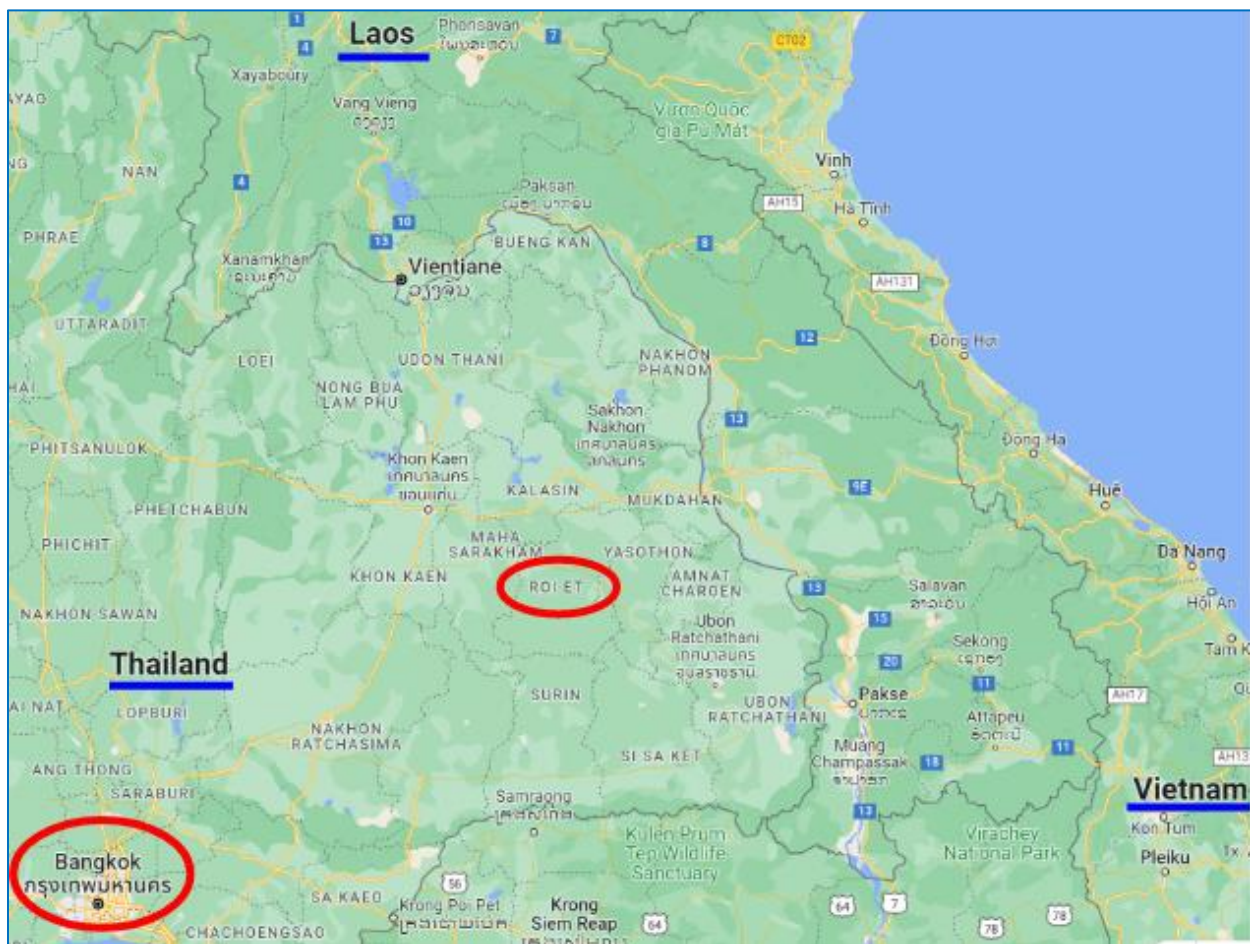


Construction in Thailand: 1st and 3rd World Combined

Executive Summary. A quick visit to Thailand revealed some interesting construction and engineering – a mixture of 1st and 3rd world construction!

The trip. Thailand is in southeast Asia. That's southwest of Japan and south of China. Both Laos and Vietnam border Thailand to the north and east; Cambodia is to the south and east. This article is similar to the one I did on Laos right before COVID came out in 2020. Below shows a map of where I spent time.



Thailand – two places I visited in the red circles. Laos and Vietnam to the north and east. Cambodia to southeast. Taken from Google Maps.

First world/third world combination. When you're outside of Bangkok, the world goes back in time for an American. Scaffolding is made of bamboo, and this trestle below is made out of wood (no, not lumber – wood, like from the forest).

