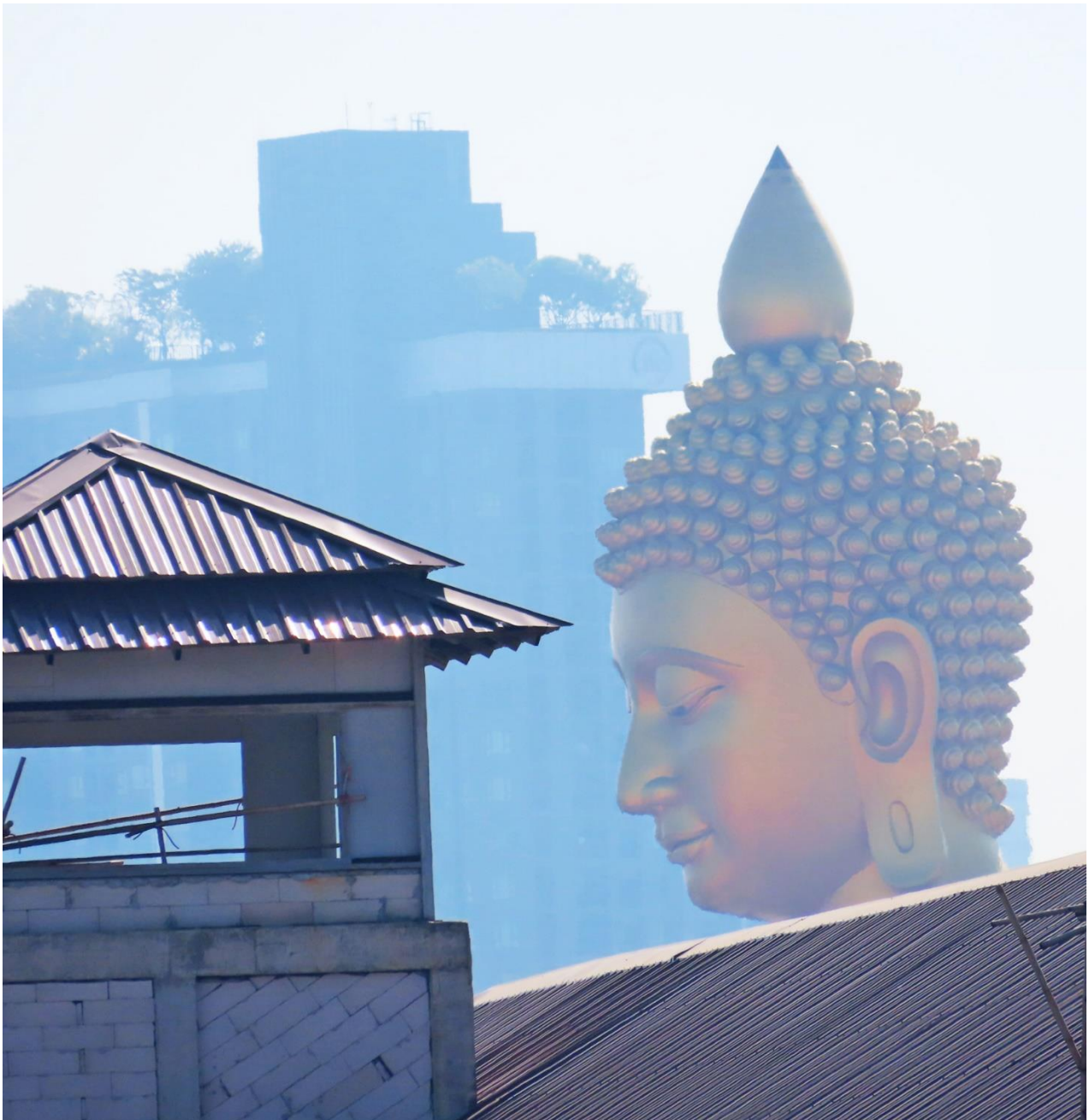


THE BIG BUDDHA AT WAT PAKNAM

BANGKOK, THAILAND



December 2023

Cover page:

The Buddha seen from the platform at Bang Phai MRT station on 30 Dec 2023.

