

Richard Barrow's

THAI TRAIN GUIDE

September 2022



SAI YOK NOI WATERFALL

ขบวนรถพิเศษนำเที่ยวที่ 909/910 กรุงเทพฯ – น้ำตก – กรุงเทพฯ (เฉพาะวันหยุด)

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for downloading this e-book for the trip along the Death Railway to **Sai Yok Noi Waterfall (Nam Tok)**. This is an extract from the Excursion Trains chapter. This is an advance copy for people who are willing to help test run this trip. Please help check for mistakes and feel free to add suggestions to make it better. The first edition of the complete **Thai Train Guide 2023** with over 200 pages is due to be published around Christmas 2022.

Please send feedback about this e-book and any ideas that you may have for other chapters in the train guide to richard@thaitrainguide.com

Thanks, and happy travels!

Richard Barrow

September 2022

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Weekend Excursion Train 909/910 Bangkok – Nam Tok – Bangkok

ขบวนรถพิเศษนำเที่ยวที่ 909/910 กรุงเทพฯ – น้ำตก – กรุงเทพฯ (เฉพาะวันหยุด)

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EXCURSION TRAINS นั่งรถไฟเที่ยวไหนก็สนุก






The State Railway of Thailand run special excursion trains at the weekend and on public holidays. These are daytrips with stops along the way. Unlike regular trains, these ones will wait for you at each stop. The price includes the return ticket. The most popular trips are **Excursion Train No. 909/910 to Sai Yok Noi Waterfall** (น้ำตกไทรโยคน้อย) in Kanchanaburi and **Excursion Train No. 911/912 to Suan Son Pradipat Beach** (สวนสนประดิพัทธ์) to the south of Hua Hin.

Excursion Trains No. 909 and No. 911 are combined when they leave Bangkok Railway Station (Hua Lamphong) at 6:30 a.m. Both excursion trains will have the same first stop at Nakhon Pathom. However, shortly after this, they will split at Nong Pladuk Junction and go their separate ways. So, make sure you are sitting in the right carriage. No. 911 will head south to Hua Hin and No. 909 will take the branch line to Kanchanaburi. This branch line is known internationally as the 'Death Railway'.

You can also board this train at other stations in Bangkok such as at Sam Sen (6:43 a.m.), Bang Sue Junction (6:50 a.m.), and Bang Bamru (7:06 a.m.). Parking at Hua Lamphong is limited and costs 20 Baht per hour or 300 Baht for the day. However, at Bang Sue Grand, parking is free. All times in this guide are subject to change.


HOW TO BUY TICKETS วิธีจองตั๋วรถไฟ





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Exploring Thailand by Train


SAI YOK NOI


STEAM ENGINE TRAIN


SUAN SOAN PRADIPAT

You can buy excursion tickets online on the official **D-Ticket** website (dticket.railway.co.th) up to thirty days in advance. You will need to sign up first and then log in. Change the language to English and then click 'Exploring Thailand by Train'. The excursion trains are 120 baht for 3rd Class carriages with a fan and 240 baht for 2nd Class carriages with air-conditioning. These prices are for return tickets and are very good value for money. Tickets are the same for adults and children. However, children who are less than 100 centimeters tall can travel for free, but they don't get their own seat.

The choice between 2nd and 3rd Class is up to you. I personally prefer to travel in 3rd Class as you can open the window. On the average day that is enough to keep me cool. But the main reason that I like having the windows open is that it is easier to take photos. In 2nd class the windows are often dirty or scratched. For the scenic route to Kanchanaburi I would recommend going 3rd Class and for the trip to Hua Hin you might be more comfortable in 2nd Class.

If you need more information about any of these trips, you can call the **1690 Hotline**. They speak excellent English and are usually very helpful. You can even reserve your tickets with them, but you then must go to the station before 10:00 p.m. the next day to pay for the tickets.

