace.
Remark: Ayutthaya Historical Park provides the audio tour describing Wat Phra Si Sanphet in English, which is available at Ayutthaya Historical Park ticketing counter.
Wat Phutthaisawan

Wat Phutthaisawan was constructed in the area where King U-Thong and his subjects first migrated in order to establish the new town. At that time, the vicinity was formally known as "wiang lek" and was the royal palace of King U-Thong for 3 years before converting the complex to a monastery. The most distinctive feature of this temple is the great principal Buddha image cast in the early Ayutthaya style.

**Opening Hours:** Everyday from 8.30 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

**Location:** Located to the south of the Chao Phraya River bank, opposite the city island.
Wat Na Phramen

The former name of this monastery was Wat Phra Merurachikaram, Wat Na Phramen is the only temple in Ayutthaya that was not destroyed during the siege of 1767. The Ubosot's design is of very old typical Thai style, but has no windows like other temples constructed in the Ayutthaya period and has small openings on the walls for ventilation instead. The most interesting objects of Wat Na Phramen are the principal Buddha image, which is fully decorated in regal attire, and another ancient Buddha image made of black stone, enshrining in the small Wihan.

Opening Hours: Everyday from 8.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Location: Located on the bank of Khlong Sa Bua, opposite the Grand Palace.
Wat Chaiwatthanaram

Built in 1630 by King Prasat Thong to honour his mother, Wat Chaiwattanaram was built in a Khmer-influenced style and conceived as a replica of the Angkor temple. A Royal monastery, the temple’s unique feature is a huge prang which is surrounded by smaller prangs. This symbolises Mount Meru, the abode of the heavenly gods. Now restored, the temple is also accessible by a 1-hour long-tailed boat trip from Chantharakasem Palace Pier.

Opening Hours: Everyday from 8.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.
Location: On the bank of Chao Phraya River, to the west of the city island.
Remark: Ayutthaya Historical Park provides the audio tour describing Wat Chai Watthanaram in English, which is available at Ayutthaya Historical Park ticketing counter.
Forts and Fortresses around the city

The city wall originally built by King U-Thong was merely a moat-and-mound enclosure with a wall of wooden poles on top. A brick one was built later in the reign of King Maha Chakraphat. The forts along the city wall and outer circle fortresses as found in the historical records include Pom Phet, Pom Maha Chai, Pom Sat Kop, Pom Ho Ratchakhrue and Pom Champa Phon. Large fortresses were mostly built on the meeting points of rivers.

For more effectiveness of the city protection, bricks were used to replace the mound wall around the city during the reign of King Maha Chakraphat as bricks are regarded as one of the strongest construction materials.

Location: Forts and fortresses can be spotted around the city of Ayutthaya.
Pom Phet

Pom Phet is Ayuthaya’s most important defensive structure and is the fort that remains almost intact while ruins of the other forts, which had been destroyed by the Burmese, are visible around the city island. Originally built of wood, Pom Phet was later rebuilt with bricks. This fort is situated on a site known as Bangkacha where the Chao Phraya River and the Pa Sak River meet to form the southwest corner of the city island.
Things to remember while visiting the sacred places

Buddhist temples are places of worship on holy ground, thus it is important that visitors respect the following temple etiquette:

• Women are not allowed to touch monks, monks’ robes, or hand any objects directly to monks.

• Remove shoes before entering the ubosot or wihan of the temple.
Ayutthaya

Out-of-City Attractions

- Buddha statues and Buddha images are religious objects, and visitors are expected to treat them with the utmost respect, and not lean on, sit on, touch, or point their feet towards them.

- Ensure that your clothes cover your shoulders and your knees. Avoid sleeveless shirts, short pants, and short skirts. Some temples do not allow improperly dressed visitors to enter, and some provide sarongs for visitors to wear in case of unacceptable clothing.
Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon

One of the most important temples in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya and in Thailand, Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon is a temple with fascinating history and several significant archaeological objects. The bell-shaped chedi stands on an elevated square base with smaller chedis at the corners, is one of the landmarks of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya. Enshrining in the ordination hall is Phra Phuttha Chaiya Mongkhon, one of the most sacred Buddha images in Ayutthaya. Made of sandstone in Mara Wichai posture, it is believed that the Buddha image was built around the same time as the Chedi, making it one of the oldest Buddha images in Ayutthaya.
The giant reclining Buddha image draped in a long orange robe situated outside on the temple’s complex is also a magnificent sight for visitors.

