

## Bangkok Rediscovering The Old

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Have you ever wondered how Bangkok was 60 years ago? I do and I can focus back only 20 years, when Silom was not overbuilt-up like it is today. Bangkok is growing so fast and keeps changing. But there's still some places which kept their secrets, Just off Rachadamnoen Road, is an area just like this &ndash; perfect for whole day walking tour with lots of stops for good food. The roads you'll have to trek are. Praeng Nara Road. It may not seem so today but Tanao Road at one time was one of Bangkok's liveliest fashion streets.

Any tour should begin with a prayer, so head for Chao Por Sua (tiger) shrine on Tanao Road, one of the most sacred shrines in this area. Near the shrine is a parking lot lined with carts selling flowers, incense, red candles and gold paper money.

There is even Chinese opera troupe available for hire for a votive performance. This shrine is a Tao temple built 1834, with a large area taken up by huge candles and incense holders, it is full of smoke and is crowded.

From the shrine take a right and you'll see an old western style gate called Praeng Suphakit Gate. It was the gate of the palace of Prince Sappasat Suphakit's son of King Rama IV. The palace in 1919. Of interest to the hungry is the corner of Praeng Nara Road with its Savoey Patongko, selling deep fried doughnuts or patongko. These are eaten dipped in a very tasty Thai custard. Get there early in the morning to try this crispy treat.

After the snack, head for Praeng Nara Road. A calm street of beautiful shop houses. Built during King Rama V period, these 2-storey buildings are western in architecture. To your right, Kanom Bueng outlet.

Now Kanom Bueng is a bean flour crepe with fillings of preserved winter melon, plum, Foi Thong (dessert made from egg and syrup), coconut with shrimp or coconut with crushed coriander root. Served with custard (Sangkhaya) Another landmark on this road is the Talapatr school with its beautiful architecture.

Praeng Nara is busy during lunch time as all the government officers come here for a meal. Praeng Nara and Praeng Phutorn run parallel to each other, and once you get to the end of Praeng Nara turn left for Praeng Phutorn. Military and camping gear shops crowd this area very interesting. A delicacy to try here, I believe, is pork brain served with noodles. If you are curious about this you'll have to try it, I haven't a clue as honestly I don't dare eat it, reminds me of Hannibal's.

Having said that, pork brain is essential to Chinese health food. This stall opened in 1955 when of noodles. On the opposite side of the road is shop colored with mangoes. Open since 1932, Kor Panich serves mango with sticky rice. Only sticky rice from Chiang Rai is used and it is cooked in fresh coconut milk. Try their trial size sets: little cups of sticky rice topped with Thai custard, dried fish or dried shrimp.

In Thai cuisine a dessert is essential to 'lang pak' or cleanse your palate. Mangoes and sticky rice do this job well but for deeper cleansing I need something cold and refreshing.

The exterior of Nattaporn ice cream is like a dark noodle shop but their light coconut ice cream is great. The owner who is the third generation in his family to take up this trade prides in his ice cream has to be tried with a topping or two. Choose from sweet potato, taro or pineapple.

From here you can see small park which is like a monument to community cooperation.