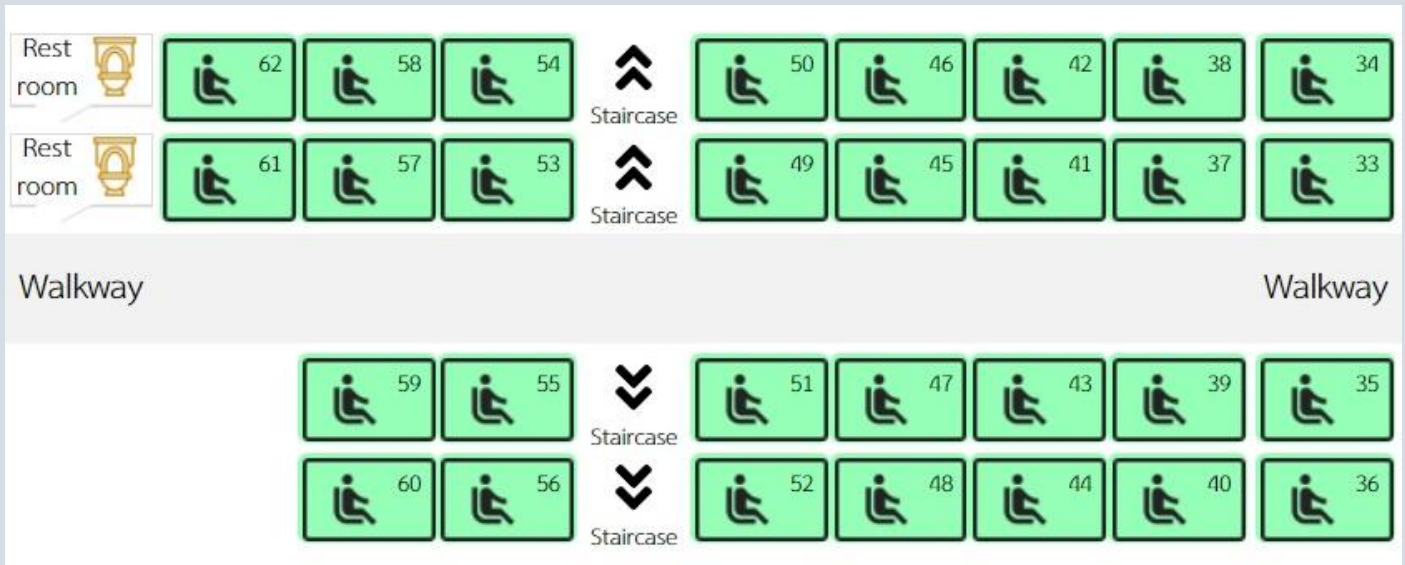
2nd CLASS CARRIAGE รถไฟชั้น 2



On each excursion train, 'Car No. 2' is usually the 2nd Class carriage with comfortable seats and air-conditioning. However, the windows are not the cleanest and are tinted.