**Opening Hours:** Everyday from 8.00 a.m. – 6.00 p.m.  
**Location:** Cross the Pa Sak River and take the Bangkok Road, then turn right around 300 metres beyond the railway.
Wat Phanan Choeng

Built in 1324 by King Sai Namphueng, around 26 years before King U-Thong founded Ayutthaya, Wat Phanan Choeng is located on the southeastern area of the confluence of Chao Phraya and Pa Sak Rivers. The Wihan’s principal Buddha image called “Luangpho To” is made of brick and mortar and covered with stucco, sits in the position of Subduing Mara.
The Famous Legend of Luangpho To

There is a legend saying that Luangpho To had shed tears on the day that the Burmese destroyed Ayutthaya in 1767.

Opening Hours: Everyday from 8.30 a.m. – 5.30 p.m.
Location: Take Rotchana Road to Km.-1 marker and turn left passing Wat Yai Chai Mongkhon to get to Wat Phanan Choeng.
Sala Phra Ming Khwan is a 4-storey modern rendition of a traditional Thai style building that houses arts and crafts demonstration and shops displaying and selling products from the Centre and other arts and crafts centre throughout the country.

Situated in the heart of the Centre is the Arts and Crafts Training Buildings, which provide arts and crafts training for farmers from all regions of the country to be their supplementary occupations out of the farming season.

The Arts and Crafts Village was established to showcase different aspects of architecture of the Thai houses of the various regions of the country as well as their ways of living and culture. Lifestyle and handicraft demonstrations as well as Thai classical dances and folk entertainment of the 4 regions are performed here.
The fair, held annually in January at the Bang Sai Arts and Crafts Centre displays products of H.M. the Queen’s SUPPORT programme; such as, woven basketry, artificial flowers, hand-woven silk, wood carving, and miniature hand-modeled dolls. Visitors can enjoy the demonstrations of product making, local folk arts, and cultural performances, as well as buy the exquisite handicrafts that reveal the wealth of local wisdom.

Remark: For the exact date of the event, please contact TAT Call Centre at 1672, TAT Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office at Tel. 0 3524 6076-7 or visit www.tourismthailand.org.
King Prasat Thong (1630-1655) had the Bang Pa-in palace built on a lake in the middle of the island as a royal retreat. But when the capital moved to Bangkok, the palace was left unused for 80 years. King Rama V the Great (1868-1910) liked the place immensely and constructed the splendid ensemble as it is seen today.

**Opening Hours:** Everyday from 8.30 a.m.- 5.00 p.m.

**Location:** Around 18 kilometres south of Ayutthaya, take Highway No. 32 to Ayutthaya and turn left around Km.-35 marker to the Palace.
Important buildings within the Bang Pa-in Palace:

- **Aisawanthiphaya-at Pavilion**: the exquisite Thai teak pavilion built in the middle of a lake.
- **Woraphat Phiman Hall**: the European-style building used as a Throne Hall where the King received his subjects and visitors.
- **Wheet Chamrun Royal Mansion**: a hall of a Chinese Emperor-style that was a royal offering to King Rama V the Great from Bangkok’s Chinese merchant community.
- **Withunhasana Tower**: a three-storey building with a spiral staircase in which King Rama V the Great used it to enjoy a bird’s eye view of the surrounding area.
Activities in Ayutthaya

Sightseeing

Visit Local Markets

Hands-on Experience
Cycling

There are various routes in and around Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya and visitors are recommended to take a bike tour in the early morning or during the sunset to enjoy the magical sights of this historic city. The recommended starting point is Ayutthaya Historical Park, a remarkable ancient location that has been recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Then visitors can ride on to visit the other historical sites and ancient temples to explore places that illustrate stunning images of the old Ayutthaya kingdom.

Remark: For more information, contact the Tourism Authority of Thailand at Hotline 1672 or TAT Ayutthaya Office Tel.: 0 3524 6076-7.
Ayutthaya Elephant Palace and Royal Kraal

Elephants are regarded as the royal symbol of Thailand and have long served the country in numerous ways, for example as mounts for past kings in battles for national freedom. A visit to Ayutthaya Elephant Palace and Royal Kraal offers visitors a priceless insight into the dignified role that elephants have played in the history of Thailand’s freedom. The Ayutthaya Elephant Palace and Royal Kraal offers several activities; such as, taking visitors on a ride on an elephant to get an idea of the past glory of Ayutthaya by following the royal routes once taken by kings. The mahout-training programme allows visitors to understand the life of the mahout and the unique personality of the elephant through various activities; such as, learning to ride, bathe and feed the elephants correctly. Elephants at the Royal Kraal are professionally trained to show their surprisingly skillful performances of painting, greeting visitors, and show visitors glimpses of their glorious military past through their re-enactments of ancient battles.
River Cruises

There are a number of river tours from Bangkok to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, or around Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya. Visitors can also take river cruise to view the historical sites of cultural fascination around this magnificent royal city. Along the way, visitors can observe the unique Thai way of life by the river and canals that is a colourful reminiscent of the olden days. River cruise with lunch or dinner or board is also available, and it is recommended to take the cruise at nighttime to enjoy seeing the incredible sight of the once prosperous city.

