

# "Walking tour of Thailand in one day"

written by Michel GÉRARD

No far from Bangkok an original park presents Thailand through its rich cultural and historic heritage. Meuang Boran or "Ancient City", which was constructed by a rich Thai businessman who loved art and history, is an outdoor museum regrouping a collection of 112 reproductions of monuments on a large scale covering an immense stretch of land in the shape of Thailand.



After breakfast early in the morning, our group gets ready for the tour of Thailand in one day. But how is this possible? Meuang Boran allows us to experience this on foot as well as by bicycle or tandem, samlor or vehicle. This historic park is situated on the old Sukhumvit road and about one hour is needed from the centre of the capital to reach there. When we arrive at the entrance, we are surprised not to see the tens of buses usually parked close to tourist places. Without a doubt, Meuang Boran is part of the privileged places little known or marketed, and that is all to the advantage of those who look for tranquillity and authenticity.

Our group, accompanied by our smiling guide Mr Chatpong, decides to leave the mini van in the parking lot and to tour the park on foot before the bewildered eyes of the ticket attendants. We are in fact good walkers and wish to take time to appreciate this cultural day out whereas the children are all happy to choose their bicycle and get around safely. The visit starts with the southern part of Thailand and particularly the Stupa of Phra Mahathat, a Buddhist monastery built in the Srivijaya period (VIIe - XIIe centuries) and the most adored of Nakhon Sri Thammarat. There, our guide explains to us the history and basics of the religion.

A few steps farther we enter a small village where everyone can see and buy some souvenirs and cool drinks. Our walk continues then in direction of the North to Bangkok for a visit to the Grand Palace. Next comes a magnificent and unique reconstruction of the former Sanphet Prasat Grand Palace of Ayutthaya, which was destroyed by the Burmese in 1767. It is there that the first European, and especially French ambassadors under the reign of Louis XIV, presented themselves to king Narai perched on his throne.

The floating market is a very quiet place where our group takes the time to have lunch. The atmosphere is definitely enjoyable and the Thai dishes tasty, it is indeed the best place in the park to eat. At noon the sun hits hard and a cap is necessary to continue. While retracing our steps a little it is interesting to see the Khmer sanctuary Prasat Hin Phimai of Nakhon Ratchasima that might have been used as a model to build Angkor Wat.

More to the East is located the temple Wat Khao Phra Viharn of Sri Saket at the Cambodian border that has been reconstructed on an artificial mountain, and from the top of it you will be able to admire an impressive panoramic view of the whole park. A visit to the cultural and social Anthropological Museum that regroupes the biggest collection of farming objects of every region is not to be missed, but also the sculptures of the Thai epic history and an exhibition of the Royal barges procession.

All replica of the existing or reconstituted sites in Meuang Boran are at a scale of one-third or full size and have been created with the help of the National Museum experts. There are so many interesting monuments that one full day would be required to see them all best and it would be too long to write all about them here. The only thing to do is to go there. At the end of this historic and cultural walk our group is able to keep the memory of this place in their minds forever, specially how it enabled us to get around Thailand in one day...

© Michel GÉRARD

Michel Gerard is a Travel author based in Asia. Visit the *Reperages Thailand Travel* website for information and ideas of original excursions. Download your \*free\* ebook: "Stories of Authentic Eco-adventure Destinations for Travellers in Thailand" => <http://www.travel.reperages-thailand.com>