WAT SAMPHRAN
The Dragon Temple

The 17-storey pink tower wrapped by a giant dragon - how to reach it from Bangkok, how to climb inside the dragon, and every tip that saves the trip.



Wat Samphran from above: the dragon coils from the ground to the rooftop, next to the large golden Buddha.

40 km west of Bangkok | Entry to grounds: FREE | Half-day trip | Best on a Sunday morning

How to use this guide: Prices are in Thai Baht (THB). As a rough guide, THB 100 is about Rs 260-280 - check the live rate before you travel. This temple does not publish its own timetable, and published hours differ between sources, so this guide gives the commonly reported timings and tells you plainly where to double-check on the day. Distances and fares are indicative, compiled for planning.

Spelling note: you will see it as Wat Samphran, Wat Sam Phran and Wat Sam Pran - it is the same temple. On Google Maps, search **"Wat Sam Phran"** or **"Dragon Temple Bangkok"**.

START HERE

The temple almost no guidebook lists

Wat Samphran is a working Buddhist temple in Sam Phran district, Nakhon Pathom province - not in Bangkok itself, but about 40 km west of the city centre. Its main building is a 17-storey, 80-metre-high cylindrical pink tower, and wrapped around it from ground to roof is a huge green dragon. You do not just look at the dragon: its body is hollow, and a ramp inside it spirals all the way to the rooftop.



The pink tower and its dragon, rising out of the orchards of Nakhon Pathom.

At a glance

Need to know	Details
Address	92/8, Sam Phran, Sam Phran District, Nakhon Pathom 73110, Thailand
Grounds open	Daily, commonly reported as about 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM; some sources say 8:00-9:00 AM openings on weekdays. Arrive in the morning and treat any timetable as an estimate.
Dragon climb	NOT open every day - see page 6. Best chance: Sundays, Buddhist holy days (wan phra) and public holidays.
Entry fee	Grounds are free and parking is free. A donation of about THB 80 per person is asked for the dragon climb.
Time needed	About 2 hours on site, plus roughly 1 hour each way from central Bangkok by car.
Dress code	Shoulders and knees covered. No cover-ups are provided - come dressed correctly.

THE STORY

Why a dragon? The story & the symbolism

The temple was officially registered in 1985 and built through the devotion of its followers as a centre for meditation and Buddhist practice. It is a recent temple by Thai standards - which is exactly why it looks like nothing else in the country. Thai and Chinese influences meet here: the dragon is a guardian figure, coiling protectively around the tower, and its five claws are said to recall the five moral precepts of Buddhism.

80 metres, on purpose

The tower rises to 80 metres - the age of the Buddha at his death. The number is the message: the whole building is a reminder of the Buddha's life and passing.

17 storeys

The pink cylinder climbs 17 floors. There is a lift in the tower, but visitors do not use it - the way up, when it is open, is through the dragon itself.

A working temple first

Resident monks and nuns live and practise here. On a weekday morning you will see more robes than cameras. That is the charm - and the reason the rules on page 7 matter.

Still unfinished, still loved

Parts of the complex were never fully completed and some corners look weathered. Go expecting a place of faith with an extraordinary building, not a polished theme park, and you will love it.

Why it stayed a secret

Wat Samphran sits off every standard Bangkok tour route, has no direct train or metro, and for years appeared in almost no guidebook. Most visitors are Thai devotees. Social media found it eventually - the aerial photos are unmistakable - but on the ground it remains calm, green and uncrowded, especially on weekday mornings.

> **Crafted tip:** The famous shot is from the rooftop beside the dragon's head, looking down its body. You can only take it on a day the dragon climb is open - plan around that first (page 6), everything else second.

The wish at the top

At the rooftop you step out beside the dragon's head. Local tradition says to touch the dragon's beard (some say its chin) and make a wish. Whether or not you believe it, the view earns the climb on its own: flat green orchards and the Tha Chin river plain stretching out in every direction, with no other tall building in sight.