2nd CLASS SEATING PLAN

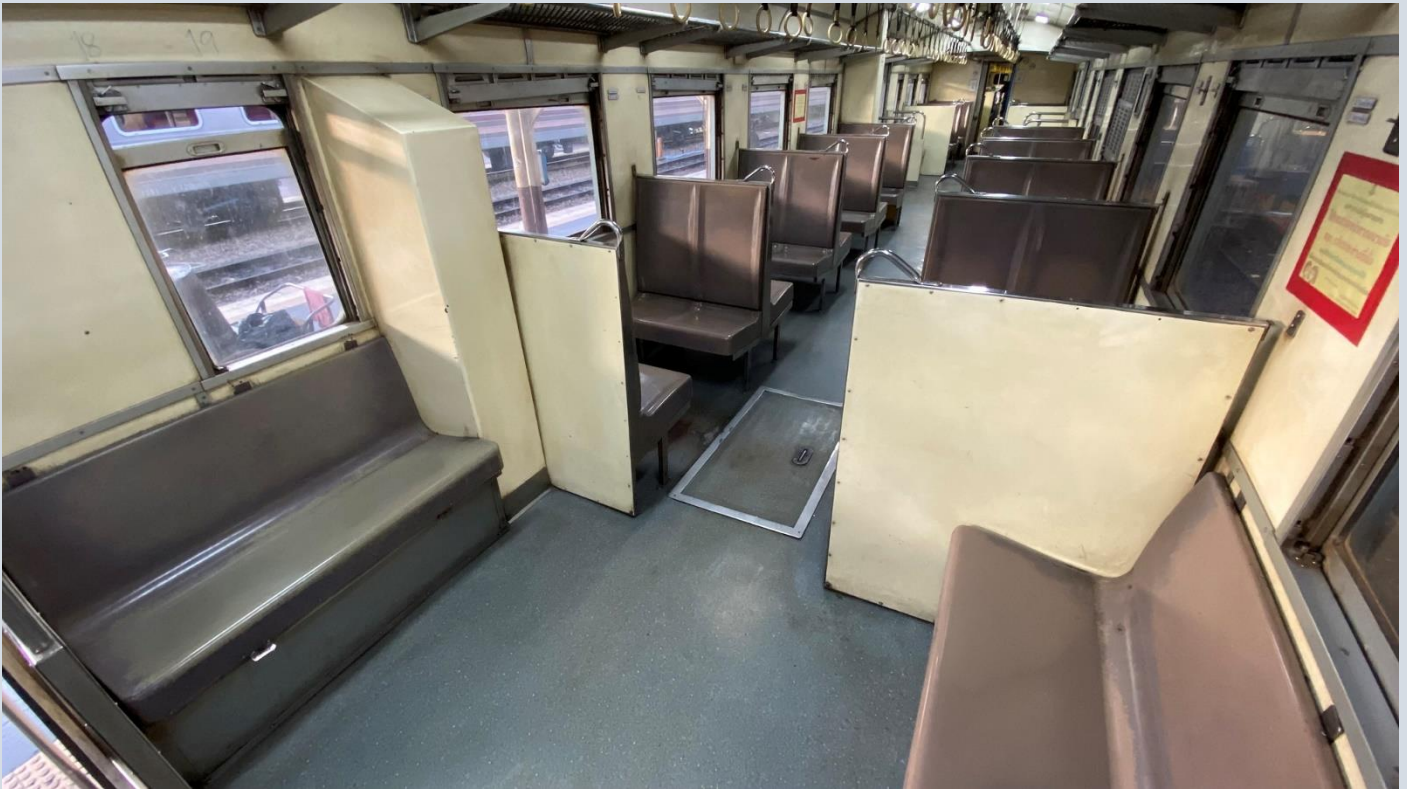


2nd Class Carriage (above left half and below right half)



The 2nd Class carriage has 62 seats in total. The seats are a lot more comfortable than in 3rd Class and they recline too. This carriage is air-conditioned and so the windows do not open. Unlike on the Sprinter, the seats don't swing around if you want to face the engine on the return. So, you might find yourself going backwards for either the outbound or inbound journey. As you can see from the seating plan above, there is no indication which one you will get.

3rd CLASS CARRIAGE รถไฟชั้น 3



The excursion train usually has four carriages. Three are 3rd Class with fans (Car No. 1', 'Car No. 3' and 'Car No. 4') and one is 2nd Class ('Car No. 2'). One of the 3rd Class carriages has hard seats (above) and two have the softer blue seats (below). The hard seats are usually 'Car No. 3', though that is no guarantee.



3rd CLASS SEATING PLAN



3rd Class Carriage (above left half and below right half)



The 3rd Class carriages have 74 seats in total. You might want to avoid seats 69-74 as they are at the end near the toilets. The doors don't always close properly and you might have a smelly ride! If you have long legs like me, you might want to consider booking one of the seats looking inwards. There are sets with three seats together and ones with two seats. I personally prefer the latter as you might not get a neighbor. So that is either seats 18-19 or 55-56. Only seats 19 and 55 have windows behind them.

Other seats are sets of four facing each other. For example, 23 & 27 and 22 & 26 are facing each other. The gap between seats is 41 centimeters on the hard seats and 39 centimeters on the soft blue seats. This is 10 centimeters shorter than 3rd Class seats on other routes. Two tall people sitting opposite each other won't be comfortable. To the left is the direction you are going when you first board. So, if you want a window seat facing the engine for the outbound journey, then choose seats like 27, 35, 43, 51 etc. For the Nam Tok route, I advise you to get a window seat on the other side as the views on the left are better. For the Hua Hin trip it doesn't matter.

