

Just an hour and half boat ride from the bustling city of Bangkok, Koh Kret charms you, thanks to its idyll



# potter island

In the year 1722, when a canal was constructed as a shortcut to bypass a bend in the Om Kret branch of the Chao Phraya River a section was cut off eventually becoming a separate island. And Koh Kret was born.

Known for its beautiful clay pottery and considered one of Bangkok's hidden treasures it can be reached from Sathorn pier in approximately 90 minutes by a long-tailed boat. Here, lives a community of craftsmen famous for their distinctive style of pottery which dates back to several centuries!

Descendants of the Mon people of Koh Kret have managed to retain the skills of their forefathers. The island, a centre for "kwan arman" style of Mon pottery is fundamentally just baked unglazed red clay carved with intricate patterns. Prices for the simplest and smallest pots start from as low as 5 baht a piece, but can go up to hundreds or even thousands of baht for large ornate pieces. Particularly popular among visitors are candle and incense holders with ornate patterns of holes to let the smoke or light out, averaging around

200 baht. There are some 20 pottery workshops on the island and one can see many kilns as one walk's around. Mon potters also make pottery which can be used in daily life, like soup bowls, night lamps and aromatherapy lamps.

The other attraction at Koh Kret is the Wat Poramaiyikawat temple, constructed in Mon style and which was built about 200 years ago. In 1873, King Rama V visited the temple and ordered the renovation and later on reconstruction of the main temple.

One starts one's boat cruise at

### How to get there?

Bangkok is connected by direct flights from New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai and Bengaluru. The easiest way to reach Koh Kret is to take the once-weekly Chao Phraya Express Koh Kret tour, which leaves the Central Pier (BTS Saphan Taksin) every Sunday at 09am and visits a number of attractions before returning at 3:30pm. The cost of the cruise and guided tour is 300 baht (no lunch).

### Where to stay?

Siam City Hotel, located adjacent to the Phaya Thai BTS sky-train station, is a convenient location to stay, as almost all tourist attractions including Grand Palace, Wat Arun and Sathorn pier are easy to reach. Also the hotel is itself located opposite Suan Pakkad Palace, which is a tourist attraction in itself owing to the treasures of art housed in this palace. There are no hotels or guesthouses on Koh Kret. Most visitors visit Koh Kret as a day trip from Bangkok.



Sathorn pier which is adjacent to Saphan Takshin BTS Station and makes one's way to Nonthaburi pier, an hour-long ride on the fast flowing waters of the Chao Praya river taking you through the rural outskirts of Bangkok. Alight at Nonthaburi pier to hire a long tailed boat which will take you to Koh Kret and return after an hour's halt. Here both sides of the streets are filled with shops selling pottery of various kinds. Aroma therapy candle holders, night lamps and large pots in a distinctive style are arranged one on top of the other in endless rows. Street vendors selling everything from fried potatoes to papaya salads are found along the way. As you walk about 2km you come across several Buddhist temples whose spires can be seen from a distance.

The entrance to the temple is small but one can sight a golden coloured statue of Quan Yin from the opening. Behind the temple is a pottery museum, which details the history of Koh Kret village and the Mon

tribesmen who came settled here and continue to make pots like their forefathers. Several attractive pots and vases from this village are displayed and look gorgeous with dim lighting illuminating the exhibits in the museum.

Fresh tropical fruits including durians, mangosteens, pineapples, tender coconuts and jack-fruits are available plenty at the local market here. Do savour the island specialty rice preparation, called "Khao Cher" which is similar to Orissa's "pakhalo" in Kerala's "kanji". A Mon specialty and favourite during the summer months, this rice dish is served with chilled fragrant water and needs to be eaten with green papaya salad and roasted peanuts.

Before you head back to your boat do check out the souvenirs at roadside stalls like Thai herbal compress bags for steam massage, Thai herbs and of course, pieces of pottery which can endure the journey back home lasting the airport conveyor belts and luggage handlers. ◀