The Buddha

This is Bangkok's largest seated Buddha statue. With a height of 69m (225 ft) it is very prominent. It can be seen from many parts of the city, especially from the elevated tracks of the Skytrain and MRT (urban railways). Wat Paknam, whose red roofs can be seen near the statue in some of the images, is very old as a monastery, dating back to 1610, but the Buddha statue is very new – completed only in 2021. The statue is not solid, nor of gold. It is hollow, made of metal sheets positioned on a metal skeleton and then painted in gold colour.

We discovered the big Buddha by accident. Examining the view from the top floor lounge of our hotel for new items of possible interest in July 2023, we saw a glimmer of gold in the mid-distance to the west. Below is the full westward view from the hotel's top floor. The Buddha, 5.5 km away in the centre of the image, is visible only if you search for it – see the photo following.



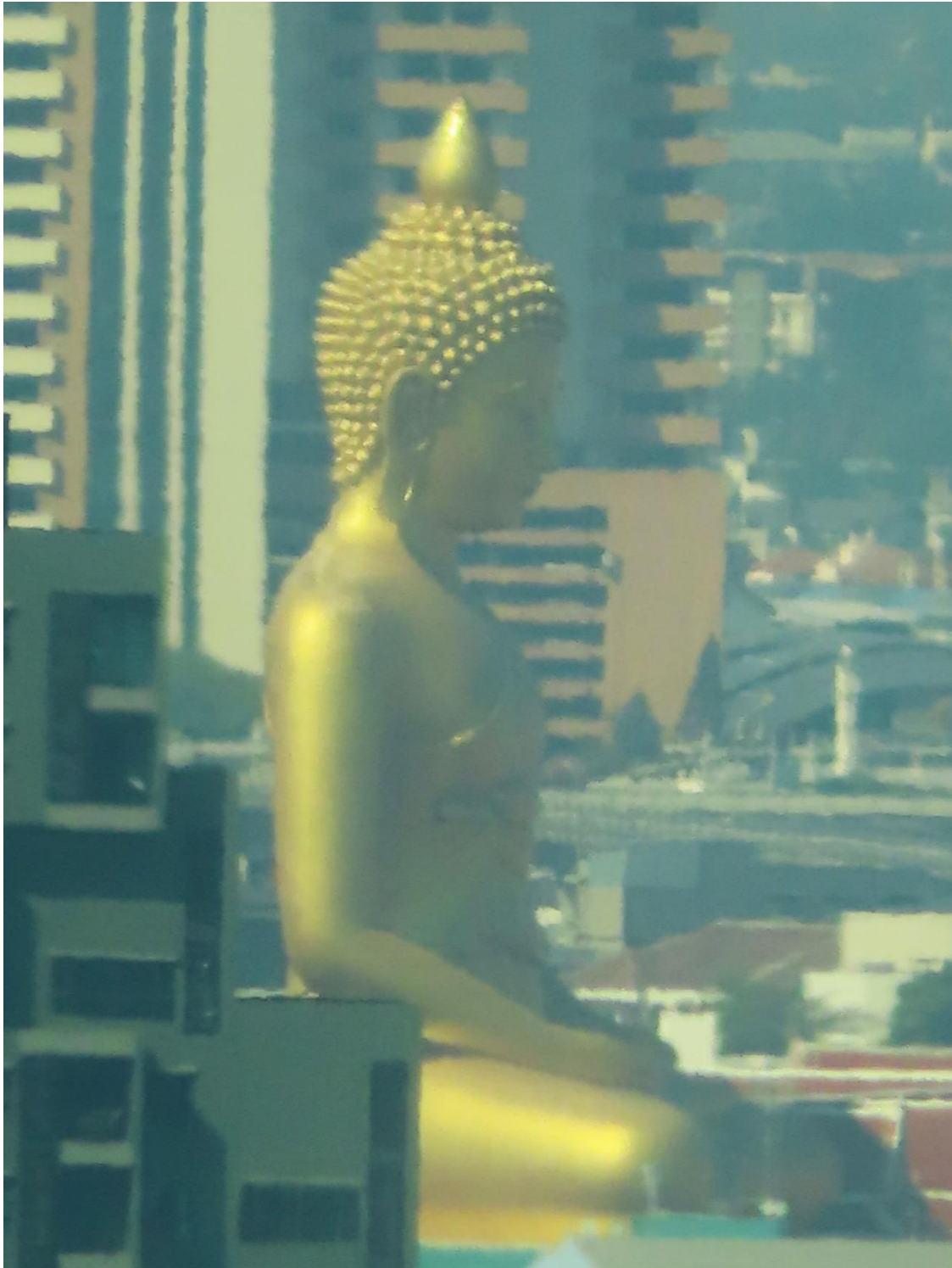
View westwards from top floor of Eastin Grand Hotel, Sathorn, Bangkok, Thailand.

