

# BANGKWANG CENTRAL PRISON

## A guide for visitors

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### **1 Background**

Bangkwang Prison is located in a small suburb of Bangkok called Nonthaburi which is at the very north of Bangkok. The best way to get there is using the Chao Phraya River Express Boat from “Central Pier” in the centre of Bangkok. The river boat ride takes at least one hour, and you should also leave enough time to get to Central Pier and find the correct stop and to find the prison once you arrive at Nonthaburi.

### **2 When to go**

Each building number has different visiting times/days although the visit itself does not need to be booked. You should check with consular staff what time you will be able to visit before you book your flights.

Aim to leave Central Pier one and a half hours before the visiting time, to give you enough time to find the prison and register as below.

### **3 Who Can Visit?**

Any family member visiting for the first time must contact the Embassy in Bangkok to discuss the arrangements of the first visit and to confirm if any paperwork needs to be collected from them before attending the visit. For subsequent visits, a close family member who has already visited can visit at the allocated time for that person/building, however you may still want to give a quick call to the Embassy to ensure that this is still the case and that regulations have not changed since your last visit.

Any other person **MUST** contact the consulate in advance of the visit to arrange an appointment with them, before the visit, so that paperwork can be issued to prove that they are authorised by the British Embassy to visit that person. Please note that there is no obligation for the Embassy to authorise any person to go on a visit or to provide any paperwork.

### **4 What to take**

- Your passport
- Photocopies of your passport
- Name and Building Number of the person you are visiting
- Wear trousers and take a long sleeved top in case T-shirts are not allowed.  
Check with consular staff beforehand about what you are permitted to wear.

## **5 How to behave**

Thai culture demands that visitors to the prison are quiet, respectful, peaceful and respectful of any authority figures. Enjoy the visit, smile at the prison guards, follow any directions that you are given, and be respectful at all times. Raising your voice, shouting, or (if you are in a group visiting the prison) laughing or joking uncontrollably and loudly amongst you will not be tolerated.

## **6 Getting to Bangkwang**

1) The easiest way to get to Central Pier is to take the “Sky Train” in the direction of Saphan Taksin and get off at Saphan Taksin. Head towards the river to Central Pier by following the signs in the Sky Train stop. It is only a short walk. Alternatively take a tuk-tuk or TAXI-METER to Central Pier/Saphan Taksin.

2) When you are at Central Pier, you need to take the Chao Phraya River Express Boat northbound in the direction of Nonthaburi (Nonthaburi is the last stop). You will see many river boat piers at Central Pier, not all of which are for the Chao Phraya River Express Boat. Although there should be a sign in English which identifies which pier is for the Express Boat in the direction of Nonthaburi, at the time of writing the sign was quite small and not easy to understand. It is better to try to find someone who speaks enough English who can confirm which pier you should wait at.

3) Sometimes there is an attendant at the entrance to the Express Boat stop who you should buy a ticket from before boarding. If not, enter the pier when the boat arrives and buy a ticket on the boat. Keep your ticket for the duration of the journey. Try not to pay with large notes; if you don't have any coins buy something beforehand to break a large note. At the time of writing (February 2006) the cost of a ticket from Central Pier to Nonthaburi was 32 Bhat.

4) There are many different types of Express Boat not all of which stop at every stop, however all boats stop at Nonthaburi, as it is the last stop. If there is a helpful English-speaking attendant at the pier it could be that they try to prevent you taking the first available boat which arrives – this is likely to be so that you get onto a faster boat. Otherwise take the first boat which arrives.

5) Get off at Nonthaburi, which is the last stop.

6) At the end of the pier at Nonthaburi take the road directly ahead of you leading away from the river. After a few minutes, you will see the prison on the right, and the visitors' information centre on the left. You need to go into the visitors information centre before entering the actual prison.

## **7 What to expect at the prison**

Once inside the visitors information centre you will see a number of windows with prison officers. Wait at one of the windows with your passport and photocopies. You will be given a small form to complete with your details and the details of the person you are visiting (Name, Building Number).

Once it is visiting time you can exit the visitors centre and cross the street to the visitors entrance of the prison, which is just opposite. You will be asked to hand in your bag. You should not take money inside, you may be searched and you will walk underneath a metal detector. If you are taking items to give to the person you are visiting, take this inside with you.

Your visit will be behind glass, unless the Embassy has been able to arrange a contact visit (which is not always possible). Once inside the prison you will see many windows and telephones surrounding a garden. It is a good idea to walk to the end of the garden where there is a small officer's building, so that you can try to ask one of the guards where to sit (the sections for foreign visitors and Thai visitors are on separate sides of the garden). You can sit at any telephone, you do not need to sit at the nearest available. Once your friend/family member enters their section of the visiting area, they will be able to walk around freely until they recognise you and pick up the telephone which corresponds to yours.

After your visit, if you are taking items to give to your friend/family member, you should hand it in to one of the windows which is designed for this near the officers' post at the end of the garden. Try not to tell your family member that you have brought items, as not everything is allowed and it avoids disappointment. It is better to buy items at the prison shops. At the end of your visit, there are a few shops where items can be bought. It appeared, at the time of writing, that there were different shops selling different items. The first shop was located on the left as you are exiting the prison, just after you collect your bag – stamps and tinned items could be bought here. Back at the prison information centre there is a larger shop which sells a variety of items, including fruit.

If you require this leaflet in a large print format, please contact us. Our details are below.

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