Jim Thompson’s House

Jim Thompson, an American who came to Bangkok in 1945, is credited with having revived the Thai art of silk weaving. His traditional Thai house is filled with Southeast Asian antiques, paintings, and sculptures. Surrounded by a lush garden, the compound consists of five other teak houses on stilts which also showcase part of the collection.

Top 10 Features

1. Jataka Paintings
2. Burmese Carvings
3. Master Bedroom
4. Dvaravati Buddha Torso
5. Drawing Room
6. Dining Room
7. Traditional Teak Houses
8. Spirit House
9. Ban Khrua Silk Weavers
10. The Garden

Master Bedroom

With a great view over the garden, the master bedroom (above) of the house is decorated with large sculptures, paintings of the Jataka Tales, and photographs of Jim Thompson on a bedside table.

Jataka Paintings

Near the entrance of the house are scenes from the Jataka Tales, which depict the incarnations of the Buddha. The panels, painted in the early 19th century, still retain their rich colors and detail (above).

Burmese Carvings

These intricate carvings display a high level of artistic ability. Jim Thompson’s extensive collection of wooden figures includes images of Nat (right), animist spirits which were incorporated into Buddhism when it developed in Burma.

Dvaravati Buddha Torso

Probably the most significant example of early Asian art at the complex, this headless Buddha torso (above), made of limestone during the Dvaravati period (7th–8th centuries), was found in Lopburi Province. The statue is on display in the garden that surrounds the house.
5 Drawing Room
The centerpiece of the house, this large and airy room looks out onto a terrace and is decorated in rich orange and red colors (right). It houses a 14th-century sandstone head of the Buddha and wooden carvings of Burmese figures set in illuminated alcoves.

6 Dining Room
Like the master bedroom, the dining room also enjoys lovely views of the garden. The room features several items of Ming porcelain as well as some fine paintings. The dining table, which consists of two mahjong tables put together, is laid out for a meal as it might have been during the days of Jim Thompson.

7 Traditional Teak Houses
Their roofs are steeply pitched for ventilation, and the walls lean inward to create a sense of height (above).

8 Spirit House
Located near the canal, the spirit house generally has offerings of flowers and incense to appease the spirit of the land on which the house stands.

9 Ban Khrua Silk Weavers
Thompson initially chose the location of his house beside Khlong Saen Saep because a silk weavers’ community lived at Ban Khrua, on the opposite bank. This made it easy for him to oversee their work.

10 The Garden
Surrounding the house is a garden with cooling pools and dense tropical vegetation (below) including flowers, banana plants, and palm trees.

Jim Thompson’s Disappearance
On Easter Day, 1967, Jim Thompson went out walking in the Cameron Highlands in Malaysia, and was never seen again. Since he once worked for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a predecessor of the CIA, this fuelled suspicion that he was abducted by Vietnamese communists, though others suspect he was hit by a truck and that the driver buried the remains. Since his body was never found, the mystery is likely to stay unsolved.

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