Scott Jennings, P.E., is the President of [SJ Construction Consulting, LLC](http://SJConstructionConsulting.com) (808) 271-5150, sj@sjcivil.com. He is the former owner of a heavy/civil construction company and now provides cost estimating and training, litigation support, construction management, and efficiency advice to contractors. He is also the author of numerous construction children's books at www.amazon.com!



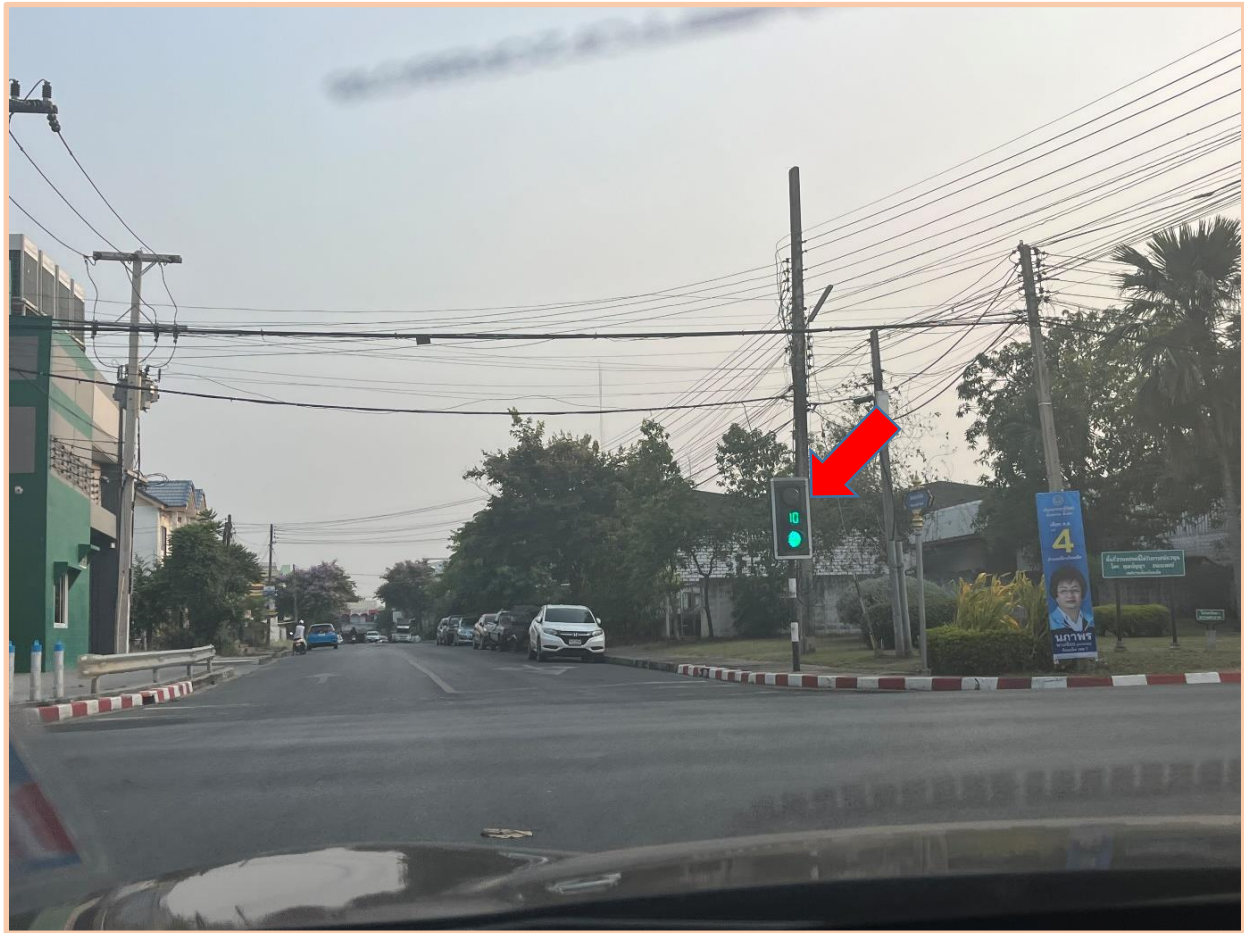
Trestle built from wood.

This is a public project – it's a walkway in the middle of a large Thai City (Roi Et), so if any standards were going to be required, this is where there would be a requirement.