FOOD ON THE TRAIN กินข้าวบนรถไฟ



If you are travelling on local trains in Thailand, then you won't go hungry. Food vendors are often getting on and off the train at major railway stations. The excursion trips are no exception. On the journey there, you usually have an opportunity to buy breakfast from a food vendor who will board your train as you pass through Bangkok. Or you can buy in the market in front of Nakhon Pathom Station when you reach there at around 7:45 a.m. The train conductor will also come round with a menu so you can order food to eat on the return half of the trip. On the waterfall trip, you also get an opportunity to buy food at the market in front of Kanchanaburi Station.

My favorite dish on the train is **spicy stir-fried basil with pork or chicken** (top right). You can buy this very cheaply almost anywhere around Thailand. However, you should also try food which is famous from the places that you are passing on this trip. For example, **dry fish ball noodles** (top left) is a famous dish from Ratchaburi. **Khao Lam** (bottom left) is a sticky rice dessert cooked in bamboo that is famous in Nakhon Pathom. **Khanom Mor Gaeng** is another famous dessert, this time from Phetchaburi. Another of my favorites is **Hor Mok** (bottom right) which is a fish curry cooked with coconut.

ITINERARY

All times are subject to change. Some stops might be shortened.

ARRIVE	DEPART	STATION	NOTES
-	06:30	Departs Bangkok Station	No. 909 (outbound journey)
06:43	06:44	Sam Sen Station	
06:50	06:51	Bang Sue Junction	
07:06	07:07	Bang Bamru Station	
07:24	07:25	Salaya Station	
07:45	08:20	Nakhon Pathom Station	About 40 minutes to explore
08:32	08:35	Nong Pladuk Junction	The train splits here
09:26	09:29	Kanchanaburi Station	
09:34	09:59	River Kwai Bridge	About 25 minutes to explore
10:40	10:41	Tha Kilen	
10:55	10:56	Saphan Tam Krasae Station	Impressive views on the left
11:30	-	Nam Tok Sai Yok Noi Station	About 3 hours to explore
-	14:25	Departs Nam Tok Station	No. 910 (return journey)
14:54	14:55	Saphan Tam Krasae	Impressive views on the right
15:49	15:50	River Kwai Bridge	
15:53	16:53	Kanchanaburi Station	About one hour to explore
17:48	17:57	Nong Pla Duk Junction	
18:08	18:09	Nakhon Pathom	
18:29	18:30	Sala Ya	
18:44	18:45	Bang Bamru	Connects to Red Line
19:00	19:02	Bang Sue Junction	Connects to Red/Blue lines
19:08	19:10	Sam Sen	
19:25	-	Arrive Bangkok Station	Connects to Blue Line

This is important. If the train is delayed, they might shorten or cancel some stops. Always check with the train conductor or station master.

NAKHON PATHOM นครปฐม



STOP ONE: Excursion Train No. 909 makes its first stop in **Nakhon Pathom** at 7:45 a.m. You are given 35 minutes here to look around. As you pull into the station, you will see the 120-meter-high Phra Pathom Chedi (top left). This is the highlight of the city and where all the Thais will head to, to make merit. It will take you about ten minutes to walk there.

At the top by the Standing Buddha, turn left and you will see many Buddha images around the perimeter of the chedi. You don't have enough time to walk all around the chedi, but if you did, you would see the complete set of different poses of the Buddha. There are also some giant Chinese sculptures here that were used as ballast for trading ships coming to Thailand.

On the way back to the train, you can buy snacks from the food vendors to eat on the train. There is a lot of variety, from ready cooked rice dishes to fried chicken and various desserts. There is also a 7-Eleven across from the railway station if you want to buy some drinks or other snacks. Don't be late getting back on the train as they won't wait for you.

The train is scheduled to depart at 8:20 a.m. Ten minutes later, the train will stop briefly at Nong Pladuk Junction. This is where the train will split and so make sure you are sitting in your assigned carriage.

RIVER KWAI BRIDGE สะพานข้ามแม่น้ำแคว



STOP TWO: The second sightseeing stop is at the **River Kwai Bridge** which is a short distance after Kanchanaburi Railway Station. You should arrive here at 9:34 a.m. You have about 25 minutes here. Most people will head straight onto the bridge to take some selfies.

