

History of Wat Pho

Wat Pho or Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram known as Photharam Temple, is located on Sanam Chai Road, next to the Grand Palace. It is an old temple, recognized as the temple of King Rama I. It was built for monks to learn about Phra Pariyat Dhamma, presumably built in Ayutthaya during the reign of King Petracha to enshrine the Sri Maha Bodhi tree which was derived from Ceylon, commonly known as Wat Pho in the reign of King Rama I when he moved the city to the east bank of the Chao Phraya River, he then ordered the restoration, enlargement and beautification of Wat Pho with its royal name Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalawat. It has been said that if we are going to calculate the age of Wat Pho temple from the time it was established throughout the Rattanakosin period, it is now more than 300 years old.

When the Chinese saw the beautiful works of art of the temple, they expanded the place and brought some Chinese art works, by then the beginning of the western people's influence spread, bringing new technologies, thus collecting and incorporating Thai knowledge to keep them with the changes of time. It is desirable that the knowledgeable people's text inscriptions in religion, language, literature, culture, traditions, painting, sculpture, writing were engraved on the stone for public view. Therefore, anyone who would like to study will be able to record ancient facts. With all the inscriptions, Wat Pho became the national treasure and storehouse of both secular and dharma knowledge. And it was believed to be "the first public university in Thailand and was regarded as the temple with the most pagodas, with approximately 49 pagodas. Wat Pho has been the center of ancient medical knowledge acquiring numerous textbooks, architecture, literary sculptures and medicinal textbooks that will benefit the next generation, so it will be remembered as the place where the beginning of Thai literature called Lilit Taleng which defeated Somdej Phra Maha Samana Krom Somdej Phra Paramanu's writings.

When Chitchinorot was ordained at Wat Pho, the temple was opened for visitors who could say its name "Wat Pho".

The thing that most people remember about Wat Pho is the "Yak Wat Pho" or the giant who stood guarding the temple's door wearing a warrior set with weapons, but in fact, "Yak Wat Pho" is just an ordinary "Thai giant" which is large in size. It is positioned at the entrance arch of the Mondop with a red and green body, similar to a giant in the Ramayana literature, with 175 cm. tall, 8 figures are set up at the Hor Trai door arches on all 4 sides of the temple, serve as the protection of

the Tripitaka Hall. After the reign of King Rama IV, the reign of Maha Chedi was built, he ordered the demolition of the arches, left with only 2 pairs.

In addition, there is a legend of Yak (Giant) Wat Pho and Yak (Giant) Wat Jaeng which was the caused their present posture. Yak Wat Pho was in charge of Wat Pho Temple, and Yak Wat Jaeng was in charge of Wat Jaeng Temple, the two were close friends. One day, Yak Wat Pho was broke, so he went across the Chao Phraya River to borrow money from his friend, Wat Jaeng. When it was due to return the money, Yak Wat Pho refused to pay him back, so the two giants quarreled and had a huge fight. Because of their enormous shape and great strength, everything around them were destroyed causing the area to be completely flat. When Shiva heard of this, he cursed and punished them, he ordered Yak Wat Pho to stand guarding the Wat Pho Temple. And Yak Wat Jaeng to stand guarding Viharn of Wat Chaeng Temple since then.

2. **Reclining Buddha**, enshrined the Reclining Buddha image within the area of Phutthawat, it is a Buddha statue with beautiful features, especially the art of 108 auspicious pearl decoration on the king's feet. His Majesty is regarded as the largest reclining Buddha image in Bangkok and the third largest in the country, with a motto that appears in the Sinangka scriptures of Lanka, indicating that it is auspicious that the Brahmins had seen His Majesty Prince Siddhartha after the 5th day of his birth. It was highly revered by both Thais and foreigners with the believe that coming to pay homage will bring "peace and happiness." Inside, there are mural paintings showing the Thai people's way of life in the past.

3. **Maha Chedi Si Rachakarn** is a large Buddhist stupa with 4 chedis. The Phra Chedi is in the form of twelve wooden chedis decorated with glazed tiles and amulets. The Great Buddhist Stupa of King Rama I-IV, was built in the reign of King Rama IV in the style of Sri Suriyothai Chedi of Ayutthaya for foreigners to worship, which abandoned the resolution of installing pattern of glazed tiles around it.

4. **Hall of Warship** The original ceremony was the ubosot of Wat Photharam during the Ayutthaya period. But after the establishment of the new Ubosot of Wat Phra Chetuphon, the status was then reduced to a pavilion with "Phra Phutthasada" as the primary Buddha image.

5. **Pra Ubosot** Summoned from Wat Sala Si Na with the determination that this will be a permanent city (Pang Samadhi refers to the determination of the mind) At the Chukchi base, three floors were built, the first floor contained the royal ashes and the royal body, the second floor protected the images of the two apostles.

6. **Phra Vihara** was in 4 directions, with Phra Phuttha Maravichai Abhaipraphak enshrined at the eastern viharn (front porch), Phra Phuttha Lokanat enshrined at the eastern viharn (back porch), and Phra Phuttha Chinnasri. Muni Nat enshrined at the west viharn. All directions brought important Buddha images from different cities to preserve them, divided into front and back porches, with the front porch facing different directions while the back porch, facing towards the Ubosot,

Phra Phuttha Palilai is preserved at the north viharn Phra Buddha Chinnarat Worawat Thammachak at the south of the temple for Thai philosophers to use the medical textbooks, archaeology, literature, poems in their studies as well as others inscriptions on the marble slabs adorned on the temple's walls collectively known as Prachanachan.

