



In The News: Lopburi Monkey Gangs

Description

Lopburi Monkey Madness

default watermark



Temple Monkeys hanging out in the ancient Khmer ruins of Lopburi. Photo Attribution: J-mak @ Flickr

There are monkey gangs in Thailand. Recently they've made news all over the world with their big brawl in Lopburi that freaked out even the local people. Thank god there was no poo flinging!

The ancient town of Lopburi, located about 150 kilometers northeast of Bangkok, has a population of 3-4 thousand macaque monkeys. They are everywhere. Homes and businesses must be "monkey proofed" to keep them out.

These monkeys are socially divided into two groups: temple monkeys & city monkeys. The temple monkeys hang out in the town's extensive Khmer ruins that were built nearly one thousand years ago. The city monkeys hold turf not far away in the surrounding town. The two gangs don't mix and they don't like each other, much like two enemy motorcycle gangs.

The temple monkeys are fed primarily by tourists who flock to Lopburi to see the Khmer ruins. City monkeys are fed by the local townspeople. And that's what's caused all the chest pounding and chattering.

Recently, Thailand tourism has been crushed by the coronavirus. The tourists who visit Lopburi have almost completely disappeared; and so the Temple monkeys became short of food. They staged a mass food raid into the turf of the City monkeys. It didn't go well-see video above. Nobody got killed, but fights were breaking out everywhere.

Lopburi: A Brief History



These ancient Khmer ruins in Lopburi are almost 1,000 years old. Photo Attribution: Trip Advisor

[Lopburi](#) was founded sometime between 400-500 A.D. by a Hindu civilization called The [Dvaravati](#). The city's ancient name was Lavo.

In the 11th Century, Lopburi became a major satellite city of the [Khmer Empire](#) centered in Angkor Wat in what today is Cambodia. After conquering Lopburi, the Khmers built a temple complex of hewn laterite blocks resembling their temple structures in [Angkor Wat](#).

By the 13th Century, [Sukothai](#), the 1st capital of Siam located in central Thailand, broke the Khmer hegemony in the region. In the 17th Century, [Ayutthaya](#), the 2nd Capital of Siam, fully brought “Lavo” under Siamese control and the city’s name was changed to Lopburi.

King Narai of Ayutthaya built a palace in Lopburi and often resided there for much of the year. That’s why Thai school children are taught that the four historic capitals of Thailand are Sukothai, Lopburi, Ayutthaya, and Bangkok-in that order.

For almost a thousand years, the stone temples built by the Khmer have been impervious to time. They will stand for another thousand years. These Hindu temples were abandoned centuries ago and macaque monkeys claimed them as home-hence The Temple monkeys of Lopburi.

For further reading about ancient Siam and its kingdoms, please read my blog post: [“Traditional Thai Fabrics: 3,000 Years in 15 Minutes”](#).

The Monkey Festival

Every year Lopburi holds its Monkey Festival. Town folk make huge buffets of fruit and vegetables for the temple monkeys to gorge on. The festival is usually held the last week of November.

Watch the video above and you’ll get the picture.

Back to the raging monkeys....

default watermark



Lopburi locals figured out almost immediately that all the monkey madness and aggression was about a food shortage for the temple macaques. The locals began bringing more than enough food to satiate them. Peace was restored.

As of this writing, the ancient temples of Lopburi are all but empty of tourists. No more loud, rude, grabby-touchy tourists jamming cameras in their faces and chasing after their cutie-pie youngsters.

A pandemic-the Coronavirus-has temporarily restored a solemn stillness to these ancient temple ruins.

The din of tourists is gone. And that's just fine with the temple monkeys.

Category

- The Siamese Puzzle Box

Tags

- monkeys
- Lopburi
- Khmer

Date Created

March 2020

Author

jeffcgallagher

default watermark