In this partially magnified view, the gold of the Buddha can be seen exactly in the centre of the image, at 8 o'clock (ie down and to the left) from the ERGO red-on-white name sign on top of a tall building just right of centre.



Same view (partly magnified) from top floor of Eastin Grand Hotel, Sathorn, Bangkok, Thailand.

At full zoom of the camera the gold Buddha statue becomes very clear. The distance to it is 5.5km from the camera. The brown coloured high-rise building beyond it is 2 further km away and belongs to Siam University, a specialised engineering and business management college. The photo below was taken on our arrival in the hotel on our most recent trip in December 2023.



View westwards from top floor of Eastin Grand Hotel, Sathorn, Bangkok, Thailand.

The statue can be seen from a number of stations on the nearby Skytrain and MRT rail lines. Here it is 3.5 km away.



From Krung Thonburi Skytrain station, looking through the line's next station, Wongwian Yai.

Here it is from behind, just 1 km away.



From Wuttakat Skytrain station, Bangkok, Thailand.

The statue looms over everything in its vicinity. This is a view that you catch from the platform at the nearest MRT station when you get off the train en route to visit the site. It's still a 20 minute walk away through some back lanes and across a canal from here.



From Bang Phai MRT station, Bangkok, Thailand.

Here are some images (of houses and other temples and shrines) along the 1km walk through the lanes from the Skytrain to Wat (monastery) Paknam where the Buddha is located.



Some more images from the 1km walk through the lanes from the Skytrain to Wat Paknam where the Buddha is located.



Some more images from the 1km walk through the lanes from the Skytrain to the monastery where the Buddha is located.



Some more images from the 1km walk through the lanes from the Skytrain to the monastery where the Buddha is located.



Inside the Wat Paknam Monastery – one of its cats ready to spring into action.



Inside Wat Paknam, Bangkok, Thailand.

One of the courtyards inside Wat Paknam Monastery.



Inside Wat Paknam, Bangkok, Thailand.

Unusual view of the Buddha's head from close-by.



Inside Wat Paknam, Bangkok, Thailand.

It's difficult to capture the entirety of the statue in a single close-up. Note the scale of the people below the statue at bottom.



Inside Wat Paknam, Bangkok, Thailand.

A nice local café, Café Meili, close to the Wat – views outside and inside.



Across the canal from Wat Paknam, Bangkok, Thailand.

Wat Paknam's Golden Buddha was featured on the cover of the London Financial Times' "How to Spend it Magazine" on 28 Oct 2023. The magazine showed fashion shots in various unusual Bangkok locations. The cover shot was the only location out of about 20 that was not specifically identified, but we recognised the Buddha instantly.



We found the exact viewpoint from which the FT's October 2023 photo was taken.



Near Wat Paknam, Bangkok, Thailand.

AND THERE IS MORE...

The Wat Paknam Buddha lies on a bearing of 273 degrees (ie minutely to the north of due west) from our viewpoint at the top of the Eastin Grand Sathorn Hotel in Bangkok. It is 5.5 km away. If one continues on exactly this bearing for a further 27.75 km (about a further 17 miles), another curiosity is reached.

The Dragon Tower at Wat Sam Phran

This is an 80m (262 ft) high structure on the very western fringe of the Bangkok area. It is about 40 years old. The dragon's body is wrapped around the 17-storey tower and encloses a walkway that takes visitors right to the top, from where there are extensive views in all directions. The following photos are file images, not personal photos.



The dragon's claws at the bottom.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF IT ALL...

