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WEEKEND IN BANGKOK

The way a museum should be.

The new Museum of Siam promises future generations that the story of those who preceded them will not be lost.



Museum of Siam is a fun place to explore. Photo/Courtesy of Museum of Siam.

What does "typically Thai" mean? Did Ayutthaya already exist during the Sukhothai Period? What army tactics were used in ancient times?

These triggers to curiosity decorate the foyer of the Museum of Siam, which opened on Wednesday night with a jazz concert. The answers aren't found in school textbooks, something that underlined the need for the Museum of Siam, formerly known as the National Discovery Museum.

Right off the bat, the first exhibition room gets interactive with the region of Suvarnabhumi as it was 3,000 years ago. Projected on a screen, an elderly woman rises from a tomb to tell her story.

From there the journey through time visits Ayutthaya, Siam Prathet, Thailand in the 1960s, Thailand Today and Thailand Tomorrow. It's a sensory feast.

You can learn how animism has seamlessly fused with Brahmanism and Buddhism, and listen to the preachings of the late Venerable Buddhadasa Bikkhu in the Buddhism Room.

Admire colourful replicas of the magnificent royal barges in the Founding of Ayutthaya Room, and learn ageold military ploys through interactive games.

A prototype for Thailand's future museums, this one provides a learningcentred environment with the focus on "plearning" - coined from "playing and learning" and the Thai plearn, meaning to be happily engrossed.

"It's a new approach to learning outside schools, which Thailand has sadly lacked," says Apinand Poshyananda, chairman of the Office of Knowledge Management and Development, which runs the new museum, Thailand Knowledge Park and the Thailand Creative and Design Centre.

The threestorey former home of the Commerce Ministry, which was erected in 1922 to an Italian Renaissance design by architect Mario Tamagno, has been completely renovated for its new role.

XTRA

A palace of plearning

The Museum of Siam is at 4 Sanam Chai Road, close to the Grand Palace and Wat Pho. It's open Tuesday to Sunday from 9.30 to 6. There is no admission charge. Along with the exhibits, there will be seminars, creativity contests and activities for school students.

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By Aree Chaisatien

Daily Xpress



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