HOW TO REACH

Getting there: every option, honestly compared

There is no direct BTS, MRT or train to the temple door - that single fact shapes every route below. All routes end with a road leg, so the real choice is how much of the journey you do cheaply before the final taxi.

Option	Time one way	Indicative cost	Best for
1. Grab / taxi direct	45 min - 1 hr 15 min	THB 400-700 one way	Almost everyone; families, groups of 3-4
2. Pre-booked round-trip taxi / private car	45 min - 1 hr 15 min	About THB 1,200-1,500 with waiting	Anyone worried about the ride back - recommended
3. MRT to Lak Song + taxi	1 hr 15 min - 1 hr 45 min	MRT fare + about THB 250 taxi	Solo travellers saving money, still simple
4. Bus 84 + songthaew / taxi	1 hr 30 min - 2 hrs	About THB 25 bus + THB 10-60 last leg	Backpackers, the full local experience
5. Minivan via Sai Tai Mai	1 hr 30 min - 2 hrs	Budget, varies by route	Confident travellers comfortable asking locally
6. Guided day tour	Full / half day	Per-person tour price	Zero planning; often combines Don Wai Market

The return trip is the trap. Taxis and Grab cars are scarce around the temple - several visitors report no Grab availability in the area at all. Never assume you can simply book a ride back. Use option 2, ask your driver to wait, or follow the bus route back on page 5. Decide your return plan *before* you leave Bangkok.

From the airports

From Suvarnabhumi (BKK) or Don Mueang (DMK), a direct taxi or Grab takes about 1.5-2 hours depending on traffic - the temple is on the far western side of the city from both airports. Do not attempt it on a tight same-day connection; do it as a morning trip from a Bangkok hotel instead.

HOW TO REACH - STEP BY STEP

The routes, step by step

A **Direct Grab / taxi - the easy way.** Book a Grab car from your hotel to "Wat Sam Phran". Leave by 7:30-8:00 AM to beat both heat and traffic; the drive west out of Bangkok is about 40 km. On arrival, agree with the driver whether he will wait (offer a waiting fee) - or be ready with Route D for the return. Insist on the meter in a street taxi, or fix the price before you sit down.

B **MRT + taxi - the smart budget way.** Take the MRT Blue Line to **Lak Song**, its western terminus. From outside the station, take a taxi or Grab for the remaining road leg - about THB 250 and 25-35 minutes. You skip the worst of Bangkok traffic on the train and pay for a taxi only where there is no train. Bang Wa (BTS Silom Line) works the same way as an alternative start.

C **Bus 84 - the cheapest way.** Reach Lak Song MRT or Bang Wa BTS, then board air-conditioned **bus 84** towards Sam Phran (about THB 25). Ask the conductor for the stop nearest Wat Samphran - buses pass along the main road, and the temple turn-off is still about 4-5 km short of the gate. Cover that last leg by blue songthaew (about THB 8-10), motorbike taxi or a passing taxi (about THB 50-60). Total: under THB 100 per person, one way.

D **Getting back - do it in reverse, early.** Walk out to the temple entrance and take the songthaew back to the bus 84 stop, then the bus to Lak Song, then the MRT into the city. Start back by mid-afternoon at the latest: songthaews thin out, and you do not want to be negotiating transport at dusk in a quiet district. If a taxi happens to be at the gate, take it to Lak Song MRT rather than all the way into Bangkok - faster and cheaper.

> **Crafted tip:** Save the temple's name and address in Thai script on your phone, plus a screenshot of the map pin. Out here, showing the driver beats pronouncing it - "Sam Phran" said the Indian way will get you a polite smile and the wrong district.

Self-drive

Renting a car is straightforward once you clear Bangkok - Thailand drives on the left, like India, and parking at the temple is free. Follow the highway west towards Nakhon Pathom and the signs for Sam Phran. Leave before 8:00 AM on weekends; the return into Bangkok builds up from about 4:00 PM.

