

What's In a Wat?

A *wat* is a Buddhist spiritual and social center with a temple, prayer and meeting rooms, social gathering places, and a building for learning and education. Living quarters for monks, whether in one large building, or in separate huts, called *kuti* (กุฏิ) are always separated from the sacred buildings.



Wats are not simply places to meditate and pray; they are complete social and education centers which serve the immediate community. A typical Buddhist wat consists of some or all of the following buildings:

- **Chedi** (เจดีย์), a conical or bell-shaped building, often containing a relic of the Buddha, or another type of sacred item.
- **Vihara** (**wihan** in Thai - วิหาร), a building or large hall for meeting and prayer. Viharas can also serve as living quarters for monks.
- **Mondop** (มณฑป), an open, square building with four arches and a pyramidal roof, used to worship religious texts or objects.
- **Sala** (ศาลา), a pavilion for relaxation and miscellaneous activities.
- **Bot** (โบสถ์) or **ubosot** (อุโบสถ์); the holiest prayer room, used as an ordination hall where new monks take their vows. The building's cornerstones are believed to ward off evil.
- **Hall** (หอไตร), a library containing Buddhist texts, and multipurpose hall (ศาลาการเปรียญ)
- **Drum tower** (หอกลอง) or **bell tower** (หอระฆัง) used for summoning people for meditation and prayer