7. Wat Pho Inscribe The temple of Pra Chetuphon is considered as the earliest centre of Thailand's public education, and the marble illustrations and inscriptions inside the temple have been opened for public view and has been recognized by UNESCO as a notable cultural heritage of the world. During the Ayutthaya period, the temple was recognized as an institution for Thai traditional medicine and the art of science. His Majesty has taken a cutting posture, a relaxing body position to relieve of aches and pains in different parts of the body, thus he applied them to Thai motto to glorify the hermit as a teacher who has the supremacy to various neurosciences.

8. Statues showing methods of massage and yoga positions. He made hermits statues in different poses. Later, in the reign of King Rama III, 80 hermits' images were cast in various poses by using zinc and tin instead of soil which can deteriorate easily. The poem was composed in 80 chapters to describe the Rishi Datton's different postures. Because of the removal of some statues and statues that were being smuggled for sale, only 24 images are remained inside Wat Pho.

9. Lantan the Chinese doll Wat Pho is a charming Chinese temple in the reign of King Rama III where the Sampao trade was very prosperous. With its royal popularity in Chinese art, he ordered to rebuild and restored the temple. The temple is made of Chinese stones which have architectural styles that are influenced by Chinese art so called "Royal Art Style". The junk ships of Chinese merchants who used stone dolls as "ballast" offered it every time they arrived in Thailand as a tribute to King Rama III. China itself was satisfied to disseminate its own arts and culture as a signed in supporting to each other. This was the reason Chinese stoneware and stone dolls were spread and offered to various temples as decoration in the period of King Rama III.

10. Khao Mo Garden is a stone garden planted with ornamental plants and made of small stones that form a mountain on the right garden in the Grand Palace. It was ordered by King Rama III. However, during the rule of King Rama II the mountain was an ornamental garden temple. Most were planted trees along the foot of the hill, and on the hill, there were both Chinese-style stupas and lantern poles in the form of Chinese dolls and four-footed animals.

At the foot of the mountain there were four-footed beast lined up everywhere both on the hill. There is a total of 24 children, such as Khao Pratu, Khao Sadao, Khao Asoka, Khao Anchor, Khao Rut, Khao Siwa Lingam and others. Most of the plants were not able to survived, so they renovated the place into a rock garden with other flowers where you can relax and enjoy the view with your eyes.

Important Places near Wat Pho

1. Tha Tian during the Ayutthaya period, the inner area of Rattanakosin was composed of the Chao Phraya River, temples, palaces, and cities. The river was the main transport route in maritime trade with other distant cities. Various lines to support large maritime, with the digging of the Lat Bangkok Canal from the mouth of the Bangkok Noi Canal to the sea through the mouth of the Bangkok Yai Canal during the reign of King Chai Rachathirat, which caused the changes of the river's route, "Khlong Lad", to expand into different parts of the river.

The Chao Phraya Sai Fiem River became shallow and narrow until it became a common canal. Along the Chao Phraya River it expanded at the end of Khlong Lat then later on it was called "Bangkok". It became the important port city and a resting point for international ships for more than 300 years during the reign of the emperor. With all junks having to stop to inform travel details, cargo and

passengers, as well as pay taxes on both arrivals and departures in Bangkok. The Grand Palace converted to be the center part in creating economic prosperity for the two kingdoms, Thonburi and Rattanakosin. Sovereignty of King Rama IV made the role of "Tha Tian".

The "Tha Tian" is considered the most important trade junction along the Chao Phraya River because it is the source of all kinds of goods from every province, including goods carried by the Chinese Samut and a place for unloading the goods.

The life of Sao Bangkok from a water community to a full-fledged land life was a result of Siam turning to trade with foreigners more after the Bowring Treaty during the reign of king Rama IV which made the role of "Tha Tian". Yet, changes occurred when an old legend about Wat Pho giant who borrowed money from his good friend Wat Jaeng giant who drew his sword to Wat Pho giant because he refused to pay him back, causing Wat Jaeng giant to cross the Chao Phraya River to ask for the money, so the two fought in a dogfight, causing the houses in the neighborhood to flatten, which is the origin of the name "Tha Tian".

At present, “Tha Tian” is a good place for walking, buying souvenirs and special delicacies such as dried seafood, dried shrimps, dried squid, etc.

2. Souvenir Shops

Siam Exotic concentrating on its inimitable ambiance, most products are handmade showing Thai unique identity. Shops are located at the entrance of Soi Tha Tian, Sala Rattanakosin Hotel.

3. Kin & Koff Cafe Restaurant which is opposite Wat Pho and at the corner of Maharat Road. The shops offer varieties of delicious food such as croissants, homemade pastries and recommended dishes like “Pad Thai “which is available on the shop’s 2nd floor. You can also relax, sit and watch the beautiful view of Wat Pho and Wat Phra Kaew,

Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimonmangkalam Ratchaworawihan known as Wat Pho. Or simply take ordinary bus number: 9, 3, 2, 5, 12, 25, 32, 54, 57, 84, 53, 42 or air-conditioned bus: Por. 4, Por. 507, Por. 508, Por. 12, Por. 44, Por. 48 or by a private car. Parking is available at Chetuphon Road with an hourly fee of 20 baht. For more convenience you may take the MRT to Sanam Chai Station, exit no. 1 or by express boat along the Chao Phraya River to Tha Chang Pier (Wat Arun Pier) then take a small ferry across to Tha Tien, Tha Rachini pier to get there.