THE CLIMB

Inside the dragon: the climb to the roof

This is the reason to come - and the one part of the visit you cannot guarantee. Read this page before you fix your date.

> **When is the dragon open?** Multiple current sources agree: the walkway inside the dragon is open only on **Sundays, Buddhist holy days (wan phra) and public holidays** - and it can also close for maintenance without any notice, posted anywhere. On other days the grounds, halls and gardens are open, but the tower door may stay shut. If climbing is your main goal, go on a Sunday morning.

What the climb is actually like

- **A ramp, not stairs:** you walk up a sloping concrete tunnel that spirals inside the dragon's hollow body, all the way to the 17th floor rooftop.
- **Barefoot:** shoes come off before you enter. Wear socks you do not mind getting dusty - the tunnel floor is bare concrete.
- **Narrow and enclosed:** in places two people pass sideways, with small openings in the dragon's flank and fans along the route for air. If enclosed spaces trouble you, this climb is one way in, one way out - skip it without regret and enjoy the grounds.
- **Hot work:** even with the fans, it is warm inside. Carry water, go early, and take the resting spots on the way up.
- **The payoff:** you step out on the rooftop beside the dragon's head - touch its beard and make a wish - with a large Buddha, prayer spots and a full 360-degree view over the plains.

> **Crafted tip:** The donation asked for the climb is about THB 80 in cash - carry small notes. Donations go into the donation box; you should not be pressed to hand cash to individuals. A polite smile and the box settle every request.

Honest note: reports differ on how many floors visitors reach and whether the lift or upper floors are accessible on a given day - access is the temple's decision on the day. Ask at the entrance desk when you arrive, before you plan your photos around the rooftop.

ON THE GROUND

What else to see - and how to behave

Even on a no-climb day, give the grounds a full hour. This is one of the most unusual temple compounds in Thailand:

The large golden Buddha

Beside the tower stands a huge seated golden Buddha on its own platform - visible in every aerial photo and the main prayer focus for many devotees.

The turtle building

A giant turtle you enter through its mouth and leave by its tail, with Buddha images inside - children love it, adults photograph it, nobody forgets it.

The white elephant

On the ground floor of the tower. Local belief: touch the elephant's legs, then your own, for strong legs and good health.

The animal gardens

Peacocks, a white rabbit, dolphins, tigers and dragons on bridges and ponds, a wishing well with small dragons, and a statue of the Goddess of Mercy - wander slowly, it rewards it.

Temple etiquette - non-negotiable

- Shoulders and knees covered, for everyone. No sarongs or cover-ups are provided here - this is not the Grand Palace with its rental counter.
- Shoes off inside halls and before the dragon climb; never step on a threshold, step over it.
- Keep voices low, do not climb on statues, and do not point your feet at Buddha images or sit with feet facing them.
- Ask before photographing monks, nuns and worshippers. The women attendants in lilac who assist with prayers should not be touched - a wai (palms together, slight bow) is the correct greeting.
- Women should not hand anything directly to a monk; place it down for him to pick up.
- Photography of the building and grounds is welcome; check before flying a drone, as rules and permissions change.

MAKE A DAY OF IT

Nearby: turn a half-day into a full day



Don Wai Market - come hungry.



Phra Pathom Chedi, Nakhon Pathom town.

Combine with	Why / how far
Don Wai Market	The easiest pairing - a riverside market in the same Sam Phran area, loved by locals for Thai sweets, noodles, stewed duck and fruit. Many day tours run Don Wai + Wat Samphran together.
Wat Rai Khing	Revered riverside temple near Don Wai on the Tha Chin river - pair all three for a Sam Phran loop.
Phra Pathom Chedi	Thailand's tallest stupa, in Nakhon Pathom town further west. A full-day plan only: temple in the morning, chedi after - do not rush both before lunch.
Red Lotus Floating Market / lotus cafes	Seasonal lotus ponds and photogenic cafes in the district - a relaxed stop on the drive back.

