

WAT RAKHANG KOSITARAM

THE TEMPLE OF BELLS

- PEMA RINCHEN -



Wat Rakhang is an old temple in Bangkok from the Ayutthaya era, and is one of the favourite and most popular temple for merit-making.

Originally called Wat Bang Wa Yai, the temple was renovated and elevated to a royal temple in the reign of King Taksin (1767-1782), when the King constructed his palace nearby.

Then later, during the reign of King Rama I (1782-1809), a huge bell was unearthed during the construction of the temple. This bell was removed to Wat Phra Kaeo, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha. Subsequently, five new bells were presented by King Rama I as replacements. These five bells are still hanging in the belfry today and it is from these bells that the temple got its present name, *rakhang* or bells. Its name in full is Wat Rakhang Kositaram Woramahawiharn, the last word indicating a royal temple of the second grade.



The Golden Bell

The golden bell alongside the entrance of the temple grounds is a replica of that bell that was found in the temple more than 200 years ago. And once inside the temple compound, visitors will be able to see the beautiful service bells just outside the *Ubosot* or ordination hall.



The smaller bells hanging can be heard ringing continuously by devotees and visitors, as it is a local belief that this act can ring in goodness and fortune. Another reason why Wat Rakhang is popular is because the first Supreme Patriarch (in the Rattanakosin era), Somdet Phra Sangkharat, the spiritual leader of the Buddhist clergy in Thailand, once lived there.

Inside the Ordination Hall



Outside the ordination hall are boundary markers and windows framed by ornate designs in gold, with intricate golden horn-like shofars protruding from the corners of the multi-tiered roof. And within the hall are elaborate wall murals painted by a monk who was a famous artist in the reign of King Rama VI (1910-1925).



In the hall, both monastics and devotees can be seen paying respects at the main altar, meditating, chanting or reflecting on the carpeted floor.



The Monastic Library



Just next to the *ubosot* is a red wooden building, the Ho Phra Tripitaka or monastic library where Buddhist scriptures or *Phra Tripitaka* (teachings of Buddha in three parts) are kept.

And today, the central section of the monastic library is home to a life-sized portrait of King Rama I and an altar, where many locals and visitors pay their respects. Also known as the Ho Phra Tripitaka, the monastic library is also where King Rama I once lived before he became king.

And in the reign of King Taksin, the scriptures were transferred from Nakhon Si Thammarat and kept there too.

The Chao Phraya River

On the other side of the temple is Wat Rakhang Pier, that overlooks the Chao Phraya River. At this open area between the temple and the famous river, devotees and visitors can be seen taking in the beautiful view of the bustling river and feeding pigeons. With blue skies as the backdrop on a sunny day, this scenic spot is definitely a hit with tourists, before they head off to Chang Pier via the ferry .