Remark: For more information, contact the Tourism Authority of Thailand at Hotline 1672 or TAT Ayutthaya Office Tel.: 0 3524 6076-7.
Kong Khong Market

The name of this market, ‘Kong Khong,’ describes the traditional Thai market where the sellers sat on the floor and the standing buyers had to lean towards the sellers. This posture of the buyers is called ‘Kong Khong.’ At this market, visitors can find a variety of products ranging from fresh vegetables and fruits, freshly cooked food, beverages, and desserts, as well as other local handicrafts and goods; such as, pots, knives, and pans. This unique market is also where visitors can see the traditional lifestyle of Thai people through the costumes that the local sellers wear.
Khlong Sa Bua Floating Market & Water Theatre

Khlong Sa Bua Floating Market and Water Theatre is the leading place in Thailand where visitors can watch a live performance of Thai classical dance and song recitals on a stage situated in a lotus pond. Boats paddled by the locals dressing in traditional Thai costumes selling freshly made food show the way of life of the Thai people in the past. Surrounding the water theatre is a bamboo platform where you can find a variety of delicious Thai food. The traditional Thai dance and folklore performances are performed at the water-based theatre five times a day at 11 a.m., 12 noon, 1.30 p.m., 3 p.m., and 4.30 p.m.
One of the most famous local wisdoms of Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya is the palm leaf fish mobile, which is used as decorations or toys. The palm leaves are cut into thin, long strips and weave into a shape of the fish which usually is a Thai barb or carp, which is a symbol of prosperity. The smaller fish, the offspring of the larger one, are thought to symbolise fertility. Weavers of the palm leaf fish mobile, and other palm leaf products in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya are mostly Thai Muslims, who has inherited this skill for over 100 years ago. Visitors can observe the demonstration of weaving the palm leaf fish mobile as well as buy the products home as souvenirs.
Thai people in ancient times regarded Thai barb as an auspicious fish that help attracting wealth, so a palm leaf fish mobile would be hung in the corridor in front of the house. The palm leaf fish mobile is also traditionally hung over the baby’s cradle and it is believed that it should be hung at the right position easily visible for the baby, neither toward the head nor the feet or else the baby would be disturbed by the guardian spirit.

**Remark:** Contact the Tourism Authority of Thailand at Hotline 1672 or TAT Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Office at Tel. 0 3524 6076-7 for where you can observe the palm leaf fish mobile weaving demonstration.
Getting There & Around

Getting to Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya

By Boat

There are no public boats but several private companies run a one-day excursion to Ayutthaya and Bang Pa-in, and some companies provide an overnight cruise for visitors to get a more complete insight of Ayutthaya. For more information, contact TAT Call Centre at 1672.

By Train

Trains depart from Bangkok’s Hua Lamphong Station approximately every hour. For more information, contact State Railway of Thailand at 1690 or visit www.railway.co.th.
By Bus

From the Bangkok Bus Terminal (Mochit) on Kamphaeng Phet II Road, air-conditioned buses leave for Ayutthaya every half-hour from 5.30 a.m. to 7.20 p.m. Non-air-conditioned buses leave for Bang Pa-in, Bang Sai, and Ayutthaya during the day from 5.30 a.m. to 7.20 p.m. For more information, contact Tel. 0 2936 2852-66 or visit www.transport.co.th.

By Car

1. Take Highway 1 (Phahonyothin Road.) then take Highway 32 to Ayutthaya.
2. Take Highway 304 (Chaeng Wattana Road) or Highway 302 (Ngamwongwan Road), turn right onto Highway 306 (Tiwanon Road.), then take Highway 3111 (Pathum Thani - Sam Khok - Sena), and turn right at Sena onto Highway 3263.
3. Take Highway 306 through Nonthaburi and Pathum Thani, then take Highway 347.
Getting There & Around

Getting around in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya

Song Thaeo

Song Thaeo, a covered pick-up truck with two long benches for passengers at the back is the most common public transport in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya. Remember to negotiate the fare before departure.

Tuk Tuk

Tuk Tuk or a three-wheeled taxi, is a quick way to get around in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya. The fare is depending on the route and is negotiable. It is important that fares must be negotiated for before the journey is undertaken as there is no meter.
The best way to get around the historical park is by bicycle, which can be rented outside the park entrance.

There are small shuttle busses that take visitors around attractions within the grounds of the historical park.

Another interesting way to explore Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya is to charter a long-tailed boat with a capacity of up to 8 people from Tha Chan Kasem (Chan Kasem Pier, next to Hua Ro Market) for a semicircular tour of the island. Visitors get the opportunity to see some of the less accessible ruins.