Two ready plans

Half-day (recommended): 7:30 AM leave Bangkok - 8:45 AM arrive, grounds and halls - climb the dragon (Sunday) - rooftop by 10:00 AM - gardens and turtle building - 11:30 AM start back - lunch in Bangkok. You beat the heat at every step.

Full day: Wat Samphran first thing, then Don Wai Market for a long riverside lunch and sweets shopping, Wat Rai Khing in the afternoon, back in Bangkok by 5:00-6:00 PM.

TIPS & TRICKS

Every tip that saves this trip

Do

- Go on a **Sunday morning** if the climb matters; any weekday morning if you want the temple to yourself.
- Leave Bangkok by **7:30-8:00 AM** - cooler climb, softer light on the pink tower, thinner traffic.
- Carry **cash in small notes** - donations, bus, songthaew and market snacks are all cash. There is no ticket counter to swipe a card at.
- Carry **water, sunscreen and a hat**. The grounds are open and green, with little shade at midday.
- Wear **socks** for the barefoot climb and shoes that slip off easily.
- Budget **2 hours on site**. Rushing the grounds to "just see the dragon" misses half the place.
- Best season: **November to February**, like the rest of central Thailand.

Do not

- Do not arrive at noon expecting the climb, the photos and no queue of heat - all three get worse.
- Do not count on finding a Grab back. Arrange the return first (page 5).
- Do not wear shorts or a sleeveless top and hope for a rental cover-up. There is none.
- Do not plan it on a departure day - it is 40 km the wrong way from both airports, plus traffic.
- Do not skip it just because it is "not in Bangkok". It is closer than Ayutthaya and unlike anything there.

Sample budget, per person

Item	THB
Grab direct, split 3-4 ways	150-250
OR MRT + taxi / bus route	60-300
Dragon climb donation	~80
Drinks & snacks	50-150
Total (transport-dependent)	**~200-700**

For Indian travellers: the temple is vegetarian-friendly by nature - the surrounding market food is Thai, so carry a snack if you need a Jain or strict veg meal, and eat properly at Don Wai or back in Bangkok. Your Bangkok SIM/eSIM and Grab app work here; network can be patchy inside the dragon tunnel, which is part of the point.

BEFORE YOU GO

Quick answers & your final checklist

Question	Answer
Is Wat Samphran in Bangkok?	No - Sam Phran district, Nakhon Pathom, about 40 km west. Plan it as a half-day trip out of the city.
Can I always climb the dragon?	No. Best chance Sundays, Buddhist holy days and public holidays; it also closes for maintenance without notice.
Is there an entry fee?	Grounds and parking are free. About THB 80 donation is asked for the climb.
How long does the visit take?	About 2 hours on site; about 4.5-5 hours door-to-door from central Bangkok by car.
Is it suitable for kids / seniors?	The grounds, yes - flat and green. The climb is a long, warm, enclosed ramp: fine for fit kids, hard for anyone with knee, breathing or claustrophobia concerns.
What if the climb is closed?	Still go if you are nearby - grounds, golden Buddha and turtle building fill an hour. If the climb is the whole point, switch to Sunday.

Packing checklist for the morning

- Temple outfit (shoulders + knees covered), socks, slip-on shoes
- Cash in small THB notes, water bottle, sunscreen, hat
- Phone charged, temple pin + Thai address saved, power bank
- Return plan decided before you leave - driver waiting, or bus 84 route saved offline

Ready to craft your Bangkok trip?

Flights, hotels, day trips and custom itineraries for Indian travellers - including Wat Samphran done the easy way, with the car, the timing and the climb day planned for you.

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Tell us your dates and travel style - we will plan the rest.

Hours, fares and access rules in this guide are indicative and were compiled for planning from multiple published sources, which differ on this temple's timings; please confirm on the day before your visit. Safe travels - Sawasdee!