From our Hotel (at right) across the river to Wat Paknam Buddha (red dot at left) is 5.5km

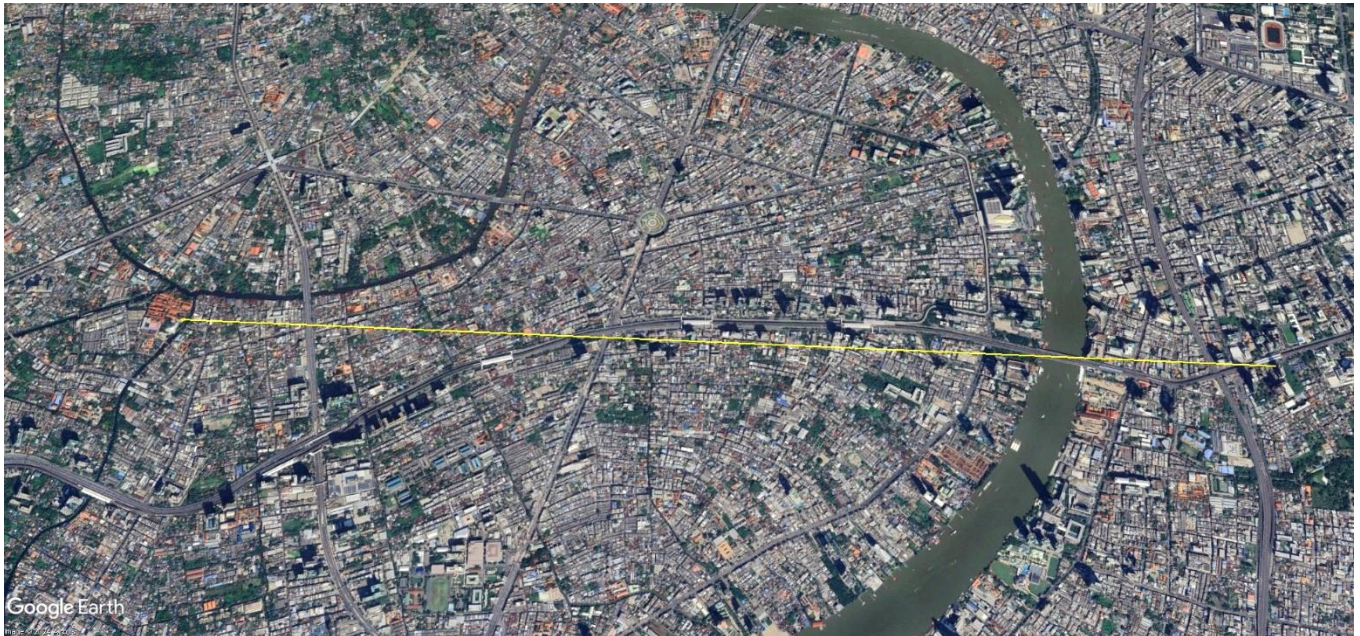


Image courtesy of Google Earth

Wat Paknam (the red roofs cluster clearly seen on the photo) lies 4.5 km west of Bangkok's Chao Phraya river at the junction of several canals. It is close to the old railway line that ran westwards from the river towards Wat Paknam then another 30 km or so south-west down to the small fishing port and town of Samut Sakhon (also known locally as Mahachai), close to the open sea at the mouth of the Tha Chin river. The railway opened in 1904, with its Bangkok terminus on the river's west bank between today's Millennium Hilton Hotel and the old Jam Factory. The railway still operates, but its Bangkok terminus was moved in 1961 away from the river, some 2km back down the line, and trains now start and terminate at the Wongwian Yai station, close to the massive traffic circle of that name with its memorial to King Taksin. The line of the abandoned old track down to the old river's edge terminus is, however, still very visible on the map.

From our Hotel (at right) to Wat Sam Phran (at left) is 33.3 km (20.7 miles). Red dot is location of Wat Paknam



Image courtesy of Google Earth

Wat Sam Phran lies on almost exactly the same line of sight from our hotel towards the west, but a further 28 km further on from Wat Paknam. In theory this would place the tall Dragon Tower, with its 80m height, clearly visible on the horizon, just to the right of Wat Paknam's Buddha (the space of two Buddha torsos to the right and directly above the centre of the cluster of red monastery roofs), looking from our hotel. So far Bangkok's air pollution has obstructed any clear view this time, so this remains an ongoing project for the time being. On a clear day with clean air, seeing a structure the size and height (80 m) of the dragon tower, from 33 km away and from a height of 100 m up should not present any problem.

A search of photos along this sight-line on earlier visits has produced one image that, with much adjustment, possibly shows the tower, with its entwined serpent, in the calculated position on the horizon.