The bridge was made famous by the 1957 war movie, 'The Bridge on the River Kwai'. The movie was a work of fiction and has quite a few inaccuracies. The most interesting one is that Kwai is a mispronunciation of the word Khwae. Much of the Death Railway here follows the Khwae Noi River. Unfortunately, the famous bridge crossed the Mae Klong River and not the Khwae Noi River. Due to the popularity of the movie, the Thai government had to change the name of this stretch of the river in the 1960's. The river here is now called Khwae Yai River.

The steel and concrete bridge was badly damaged by Allied bombers during air raids in 1944 and 1945. You can see some shrapnel damage on the concrete pillars. The curved arches at each end are original but the middle section was rebuilt after the war. Be careful when you cross the bridge as you can easily fall.

WANG PHO WOODEN TRESTLE BRIDGE



SCENIC VIEW: The highlight of the train trip is between the River Kwai Bridge and Nam Tok Station. Make sure you are on the left as that is where the best views are. Just before 11:00 a.m. the train creeps slowly along the **wooden trestle bridge** near Tham Krasae station. This is a double viaduct built by Allied prisoners of war. The first section is the longest at around 260 meters.

Down below is the Khwae Noi River which is a tributary of the Mae Klong River. On the other side of the river there was a prisoner of war camp called Wang Pho. Which is why this viaduct was known as Wang Pho Viaduct. However, these days it is popularly known as Tham Krasae due to the nearby cave and station of the same name.

If you are not on the left when the train passes over the wooden viaduct, you can also get some good pictures from either the rear door of the last carriage (bottom right picture) or, if the driver allows you, from his cab (top right picture). First come first served.

The railway line here follows this river for much of the way to the Burmese border. You will get some more views of the river further up the line (bottom left picture) about ten minutes later.

SAI YOK NOI น้ำตกไทรโยคน้อย



STOP THREE: The final stop on the outbound journey is at **Nam Tok Sai Yok Noi Station**. If the train is on time, it should arrive at 11:30 a.m. They give you nearly three hours here. One year I went, we arrived at the waterfall nearly two hours late, but they still gave us three hours. But they cut out the stop at the war cemetery on the way back.

Near the train station, you will see a Class C56 steam locomotive that was brought over from Japan during the Second World War. There is a track here to your right that has a walk to the top of the waterfall where you will find a coffee shop with air-conditioning. But most people head straight to the waterfall which is only 25 meters away.

This is now the end of the line of the Death Railway. The train used to pass right in front of the waterfall. Most of the track between here and the Burmese border has been removed and the line is now overgrown or built over. However, there are a few notable exceptions where you can see some tracks such as at Hellfire Pass and Sai Yok National Park.

Many people swim or paddle in the water below the waterfall. You can also have a picnic under the trees or eat in the nearby restaurants. There is a 7-Eleven and other shops on the other side of the main road.

WAR CEMETERY สุสานทหารสัมพันธมิตรดอนรัก



STOP FOUR: The return train is scheduled to leave at 2:25 p.m. You will then have a second chance for the views on your right of the Khwae Noi River and then 10 minutes later the wooden trestle bridge. About an hour later you will cross the River Kwai Bridge again.

The fourth and last stop is **Kanchanaburi Railway Station**. They give you about one hour to visit the war cemetery or to buy snacks in the market in front of the station. However, if the train is running late, this stop might be shortened or cancelled altogether. So, make sure you confirm the time when you arrive.

The **war cemetery** is only a five-minute walk from the station. So, ignore the songtaew touts. At the main road, you will see an old steam locomotive that was built in 1936. Turn left here and walk about 200 meters. The entrance to the cemetery is on your right. There are more than 5,000 Commonwealth and almost 1,900 Dutch servicemen buried or commemorated here. They all died during the building of the Death Railway.

The train is scheduled to leave at 4:53 p.m. If you had ordered food during the outbound trip, you will get it when it comes onboard. Otherwise, you should buy something at the station. If the train is on time, you will get back to Bangkok at 7:25 p.m.

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