Damnoen Saduak Floating Market

Today, the many waterways of Bangkok’s once extensive canal network have been filled up to make new roads, but for visitors the image of floating vendors in traditional dress remains quintessentially Thai. So each morning, vendors and tourists alike descend on Damnoen Saduak to re-enact scenes from an idealized past. Visitors can explore the rural canals, take pictures of colorful boats, and shop for souvenirs.

A vendor doing brisk business in a sampan

Top 10 Features

1. Boats
2. Ton Kem Market
3. Hia Kui Market
4. Khun Pitak Market
5. Fruits
6. Bridge
7. Boat Vendors
8. Fruit Orchards
9. Boat Noodles
10. Souvenirs

To enjoy the market before busloads of tourists arrive (usually around 9–10am), it is necessary to stay overnight in a local guest house and get out on the canals in the early morning.

Most guided tours include refreshments, but there are plenty of vendors selling food and drink for independent travelers.

- 62 miles (100 km) SW of Bangkok
- Map S2
- (03) 224 1204
- AC bus 78 from Bangkok’s Southern Bus Terminal

Boats

Most vendors paddle around in sampan, which are simple, square-ended rowing boats that are easily maneuvered and ideal for displaying goods for sale. The tourists, however, are propelled around the canals in longtail boats. These boats can be noisy but offer protection from the elements and can cover a big area in a short time.

Ton Kem Market

What is normally referred to as Damnoen Saduak Floating Market actually consists of three separate markets. The biggest of these is Ton Kem Market on Khlong Damnoen Saduak. The market is very popular with both tour groups and vendors, the result being that the canal often gets jammed with boats.

Hia Kui Market

A short way south of Ton Kem, Hia Kui market (below) is less frequented by tourists and hence has a more authentic feel to it. The banks of the canal are dotted with souvenir shops where some group tours stop for mementos.
Khun Pitak Market
Located on a smaller *khlong*, or canal, a little over a mile (2 km) south of Hia Kui, Khun Pitak is the least crowded of the three markets. However it is still a bustling place early in the morning when locals buy their breakfast or fresh produce, including fruits, vegetables, and spices, from the vendors.

Fruits
Many of the *sampan* on the canals here sell pomelos, bananas, rose apples, and jackfruit that are freshly picked from local orchards (above).

Boat Vendors
The *sampan* that the vendors paddle along the canals provide no protection from the elements, so most vendors wear a *ngob*, a traditional hat that ingeniously allows for ventilation. Many also wear a collarless denim shirt typical in rural Thailand.

Fruit Orchards
To add variety to a visit to the floating market, many tour groups include a visit to an orchard to look at the trees and sample ripe fruit. Some orchards also keep harmless pythons, which tourists can drape round their necks for a souvenir photo.

Boat Noodles
It is a minor miracle that cooks can prepare a tasty bowl of *goaadtdeeo rua*, or boat noodles, in a small boat and serve it without spilling a drop (below). These dishes are so popular that noodle shops often display their goods in a boat.

Souvenirs
Since busloads of tourists arrive in Damnoen Saduak every morning, it is not surprising to find that many locals operate souvenir stalls on the banks of the canals, selling traditional hats (above), silk purses, carved soaps, and, of course, colorful postcards of the market.

Bridge
Although there are plenty of opportunities for taking pictures while exploring the canals by boat, the classic view of the floating market, thick with vendors and colorful produce, is from the bridge that crosses the canal at Ton Kem market.

Other Floating Markets
Damnoen Saduak gets the lion’s share of visitors to floating markets, but there are other locations in and around Bangkok where similar markets operate, though some of them only function once a week. These include Amphawa, Tha Kha, Lam Phya, Don Wai, Wat Sai, and Taling Chan. The last two are near the center of Bangkok, but are exclusively for tourists and lack the photogenic nature of the markets at Damnoen Saduak.