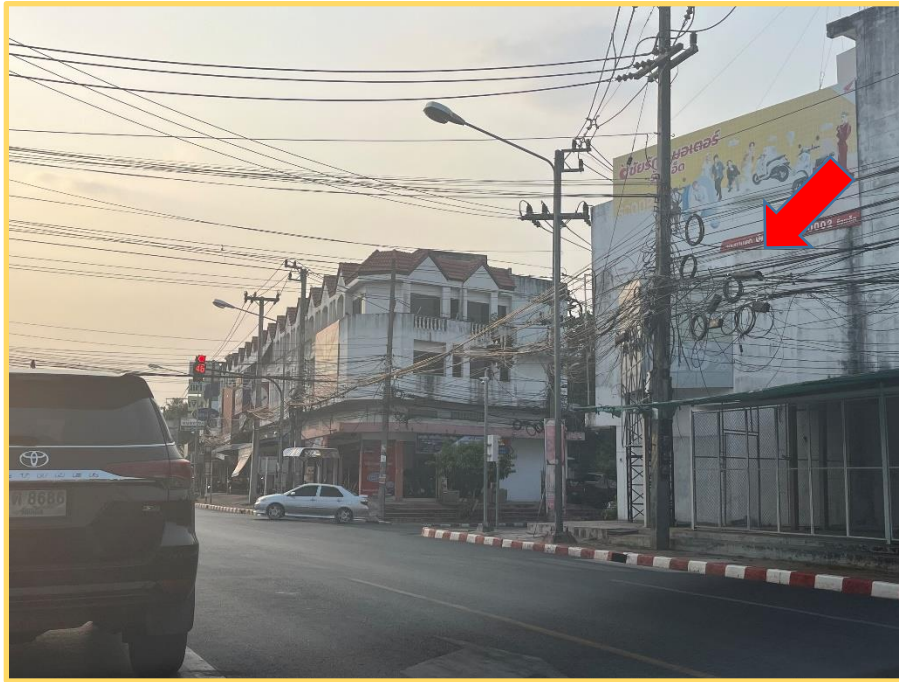
Concrete bends in Thailand! Look at this concrete utility pole.

I don't recall seeing a utility pole made out of timber. They were all concrete. And, this best of all, here in Thailand they get the concrete to bend! The "basics" of my construction materials class in my sophomore year of college went out the window – concrete there was ductile!



A countdown clock at a traffic signal. The green here at the top says "10" – sometimes it was over "100".

At more than one light I saw a countdown clock until the light went from green to yellow to red. This was ingenious. The countdowns were also displayed for red to green. I'm not sure how much it did for safety, but it was great for patience management.



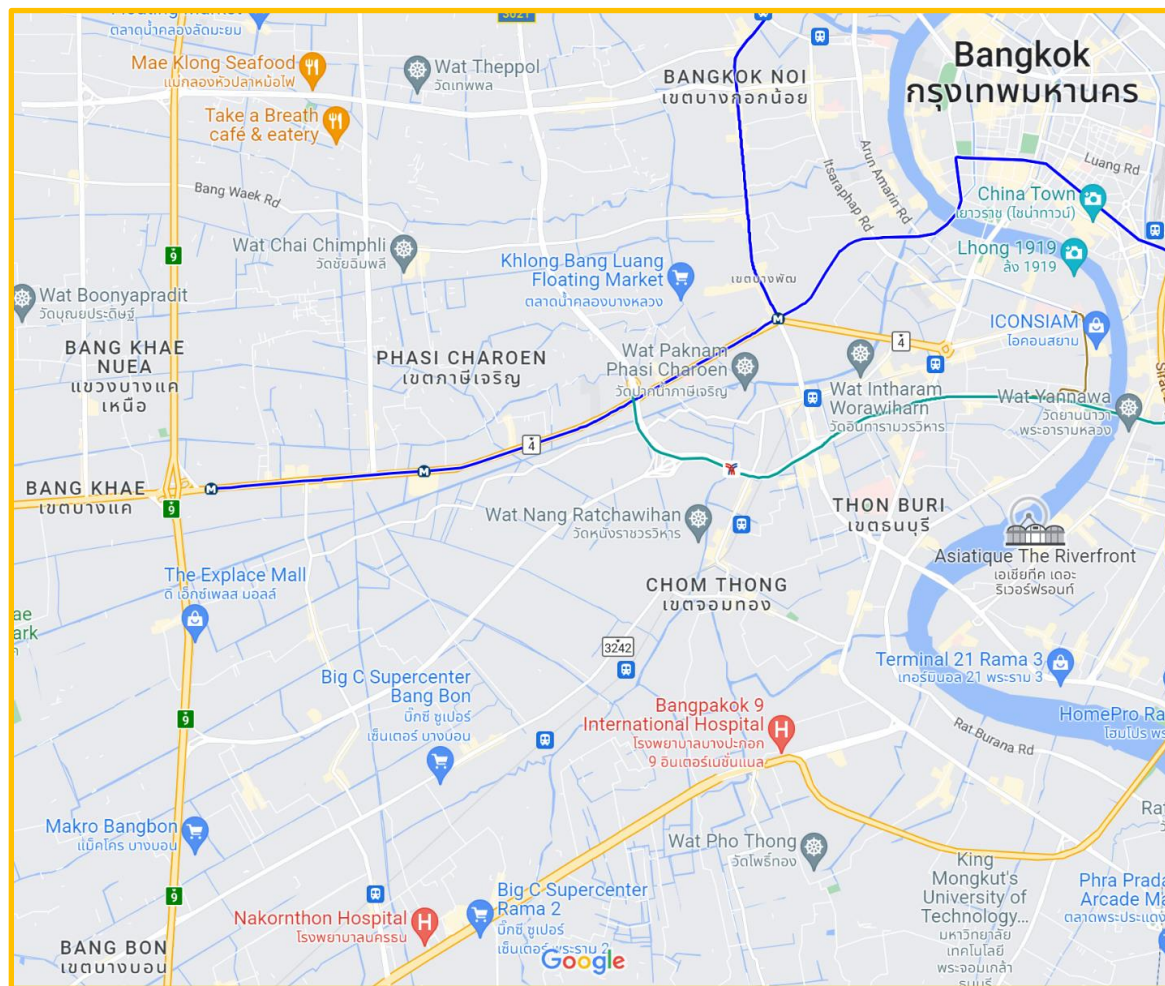
This was much more jaw dropping in real life, but I can't say this is that extraordinary. It looks almost identical to outside my home in Pearl City, Oahu, Hawaii.

