

# Bangkok by Bike

By Christina Hammarlund

Is it really possible to ride a bike in Bangkok? And survive? Without any major injuries? Bruises doesn't count. Yes, it is.

We went on a trip by bike in a part of Bangkok, which I believe few farangs knows about and has experienced. On the western shore of Chaophraya River in an area named Thonburi a Swedish guy, Arne Wilhelmsen, runs his Bangkok sightseeing on bike business, Bangkok by Bike, since 2006.

Our full day excursion started with the BTS down to Saphan Taksin. From the pier we jumped on the Express Boat with the orange flag up the river. After a nice 30 minute boat ride with we arrived at our destination, Phra Pin Klao Bridge (pier 12).

A short 5 min walk later, we could see our bikes ready for departure on the pavement. We met Arne and his guide Jam. And after a brief introduction we were off!



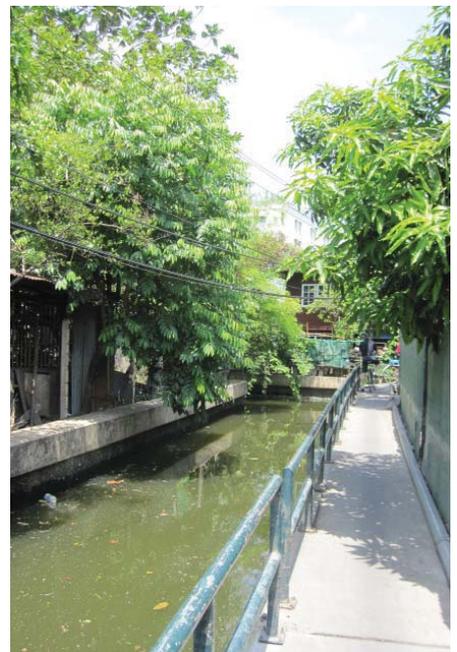
Arne Wilhelmsen, Bangkok by Bike, shows us the direction



We cycled in a line on narrow alleys. Arne in the front and Jam at the back. No risk getting lost in what otherwise looked like a maze. Some alleys are really green and lush. And sometimes it feels like biking through someone's living room. We had to be aware of dogs, children and of course motorbikes. Coming closer to the river, the autumn flooding appeared very clearly. The highest waterline is clearly visible. This area, behind the locks was very exposed.

We continue our trip by the canals and had a lovely lunch break at the Taling Chan floating market. The food was excellent and we even tried durian, famous for its "not so nice" smell, as dessert. An experience not as bad as expected. Normally Arne doesn't include the durian fruit for dessert, but we talked a lot about different fruits during our ride and also mentioned that some of us never had tried it. Therefore the treat for dessert.

The floating market is located just underneath the railway. Suddenly during the middle of our lunch a train passes by. At the market not



only food is for sale. I found a bucket with small, 2 centimeter wide, turtles. There is also a lot of handcraft. Lovely animals made out of recycled paper. The market is well worth a visit and many Thai people go there as a weekend treat.



During our trip we made frequent stops. Both at waterholes for drinks as well as at temple sites for rest, contemplation and storytelling by Jam. She shared a lot of her knowledge about Buddhism and ceremonial and way of life with us.

One of our first stops was at the Royal Barges Museum with the royal barges used in ceremonial processes along the river. Last time in use was in 2011 for the 65th anniversary of the king's ascension.

The day was finished with a return trip by long tail boat on the canals. The boat took us back to our starting point.

On this full day trip we made approximately 25 kilometers on bike. Overall it was a great experience and we'll certainly do it again. Especially inviting friends visiting us as they probably not will get close to such an experience seeing another side of Bangkok, which probably also is closer to the average life of Thai families.

