

Bangkok Floating Market

The alarm goes off at an ungodly hour and I immediately regret going out the previous evening. I am not the world's biggest fan of early mornings, but the floating market closes around noon, so an early start it is.

There's no time for breakfast, just enough time for a quick shower and then down to catch the cab that will take me 60 miles out of Bangkok to Ratchaburi and ultimately Damnoen Saduak, one of the most famous floating markets.

It's been years since I've been to this floating market, but I remember it as one of the highlights of my first trip to Bangkok. If you've never been to a floating market in Thailand, I highly recommend it. Not so much for the shopping, but for the experience of eating tasty local foods on a boat.

Although now more touristy, floating markets used to be where Thais went shopping for fresh food and household goods. Imagine the Venice canals filled with people on boats selling food and people on shore at the edges of the canals selling souvenirs and even a few areas where you can get off the boat and go to a sit-down restaurant or store or temple. This will give you a reasonable idea of what the floating markets look like.

I get lucky as the normally ½ hr. taxi ride only takes 50 minutes. After hopping into a long-tail, narrow speedboat, I head down the canals to the market. The game plan is to eat as much local cuisine as possible while doing a little souvenir shopping.

The first vendor sells boat noodle soup. Watching someone make a fresh bowl of spicy Thai boat noodle soup from the kitchen they have set up on their canoe is awesome. The big pot used to cook the soup has three sections: one for cooking noodles, one for broth, and one for I don't know what! I will have to pay closer attention next time. I am too distracted by the way the bowls are expertly stacked on each other, maximizing the small space available. The soup is delicious. I can't wait to go back. The fact it costs less than a few bucks doesn't hurt either!

I follow up the soup with fresh mangosteens, fresh mangoes, not quite so fresh durian, hot-off-the-grill crunchy coconut pancakes, multi-colored pork rinds, coconut juice, hot coffee, fried pork with rice, mango with sticky rice, coconut cookies, and finally, more fresh mangoes. All in all, I do fairly well on my mission of eating as many things as possible.

Be aware, the boat drivers take tourists here every day and know all the sellers. They will try to get you to stop at tons of the little souvenir shops. Tell your driver if you don't want to stop at these things and you won't have to stop at as many, BUT they are trying to get you to buy stuff, so be prepared to say no thanks, often. If you buy souvenirs, don't forget to bargain. It's part of the experience. Just don't go crazy, they probably need the money more than you do.

A souvenir will be a great reminder of your trip to Damnoen Saduak Floating Market.