A rat's nest of wires on this utility pole.



You can't have pictures of Thailand and not work an elephant in somehow. We never saw elephants crossing the road, but were warned!

Road sign - beware of elephants crossing ahead.



Bangkok - a city of canals.

This was my third time to Thailand and I never knew that it was a city with hundreds of canals throughout it. We took a tour on a long boat from the major river through town (Chao Phraya River) and then whipped through the canals on the west side. Although the cars drive on the left side (opposite of America), it seemed like the boats were doing the opposite. Either way, for the most part, it was safe!



Bar screens to collect river debris. They weren't operating.

Not easy to see from the picture here, but this is a bar screen just off to the side of the river on a major canal. The river and the canals were filthy and, unfortunately, these screens were not moving. I did see a collection of five or so trash collection boats. They were parked and not in use either.



One of many long stick excavators on a barge.

This photo was taken from my long boat. I saw many long stick excavators on barges. I think this barge, and maybe the bar screens and trash collection boats too, were not operating because of the Thai new year celebration.



Means and Methods



A water line which followed us throughout our canal travels.

This water line traveled with us throughout the canal ride. This is an air release valve, which is typical at a water line's high point to release air from the line.



Deluge pump evacuating flood water?

I saw these bright orange pipelines by the dozens during our canal ride. I can only surmise that these pipes are evacuating water from basements and other below ground structures at the waterfront. These pipes were at commercial and residential locations.



A "quick" cofferdam in use.

These cofferdam cans, about ten of them, were observed throughout the canals. We never got up against one to be able to look in, but there had to be some sort of "spot" construction going on here: utility tie-in, dock construction, repair and maintenance of some sort?



Half of the cofferdam cans I saw along the canals.

Here is half of one of the cans you see installed above.

My story. There were some major jobs being constructed in and around Bangkok. I saw some major highways under construction. They seemed to be precast segmental bridges – the segments plus the launching gantry cranes were the clues. Lots of concrete trucks were seen, but not a single asphalt paving machine.

Just like in my visit in 2006 to Thailand, there continue to be many major projects which were abandoned. Not so much highway jobs, but buildings. Big ones. I saw a building twice the size of an American football field, its concrete frame completed, built up about eight stories. And that was it. Everyone gone. No plumbing, no interior walls. Nothing. I remember that upon my arrival 17 years ago. Not certain what causes this – I assume the project(s) ran out of money.

Although when I was in Laos in the 2019/2020 timeframe (just before Covid) I was only in smaller cities and in rural areas (not in their capital of Vientiane), the difference between the countries seems minuscule to enormous. Laos just seems like Thailand 50 years ago. Laos looks like a poorer country (more dirt roads, less infrastructure, non-modern dwelling units). Thailand has comparable rural areas too, but in Bangkok it doesn't look much different than downtown New York. There are plenty of skyscrapers, a subway, and an elevated rail.



*My hotel in Khaoyai (just outside of Bangkok).
Beautiful at USD \$100/night.*

I'm going back again one day! And for all of you who say "jeez Scott, do you ever vacation or just look at construction?!", there's a picture of one of my hotel pools up in the mountains northeast of Bangkok – see I do vacation! (PS. There were some tower cranes just across the street building another hotel...I'm jus sayin'!).

Work safe!